

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

June 2025



Our commitment

Fenland is made up of communities of people with different identities, pride, cultures and abilities. We are home to some of the poorest and most vulnerable people in the County and others that are also facing hardships.

We encourage participation from all sections of our diverse community, irrespective of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, gender identity and expression, pregnancy, maternity, race, sexual orientation, religion or belief, or because someone is married or in a civil partnership. We believe our district will be a better, more creative and innovative place to work, visit and live in if we can harness the benefit of lots of different perspectives.

We welcome and celebrate diversity and the strengths this brings to our communities and workforce. We have detailed our vision and ambitions for the county and all our communities in our [Council's Business Plan](#).

As one of the largest employers in the district and one of the main providers of local services, we are committed to providing equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination, harassment, intimidation and disadvantage. We are also committed to achieving the highest standards in service delivery, decision-making and employment practice.

This policy statement is intended to be a short, overarching document which sets the principles and vision for the Council. Our vision and principles inform all relevant policies, procedures and standards which provide more detail on specific areas.

Definitions

Equality

Equality is about ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents. It is also the belief that no one should have poorer life chances because of the way they were born, where they came from, what they believe, or whether they have a disability. (Equality and Human Rights Commission)

Diversity

Diversity means recognising, valuing and encouraging the different perspectives and life experiences which individuals bring to a community or organisation.

Inclusion

Inclusion means that everyone feels part of a community or organisation and that they are all respected for what they bring to that community or organisation.

Our aims

We aim to:

- create an inclusive culture with a sense of belonging for everyone
- support the development of places and situations where everyone is treated fairly no matter what their background, where people are empowered and have the confidence to play active roles in their communities.
- work with partners and local businesses to improve opportunities for the people of Fenland, especially those who feel excluded, experience disadvantage and/ or discrimination
- be an access friendly organisation for communities and our workforce
- ensure that our recruitment is fair, open and inclusive
- have a workforce that reflects the diversity of Fenland
- ensure that diversity and inclusion is a natural and organic part of what we do, making it something that everyone at the Council understands and embraces.
- increase representation of under-represented groups at all levels across the council
- build our reputation as an inclusive employer that attracts, develops, supports, retains and fully engages all of our workforce

Treating everyone the same does not necessarily give people equality of opportunity. Sometimes we need to treat different people in a different way to give them equal access to a service or job. For example, we may need to provide information in a different format or make reasonable adjustments to a physical workplace.

Our responsibilities

The Equality Act 2010 says that we must not treat people unfairly because of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, race, religion or belief, pregnancy or maternity, marriage or civil partnership. These are called “protected characteristics”.

As a local authority we must:

- stop unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- make sure that people have equality of opportunity whether or not they have a particular protected characteristic
- build good relations in and between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't

Fenland is a very rural county and people living outside the market towns can find it difficult to access services. We will treat people fairly wherever they live and make sure they get the district council services they need.

There are other factors which affect people's lives. Examples of these are income, education, unpaid care responsibilities and occupation. We will work to deliver the best possible outcomes for all our communities and citizens.

We will not just focus solely on protected characteristics but promote inclusion and diversity more generally deprivation and those who those who are socio- economically challenged.

We also act in accordance with the Human Rights Act 1998 to support a culture of respect for everyone's human rights.

Meeting our responsibilities

Everyone, including the Council, has a part to play to realise our vision for Fenland. We will work with our communities and partners to achieve our vision.

As part of meeting our responsibilities, we make the following commitments.

- We will treat staff and customers with dignity and respect and embrace and celebrate diversity.
- We will train and develop our councillors and staff to help us meet our equality duties and show leadership by being active and visible in delivery of our responsibilities.
- We will use information and talk to people to identify where inequality exists so that we can plan to tackle it.
- When it will help us to improve our services and to understand how we are meeting our equality duties, we will ask questions about people's protected characteristics, including age, race, sex and disability. We will always make it clear that people do not have to answer these questions and that they will still receive the services they need. We will keep personal data confidential.
- We will consider equality issues when we deliver our services. Our service plans will include any major equality actions that we plan to undertake.
- We will set equality objectives to help us focus on some of the areas which we want to improve.
- When we think about changing our services, we will make sure that those making the decision know how the change could affect people with any of the protected characteristics. We will collect information about how people might be affected before making a decision. If the change might cause difficulties for people with a protected characteristic, we will do our best to find ways to reduce this impact. If we can't, then we should think carefully about whether we need to make the change to achieve a legitimate aim.
- We have a duty to make reasonable changes to the way we do things so that disabled people can use our services and work for us. We recognise that everyone is different and we will treat people as individuals.
- We will make sure that anyone who provides a service for us treats people fairly. We will do this through our procurement process and by monitoring their work.
- We will consider the needs of all communities in the methods we use for communicating with customers, colleagues and residents.
- We will recruit, select, train and promote staff fairly. We will aim to get the make-up of our staff to match our communities. We will have clear systems for staff to complain if they are treated unfairly.
- We will challenge discriminatory behaviour towards our staff.

- We will make it easy for customers to complain if something goes wrong and we will respond quickly and efficiently. If legal action is intended or underway; complaints will be suspended until the legal process is resolved.
- If we find that anyone has broken our equality policy we will investigate and take disciplinary action if appropriate.
- We will monitor our equality actions through our usual reporting systems.
- We will publish information each year to show how we are meeting our equality duties.