



WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

WRITTEN BY:

Mrs Sarah Haydon, Chief Officer

REVIEWED:

March 2024

APPROVAL DATE:

Finance Strategy & Management Committee – 26 March 2024

Town Council – 9 April 2024

REVIEW DATE:

March 2026

INTRODUCTION

1.1 We are committed to conducting our business with honesty and integrity and we expect all staff to maintain high standards. Any suspected wrongdoing should be reported as soon as possible.

1.2 This policy covers all councillors, employees, officers, consultants, contractors, volunteers, casual workers and agency workers.

1.3 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and we may amend it at any time.

WHAT IS WHISTLEBLOWING

2.1 Whistleblowing is the confidential reporting of suspected wrongdoing or dangers in relation to our activities. This includes bribery, facilitation of tax evasion, fraud or other criminal activity, miscarriages of justice, health and safety risks, damage to the environment and any breach of legal or professional obligations.

2.2 In certain circumstances, an employee may raise a concern which qualifies as a protected disclosure under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA). To qualify as a protected disclosure, the employee must believe that the information they are disclosing is in the public interest and that one or more of

the following matters is either happening, has taken place, or is likely to happen in the future:

- A criminal offence;
- The breach of a legal obligation;
- A miscarriage of justice;
- A danger to the health and safety of an individual;
- Damage to the environment;
- Deliberate attempt to conceal any of the above.

Protection applies to employees who have disclosed the information in the correct way. Protection applies to any form of detriment from an employer or colleagues, including victimisation, harassment, bullying or dismissal.

HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN

3.1 Any concern can be raised – about the council, its business, services or people. There are no right or wrong concerns. Examples may include:

- Policies, procedures or practices not being followed;
- Inadequate induction, training or supervision for staff;
- The care or treatment of service users;
- The safety or wellbeing of service users or staff;
- Unsafe conditions for staff or service users;
- Inappropriate activity in the workplace;
- Something which could damage the council's reputation;
- A culture of inappropriate behaviour, including bullying or intimidation.

3.2 We hope that in many cases you will be able to raise any concerns with the Chief Officer. However, where you prefer not to raise it with your manager for any reason, you should contact the Chair of the Finance Strategy and Management Committee.

3.2 We will arrange a meeting with you as soon as possible to discuss your concern. You may bring a colleague or other representative to any meetings under this policy. Your companion must respect the confidentiality of your disclosure and any subsequent investigation.

CONFIDENTIALITY

4.1 We hope that staff will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this policy. Completely anonymous disclosures are difficult to investigate. If you want to raise your concern confidentially, we will make every effort to keep your identity secret and only reveal it where necessary to those involved in investigating your concern.

4.2 In certain circumstances, we may share information, for example with the Police. This will usually only occur if it is believed that some form of criminal offence has been committed. In all other cases, for example with an external body such as a regulator, we will only share any personal data where there is legal authority or explicit consent to do so.

EXTERNAL DISCLOSURES

5.1 The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing in the workplace. In most cases you should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally.

5.2 The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for you to report your concerns to an external body such as a regulator. We strongly encourage you to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. Protect operates a confidential helpline; their contact details are at the end of this policy.

PROTECTION AND SUPPORT FOR WHISTLEBLOWERS

6.1 We aim to encourage openness and will support whistleblowers who raise genuine concerns under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken. Whistleblowers must not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a genuine concern. If you believe that you have suffered any such treatment, you should inform the Chief Officer immediately.

You must not threaten or retaliate against whistleblowers in any way. If you are involved in such conduct you may be subject to disciplinary action.

However, if we conclude that a whistleblower has made false allegations maliciously, the whistleblower may be subject to disciplinary action.

Protect operates a confidential helpline. Their contact details are at the end of this policy.

CONTACTS

Whistleblowing Officer	Sarah Haydon 01782 498480 sarah.haydon@biddulph-tc.gov.uk
Chair of Finance Strategy and Management Committee	Councillor Wayne Rogers wayne.rogers@biddulph-tc.gov.uk

Protect

UK Whistleblowing Charity
Provides free, confidential
whistleblowing advice

Helpline: 0203 117 2520

Website: www.protect-advice.org.uk