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| Policy number | SPM-POL-002 | | Saddington Parish Meeting Saddington Neighbourhood Forum |
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Saddington Parish Meeting Saddington Neighbourhood Forum

Equality and Diversity Policy

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| Policy number | SPM-POL-002 |
| Policy title | Equality and Diversity Policy |
| Revision | Draft A |
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| DOCUMENT HISTORY | |
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| First draft document issued for review and comment by the Parish Meeting and the Neighbourhood Forum. | 13 th August 2024 |
| Draft A of this policy was adopted for use by the Neighbourhood Forum at the AGM dated 25 th September 2024, and the Neighbourhood Forum will accept any future updates to the document that might be made by the Parish Meeting. | |
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| Table of Contents | Page |
|--|-------------|
| DOCUMENT HISTORY | 2 |
| 1. INTRODUCTION | 3 |
| 1.1 Equality Duty | 3 |
| 1.2 Who is this policy for? | 3 |
| 2. THE POLICY | 3 |
| 3. GROUPS THAT ARE PROTECTED UNDER THE EQUALITY ACT | 4 |
| 3.1 Age | 4 |
| 3.2 Disability | 4 |
| 3.3 Gender reassignment | 4 |
| 3.4 Marriage and Civil Partnership | 4 |
| 3.5 Pregnancy and Maternity | 5 |
| 3.6 Race | 5 |
| 3.7 Religion or Belief | 5 |
| 3.8 Sexual Orientation | 5 |
| 3.9 Other | 5 |
| 4. RESPONSIBILITY AND LIABILITY | 6 |
| 5. RECRUITMENT | 6 |
| 6. EMPLOYMENT AND RETIREMENT | 6 |
| 7. REFERENCES | 6 |

| | | | |
|---------------|-------------|--|---|
| Policy number | SPM-POL-002 | | Saddington Parish Meeting Saddington Neighbourhood Forum |
|---------------|-------------|--|---|

1. INTRODUCTION

The Equality Act 2010 came into force in October 2010 and replaces and brings together the previous legislation such as the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, Race Relations Act 1976, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Equal Pay Act 1970.

The legislation covers a prescribed set of protected characteristics including age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. It also covers prohibited conduct including discrimination, adjustments for disabled persons, victimisation and harassment; services and public functions; premises; employment; contracts; and advancement of equality. The latter provision specifies a public sector equality duty, which applies to town and parish councils.

1.1 Equality Duty

When going about their activities, Saddington Parish Meeting, Saddington Neighbourhood Forum and their members (the **Village Organisations**) recognise their responsibility to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity between different groups (refer to section **Error! Reference source not found.**); and
- foster good relations between the Village Organisations and different groups.

1.2 Who is this policy for?

This policy applies to all members of the Village Organisations when engaged in any activities that are associated with the Village Organisations as well as any volunteers or anyone working on behalf of, delivering a service for, or representing the Village Organisations.

2. THE POLICY

When going about their activities, the Village Organisations will commit to achieving equality of opportunity, valuing diversity in all aspects of its activities, providing an inclusive and supportive environment for all by:

- ensuring that people are treated solely based on their abilities and potential, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, sex, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, or any other inappropriate distinction,
- promoting diversity and equality and value the contributions made by individuals and groups of people from diverse cultural, ethnic, socio-economic and distinctive backgrounds,
- challenging inequality and less favourable treatment wherever practicable; and
- promoting greater participation of under-represented groups by encouraging positive action to address inequality, promote an environment free of harassment and bullying on any grounds in relation to all members of the Village Organisations', 'staff', and 'volunteers' when they engage in activities associated with the Village Organisations,
- the terms 'members of the Village Organisations', 'staff', and 'volunteers' are used to refer to:
 - the elected chairperson and members of Saddington Parish Meeting (ie all registered local electors in Saddington parish) when engaged in activities associated with the Parish Meeting,

| | | | |
|---------------|--------------------|--|---|
| Policy number | SPM-POL-002 | | Saddington Parish Meeting Saddington Neighbourhood Forum |
|---------------|--------------------|--|---|

- the elected chairperson, committee members and members of Saddington Neighbourhood Forum when engaged in activities associated with the Neighbourhood Forum,
 - volunteers engaged in activities associated with the Parish Meeting or Neighbourhood Forum,
 - contractors and anyone working on behalf of, or delivering a service for, or representing the Parish Meeting or Neighbourhood Forum,
 - employees of the Parish Meeting or Neighbourhood Forum.
- The Village Organisations will ensure all members of the Village Organisations are informed about this Equality and Diversity Policy.

3. GROUPS THAT ARE PROTECTED UNDER THE EQUALITY ACT

The Equality Act 2010 s.4 introduced the term 'protected characteristics' to refer to groups that are protected under the Act, these are:

3.1 Age

Individuals of any age or apparent age are protected from discrimination.

When going about their activities, the Village Organisations will ensure that people of all ages are treated with respect and dignity; ensure that people of working age are given equal access to our employment, training, development and promotion opportunities; and challenge discriminatory assumptions about younger and older people.

3.2 Disability

This is a physical or mental impairment which has (or is likely to have) a substantial effect on a person's ability to carry out day-to-day activities for a period of a year or more. Certain medical conditions, such as cancer, Multiple Sclerosis and HIV are a disability from the outset, whatever their impact on day-to-day activities. Protection from discrimination covers a person who has had a disability in the past.

There is no unfavourable treatment if the 'discriminator' did not know or could not reasonably have known the person had a disability. More favourable treatment of disabled persons is not unlawful discrimination against non-disabled people.

When going about their activities, the Village Organisations will challenge discriminatory assumptions about disabled people.

3.3 Gender reassignment

Gender reassignment is a protected characteristic that applies to a transsexual person who is proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) to change their sex.

When going about their activities, the Village Organisations will challenge discriminatory assumptions about women and men; take positive action to redress the negative effects of discrimination against women and men; offer equal access for women and men to representation, services, employment, training and pay and encourage other organisations to do the same; and provide support to prevent discrimination against transsexual people who have or who are about to undergo gender reassignment.

3.4 Marriage and Civil Partnership

Protection is given to people who have or share the characteristics of being married or being a civil partner.

| | | | |
|---------------|--------------------|--|---|
| Policy number | SPM-POL-002 | | Saddington Parish Meeting Saddington Neighbourhood Forum |
|---------------|--------------------|--|---|

When going about their activities, the Village Organisations will ensure that people are treated with respect and dignity and that a positive image is promoted regardless of marriage or civil partnership; challenge discriminatory assumptions about the marriage or civil partnership of our employees; and ensure that no individual is disadvantaged and that we take account of the needs of our employees' marriage or civil partnership.

3.5 Pregnancy and Maternity

This protected characteristic covers the course of a pregnancy and any illness suffered as a result of the pregnancy or because a woman is exercising or is seeking to exercise the right to compulsory, ordinary or additional maternity leave.

When going about their activities, the Village Organisations will ensure that people are treated with respect and dignity and that a positive image is promoted regardless of pregnancy or maternity; challenge discriminatory assumptions about the pregnancy or maternity of our employees; and ensure that no individual is disadvantaged and that we take account of the needs of our employees' pregnancy or maternity.

3.6 Race

Race includes colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins.

When going about their activities, the Village Organisations will challenge racism wherever it occurs; respond swiftly and sensitively to racist incidents.

3.7 Religion or Belief

Religion means any religion including lack of religion.

Belief is defined as any religious or philosophical belief including a lack of belief.

When going about their activities, the Village Organisations will ensure that religion or beliefs and related observances of members of the Village Organisations are respected and accommodated wherever possible; and respect people's beliefs where the expression of those beliefs does not impinge on the legitimate rights of others.

3.8 Sexual Orientation

The Act protects a person's sexual orientation towards:

- people of the same gender as him or her (i.e. a gay man or a lesbian); people of the opposite gender from him or her,
- people of both genders.

When going about their activities, the Village Organisations will ensure to consider the needs of all sexual orientations.

3.9 Other

In addition, the Village Organisations recognise that there is a range of other groups/people that may face additional disadvantage and discrimination, and these will be considered when going about their activities. These are:

- people who are rurally isolated
- people on low incomes/in poverty
- single parents
- people with a military background and their families
- ex-offenders (except where there is a known risk to children or vulnerable adults)

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|---------------|-------------|--|---|
| Policy number | SPM-POL-002 | | Saddington Parish Meeting Saddington Neighbourhood Forum |
|---------------|-------------|--|---|

- gender identity
- gender expression

4. RESPONSIBILITY AND LIABILITY

All members of the Village Organisations remain personally responsible for ensuring that they act within the law and any member of the Village Organisations may be personally liable if they behave illegally in respect of the Equality Act 2010.

5. RECRUITMENT

Note – as at August 2024 the Village Organisations do not currently employ any staff and so this section of the policy is not applicable, but it is left in the document for possible future reference.

The Village Organisations will ensure that within the framework of the law that their recruitment process for staff and the co-option of volunteers is free from unlawful or unfair discrimination.

Any recruitment advertisement will be non-discriminatory and will avoid any gender or culturally specific language and include a statement of commitment to equal opportunities, welcoming applications from all sections of the community.

Application forms should ask whether the applicant has been convicted of a criminal offence and if so, to give details. Under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 a conviction can become spent. If so, the applicant is not obliged to disclose it. Job applications should not ask for the applicant's age.

During the interview process, personal questions relating to the candidate's age, sex, sexual orientation, race, marital status, nationality, religion or belief, disability, membership or non-membership of a trade union will not be asked.

6. EMPLOYMENT AND RETIREMENT

Note – as at August 2024 the Village Organisations do not currently employ any staff and so this section of the policy is not applicable, but it is left in the document for possible future reference.

All employees whether full-time, part-time, fixed contract, agency workers or temporary staff, will be treated fairly and equally. Selection for employment, promotion, training, remuneration or any other benefit will be based on aptitude and ability.

It is unlawful to terminate employment by retirement unless the employer can justify it, or the employee agrees to it.

7. REFERENCES

- Equality Act 2010. Further information available: [here](#)
- National Association of Local Councils (NALC). Web site: [here](#)
Legal Topic Note no.79 Equality Act
Being a Good Employer