

WHISTLE BLOWING POLICY

Section 1 - Introduction

- 1.1 Rushmoor Borough Council strives for the highest standards of corporate governance and accountability of its services. As such the Council is committed to the prevention, deterrence, detection and investigation of malpractice including fraud, corruption, and unethical conduct.
- 1.2 As an employee you are an important element in the Council's action against malpractice, and are encouraged to raise serious concerns relating to Council activities when they arise.

Section 2 - Aim of the Policy

- 2.1 The Policy aims to give you confidence to raise concerns, and if necessary on an anonymous basis. It gives assurance that these concerns will be treated in confidence, properly investigated and dealt with fairly.
- 2.2 The Policy also provides you with reassurance that if you have raised concerns in good faith you will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation.

Section 3 - What is 'Whistle Blowing'?

- 3.1 'Whistle Blowing' is the disclosure of information that relates to suspected malpractice by employees and/or agents of the Council. The following list is not exhaustive but gives examples of malpractice:
 - Danger to the health and safety of individuals
 - Damage to the environment
 - Unauthorised use of public funds
 - Misappropriation of public funds
 - Breach of regulatory, administrative or common law
 - Fraud and corruption, or any criminal offence that has or is likely to take place.
 - Breach of contract
 - Negligence
 - Attempting to conceal any of the above, including failure to record issues of concern, or preventing others from reporting such concerns.
- 3.2 Whistle Blowing is not the same as a grievance. The Council has a separate grievance procedure, which describes a grievance as 'anything that an employee feels upset or aggrieved about'.

Section 4 - Who is affected by the Policy?

- 4.1 The Policy applies to all employees of Rushmoor Borough Council, as well as its contract and agency staff.
- 4.2 Members are required to meet the Members Code of Conduct and the Member/Officer Protocol. Issues relating to Members should be raised with the Solicitor to the Council, and will be dealt with under these specific procedures.
- 4.3 Contractors are required to meet the Council's governance arrangements including the approach to whistle blowing.

Section 5 - How to Raise a Concern

- 5.1 You are urged to raise concerns when they arise with your Line Manager. However, if you prefer you can raise your concern with one of the following officers:
 - Director of Resources
 - Solicitor to the Council
 - Audit Manager
 - Chief Executive
- 5.2 Concerns can be raised in writing or verbally. If in writing the following information should be included:
 - The name of the officer the concern is addressed to.
 - The date the concern is being raised.
 - An outline of the concern.
 - Information to support the concern
 - Your name and job title.
- 5.3 The information should be put in an envelope addressed to an officer listed in 5.1, and marked 'STRICTLY PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL – ADDRESSEE ONLY'. The envelope should be given to the named officer by hand.
- 5.4 Your identity will not be revealed other than with your consent. The Council will also take any necessary action to ensure you are not harassed or victimised as a consequence from raising your concern.
- 5.5 Alternatively concerns can be disclosed anonymously to Internal Audit by leaving a telephone message on 01252 398812 or a written document for the Audit Manager. However, you should note that anonymous disclosures make subsequent investigations harder to carry out and the disclosure much less compelling.
- 5.6 If you still feel unable to report your concerns as described above you can report the issue to a prescribed external organisation. These include:

Public Concern at Work	Tel. No: 020 7404 6609	www.pcaw.co.uk
Hampshire Police	Tel. No: 0845 045 4545	
Audit Commission	Tel. No: 020 7828 1212	
Health and Safety Executive	Tel. No: 0845 345 0055	
HM Revenue and Customs	Tel. No: 0800 59 5000	
Unison	Tel. No: 0845 355 0845	

- 5.5 Malicious or vexatious allegations will be viewed very seriously and be regarded as a disciplinary issue.

Section 6 - Investigating and responding to a concern

- 6.1 The Council's Internal Audit Service will conduct all investigations relating to employee malpractice, and if appropriate, cases will be referred to the Police.
- 6.2 It is critical that you and/or your line manager do not instigate your own investigation as this may hamper possible criminal action in the future
- 6.3 If you raise a concern you will be informed of progress and any changes to working practices, however detailed feedback may not always be possible.
- 6.4 If you feel that the investigation has failed to resolve the matter you should inform your Director or Chief Executive.

Section 7 - Links to legislation and other Council policies

- 7.1 This Policy links to other Council documents including:
- Anti Fraud and Corruption Policy
 - Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures
 - The Council's Constitution
 - Anti Money Laundering Policy (to be produced in 2007/08)
 - The annual Statement of Internal Control
- 7.2 Legislation and guidance that supports this Policy includes:
- Committee on Standards in Public Life
 - Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998
 - Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000
 - Data Protection Act 1998
 - Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

Section 8 - History of the Policy

Version	Author	Date	Comments
V1.1	Nikki Fowler Audit Manager	March 2007	This policy replaces the original policy produced by the previous Solicitor to the Council (M. Lawther).

			<p>Agreed at Directors Management Board on 13 February 2007.</p> <p>Agreed at Standards and Audit Committee on 5 March 2007.</p>
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