

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Cringleford Parish Council

Introduction

Cringleford Parish Council is committed to the highest standards of openness, honesty and accountability. In line with that commitment, councillors, officers, local residents and others with serious concerns about any aspect of the Parish Council's work are encouraged to come forward. This policy applies to concerns about the activities of councillors, officers and external organisations in their dealings with the Parish Council. It is recognised that certain cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis. This policy document makes it clear that those with reasonable concerns can voice them without fear of reprisals and encourages people to raise serious issues with the Parish Council first rather than ignoring them or seeking recourse elsewhere.

This policy has been written to take account of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 which protects workers making disclosures about certain matters of concern when those disclosures are made in accordance with the Act's provisions and in the public interest.

Policy Statement

This policy aims to:

- Provide avenues for you to raise concerns and receive feedback on any action taken.
- Allow you to take the matter further if you are dissatisfied with the Parish Council's response.
- Reassure you that you will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistleblowing concerns made in good faith.

The Parish Council recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of reprisals from those responsible for the misconduct. The Parish Council will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take all reasonable measures to protect the originator when a concern is raised in good faith. The Parish Council will protect your identity when you raise a concern as much as we can and do not want your name to be disclosed. It must be appreciated though that a statement by you may be required as part of the evidence and we may need to reveal your identity (e.g. if the evidence is needed in a Court of Law). If this is the case, it will be discussed with you beforehand. This policy encourages you to put your name to your allegation whenever possible. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful, but they will be considered at the discretion of the Parish Council dependent upon the

seriousness and credibility of the allegation. If you make an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you. However, allegations which are frivolous, malicious or made for personal gain may lead to serious repercussions including disciplinary proceedings.

This policy is not for you to raise a grievance relating to your employment for which there are other policies and procedures in place.

Procedure

- As a first step, you should normally raise concerns with the Chair, (or their nominee), or the Clerk. If you feel that you cannot approach the Parish Council, then you should approach the Monitoring Officer at South Norfolk Council
- Matters should be raised in writing. You are invited to set out the background and history, giving names, dates and places where possible, and the reason why you are concerned about the situation. If you do not feel able to put your concern in writing, you can telephone or meet the appropriate person
- Although you are not expected to prove the truth of an allegation, you will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are grounds for your concern.

Parish Council Response

The Chair (or their nominee) will determine the nature and sequence of the investigations relevant to each case and will take the lead throughout the process. The actions taken by the Parish Council will depend on the nature of the concern and the matters raised may be:

- Investigated internally
- Investigated by the Monitoring Officer at South Norfolk Council
- Referred to the Police in order to protect individuals and the Parish Council

Initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. The person undertaking the preliminary enquiry will contact you with seven working days to understand the complaint more fully and, if appropriate, undertake an investigation. The Parish Council accepts that you need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Subject to legal or contractual constraints, you will receive information about the outcomes of any preliminary enquiries and investigations.

Further Action

Cringleford Parish Council will look into all reasonable concerns and hopes its enquiries and investigations will satisfy you. If you are not satisfied, and if you feel it is right to take the matter outside the Parish Council, the following are possible contact points:

- Monitoring Officer, South Norfolk Council
- Police

If you do take the matter outside the Parish Council, you need to ensure that you do not disclose confidential information.

Contact Details

Parish Clerk (Sonya Blythe) clerk@cringlefordpc.org.uk / 01603 250198

Chair (Trevor Wang) trevorwang@cringlefordpc.org.uk / 01603 502285

South Norfolk Council Monitoring Officer 01508 533791.