



SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

AIMS OF THE POLICY

"Whistleblowing" means action by an employee to disclose malpractice in the form of irregularity, wrong doing or serious failures of standards at work. "Whistleblower" is the employee who discloses that practice.

Employees will be expected through agreed procedures and without fear of recrimination to bring to the attention of the appropriate level of management any deficiency in the provision of the service.

"Employee" for the purpose of this policy means anyone who works for and receives remuneration from Shrewsbury Town Council or who works for a contractor of the Town Council.

SCOPE OF THE POLICY

An employee's concerns about malpractice may include concerns about possible:

- (i) corruption and fraud
- (ii) dangerous procedures risking health and safety
- (iii) abuse of members of the public
- (iv) evasion of responsibilities
- (v) harassment of other staff
- (vi) damage to the environment
- (vii) unauthorised use of public funds
- (viii) other unethical conduct

The overriding concern should be that it would be in the public interest for the malpractice to be corrected and, if appropriate, sanctions applied.

This Code does not replace the Grievance Policy.

PROCEDURE

Where an employee has concerns about malpractice and it is not appropriate to raise them through other procedures such as grievance procedures, they should be raised with the immediate superior or manager. Much, however, depends upon the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of being involved in the malpractice. If, for instance, the employee thinks that their manager is involved the approach should be made to the either the Head of Operations, the Head of Resources, the Deputy Town Clerk, the Town Clerk or a Member, who may ask for a Personnel Committee meeting to be convened if appropriate.

An employee may email or put his/her concerns in writing and place them in an envelope which he/she should mark "Private and Confidential". This should then be sent to the appropriate senior officer. Complaints in writing, however, should not be anonymous and should be signed.

Anonymous Allegations

This policy encourages you to put your name to your allegation whenever possible.

Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful but will be considered at the discretion of the Town Council.

In exercising this discretion the factors to be taken into account would include:

- the seriousness of the issues raised;
- the credibility of the concern; and
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

An employee may obtain advice on how to pursue matters of concern by contacting any of the people listed in above.

INVESTIGATION PROCESS

The employee may consider discussing his concern with a colleague first and may find it easier to raise the matter if there are two (or more) employees who have had the same experience or concerns.

The whistleblower may invite his/her trade union, professional association representative or a friend to be present during any meetings or interviews in connection with the concerns raised.

Within ten working days of a concern being raised the person contacted will write to the whistleblower:

- acknowledging that the concern has been received
- telling you whether any initial enquiries have been made
- telling you whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not
- indicating how the Council propose to deal with the matter it is to be investigated

In order to protect individuals and those accused of misdeeds or possible malpractice, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. The overriding principle which the Town Council will have in mind is the public interest. Concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of specific procedures (for example, child protection or discrimination issues) will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.

Where appropriate, the matters raised may:

- be investigated by management, internal audit or through the disciplinary process
- be referred to the external auditor
- form the subject of an independent inquiry
- be referred to the police

The amount of contact between the officers considering the issues and the whistleblower will depend on the nature of the matters raised, the potential difficulties involved and the clarity of the information provided. If necessary, the Town Council will seek further information from the whistleblower.

Where any meeting is arranged (off-site if the whistleblower wishes) the whistleblower can be accompanied by a union or professional association representative or a friend.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The Town Council will do as much as is reasonably possible to ensure the confidentiality of the whistleblower.

If the concern leads to criminal proceedings against an employee the Town Council will do its best so far as reasonably possible, to use only evidence collated by the investigating officer to ensure the confidentiality of the whistleblower.

The Town Council will take steps to minimise any difficulties which the whistleblower may experience as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if the whistleblower is required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings the Town Council will arrange for him/her to receive advice about the procedure.

COMPLETION OF THE INVESTIGATION

The Town Council will inform the whistleblower of the outcome of his complaint (subject to any legal constraints).

The Town Clerk is responsible for the working of this policy and records all complaints and their outcomes. They will report annually on the complaints and otherwise as necessary preserving the anonymity of the complainants as far as possible.

HOW THE MATTER CAN BE TAKEN FURTHER

This policy is intended to provide employees with an avenue within the Town Council to raise concerns. The Town Council hopes that a whistleblower will be satisfied with the outcome of his/her complaint. If not, and the employee feels it is right to take the matter outside the Town Council, the following are possible contact points:

- the Monitoring Officer at Shropshire Council
- the external auditor
- a trade union
- a local Citizens Advice Bureau
- relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations
- a relevant voluntary organisation
- the police

If the employee does take the matter outside the Town Council he or she should ensure that no confidential information is disclosed. Clarification should be sought from the Deputy Town Clerk or Town Clerk on what might constitute confidential information.

Approved by Personnel Committee	7 December 2023
Adopted by Council	
Review Date	