**QUENINGTON PARISH COUNCIL**

**Equal Opportunities Policy**

**Purpose**

Quenington Parish Council is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and equal treatment and this policy aims to demonstrate that it will endeavour to ensure that every member of the public has equal access to its employment and development opportunities, to its services and to all its activities.

The policy will act as a guide and frame of reference for the council’s employees and councillors so that they can implement its equal opportunity objectives. The Policy will provide members of the public with confidence in the Parish Council’s objectives in terms of both employment and service provisions.

**Objectives**

This Policy is designed to ensure that equal opportunities exist in all Parish Council activities, defined as follows:

Employment

To ensure that no member of the public suffers discrimination and that everyone has equal access to employment within the Parish Council.

Councillors and volunteers

To ensure that no councillors and volunteers suffer discrimination and that everyone has equal opportunity to join the council or work with the Parish Council on a voluntary basis.

Services

To ensure that all services provided by, or on behalf of, the Parish Council are made available to all individuals and groups equally and without discrimination.

Contracts

To ensure that, within the limits of the law and where practically possible, all individuals, companies, or organisations undertaking work, or providing goods or services for the Parish Council do not follow discriminatory practices. When councillors are involved in drawing up specifications for goods or services they will consider the specific needs of disadvantaged groups in service provision.

## **Legal Position**

Under the Equality Act 2010 it is unlawful to discriminate against an individual on the following grounds (known as ‘protected characteristics):

* age
* disability
* gender reassignment
* race
* religion / belief
* sex
* sexual orientation
* marriage / civil partnership
* pregnancy / maternity.

The Parish Council acknowledges that certain groups and individuals within society are discriminated against and wishes to declare its commitment to working towards equality in employment and via the delivery of its services. In particular, the council will work to combat discrimination for employees, councillors and those who may wish to use any of its services on the grounds of the protected characteristics identified in the Equality Act.

The Parish Council will not discriminate against or harass a member of the public in the provision of services or goods. It is unlawful to fail to make reasonable adjustments to overcome barriers to using services caused by disability. The duty to make reasonable adjustments includes the removal, adaptation, or alteration of physical features, if the physical features make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to make use of services. In addition, service providers have an obligation to think ahead and address any barriers that may impede disabled people from accessing a service.

**Types of unlawful discrimination**

Discrimination can come in the following forms:

* direct discrimination - treating someone with a protected characteristic less favourably than others
* indirect discrimination - putting rules or arrangements in place that apply to everyone, but that put someone with a protected characteristic at an unfair disadvantage\*
* harassment - unwanted behaviour linked to a protected characteristic that violates someone’s dignity or creates an offensive environment for them
* victimisation - treating someone unfairly because they have complained about discrimination or harassment

\*It can be lawful to have specific rules or arrangements in place, if they can be justified.

**The Policy in action**

**Equal opportunities in employment**

The Parish Council will take full account of the Equality Act 2010 and will avoid unlawful discrimination in all aspects of employment including recruitment, promotion, opportunities for training, pay and benefits, discipline, and selection for redundancy.

When recruiting a member of staff a job description and person specification must be drawn up for every vacancy and be provided to all prospective employees. Person and job specifications shall be strictly limited to those requirements which are necessary for the effective performance of the job.

The council is committed to creating a workplace where individuals are valued, and treated with respect and will ensure that it treats unacceptable behaviour seriously. Harassment and discrimination in any form is unacceptable behaviour and offenders will be subject to disciplinary action. The council will ensure that employees are made aware of their rights and responsibilities to each other, the public and the council regarding equal opportunities issues. Equal opportunities training, where available, will be provided to enable employees to implement this policy.

**Equal opportunities in relation to councillors and volunteers**

When seats on the Parish Council are being filled by co-option the council will take full account of the provisions of the Equality Act. The council will treat all prospective candidates equally and will ensure that no applicant is treated less favourably than others.

During council meetings the Chair will ensure that the views of all councillors are valued, respected and given due consideration in the decision-making process.

All new councillors and any volunteers who assist the council in providing services to parishioners will be made aware of the council’s Equal Opportunities Policy and their role in ensuring its success. Equal opportunities training will be offered, where available, to new councillors.

Parish councillors are bound by a code of conduct which sets out the standards of behaviour which councillors must uphold. Section 2.3 of the code states that councillors should not “discriminate unlawfully against any person.” The council will ensure that councillors are made aware of their responsibilities under this code, which is available on the parish council website.

**Equal opportunities in service provision**

The council will comply with all relevant legislation relating to discrimination and equity when designing and delivering its services to the public. It will provide training for employees and councillors in equal opportunities awareness and customer care, emphasising equality of treatment in service delivery. It will ensure that no member of the public is disadvantaged, or treated less favourably than others, in terms of access to council services. Where the council’s practice, policy or procedures are found to make access impossible or unreasonably difficult, it will take such steps as are reasonable in the circumstances to change these practices, policies or procedures. The council recognises the importance of communication in attaining equity and quality services which are responsive to the needs of all local people, for example through ensuring that its website meets accessibility standards.

**Breaches of the Equal Opportunities Policy**

Any breach of the Equal Opportunities Policy will be dealt with through the relevant legislation and the council’s disciplinary procedures. Serious offences, such as harassment and victimisation, may be treated as gross misconduct.

Complaints from staff about discrimination or unfair treatment will be dealt with as laid down in the council’s Grievance Procedure.

Complaints from members of the public about discrimination or unfair treatment will be dealt with through the council’s Complaints Procedure.

This policy was adopted on: 14th August 2025

Date of next review: August 2030 or sooner if the legislation changes