East Dean & Friston Parish Council

Date:	**7th November 2024**
Title:	**Report Item 11 – Policy Review**
By:	**Fiona Chalk (Parish Clerk)**
Purpose:	**To note the Policy Review Timetable; To approve revised/new policies; To agree the Risk Management Strategy**
Recommendations:	**To approve the adoption of the Equality & Diversity Policy; The Communications & Social Media Policy; and the Risk Management Strategy; and minor changes to other policy documents**

Introduction

This report presents the findings of a comprehensive Policy Review conducted for the Parish Council. The purpose of this review was to assess the effectiveness and relevance of existing policies, ensuring they align with the needs of our community and current legislative standards.

Through careful analysis, there have been identified some opportunities for improvement that will enhance our governance and service delivery. As a result, I am proposing two new policies designed to address emerging issues within our parish, along with three updated policies that reflect current best practices and community priorities.

New Policies

The two new policies are:
Equality & Diversity – appendix A (Template NALC policy)
Such a policy aids the following:

1. **Legal Compliance**: Ensures adherence to equality legislation, such as the Equality Act 2010, protecting against discrimination based on protected characteristics like age, gender, race, disability, and more.
2. **Promoting Inclusivity**: Encourages an inclusive environment where all community members feel valued and represented, fostering a sense of belonging and community cohesion.
3. **Fair Service Delivery**: Ensures that services and resources are accessible to all residents, addressing the specific needs of diverse groups and minimising barriers.

4. **Community Engagement**: Enhances participation from underrepresented groups in local decision-making processes, leading to more comprehensive and effective governance.
5. **Positive Public Image**: Demonstrates the council's commitment to fairness and social justice, enhancing its reputation and trust within the community.
6. **Cultural Competence**: Equips council members and staff to understand and respect the diverse backgrounds of residents, improving communication and service quality.
7. **Conflict Prevention**: Reduces the likelihood of discrimination complaints or conflicts within the community by proactively addressing issues of equality and diversity.

Overall, such a policy helps create a fairer, more equitable community, aligning with the council's mission to serve all residents effectively.

Communications & Social Media – Appendix B
Such a policy aids the following:
1. **Clear Guidelines**: Establishes clear protocols for council members and staff regarding communication with the public, ensuring consistent messaging and appropriate conduct across all platforms.
2. **Protection Against Intimidation**: With statistics showing that 1 in 5 councillors face intimidation, primarily on social media, a dedicated policy can provide guidance and ensure a safe environment for councillors to engage with the community.
3. **Promoting Transparency**: Enhances transparency by outlining how the council will communicate decisions, updates, and community news, fostering trust and engagement with residents.
4. **Encouraging Engagement**: Encourages positive interactions with residents, fostering a sense of community and promoting active participation in local governance.
5. **Professional Standards**: Sets expectations for professionalism and respect in all communications, safeguarding the council's image and the dignity of its members.
6. **Legal Compliance**: Ensures adherence to legal and regulatory standards in communication, protecting the council from potential legal issues arising from misuse of social media and GDPR requirements.

By implementing a comprehensive Communications and Social Media Policy, the Parish Council can effectively navigate the challenges of modern communication, support its members, and foster a positive relationship with the community.

Recommendation: The Council are asked to adopt these new policies

Updated Policies

Code of Conduct – this policy is a NALC template, and the 2020 template has been updated with a 2022 one.
Terms of Reference of the Planning Committee – this has been updated under Delegated Powers, to include reference to the Neighbourhood Plan. *'4.1 the Committee shall decide how to respond to planning applications on behalf of the Council, taking due account of the Village Design Statement, the draft neighbourhood plan, and any other material considerations advised by the SDNPA.'*
Recommendation: The Council are asked to approve these amendments.

Risk Management Strategy – appendix C
This policy has been updated to take account of change in PC Officers; moving away from Covid; and any other current issue.

Recommendation: The Council are asked to read the policy and consider the detailed risks and decide whether the mitigations are satisfactory, and to consider other risks not mentioned that the Council should consider. The Council is then asked to approve the Strategy.

Policy Review Schedule – appendix D

Recommendation: The Council is asked to note the Schedule.