



GOSFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

BIODIVERSITY POLICY

1. Introduction

Gosfield Parish Council recognises that biodiversity is essential to the health, wellbeing and sustainability of the local environment. Biodiversity includes all living species, habitats and ecosystems and contributes significantly to the character and attractiveness of the parish.

The Council acknowledges its duty under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, as strengthened by the Environment Act 2021, to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing biodiversity in the exercise of its functions.

As a rural parish containing significant areas of countryside, mature trees, public open spaces, public rights of way, allotments and a local nature reserve, Gosfield Parish Council is committed to protecting and enhancing biodiversity wherever reasonably practicable.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Protect and enhance biodiversity within land owned, managed or influenced by the Council.
- Ensure biodiversity considerations form part of Council decision-making.
- Support local and national efforts to recover nature and improve ecological resilience.
- Encourage residents, volunteers and community groups to participate in environmental improvement projects.

3. Biodiversity Assets within Gosfield Parish

The Council recognises the importance of the following biodiversity assets within the parish:

- The Village Playing Field and associated green spaces.
- Parish allotments.
- Open space and amenity grassland areas.
- The Parish Nature Reserve.
- Public footpaths and their associated hedgerows, verges and wildlife corridors.
- Mature trees, woodland areas and hedgerows throughout the parish.

- Ponds, ditches and wetland features where present.
- Farmland and rural landscapes surrounding the village.

These features provide valuable habitats for birds, mammals, insects, pollinators, reptiles, amphibians and plant species.

4. Policy Objectives

Objective 1 – Protect Existing Habitats

The Council will seek to:

- Protect existing trees, hedgerows and natural habitats on Council-owned land.
- Retain mature trees wherever possible and ensure appropriate replacement planting when tree removal is unavoidable.
- Safeguard habitats used by protected and priority species.
- Support the maintenance of wildlife corridors that connect habitats across the parish.

Objective 2 – Enhance Biodiversity on Council Land

The Council will:

- Identify opportunities to increase biodiversity within the Village Playing Field, open spaces and other Council-owned land.
- Encourage the planting of native trees, shrubs and wildflowers.
- Consider areas where grass cutting can be reduced to encourage pollinators and increase plant diversity.
- Promote habitat features such as bird boxes, bat boxes, insect hotels and log piles where appropriate.
- Support improvements to the Parish Nature Reserve to maintain and enhance its ecological value.

Objective 3 – Promote Sustainable Management

The Council will:

- Minimise the use of pesticides, herbicides and peat-based products wherever practical.
- Encourage environmentally sensitive management of Council land.
- Consider biodiversity impacts when commissioning grounds maintenance works.
- Support water conservation and sustainable drainage measures where appropriate.

Objective 4 – Support Biodiversity Along Public Rights of Way

The Council recognises the importance of public footpaths as wildlife corridors and will:

- Encourage sympathetic management of verges and path edges where this does not compromise public safety.
- Support the retention and enhancement of hedgerows alongside footpaths.
- Work with Essex County Council, landowners and volunteer groups to improve biodiversity along rights of way.

Objective 5 – Support Allotments and Community Participation

The Council will encourage allotment holders and residents to:

- Grow a diverse range of plants beneficial to pollinators.
- Avoid the unnecessary use of pesticides and herbicides.
- Create habitats for wildlife through planting, composting and water conservation.
- Participate in community environmental projects and biodiversity initiatives.

Objective 6 – Consider Biodiversity in Planning and Decision-Making

When responding to planning applications and consultations, the Council will:

- Support developments that protect and enhance biodiversity.
- Encourage the retention of trees, hedgerows and important habitats.
- Promote biodiversity gain, habitat creation and sustainable landscaping.
- Consider the cumulative impact of development on the natural environment of the parish.

5. Actions

To help achieve these objectives the Council will:

- Maintain records of land and biodiversity assets under its ownership or management.
- Review grounds maintenance practices periodically to identify opportunities for biodiversity enhancement.
- Consider annual tree and hedgerow planting initiatives where resources permit.
- Support local conservation projects and volunteer activities.
- Promote biodiversity awareness through Council communications and community events.
- Seek opportunities for partnership working with environmental organisations and local groups.

6. Monitoring and Review

The Council will review this policy annually year, or sooner if legislation or local circumstances change.

Biodiversity actions and opportunities will be considered annually by the Council and reflected within its work programmes and budget planning where appropriate.

Adopted

Date 22nd June 2026

Minute reference 26/122 Item 3

Signed

Review Date: May 2027