



Whistleblowing Policy

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Introduction

All of us at one time or another has a concern about what is happening at work. Whistleblowing is the term that is used to refer to workers reporting a serious concern in the workplace. This could be an incident or a practice that is:

- a criminal offence;
- improper or unethical conduct;
- unauthorised use of public funds;
- a serious risk to the health and safety of employees or the Public;
- customer abuse;
- damage to the environment;
- breach of any other legal obligation;
- serious breach of Council policy, Code of Conduct or Standing Orders; or
- action to conceal any of the above wrongdoing.

Usually these are easily resolved. However, when the concern feels serious because it is about a possible fraud, danger or malpractice that might affect others or the organisation itself, it can be difficult to know what to do.

You may be worried about raising such a concern and may think it best to keep it to yourself, perhaps feeling it's none of your business or that it's only a suspicion. You may feel that raising the matter would be disloyal to colleagues, managers or to the organisation. You may decide to say something but find that you have spoken to the wrong person or raised the issue in the wrong way and are not sure what to do next.

South Cambridgeshire District Council is committed to running the organisation in the best way possible and to do so we need your help. We have this policy to reassure you that it is safe and acceptable to speak up and to enable you to raise any concern you may have at an early stage and in the right way. Rather than wait for proof, we would prefer you to raise the matter as soon as you have a concern.

This policy applies to all those who work with us, full-time or part-time, employed through an agency, work as a volunteer, or if you are a Councillor. If you have a whistleblowing concern, please let us know.

If something is troubling you which you think we should know about or look into, please use this policy. If you don't register your concern through this process, we will not know that you have raised a concern.

We also have policies for other specific matters, and you may wish to read these. If you wish to make a complaint about your employment or how you have been treated, please use the Grievance policy or Bullying / Harassment policy. If you have a concern about financial misconduct or fraud, please see our Anti-Fraud Policy. If you have a concern about the treatment of a child or adult at risk, please see our Safeguarding policy.

This Whistleblowing Policy is primarily for concerns where the public interest is at risk, which includes a risk to the wider public, customers, staff or the organisation itself.

If in doubt - raise it!

Your safety

The Council is committed to this policy. Provided you are raising a genuine concern, it does not matter if you are mistaken.

If you raise a genuine concern under this policy, you will not be at risk of losing your job or suffering any form of reprisal as a result. We will consider it a disciplinary matter if your colleagues or management treat you unfairly or cruelly by intimidating or pressurising you because you have raised a genuine concern.

Your confidence

With these assurances, we hope you will raise your concern openly. However, we recognise that there may be circumstances when you would prefer to speak to someone confidentially first. If this is the case, please say so at the outset. If you ask us not to disclose your identity, we will not do so without your consent unless required by law (this could be where a criminal act is alleged to have taken place and we have a duty to report this). You should understand that there may be times when we are unable to resolve a concern without revealing your identity, for example where your personal evidence is essential. In such cases, we will discuss with you whether and how the matter can best proceed.

Please remember that if you do not tell us who you are (and therefore you are raising a concern anonymously) it will be much more difficult for us to look into the matter. We will not be able to protect your position or to give you feedback. Accordingly, you should not assume we can provide the assurances we offer in the same way if you report a concern anonymously.

If you are unsure about raising a concern you can get independent advice from Protect (see contact details under Independent Advice).

Handling vexatious and malicious concerns

Of course, we do not extend this assurance to someone who maliciously raises a matter they know is untrue. If you deliberately raise a malicious concern or matter that you know is untrue, disciplinary action may be taken against you.

How to raise a concern internally

Please remember that you do not need to have firm evidence of malpractice before raising a concern. However, we do ask that you explain as fully as you can the information or circumstances that gave rise to your concern.

Step one

If you have a concern about malpractice, we hope you will feel able to raise it first with your manager or team leader. This may be done verbally or in writing.

Step two

If you feel unable to raise the matter with your manager, for whatever reason, please raise the matter with the Head of Internal Audit by:

Online Form	Our online form will guide you through the process.
Telephone	01223 458180
Email	internal.audit@scambsgov.uk

Alternatively, you may contact:

- Chief Executive
- Monitoring Officer
- Human Resources

If you have a concern relating to a Councillor, you should contact the Council's Monitoring Officer.

If you want to raise the matter confidentially, please say so at the outset so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

How we will handle the matter

You will receive an acknowledgement to confirm receipt of your concern within seven days. The Internal Audit Team will assess it and consider what action may be appropriate. This may involve an informal review, an internal inquiry, a more formal investigation.

We will tell you who will be handling the matter, how you can contact them, and what further assistance we may need from you. If you ask, we will write to you summarising your concern and setting out how we propose to handle it and provide a timetable for feedback. If we have misunderstood the concern or there is any information missing, please let us know.

When you raise the concern, it will be helpful to know how you think the matter might best be resolved. If you have any personal interest in the matter, we do ask that you tell us at the outset. If we think your concern falls more properly within our grievance, bullying and harassment or other relevant procedure, we will let you know.

Whenever possible, we will give you feedback on the outcome of any investigation. Please note, however, that we may not be able to tell you about the precise actions we take where this would infringe a duty of confidence we owe to another person.

While we cannot guarantee that we will respond to all matters in the way that you might wish, we will strive to handle the matter fairly and properly. By using this policy, you will help us to achieve this.

If at any stage you experience reprisal, harassment or victimisation for raising a genuine concern please contact *Internal Audit or Human Resources*.

Independent advice

If you are unsure whether to use this policy or you want confidential advice at any stage, you may contact the independent charity Protect on 020 3117 2520 or by email at whistle@protect-advice.org.uk. They can talk you through your options and help you raise a concern about malpractice at work.

You can also contact your union or professional body (where applicable) for advice.

External contacts

While we hope this policy gives you the reassurance you need to raise your concern internally with us, we recognise that there may be circumstances where you can properly report a concern to an outside body. In fact, we would rather you raised a matter with the appropriate regulator – such as [External Audit](#), [Health and Safety Executive](#) or the [Environment Agency](#) - than not at all. [Protect](#) (*or, if applicable, your trade union*) will be able to advise you on such an option if you wish.

Monitoring / oversight

The Policy will be regularly reviewed, and significant revisions will be presented to the Audit & Corporate Governance Committee. The Chair of the Audit & Corporate Governance Committee is the Whistleblowing Champion with oversight of the effectiveness of the arrangements. We will also report statistical information to the Committee as part of our good governance.

Internal Audit and Human Resources will monitor the daily operation of the policy and if you have any comments or questions, please do not hesitate to let one of the team know.

Data protection

We will keep a confidential record of your concern, and this will be held in accordance with relevant data protection legislation.

We may need to share data to help respond to your concern in the best way, or to identify if the concern is best managed via another procedure and will keep you informed of this.

We welcome reports from our Shared Service colleagues and will let you know if a partner Council is best equipped to proceed with your concern.