

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

The Whistleblowing Policy is also included within the Prevention of Financial Crime Policy.

What is Whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing encourages and enables employees to raise serious concerns **within** the Council rather than overlooking a problem or 'blowing the whistle' outside.

Employees are often the first to realise that there is something seriously wrong with the Council. However, they may not express their concerns as they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or to the Council.

Our Commitment

The Council is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with that commitment we expect employees, and others that we deal with, who have serious concerns about any aspect of the Council's work to come forward and voice those concerns.

Who does the Policy apply to?

The policy applies to all employees, (including those designated as casual hours, temporary, agency, authorised volunteers or work experience), and those contractors working for the Council on Council Premises, for example, agency staff, builders. It also covers suppliers and those providing services under a contract with the Council in their own premises. The policy also covers Members.

The Aims of the Policy

To encourage you to feel confident in raising concerns and to question and act upon concerns about practice.

To provide avenues for you to raise concerns in confidence and receive feedback on any action taken.

To ensure that you receive a response to your concerns and that you are aware of how to pursue them if you are not satisfied.

To reassure you that you will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation if you have a reasonable belief that you have made any disclosure which is in the public interest.

What Types of Concern are Covered?

- Conduct which is an offence or a breach of law.
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation.
- Disclosures related to miscarriages of justice.
- Health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees.
- Damage to the environment.
- The unauthorised use of public funds.
- Possible fraud and corruption.
- Sexual, physical or other abuse of clients.
- Other unethical conduct.
- Actions which are unprofessional, inappropriate or conflict with a general understanding of what is right and wrong.

NB. Other procedures are available to employees e.g. the Grievance procedure which relates to complaints about your own employment. This policy also does not replace other corporate complaints procedures which are for public use.

Safeguards and Victimisation

The Council recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. If what you are saying is true, you should have nothing to fear because you will be doing your duty to your employer and those for whom you provide a service.

The Council will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect you when you raise a concern which is in the public interest.

Confidentiality

All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal your identity if you so wish. At the appropriate time, however, you may need to come forward as a witness.

This policy encourages you however to put your name to your concern whenever possible. Please note that:

- Staff must believe the disclosure of information is in the public interest.
- Staff must believe it to be substantially true.
- Staff must **not** act maliciously or make false allegations.
- Staff must **not** seek any personal gain.

How to Raise a Concern

As a first step, you should normally raise concerns with your immediate supervisor/manager or their superior. This may depend, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of the malpractice. For example, if you believe that management is involved you should approach a more senior level of management within your Directorate.

Concerns can also be made in writing. Correspondence should be sent to the Corporate Manager – Internal Audit at either of the following addresses:

Babergh District Council
Corks Lane
Hadleigh
Ipswich
IP7 6SJ

Mid Suffolk District Council
131 High Street
Needham Market
Ipswich
IP6 8DL

Human Resources
Babergh District Council
Corks Lane
Hadleigh
Ipswich
IP7 6SJ