

ESSINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Adopted: Approved: 01 March 2021

Reviewed: 23rd of March 2026

Next review: March- Annually

1. Purpose of this Policy

Essington Parish Council is committed to the highest standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with that commitment, the Council expects employees and others working on its behalf to report any serious concerns about wrongdoing, malpractice or unlawful conduct.

This policy provides a framework within which individuals can raise concerns confidently and without fear of victimisation, retaliation or disadvantage. It reflects the requirements of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 and subsequent amendments.

2. What is Whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is the act of reporting a concern, in the **public interest**, about suspected wrongdoing that has occurred, is occurring, or is likely to occur.

A whistleblowing concern must be based on a **reasonable belief** that one or more of the following has taken place:

- a criminal offence
- a breach of a legal obligation
- a miscarriage of justice
- a danger to health and safety
- damage to the environment
- financial malpractice, corruption or fraud
- failure to comply with council policies or codes of conduct
- **sexual harassment or other serious misconduct affecting dignity, safety or wellbeing**
- deliberate concealment of any of the above

3. Who is Covered by this Policy?

This policy applies to:

- all employees (permanent, temporary, part-time or full-time)
- agency staff and contractors
- consultants working for the Council
- volunteers and trainees
- any individual providing services to or on behalf of the Council

4. Matters Not Covered by this Policy

This policy is not intended to replace the Council's grievance or disciplinary procedures. Concerns relating to personal employment issues should normally be raised through the grievance procedure unless the matter is in the public interest and meets the definition of whistleblowing.

5. Safeguards and Protection

5.1 Protection from retaliation

No individual who raises a concern **in good faith** under this policy will suffer any detriment, victimisation, harassment or discrimination as a result.

5.2 Malicious or vexatious allegations

If an allegation is made maliciously or knowingly false, disciplinary action may be taken.

6. Confidentiality

The Council will treat all disclosures sensitively and confidentially. The identity of the whistleblower will not be disclosed without consent unless this is required by law or necessary for proper investigation.

7. Anonymous Disclosures

Concerns may be raised anonymously. Anonymous disclosures will be considered, but investigation may be more difficult if it is not possible to obtain further information or feedback.

8. How to Raise a Concern

Concerns should be raised as soon as possible and reported to:

- **The Clerk to the Council** (the Responsible Officer for whistleblowing)

Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing. Written concerns should be marked:

“Private and Confidential – Whistleblowing”

If the concern relates to the Clerk, it should be raised with:

- **The Chairman of the Council**

Individuals are **not expected to investigate matters themselves** or to confront anyone suspected of wrongdoing.

9. How the Council Will Respond

- All concerns will be acknowledged **in writing within 10 working days**
- An initial assessment will determine the appropriate course of action
- Investigations will be conducted objectively and without delay
- The whistleblower will be informed of progress where possible, subject to confidentiality constraints
- Records of all disclosures will be kept securely

10. External Disclosures

The policy encourages concerns to be raised internally in the first instance. However, whistleblowers may also make protected disclosures to external bodies (known as “prescribed persons”) where appropriate and in accordance with legislation.

Independent advice may also be obtained from organisations such as **Protect (formerly Public Concern at Work)**.

11. Data Protection

Any personal data processed in connection with a whistleblowing disclosure will be handled in accordance with UK data protection legislation. Information will only be shared where necessary and lawful.

12. Responsibility and Review

The Clerk is responsible for administering this policy and reporting (in anonymised form) to the Council as appropriate.

This policy will be reviewed regularly and following any changes in legislation or best practice.

Approved by Essington Parish Council