



## **South Witham Parish Council's Equal Opportunities Policy**

### **South Witham Parish Council's Statement on Equal Opportunities**

South Witham Parish Council is committed to implementing and promoting equal opportunities in its activities, services and practice. It realises that discrimination exists in society (whether protected by law or not), and believes that this prevents potential and ability from being realised in young people and others.

South Witham Parish Council will not tolerate discrimination on the basis of:

- Race
- Colour
- Gender
- Sexual orientation or identity
- Ethnic or national origin
- Disability
- Partnership status or home responsibility
- HIV or AIDS status
- Age
- Political or religious belief
- Trade union activity
- Socio-economic background
- Refugee or asylum seeker status

As a provider of a service to the community, South Witham Parish Council accepts the responsibility to promote equal opportunities and challenge discrimination wherever it occurs. This document sets out the main consequences of this commitment and the action to be taken in order to achieve equal opportunities.

South Witham Parish Council recognises that some users of its services may, because of their past or present distress or illness, say or do things which would otherwise be unacceptable and incompatible with South Witham Parish Council Equal Opportunities Policy. South Witham Parish Council will do all it can to challenge such behaviour. In cases where intervention is possible a gentle approach will be adopted which aims to alter attitudes and behaviour while maintaining support for the distressed client.

South Witham Parish Council reserves the right to open its membership to any organisation who supports our aims and objectives. However, it will exclude from membership those organisations that actively work against the development of an equal opportunities policy over time, despite encouragement from South Witham Parish Council.

South Witham Parish Council realises that a genuine commitment to equal opportunities must operate on all levels:

- South Witham Parish Council will prevent unfavourable treatment, directly or indirectly, upon individuals from any group facing discrimination in its recruitment and deployment of human resources. Where discrimination does occur, it will be dealt with through the agreed procedures. This will be achieved by following the South Witham Parish Council Equal Opportunities Policy.
- South Witham Parish Council will seek to prevent discrimination and ensure equal representation in the services it provides, the structures that it facilitates and the practice through which it carries out its work. This involves the development of greater diversity in the management committee, networks and membership, to ensure a genuinely wide representation.

### **Responsibility**

- 1.1. The committee of South Witham Parish Council has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy. However, all volunteers and service users have a duty as part of their involvement with South Witham Parish Council to do everything they can to ensure that the policy works in practice. Those responsible for recruiting volunteers to work in South Witham Parish Council projects are responsible for ensuring that they are aware of South Witham Parish Council Opportunities Policy and adhere to it while working as South Witham Parish Council volunteers.
- 1.2. South Witham Parish Council will bring to the attention of all volunteers and service users the existence of this policy, and will provide such training as is necessary to ensure that the policy is effective and that everyone is aware of it.
- 1.3. If any service user or volunteer feels that they have been, or are being discriminated against, in any way, they are entitled to pursue the matter with the committee.
- 1.4. All instances or complaints of discriminatory behaviour will be treated seriously.
- 1.5. Complaints or allegations of an unfounded or malicious nature will also be treated as serious.

### **Disabled Access**

- 1.6. South Witham Parish Council will endeavour to ensure, as far as is practicable, that all the premises it uses have disabled access. When considering new premises, every effort will be made to ensure such premises are fully accessible.

## **Use of Language**

- 1.7. Volunteers and service users should avoid and challenge the use of language which, in any way, belittles anyone
- 1.8. Where the language used has a personal impact on others, and it has been made clear to the person concerned that their use of such language is unwelcome and/or offensive, disciplinary action may be taken if they persist with it.
- 1.9. All materials used or developed by South Witham Parish Council will be judged in the light of the promotion of equal opportunities, and those considered to be discriminatory will not be used.

## **Sexual Harassment**

- 1.10. No volunteer or service user should be subject to sexual harassment.
- 1.11. This is interpreted as unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature including:
  - verbal sexual abuse
  - physical contact
  - repeated remarks which an individual finds offensive
- 1.12. If it has been made clear to the person concerned that their behaviour is unwelcome and they persist with it, then the service user or volunteer who is the recipient of the behaviour will be entitled to make a formal complaint.

## **Monitoring and Review**

The Policy will be constantly reviewed by the management committee to ensure that no Member of the group is put to a disadvantage either, directly or indirectly. This monitoring will apply to the practices of staff and volunteers, the member organisation, the composition of the Committees and the provision of services.

It is the responsibility of every individual to eliminate discrimination and to ensure the practical application of this Policy.

The committee of South Witham Parish Council will review this policy every year.

Adopted on : 7<sup>th</sup> June 2016

Reviewed : 6<sup>th</sup> June 2017