

Equalities and Diversity Policy

1. Purpose

1.1 The Parish Council is committed to providing **equal opportunities** and promoting **diversity** in all aspects of employment, community support, and the delivery of services to the public. The Parish Council welcomes and values the diversity of its employees, Councillors, volunteers, and the communities it serves.

1.2 This policy is designed to help the Parish Council implement this commitment in practice. Compliance with this policy will ensure that no unlawful acts of discrimination take place within the Parish Council, whether in the workplace or in the provision of services.

1.3 A critical aspect of ensuring equal opportunities is maintaining a work environment free from harassment, bullying, and discrimination. All employees, Councillors, and members of the public are entitled to be treated with dignity and respect.

2. Policy Principles

2.1 Protected Characteristics

It is unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly on the grounds of the following **protected characteristics**, as defined in the **Equality Act 2010**:

- Age
- Disability
- Sex
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race (including colour, nationality, caste, and ethnic or national origins)
- Sexual orientation
- Religion or belief
- Marriage or civil partnership

2.2 The Parish Council will ensure that it does not discriminate against or harass employees, Councillors, or any member of the public in relation to these protected characteristics.

2.3 Reasonable Adjustments

It is unlawful not to make reasonable adjustments to overcome barriers caused by disability. This includes removing, adapting, or altering physical features of premises that make it difficult or impossible for disabled people to access services. The Parish Council will take steps to anticipate and address potential barriers to disabled people accessing its services.

2.4 Harassment and Bullying

Harassment or bullying on the grounds of any protected characteristic will not be tolerated. Employees, suppliers, visitors, and other third parties are required to adhere to this policy. Any instances of bullying or harassment should be reported to the Parish Council, which will take appropriate action to address the issue.

2.5 Employee Responsibilities

Every employee is required to contribute to the Parish Council's commitment to equal opportunities and avoid any form of unlawful discrimination. Employees may be held personally liable for any act of discrimination or harassment, in addition to, or instead of, the Parish Council. Serious acts of harassment or discrimination may be considered criminal offences.

2.6 Disciplinary Action

Acts of discrimination, harassment, bullying, or victimisation against employees or members of the community are **disciplinary offences**. These will be addressed through the Parish Council's **Disciplinary Procedure**. In serious cases, such behaviour may be deemed gross misconduct and could result in dismissal without notice.

2.7 Grievance Procedure

If an employee believes they have been subjected to unlawful discrimination, they should follow the Parish Council's **Grievance Procedure**. In cases involving harassment or bullying, the grievance process will be modified as per the procedures set out in the **Dignity at Work Policy**.

3. Implementation and Monitoring

3.1 The Parish Council will take all reasonable steps to ensure that this policy is implemented effectively. This includes providing regular training on equality and diversity issues to all staff, Councillors, and volunteers. Training will be held **annually** to ensure that everyone understands their rights and responsibilities under this policy.

3.2 Monitoring and Reporting

The Parish Council will monitor and review its practices to ensure that this policy is being applied fairly and effectively. It will regularly collect feedback from employees and service users to assess how well equality and diversity objectives are being met. The findings of these reviews will be shared with the Council and used to inform future actions.

3.3 Support for Employees

Employees who require assistance to understand or navigate this policy will be provided with appropriate support. This may include access to advice from external experts on equality issues or legal matters, particularly in complex cases.

Review History

- Adopted by Parish Council: 20/3/2025
- Latest review: 20/3/2025
- Date of next review: 20/3/2027