

Three Rivers District Council

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy DRAFT

Date March 2023

Introduction

The Three River's District Council's corporate vision is that the district be a great place to live work and visit. That vision is one we hold for everyone.

The council is dedicated to the promotion of equality of opportunity and to removing any discrimination in service delivery, procurement and employment. This is an ambition that we cannot realise alone. To achieve the levels of equality, inclusion and community cohesion we aspire to for our district, we remain committed to working in partnership with organisations and local communities across and beyond our geography.

This Equality, Diversity and inclusion policy will guide us in our efforts to:

- Deliver accessible, inclusive and responsive services to residents and other customers
- Employ a workforce that reflects and embraces the diversity of the district we serve
- Understand and celebrate the vibrant diversity of our communities and the prosperity this brings to our district

1. Policy Statement

1.1. Three Rivers District Council is committed to identifying and eradicating any form of discrimination, direct or indirect, institutional or other, both in employment and in the procurement and delivery of our services.

1.2. The council recognises that it has responsibilities as:

- A public body to fulfil our duties under Equalities Act 2010.
- A community leader to ensure our Community vision is successfully delivered for all our residents.
- An employer to build and support a diverse, included and engaged workforce.

1.3. To meet those responsibilities the council commits to:

- Eliminate discrimination on the grounds of protected characteristics;
- Promote equality of opportunity and fair treatment for all our communities;
- Ensure equitable access to our services by all citizens
- Provide services in a manner which is sensitive to needs of individuals;
- Consciously consider the impacts (positive and negative) of our decisions and actions on all our communities
- Help those who face harassment, taking action against perpetrators where possible
- Build a workforce that reflects the diversity of our communities
- Promote equality of opportunity and fair treatment in employment
- Demonstrate visible community leadership to equality, diversity and inclusion
- Work in partnership to ensure effective consultation and engagement
- Monitor and evaluate all relevant aspects of service delivery and employment and eliminate differences demonstrated by unfair outcomes;
- Publish all relevant equalities information.

2. Our Vision for Equalities Diversity and Inclusion

Three Rivers: A district where everyone feels welcome, that they belong and that they are safe

3. Our Objectives for 2023-26

- To promote Equality of Opportunity in Employment & Training
- To improve equality and access to services for all residents.
- To strengthen knowledge and understanding of all Three Rivers communities.
- To celebrate diversity, promote inclusion and enhance community life in partnership with communities.

4. Equality of Opportunity in Employment & Training

Our commitment to diversity and equality is to our own staff as well as to the communities we serve. This commitment is driven partly by our purpose as a local authority but also by our business need to attract talented people into the organisation.

The council performs best by harnessing the complementary skills, knowledge, backgrounds and networks of a rich mix of people who are able to work together in an environment that is fully inclusive and respecting of the talents and contributions of every individual. People from different backgrounds can bring fresh ideas and perceptions which, where they are supported to thrive and flourish, have the potential to drive service improvement.

Three Rivers District Council aims to have a workforce that is:

- Representative of the communities we serve, with an equality profile that broadly reflects the economically active population within the District
- Skilled, capable and motivated to deliver the best services for everyone in the district, with employees across all equality groups showing high levels of engagement and satisfaction with the council as an employer

5. Equality of access to services

Our commitments and ambitions to promote equality is fully embedded into the way we plan, purchase and deliver our services.

The council has a robust programme of [Equality Impact Assessment \(EIA\)](#) which helps us to pay conscious attention to the potential impacts of our decisions and actions on all people relating to their protected characteristics in service delivery, commissioning services and in our role as an employer.

The council's commitment to social value ensures that where possible and applicable our contracts secure additional outcomes for vulnerable groups including for example, training and employment opportunities.

Three Rivers District Council aims to deliver services which:

- Are responsive to changes in the district and to individual need
- Adopt a social model of disability and difference
- Continuously seek to improve customer experience

Knowledge and understanding of all our communities

Having an in-depth, current, understanding of our communities, their diversity, identities, strengths and needs, helps the council to consider how best to design and deliver our services.

The release of new census data from 2021 is providing a fresh insight into the communities of our district. A snap shot in time cannot, however, in isolation provide the complete evidence base that we need. Our communities are constantly changing and the council will continue to develop its community engagement, customer experience and communication strategies to ensure that everyone who needs to has access to the information and services we provide and has the opportunity to engage with their development.

Three Rivers District Council aims to use high quality evidence and insight to:

- Develop consultation and engagement mechanisms that increase the participation and needs assessment of under-represented, disadvantaged or socially excluded communities and individuals.
- Equip staff with the evidence, data and tools they need to develop a comprehensive understanding of the communities they serve.

Celebrating diversity, promoting inclusion and enhancing community life in partnership with communities

Three Rivers is an increasingly diverse and multi-cultural district. With this diversity we face some challenges but are also provided with immense opportunity. The district has strong and cohesive communities who work to support each other, never has this been more evident than in recent years, and who provide a wide range of local skills, talents, experience, knowledge and abilities.

As a district we are aspirational and outward-looking; continuing to build and promote a reputation as a place, and as a council, that welcomes diversity, promotes and enables inclusion and where difference is valued, can only contribute positively to our future prosperity.

Three Rivers District Council aims to:

- Encourage all of our communities to play an active role in civil society across the district
- Celebrate diversity and show solidarity with our communities through significant events, including but not limited to Black History month, LGBT+ Pride, Holocaust Memorial Day, Remembrance Sunday, International Women's Day and a wide range of religious festivals

Our Communities

INFOGRAPHICS TO BE INSERTED SUMMARISING CENSUS DATA

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Roles and Responsibilities

Everybody has a role to play in achieving the council's equalities objectives and in managing their own inclusion. At Three Rivers, our approach and commitment to equalities is steered from the top and driven by our front line. To meet our objectives the council will provide leadership that is:

- focussed on tackling inequality and promoting inclusion
- able to balance competing interests and priorities in the district
- confident in its role in improving relations between communities

Council Members

- The District Council is responsible for setting and approving this policy and any subsequent changes to it. Members are expected to be champions of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) acting as role models and demonstrating their commitment to tackling inequality.
- The Policy and Resources Committee is responsible for the performance management of this Policy and will make recommendations to Council on its future development.
- The Equalities Sub-Committee (ESC) convenes bi-annually to provide detailed oversight and scrutiny of the Council's Equality Policy, its implementation and outcomes and will make recommendations for improvements to the P&R Committee.

Corporate Management Team (CMT)

CMT provides corporate leadership on diversity issues; champions, promotes and leads by example and encourages the integration of equality, diversity and cohesion principles in all of the council's functions. Collectively it is responsible for ensuring:

- the implementation of the policy,
- that all staff are aware of and have the tools, skills and knowledge to meet their responsibilities under the policy

Community Partnerships

- The Community Partnerships service provides professional support to the Chief Executive and CMT by guiding the implementation of the policy and developing monitoring, evaluation, equality impact assessment procedures and guidance. The team also co-ordinates the publication of equality information and equality objectives.

Managers

All Managers are expected to:

- Ensure all staff are aware of their personal responsibilities in relation to promoting equalities.
- Ensure continued improvement and equality outcomes in relation to the accessibility and delivery of services to residents.
- Create an inclusive workplace culture in which all staff can thrive and reach their potential.
- Ensure all staff are supported and trained so that they can perform their jobs effectively.
- Manage all staff fairly and equitably through the consistent and fair application of HR policies and procedures.
- Set clear standards of behaviours in line with the council's values and promptly dealing with any instances of inappropriate behaviour, including discrimination, harassment and bullying. All elected members:
- Champion equality within the council, including undertaking a scrutiny role to ensure that equality considerations are integrated in the decision making and governance of the council
- Lead, support and advocate for the diverse people and communities they serve
- Use equality impact assessments to inform decision making to avoid discrimination, promote inclusion and wherever possible increase fairness in the district.

Staff

All staff are responsible for complying with this Policy and its associated procedures and guidance. This means that all staff are expected to:

- Be fully aware and have a comprehensive understanding of the council's legal equality duties, our organisational commitments and what these mean practically for them in their roles.
- Treat service users, colleagues and residents with dignity and respect, responding positively and appropriately to meet diverse needs.
- Challenge and report to managers any incident where equality practice has not been followed, including discrimination, harassment and bullying. If necessary, staff are encouraged to use the appropriate grievance procedure, harassment or whistle-blowing policies.

Monitoring and Evaluation

As part of service delivery and wider community engagement, council services undertake equalities monitoring. This information is collected so that we can:

- Make sure our council services are open to everyone
- Treat everyone fairly and appropriately when they use our services
- Make sure we are listening to views from all sections of our community

Data collected through the monitoring is voluntary, anonymous and confidential. Results are combined so that individual respondents cannot be identified and information is only used under the strict controls of the Data protection Act 1998.

The insight that this monitoring provides allows the council to identify, plan and deliver service improvements and where necessary to target and/or adapt services to and for those who need them. A summary of this monitoring together with details of the actions resulting from and planned for in response to it are reported annually through the publication of the Equality Duty Information Report.

The policy will be reviewed every three years, or when new legislation requires it to be reassessed.

Three Rivers District Council aims to:

- Achieve excellence in our equality practice, as benchmarked against the [Equality Framework for Local Government](#), by 2026.

Legislation and Responsibilities

[The Equality Act 2010](#) sets out the council's legal duties to have due regard to the:

- Elimination of discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct
- Advancement of equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Fostering of good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The Act defines the 'protected' characteristics that these duties specifically apply to as:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion and belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

The council also recognises that there are a range of other communities of identity and circumstance that are vulnerable to disadvantage and discrimination. These include: Carers, people experiencing domestic and/or sexual violence, substance misusers, homeless people and rough sleepers, looked after children, (ex) armed forces personnel and people on the Autistic spectrum. Some of these communities and/or individuals do not benefit from the protection of legislation, but the Council will ensure good practice in the provision of equal opportunities towards such communities through this policy.

The council, in addition to the Equality Act 2010, recognises its duties under the following UK legislation and statutory guidance and the links that they have to the performance of its equalities duties:

- Mental Health Act 1983 and 2007
- Children Act 1989
- NHS and Community Care Act 1990
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Asylum and Immigration Act 1999
- Care Standards Act 2000
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Children Act 2004
- Care Act 2014
- Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007
- Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- The Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004
- The National Prevent Strategy
- Modern Slavery Act 2015
- Public Services (Social Value) Act (2012)
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021

