

DPC is committed to being open, honest and accountable. It encourages a free and open culture in its dealings between the Councillors, employees and volunteers. This policy aims to guide the councillors, employees/volunteers to raise any serious concerns they may have about colleagues or practice with confidence and without having to worry about being victimised, discriminated against, or disadvantaged in any way as a result.

It is written in the context of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 which protects all who 'blow the whistle' on malpractices within their organisation.

What types of concerns?

The policy is intended to deal with serious or sensitive concerns about wrongdoings such as the following:

- a criminal offence
- a failure to comply with any legal obligation or agreed DPC policy
- a failure in the protection of vulnerable adults
- a miscarriage of justice
- a health and safety risk to an individual
- damage to property or any malicious damage

How to raise a concern in the workplace

The officer designated to handle whistleblowing concerns is The Chair of DPC (If the whistleblowing is about the Chair then the Vice Chair of the DPC will be the whistle blowing officer) and shall be known as the Whistleblowing Officer.

Individuals should in most cases, first report their concern to their line manager (employees) or team leader (for volunteers on any project), Chair of DPC(Cllrs) who is expected to respond to that matter. If the relevant manager/team leader/Chair of Council cannot deal with the matter, he or she will refer the concern to the Monitoring Officer at Buckinghamshire Council. Dependent on the seriousness and sensitivity of the matter, and who is suspected of the wrongdoing, the individual can, if necessary report directly to the Monitoring Officer.

Individuals are encouraged to raise their concerns in writing where possible, setting out the background and history of their concerns (giving names, dates and places where possible) and indicating the reasons for their concerns. All personnel may invite a representative or colleague to be present during any meetings or interviews about the concerns they have raised.

Disclosures made to a legal advisor in the course of obtaining legal advice will be protected under the Public Interest Disclosure Act. Protecting the individual raising the concern If an individual raises a concern which they believe to be true. DPC will take appropriate action to protect the individual from any harassment, victimisation or bullying. Employees who raise a genuine concern under this policy will not be at risk of losing their job, nor will it influence any unrelated disciplinary action or redundancy procedures. The matter will be treated confidentially if the individual requests it and their name or position will be not be revealed

without their permission unless DPC has to do so by law. If in other circumstances the concern cannot be resolved without revealing the individual's identity, the Whistleblowing Officer will discuss with the individual whether and how to proceed.

Concerns raised anonymously tend to be far less effective but the Whistleblowing Officer will decide whether or not to consider the matter taking into account:

- the seriousness of the matter
- whether the concern is believable
- whether an investigation can be carried out based on the information provided.

Any action taken as a result of a concern raised through whistleblowing will as far as possible be kept confidential between the whistleblower, the designated Whistleblowing Officer and the person whom the whistleblower alleges has committed a breach of DPC policy and practice.

It is not necessary for individuals who raise the concern to prove the wrongdoing that is alleged to have occurred or is likely to occur. However, if an individual knowingly or maliciously makes an untrue allegation (eg: in order to cause disruption with DPC), DPC will take appropriate disciplinary action against them. It may constitute gross misconduct.

Individuals should note that they will not be protected from the consequences of making a disclosure if, by doing so, they commit a criminal offence. This policy does not deal with any complaints staff may have about their employment. This should be dealt with through DPC's Grievance Procedure. DPC's Bullying and Harassment policy offers protection to workers against harassment and discrimination.

The above policy is in respect of Buckinghamshire's Whistleblowing Policy

Derek Wilson

Executive Clerk and RFO