



## Whistleblowing Policy

### What is whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is the reporting of certain types of wrongdoing in the workplace. The wrongdoing being disclosed must be in the public interest.

Concerns can be raised at any time about an incident that happened in the past, is happening now or that the individual believes will happen in the future.

Whistleblowers are protected by law and should not be treated unfairly or victimised for 'blowing the whistle' (making a qualified disclosure).

This policy is based on NALC guidance written by the HR Services Partnership.

### Policy

It is important that any fraud, misconduct or wrongdoing by staff or others working on behalf of the council is reported and properly dealt with. We therefore require all individuals to raise any concerns that they may have about the conduct of others in the council. This policy sets out the way in which individuals may raise any concerns that they have and how those concerns will be dealt with.

This policy relates to concerns raised by employees of the Council.

### Background

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 amended the Employment Rights Act 1996 to provide protection for workers who raise legitimate concerns about specified matters in the public interest. These are called 'qualifying disclosures'. A qualifying disclosure is one made by an employee who has a reasonable belief that:

- a criminal offence.
- a miscarriage of justice.
- an act creating risk to health and safety.
- an act causing damage to the environment'.
- a breach of any other legal obligation; or
- concealment of any of the above.

is being, has been, or is likely to be, committed. It is not necessary for you to have proof that such and act is being, has been, or is likely to be, committed – a reasonable belief is sufficient. You have no responsibility for investigating the matter – it is the council's responsibility to ensure that an investigation takes place.

If you make a protected disclosure, you have the right not to be dismissed, subject to any other detriment, or victimised, because you have made a disclosure. We encourage you to raise your concerns under this procedure in the first instance.

### **Principles**

- Everyone should be aware of the importance of preventing and eliminating wrongdoing at work. Staff and others working on behalf of the council should be watchful for illegal or unethical conduct and report anything of that nature that they become aware of.
- Any matter raised under this procedure will be investigated thoroughly, promptly, and confidentially, and the outcome of the investigation reported back to the person who raised the issue.
- No employee or other person working on behalf of the council will be victimised for raising a matter under this procedure. This means that the continued employment and opportunities for future promotion or training of the worker will not be prejudiced because they have raised a legitimate concern.
- Victimisation of an individual for raising a qualified disclosure will be a disciplinary offence.
- If misconduct is discovered because of any investigation under this procedure our disciplinary procedure will be used, in addition to any appropriate external measures.
- Maliciously making a false allegation is a disciplinary offence.
- An instruction to cover up wrongdoing is itself a disciplinary offence. If told not to raise or pursue a concern, even by a person in authority, you should not agree to remain silent. You should report the matter to the Clerk or the Chair of the Council.

### **Procedure**

If you believe a Councillor has breached the councillor Code of Conduct, it should be raised with the Chair of the Council. Concerns relating to an alleged breach of the councillor Code of Conduct will be referred to the Monitoring Officer for investigation.

This procedure is for disclosures about matters other than a breach of your own contract of employment, which should be raised via the Grievance Procedure.

### **Stage One**

In the first instance, any concerns should be raised with the Clerk, who will arrange an investigation of the matter. The investigation may involve you and other individuals involved giving a written statement. Any investigation will be carried out in accordance with the principles set out above. Your statement will be considered, and you will be asked to comment on any additional evidence obtained.

The Clerk (or delegated officer) will take any necessary action, including reporting the matter to the Council, or any appropriate government department or regulatory agency. The Clerk (or delegated officer) will also invoke any disciplinary action if required. On conclusion of an investigation, insofar as confidentiality allows, you will be told the outcome and what the council has done or proposes to do about it. If no action is to be taken the reason for this will be explained.

### **Stage Two**

If you are concerned that the Clerk is involved in wrongdoing, has failed to make a proper investigation, or has failed to report the outcome of the investigations to the relevant person, you should escalate the matter to the Chair of the Council. The Chair will arrange for a review of the investigation to be carried out and make any necessary enquiries.

### **Stage Three**

If on conclusion of stages one and two you reasonably believe that the appropriate action has not been taken, you should report the matter to the relevant body which may include.

- HM Revenue & Customs
- The Health and Safety Executive
- The Environment Agency
- The Serious Fraud Office
- The Charity Commission
- The Pensions Regulator
- The Information Commissioner
- The Financial Conduct Authority

You can find the full list in The Public Interest (Prescribed Persons) Order 2014:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/blowing-the-whistle-list-of-prescribed-people-and-bodies--2/whistleblowing-list-of-prescribed-people-and-bodies>

### **Data Protection**

When an individual makes a disclosure, we will process any personal data collected in accordance with the data protection policy. Data collected from the point at which the individual makes the report is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of dealing with the disclosure.

There is also an NSPCC whistle blowing helpline. These can be contacted via the following –

NSPCC whistle blowing hotline 0808 800 5000

Email – [help@NSPCC.org.uk](mailto:help@NSPCC.org.uk)

Approved on:

Reviewed on: