



HORNSEA TOWN COUNCIL

‘Whistle Blowing’

Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 It is important that Town Council employees are aware of the procedures to follow if they wish to draw attention to issues of serious concern. Such issues may relate either to bad practice or to other matters which seem to be against the interests of the public, the Council or its employees and may, in some cases, amount to fraud and corruption.
- 1.2 Employees are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within the Council. However, they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or to Council. They may also fear harassment or victimisation. In these circumstances, they may choose to ignore the issue.
- 1.3 Hornsea Town Council is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability and encourages employees and others with serious concerns about any aspect of the Council’s work to come forward and voice them. This policy ensures that employees can, without fear of reprisals, raise serious concerns within the Council rather than overlooking a problem or ‘blowing the whistle’ outside. Any concerns should be reported to the Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk, if either is the subject of the matter then the issue should be reported to the Mayor or Deputy Mayor.

2. Aims and Scope

- 2.1 The policy’s aim is to:
 - provide avenues for Council employees to raise concerns and receive feedback on any action taken
 - allow the employee to take the matter further if they are dissatisfied with the Council’s response
 - reassure the employee that they will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for ‘whistleblowing’ in good faith

3. Safeguards

3.1 Harassment, Bullying or Victimisation

The Council recognises that the decision to report a concern can be difficult to make, not least because of the fear of reprisal. The Council will not tolerate harassment, bullying or victimisation and will take action to protect the employee when a concern is raised in good faith. (This does not mean that if an employee is currently the subject of disciplinary or redundancy procedures, that those procedures will be halted as a result of 'whistleblowing').

3.2 Confidentiality

The Council will do everything possible to protect the identity of the employee who raises the concern should they not wish their name disclosed. However, the investigation process may reveal the source of the information and a statement by the employee may be required as evidence.

3.3 Anonymous Allegations

This policy encourages the employee to put their name to their allegation. Concerns expressed anonymously will be taken seriously but investigated at the discretion of Council. In exercising its discretion, the Town Council will consider:

- the seriousness of the issue raised
- the credibility of the concerns
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources

3.4 Untrue Allegations

If an allegation is made in good faith but is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against the employee. If, however, an employee makes malicious or vexatious allegations, disciplinary action may be taken.

4. Council's Response

4.1 The action taken by Council will depend on the nature of the concern. The matters raised may:

- be investigated internally by the Town Clerk, unless allegations relate to the Town Clerk
- be referred to the Police
- be referred to the External Auditor
- form the subject of an independent enquiry

- 4.2 Some concerns may be resolved by discussion, explanation or agreed action without the need for a full investigation.
- 4.3 If appropriate, within ten working days of the concern being notified, the matter will be referred to the Staffing Committee who will:
- indicate how it proposes to handle the matter
 - give an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response
 - advise whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not
- 4.4 The Council will take steps to minimise, as far as is practicable, any difficulties the employee may have in dealing with the officer considering the issue or with those implicated in the matter.

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