

Equal Opportunities & Diversity Policy

CHAPTER 1

Schedule 2

Bushbury Hill Estate Management Board

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY & PROCEDURES

Bushbury Hill is an Estate Management Board (EMB) committed to Equality and diversity.

STATEMENT OF AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The EMB recognises that discrimination exists against certain groups in society and also recognises that the elimination of discrimination will not be overcome by goodwill alone.

The EMB will not tolerate any form of racial discrimination on, racial inequality or discrimination towards any other disadvantaged group or individual, be it direct or indirect, intentional or unintentional.

The EMB is aware of legislation concerning the rights of those groups in society who may suffer discrimination because of age, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, religion and belief, race, sex, disability or employment situation, and we accept and endorse our legal responsibilities as laid out in a variety of legislation which includes, amongst others:

Equalities Act 2010

The Human Rights Act 1998,

Protection from Harassment Act 1997,

It will be considered a disciplinary offence for staff and a breach of the code of conduct for Executive Board members, who do not comply with the requirements of these acts, or with the EMB's current equality and diversity policy and procedures.

Our policy, however, goes further than the law. It accepts our moral responsibility for promoting and working towards ensuring equality of opportunity and equity for all. It accepts our social responsibility to be an organisation that values and respects differences in our members and colleagues. It accepts our business responsibility to work towards meeting the overall objectives and goals of the organisation in a holistic way.

The EMB will:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.

- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

OPEN AND EQUAL ACCESS TO MEMBERSHIP

No person or group of persons applying for membership of the EMB, who meet the EMB conditions of membership, or for housing in the EMB area will be treated less favourably than any other person or group of persons because of their racial origin, nationality, sexuality, sex, age, class, marital status, disability, religion, gender reassignment, responsibility of dependents or people living with H.I.V. infection and those people affected by H.I.V. infection or A.I.D.S.

PARTICIPATION AND CONSULTATION

The EMB will try to ensure that in its democratic procedures and in the election of its Officers, Committee and sub-Committees members and any other representatives there is full equality of opportunity for all persons, e.g. in attending General Meetings, to participate in the business of the EMB.

Prospective members of the EMB will be supplied with an information pack offering information about the EMB and its key policies and procedures.

As a requirement of membership, anyone wishing to join the EMB will be asked to sign a copy of the Equal Opportunities Policy, stating that they understand it and are committed to its aims

The EMB will endeavour to consult with and inform its members on a regular basis, by meetings, surveys, newsletters and individual contact, in order that every member may play a part in the EMB if he/she so wishes. The EMB will make sure that opportunities for training exist as its resources permit.

SERVICES TO MEMBERS

In the provision of services to its members, including repair and maintenance services to tenants and all the work carried out by the EMB's office on behalf of its members, the EMB will ensure equality of treatment to all members.

In hiring contractors and sub-contractors, selecting suppliers of goods and services and the use of other outside agencies for any purpose, the EMB will take full account of its Equal Opportunities policy. Where it is brought to the attention of the EMB that a contractor, supplier or other agency is acting in a way which is contrary to the spirit of this Equal Opportunities statement the EMB will have no further dealings with that organisation.

EMPLOYMENT OF STAFF

In the recruitment, selection and employment of workers, the EMB will ensure that no person applying for employment to or employed by, the EMB is subject to discrimination on the grounds previously specified.

The EMB will endeavour to be a good employer, concerned for the welfare of its staff. Employees will be provided with a document outlining their Conditions of Service. The EMB will make available reasonable time and resources in order that staff may undergo relevant training and provide reasonable adjustment to allow employees with disabilities to carry out their work..

PROTECTION OF DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

All members of the EMB are equal and enjoy equal rights within the EMB's rules. For this reason, the EMB aims to ensure that all are able to peacefully enjoy their homes, and will act promptly and firmly to protect its tenants from any form of harassment, e.g. in proven cases of harassment, the EMB will request the Council to take action against the perpetrators.

In its meetings, publications and the conduct of its business generally the EMB will not tolerate any racist, sexist or other discriminatory remarks and will suffer no platform of any kind for statements which undermine the spirit of this equal opportunities policy.

BREACHES OF POLICY AND PROCEDURES

The EMB is aware that equality of opportunity is not confined to this one Appendix but runs through all its activities. In particular, this policy needs to sit within:

- a. The EMB's Rules of Registration - e.g. regarding notification and procedures at General Meetings.
- b. The Management Agreement with the Council - e.g. regarding arrangements for staffing repairs, etc.
- c. Policies in the Management Agreement in key areas - e.g. nominations for rehousing, harassment, use of contractors, etc.

All of the above contain procedures on how complainants may seek to redress their grievances. The EMB will monitor the effectiveness of all its policies and procedures in the spirit of equality opportunity.

In general terms, the EMB wishes to emphasise that it places the utmost importance on equal opportunities and alleged breaches of its policies will be investigated rigorously. In the first instance, the EMB's Senior Officer will investigate all alleged breaches, unless he/she is the subject of the allegation, in which case the Chair or Vice-Chair of the EMB will receive the complaint. All breaches of policies, whether proven or not, must be reported to the next full Management Committee in writing by the Senior Officer (or Chair or vice-Chair), outlining what was alleged, how it was investigated and what action, if any, was taken.

The EMB will attempt to resolve difficulties by conciliation and negotiation, or by reviewing its policies and procedures. Complaints will be dealt with using the complaints and compliments procedure. However, it needs to be made clear that serious breaches of its Equal Opportunities Policy may result in, for example:-

- Withdrawal of membership
- Request to the Council to serve Notice Seeking Possession
- Dismissal of staff member
- Removal from office of a Committee member

MONITORING

The EMB recognises that responding to complaints is an insufficient method of checking its policies on its own. Poor working practices can develop through custom and habit. It will therefore monitor the effects of its policies, particularly in the following areas:

- Membership and recruitment
- Allocation of properties
- Communication with, and participation of, the tenants and membership
- Composition of Committees
- Attitude of contractors to tenants
- Scale and nature of complaints

The effectiveness of this Equality and Diversity Policy will be checked quarterly by the EMB's Senior Officer and any urgent matters arising from such checks will be raised by him/her at the next full Management Committee.

A full report of the effectiveness of the Equality and Diversity Policy will be included in the EMB's Annual report, together with any targets for the coming year.

The EMB operates a computerised system for storing its tenancy and other records e.g. details of tenancies, occupants of dwellings, vulnerable tenants, special needs of tenants, contractors, etc. the EMB is registered under the Data Protection Act. Access to such information will be restricted by password to designated officers and EMB members.

In the light of its effectiveness, this policy may be amended at a Special General Meeting of the EMB members, subject to the terms and conditions of amending its Management Agreement generally.

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