

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy

Puncknowle & Swyre Parish Council (the council) aims to create a culture that respects and values each other's differences, that promotes dignity, equality and diversity. We aim to remove barriers, bias or discrimination that prevents individuals or groups from realising their potential and contributing fully to the community in order to develop a culture that positively values diversity.

This Policy applies to all individuals involved in the Council's business and projects, including Councillors, Officers, Volunteers and Residents. Where the Council's services are provided by external contractors or third parties they are responsible for adhering to this policy, whilst providing services on behalf of the Council.

Our policy's purpose

This policy's purpose is:

1. That everyone involved with the council is aware of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and knows what to do and who to contact if they have a concern relating to equal opportunities.
2. Not unlawfully discriminate because of the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics of:
 - age
 - disability
 - gender reassignment
 - marriage and civil partnership
 - pregnancy and maternity
 - race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin)
 - religion or belief
 - sex
 - sexual orientation
3. The council is committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all persons.
 - Promoting a good and harmonious environment in which all persons are treated with respect.
 - Preventing occurrences of unlawful direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
 - Fulfilling our legal obligations under equality legislation and associated codes of practice.
 - Complying with our own equal opportunities policy and associated policies.
 - Taking lawful affirmative and positive action where appropriate

Our commitments

The council commits to:

1. Encourage equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace as they are good practice and make business sense

Create a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all staff are recognised and valued.

This commitment includes training councillor's and clerk in their rights and responsibilities under the equality, diversity and inclusion policy. Responsibilities include staff conducting themselves to help the organisation provide equal opportunities in employment, and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination.

All councillors should understand they can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, during their tenure, against fellow councillor's, residents, suppliers and third parties.

This policy compliments the councillors code of conduct, it does not replace it and

2. Take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination during the councils' activities.

Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under the c grievance and/or disciplinary procedures, and appropriate action will be taken.

Further, sexual harassment may amount to a criminal matter, such as in sexual assault allegations. In addition, harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 – which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic – is a criminal offence.

3. Make opportunities for training, development and progress available to all staff, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation.
4. Monitor the make-up of the council regarding information such as age, sex, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability in encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion, and in meeting the aims and commitments set out in the equality, diversity and inclusion.

Monitoring will also include assessing how the equality, diversity and inclusion policy, and any supporting action plan, are working in practice, reviewing them annually, and considering and taking action to address any issues.

Our disciplinary and grievance procedures

Details of the organisation's grievance and disciplinary policies and procedures can be found at <https://puncknowle-swyre-pc.gov.uk/policies-and-procedures/>

Use of the council's grievance or disciplinary procedures does not affect an employee's right to make a claim to an employment tribunal within three months of the alleged discrimination.

This policy was adopted at the Parish Council Meeting dated 1 April 2025