ASHLEY PARISH COUNCIL

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY 2025

INTRODUCTION

Ashley Parish Council is committed to creating an inclusive environment where residents, Councillors, employees, and volunteers are treated with dignity and respect, and are enabled to fulfil their full potential. This policy outlines our commitment to promoting equality, valuing diversity, and eliminating discrimination in line with UK legislation and best practices.

LEGAL POSITION

It is unlawful to discriminate against an individual on the basis of the following protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

In addition, as a public authority, Ashley Parish Council recognises its responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation;
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
- foster good relations between people of different backgrounds.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all employees, Councillors, volunteers, and service users have equal opportunities and are treated fairly, regardless of their protected characteristics. We oppose all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination, whether direct or indirect, as well as harassment and victimisation.

In rare cases, different treatment may be necessary for practical or legal reasons (for example, where a role has specific requirements). In such cases, the Council will ensure any decision is fair and lawful.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all aspects of employment, volunteering, Council business, and service delivery. All employment-related decisions (including recruitment, promotion, training, and remuneration) will be based on individual merit, skills, and aptitude.

As a small council with limited staff and resources, the Parish Council will apply the principles of this policy proportionately, ensuring fairness and dignity in line with our scale of operations.

The Council will ensure that everyone involved in its work is supported and encouraged to reach their full potential, helping to make full use of local talent and improve public service. The Council also recognises its role in ensuring that residents and service users are treated fairly and with respect when interacting with the Council and its representatives.

OUR COMMITMENT

- Promoting a culture of dignity, respect, and inclusion in all its activities.
- Providing a safe and welcoming environment for employees, volunteers, Councillors, and residents.
- Preventing and addressing all forms of bullying, harassment, victimisation, or discrimination. This is further outlined in the Council's Dignity at Work/Bullying and Harassment Policy.
- Ensuring that all relevant policies and procedures are aligned with the values set out in this Equality & Diversity Policy.
- Providing training or awareness sessions as needed to support understanding of equality responsibilities.
- Where internal resources are limited, the Council may seek support from the relevant District Council's Monitoring Officer or external advisors to investigate complaints or provide appropriate HR guidance.

Breaches of this policy will be treated seriously and may lead to disciplinary action. Any employee who believes they have been subjected to discrimination or harassment may raise the issue through the Council's Complaints Procedure.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Clerk is responsible for ensuring day-to-day compliance with this policy. Councillors are expected to uphold the principles of equality and respect in all their dealings on behalf of the Council.

ACCESSIBILITY AND REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Parish Council, or more frequently if required by changes in legislation or best practice. The Council will consider relevant equality data and feedback where appropriate and ensure that its policies and procedures remain fit for purpose. This policy is available in alternative formats or languages upon request, to ensure accessibility for all.