

SEVERN STOKE AND CROOME D'ABITOT PARISH COUNCIL - WORCESTERSHIRE

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

Published by WCALC: N/A.

Adopted by Severn Stoke and Croome d'Abitot Parish Council October 2023. Updated May 2024..

1. The Policy Aims

1.1 Severn Stoke and Croome d'Abitot Parish Council's intention is to be an effective Equal Opportunities organisation. This means it will do everything in its power to ensure that everyone has equal access, and is treated with respect, in relation to employment opportunities, to its services and to all its activities.

2. As an Employer

2.1 All employees are required to treat one another with mutual respect. Actions, behaviour and attitudes should consistently demonstrate respect for the dignity and worth of an individual, irrespective of the position they have within the organisation.

2.2 Severn Stoke and Croome d'Abitot Parish Council is making every effort to create a workplace where individuals are valued, listened to and treated with respect.

2.3 Severn Stoke and Croome d'Abitot Parish Council maintains a work environment that seeks out and values the insight, experience, contribution and full participation of all staff.

2.4 Harassment and discrimination in any form is unacceptable behaviour and offenders will be subject to disciplinary action.

3. As a Service Provider

3.1 Severn Stoke and Croome d'Abitot Parish Council will strive to ensure that all services provided by, or on behalf of, the Council are made accessible to all individuals and groups equally and without discrimination.

3.2 All service users will be treated with respect. Actions, behaviour and attitudes should consistently demonstrate respect for the dignity and worth of an individual.

3.3 Severn Stoke and Croome d'Abitot Parish Council will, wherever appropriate, work in partnership with other agencies in the area, including the county and district councils, voluntary groups and community organisations to promote equal opportunities.

3.4 Severn Stoke and Croome d’Abitot Parish Council will ensure that all contractors directly supplying goods and services or executing works for, or on behalf of the Council, comply with this Council’s stated policy on equal opportunities.

3.5 **Note Update. October 26, 2023. Virtual Meetings:** The post Covid prospect of councils being able to hold virtual meetings has receded after amendments that would have enabled this were removed from the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill (LURB). The final decision is as follows: *“Local authorities need councillors to be physically present, to actively take part in democratic decision-making affecting the citizens they represent, and to interact with their fellow councillors at every opportunity to develop a sound understanding of local needs and priorities. That understanding is clearly vital for ensuring the strong local leadership that councils depend on to deliver for the electorate.”*

3.6 **Public Observation Online:** Whilst there is no legal barrier to stop members of the public observing a meeting online if that facility is provided, there is also no legal requirement for Parish Councils to webcast their meetings. Where Councils webcast any of their public meetings, they should, as a matter of good practice, notify the public. At this time, due to the demolition of the parish hall in October 2023 (after flood damage) and as the parish council has no formal, permanent meeting place and no suitable, reliable, confirmed access to broadband, this parish council considers that it has not the resources or the ability to live stream meetings to members of the public. This will be reviewed annually.

3.7 **Councillor Observation Online:** There is no legal barrier to prevent parish council meetings being observed by parish councillors online too, if they can't attend a meeting and, in these cases such Councillors are not recorded as being in attendance and can't vote or speak as a councillor. However, for the reasons described in 3.6 above, virtual attendance is not currently possible and will be reviewed annually. *Update: Advice received from WCALC in mid 2022 indicated that attendance remotely could be possible if the council facilitate, but voting would not be counted. At this time, this parish council does not have the premises and internet connection to so facilitate.*

4. The Policy in Action

4.1 As an Employer

Severn Stoke and Croome d’Abitot Parish Council aims to achieve the policy by:

- ensuring its employees are made aware of their rights and responsibilities to each other, the customer and the organisation regarding equal opportunities issues;
- providing a way in which individuals can communicate any concerns via competent named personnel;
- treating any unacceptable behaviour seriously;
- ensuring all Managers/Members realise they have a key role in implementing this policy and are expected to take personal responsibility in ensuring its success;
- providing awareness training for all employees and Councillors, ensuring opportunities to develop relevant competencies are available to implement the

policy; Training is available via Worcestershire CALC and Members do not have to wait to be invited by other members of the council or by the Clerk. Members may approach WCALC to ascertain training available and then upon notice to the Parish Clerk may book attendance at that training. A budget is set aside by the Parish Council for Members to attend training. The Clerk can assist Members with accessing the WCALC website training lists if any Member is unsure.

- meeting the commitments and living the aims of being a “Positive about Discrimination” employer.

4.2 As a Service Provider

Severn Stoke and Croome d’Abitot Parish Council aims to achieve its policy by:

- providing training for all staff in equal opportunities awareness and customer care, emphasising equality of treatment in service delivery;
- ensuring that no member of the public is disadvantaged, or treated less favourably than others, in terms of access to Council services. Where the Council’s practice, policy or procedures are found to make access impossible or unreasonably difficult, we will take such steps as are reasonable in the circumstances to change these practices, policies or procedures;
- ensuring that, wherever practical, all public buildings and premises owned or managed by the Council are accessible to all.
- recognising the importance of communication in attaining equity and quality services, which are responsive to the needs of all local people, for example through the provision of information in large print or audio on request;
- complying with all relevant legislation relating to discrimination and equity.

5. Role of Councillors and Employees

5.1 All Councillors and employees are responsible for implementing the Council’s Equal Opportunities Policy. It is important that all individuals who are employed by the Council appreciate that they have a responsibility and a role to play in the provision of equal opportunities.

6. Monitoring of Equal Opportunities

6.1 The Council’s Finance & General Purposes Committee will have responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of the policy as it applies to Severn Stoke and Croome d’Abitot Parish Council as an employer, involving staff as appropriate in the monitoring process.

6.2 Complaints from staff about discrimination or unfair treatment will be dealt with as laid down in the Council’s Grievance Procedures.

6.3 Complaints from members of the public about discrimination or unfair treatment will be dealt with through the Council’s Complaints Procedure. In the event where it is not possible to allocate sufficient unconnected (in that the complaint is not about them) Members of the Parish Council, as per the Complaints Procedure, then the matter can be referred to the District Council Monitoring Officer.

End.