Bredhurst Parish Council

Equality & Diversity Policy

Adopted: **July 2023**
Reviewed and Amended: **September 2026**

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1. Introduction

Bredhurst Parish Council is committed to promoting equality, eliminating discrimination, and fostering an inclusive environment for employees, councillors, volunteers, contractors, and members of the public.

The Parish Council recognises its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and aims to ensure that all individuals are treated fairly, with dignity and respect, regardless of protected characteristics.

This policy provides a clear framework for ensuring equality of opportunity in employment, service delivery, and community engagement. It supports the Council's commitment to openness, transparency, and professionalism.

All Councillors and officers must have due regard for the reputation of the Council and comply with the Parish Council's Code of Conduct. Confidential or exempt information must not be disclosed under any circumstances.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All Councillors
- The Clerk and any Parish Council employees, contractors, or volunteers
- All official Parish Council activities, services, and communications
- References to Parish Council business made on personal social media or public platforms

It covers both employment practices and the Parish Council's interactions with the community.

3. Legal Framework

All Council activities must comply with:

- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR
- Local Government Act 1972
- Public Sector Equality Duty
- The Parish Council Code of Conduct

4. Protected Characteristics

The Parish Council will not discriminate directly or indirectly on the grounds of:

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

5. Our Commitments

The Parish Council will:

- Treat all individuals fairly, respectfully, and without discrimination
- Promote equality of opportunity in employment and service delivery
- Ensure decisions are based on objective, non-discriminatory criteria
- Make reasonable adjustments for disabled people
- Challenge discrimination, harassment, bullying, or victimisation
- Ensure all policies and procedures reflect equality principles

6. Equal Opportunities in Employment

The Parish Council will:

- Ensure recruitment, selection, and promotion processes are fair and transparent
- Provide equal access to training and development
- Support flexible working where appropriate
- Ensure part-time, fixed-term, and temporary staff are treated equitably
- Address grievances relating to discrimination promptly and fairly

7. Dignity and Respect

- Harassment, bullying, or victimisation will not be tolerated.
- All Councillors, employees, contractors, and volunteers must:
- Treat others with dignity and respect
- Report incidents of harassment or discrimination
- Cooperate with investigations into alleged misconduct.

8. Service Delivery and Community Engagement

The Council will:

- Ensure services are accessible and inclusive
- Anticipate and remove barriers that may prevent access
- Treat all members of the public fairly and without discrimination
- Engage with the community in a respectful and inclusive manner

9. Responsibilities

- Full Council – Overall responsibility for policy implementation
- Parish Clerk – Day-to-day responsibility for compliance and guidance
- Councillors & Staff – Required to comply with the policy and attend training where appropriate

10. Breaches of the Policy

Acts of discrimination, harassment, bullying, or victimisation may result in disciplinary action. Serious cases may constitute gross misconduct.

11. Monitoring and Review

The Council will:

- Review this policy every two years or sooner if legislation changes
- Monitor equality considerations in employment and service delivery
- Ensure related policies remain aligned with equality principles.

Appendix A – Public Equality Statement

Bredhurst Parish Council is committed to treating all individuals fairly, with dignity and respect. We value diversity and aim to ensure that our services, decisions, and employment practices are inclusive and accessible to all.

We welcome constructive engagement from residents and community groups and will ensure that all interactions are conducted professionally and respectfully.

Appendix B – Councillor and Staff Guidance

When representing the Council, Councillors and staff must:

- Promote equality and inclusion
- Avoid discriminatory language or behaviour
- Ensure personal opinions are clearly distinguished from Council positions
- Report any concerns relating to discrimination or harassment
- Ensure confidentiality is maintained at all times.

Next Review Due: September 2028