

Downswood Parish Council

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

1. Purpose of the Policy

Downwood Parish Council is committed to promoting equality, valuing diversity, and fostering an inclusive environment for all members of the community. This policy sets out our commitment to ensuring that no councillor, employee, volunteer, contractor, or member of the public is unlawfully discriminated against or treated unfairly.

2. Policy Statement

The Council recognises its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and will:

- Treat all individuals with dignity, fairness, and respect.
- Actively prevent discrimination, harassment, and victimisation.
- Promote equal opportunity in all Council functions, services, and decisions.
- Ensure that diversity and inclusion are integrated into Council governance and community engagement.

3. Who the Policy Applies To

This policy applies to:

- Councillors
- Council employees
- Volunteers and contractors
- Members of the public interacting with the Council
- Any individual using Council services or facilities

4. Protected Characteristics

The Council will not tolerate discrimination based on any of the following protected characteristics:

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

5. Our Commitments

5.1 Service Delivery

The Council will:

- Ensure services are accessible and responsive to the needs of a diverse community.
- Provide information in formats accessible to people with disabilities or language needs, where reasonably practicable.
- Engage with local groups to identify barriers and improve inclusion.

5.2 Employment & Recruitment

The Council will:

- Promote a workplace culture that values diversity.
- Recruit and appoint fairly, based on merit.
- Make reasonable adjustments for employees or applicants with disabilities.
- Provide equal opportunities for training, development, and progression.

5.3 Council Meetings & Governance

The Council will:

- Encourage inclusive participation from councillors and the public.
- Provide accessible meeting venues wherever possible (including developing an online recording system).
- Consider equality impacts when making decisions, allocating funding, or planning projects.

5.4 Contractors & Partners

The Council expects contractors, suppliers, and partner organisations to follow equality and inclusion principles in their work with the Council.

6. Responsibilities

6.1 Councillors

Councillors must uphold the highest standards of conduct, promote equality, challenge discriminatory behaviour, and comply with this policy and the Code of Conduct.

6.2 Employees

All employees are responsible for treating colleagues, councillors, and the public with respect and contributing to an inclusive working environment.

6.3 Clerk / Responsible Officer

The Clerk will:

- Implement this policy in day-to-day operations.
- Provide guidance to councillors and staff.
- Support and attend equality-focused training where appropriate.
- Maintain relevant records and monitor compliance.

7. Handling Complaints

The Council takes complaints relating to discrimination, harassment, or unfair treatment seriously.

- Complaints may be raised informally or formally with the Clerk or Chair of the Council.
- All complaints will be investigated fairly, confidentially, and promptly.
- Where necessary, the Council may refer complaints to external bodies (e.g., Monitoring Officer, HR advisers, police).

Adopted on 7th July 2026

Review date June 2027 Unless there are changes in the law Reviewed on