



FRATING PARISH COUNCIL

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Next Review Date: September 2027

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY

1. Purpose and Scope

Frating Parish Council is committed to promoting equality, eliminating discrimination and fostering an inclusive environment for employees, councillors, volunteers, contractors, and all members of the public who engage with the Council. This policy sets out how the Council meets its legal duties under:

- Equality Act 2010
- Public Sector Equality Duty (s.149 Equality Act 2010)
- Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023
- Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018
- UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018

This policy applies to all aspects of employment, service delivery, public engagement, and decision-making.

2. Our Commitment

Frating Parish Council will:

- Recognise, respect and value diversity within the community.
- Provide equal opportunities in employment, volunteering, and public participation.
- Deliver services in a way that is accessible, fair and free from discrimination.
- Create a working environment that promotes dignity, respect and inclusion.
- Take reasonable and proactive steps to prevent harassment, including sexual harassment, in accordance with the Worker Protection Act 2023.
- Ensure councillors and staff understand their responsibilities under equality legislation.

The Council will not tolerate discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation in any form.

3. Legal Framework

3.1 Protected Characteristics

Under the Equality Act 2010, it is unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of:

- Age
- Disability

- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

3.2 Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

In exercising its functions, the Council must have due regard to the need to:

1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
2. Advance equality of opportunity.
3. Foster good relations between different groups.

The Council will demonstrate due regard through:

- Equality considerations in decision-making
- Equality impact assessments where appropriate
- Transparent recording of decisions
- Inclusive consultation and engagement

4. Types of Unlawful Discrimination

The Council adopts the definitions in the Equality Act 2010, including:

- **Direct discrimination**
- **Indirect discrimination**
- **Harassment** (including sexual harassment)
- **Victimisation**
- **Associative discrimination**
- **Perceptive discrimination**
- **Failure to make reasonable adjustments**

4.1 Duty to Prevent Sexual Harassment

Under the Worker Protection Act 2023, the Council must take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of employees. This includes:

- Clear policies
- Training
- Reporting mechanisms
- Prompt action on concerns
- Safe working practices

5. Equality in Employment

The Council will ensure equality in:

- Recruitment and selection
- Training and development
- Promotion
- Pay and benefits
- Working conditions
- Disciplinary and grievance procedures
- Redundancy selection

5.1 Recruitment

- Job descriptions and person specifications will reflect only essential requirements.
- Selection decisions will be based on objective criteria.
- Reasonable adjustments will be made for disabled applicants.

5.2 Working Practices

The Council will consider the equality impact of working hours, location and practices. Requests for flexible working will be considered fairly and lawfully.

5.3 Reasonable Adjustments

The Council will make reasonable adjustments for disabled employees and applicants, including:

- Adjustments to duties
- Equipment or technology
- Working hours
- Physical accessibility

6. Councillors' Responsibilities

Councillors must:

- Uphold the Nolan Principles and the Council's Code of Conduct.
- Consider equality impacts when making decisions.
- Treat all individuals with dignity and respect.
- Avoid discriminatory behaviour or language.
- Participate in training where required.

Councillors may be personally liable for unlawful discriminatory acts.

7. Equality in Service Delivery

The Council will ensure that:

- Services, facilities and public meetings are accessible.
- Reasonable adjustments are made for disabled service users.
- Public consultations are inclusive and accessible.
- Website content meets accessibility standards (WCAG 2.1 AA).
- Contractors and suppliers comply with equality legislation.

8. Third-Party Behaviour

The Council will take appropriate action where staff or councillors experience harassment or discriminatory behaviour from members of the public, contractors or visitors. Actions may include:

- Warning or excluding individuals from premises
- Reporting criminal behaviour to the police
- Reviewing risk assessments
- Supporting affected staff

9. Training and Awareness

The Council will provide training to:

- Employees
- Councillors
- Volunteers involved in public-facing roles

Training will cover:

- Equality Act 2010
- Preventing harassment
- Inclusive decision-making
- Reasonable adjustments
- Dignity at work

10. Monitoring and Data Protection

The Council may collect data on workforce composition to monitor equality. Any data collected will be:

- Anonymised where possible
- Processed under a lawful basis (employment obligations and substantial public interest)
- Stored securely
- Used only for equality monitoring
- Managed in accordance with UK GDPR and the Council's Privacy Notices

11. Reporting Concerns

11.1 Employees

Employees who believe they have been discriminated against, harassed or victimised should use the Council's Grievance Procedure. Complaints of bullying or harassment will follow the Dignity at Work Policy.

11.2 Councillors

Councillors should report concerns to the Clerk or Monitoring Officer as appropriate.

11.3 Members of the Public

Service users may raise concerns through the Council's Complaints Procedure.

No individual will be penalised for raising a genuine concern.

12. Breaches of this Policy

Breaches by employees may constitute misconduct or gross misconduct under the Disciplinary Procedure. Breaches by councillors may constitute a Code of Conduct violation. Contractors who breach this policy may have contracts terminated.

13. Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if:

- Legislation changes
- Best practice evolves
- Monitoring identifies areas for improvement

The Council will update the policy to ensure ongoing compliance and effectiveness.