

STIFFKEY PARISH COUNCIL

Whistleblowing Policy

It is vital that everyone who works or volunteers for Stiffkey Parish Council maintains the highest standards of conduct, integrity and ethics, and complies with local legislation. If an employee, volunteer or contractor has any genuine concerns about malpractice in the workplace, we wish to encourage them to communicate these without fear of reprisals and in the knowledge that they will be protected from victimisation and dismissal.

This policy does not form part of an employees' terms and conditions of employment and may be subject to change at the discretion of management.

This policy covers (but is not limited to) the issues listed below:

- Financial wrongdoing including theft, bribery, fraud, money laundering and aid diversion
- A failure to comply with any legal obligations
- Sexual misconduct, including sexual abuse, harassment or exploitation
- Abuse or exploitation of children, vulnerable adults or beneficiaries
- Breach of Council policies
- Abuse of position
- Danger to the health and safety of individuals or damage to the environment
- Improper conduct or unethical behaviour
- Activity which would bring the organisation into serious disrepute
- The deliberate concealment of information relating to any of the matters listed above

If you have a genuine concern and have a reasonable belief it is in the public interest, even if it is later discovered that you are mistaken, under this policy you will not be at risk of losing your job or from suffering any form of retribution as a result. This assurance will not be extended to an individual who maliciously raises a matter they know to be untrue or who is involved in any way in the malpractice. Those found to be making false allegations maliciously will have disciplinary action taken against them.

Whistleblowing is not a complaint about the performance and behaviour of a manager or other work colleague towards you. Such complaints are covered under other policies and procedures.

If you genuinely believe that the actions of someone who works or volunteers for Stiffkey Parish Council could lead to or has resulted in malpractice, please follow the procedure below. Please note this procedure is not intended to replace Stiffkey Parish Council's Grievance Procedures, which continues to be the appropriate way to raise personal issues relating to the specific job or employment.

1. Raise the matter with the Chairman of the Council, who will consult with the appropriate authorities. If you feel that you are unable to raise the matter with the Chairman, and you are able to, raise it with the Vice Chairman or a trusted Councillor.

At the point of raising a concern it would be useful for you to share information describing:

- Whether anyone is at immediate risk of harm?
- What happened? If possible, make note of dates, times, places, people.
- Who is involved?
- How do you know about it?
- When were you first concerned about it?
- Have you told anybody about it?
- Was any action taken?

All Councillors should:

- Report incidents of theft, fraud, or corruption immediately to the Chairman
- Report Safeguarding concerns relating to sexual abuse or exploitation of children, vulnerable adults, beneficiaries or any Parish Council representative to the Parish Clerk or Chairman
- Report any other incidents of malpractice in the Council to the Parish Clerk or Chairman

2. A decision will be made on whether it is appropriate to handle such complaints under this policy. Where not appropriate the complainant will be informed and their permission sought to divert the issue to the appropriate procedure.

3. Individual policy Investigation Guidelines will be followed, depending on the concern. If an investigation is conducted, the outcome may involve taking disciplinary action if misconduct has been proved, which may include dismissal.

You will be notified once the matter has been resolved, but outcomes are subject to confidentiality and may not be communicated.

Stiffkey Parish Council will take appropriate action, which may end in dismissal, in accordance with the relevant procedure against any employee, volunteer or consultant who:

- Has been found to be victimising another individual for using this procedure, or deterring them from reporting genuine concerns under it.
- Made a disclosure maliciously that is known to be untrue or without reasonable grounds for believing that the information supplied was accurate.

Anonymous Disclosures

You are encouraged not to make anonymous disclosures as details and further concerns cannot then be checked with you and this may seriously limit the ability to pursue your concerns. Nonetheless, all disclosures, made anonymously or otherwise, will be reviewed but lack of information may limit the nature, extent and outcome of the investigation

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