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ECKINGTON PARISH COUNCIL **Whistle Blowing Policy & Procedure**

All Councils face the risk of things going wrong or unknowingly harboring malpractice. The Council believes it has a duty to identify such situations and take the appropriate measures to remedy the situation. By encouraging a culture of openness within the Council, it is hoped that such problems can be prevented.

This policy applies to all Employees of the Council and other workers including temporary, subcontracted and agency workers.

By encouraging a culture of openness, the Council wants to encourage Employees and workers to raise issues which concern them at work. They may be concerned that by reporting such issues they may be exposing themselves to detrimental treatment or risking their job security. This is not the case. All staff have statutory protection if they raise appropriate concerns in the right way. This policy is designed to give staff that opportunity and protection. Providing they are acting in good faith it does not matter if they are mistaken. There is no question of Employees having to prove anything about the allegation they are making, but they must reasonably believe that the information they have implies acts which fall under this policy.

If there is anything which Employees think the Council should know about, they should use the procedure outlined in this policy. By knowing about malpractice at an early stage, the Council has a good chance of taking the necessary steps to safeguard the interests of all who are involved with and have a legitimate interest in its activities.

Issues which fall under this policy include:

- Criminal offences
- Miscarriages of justice.
- Dangers to health and safety
- Damage to the environment.

- Breaches of any legal and / or statutory obligations
- Deliberately concealing any of the above.

The Council's Guarantee

The Council is committed to this policy. If an Employee uses this policy to raise a concern in good faith, the Council gives them its assurance that they will not suffer any form of retribution or detrimental treatment.

The Council will treat their concern seriously and act according to this policy. They will not be asked to provide anything about the allegation they raise, but they must reasonably believe that the information they have tends to show some malpractice. If an Employee asks for a matter to be treated in confidence, the Council will respect their request.

Employees should raise their issues with the Parish Clerk. If they feel that they cannot deal with the Parish Clerk, for whatever reason, they should address their concerns to the Chair of the Council.

How the Council will respond

Once a concern has been raised the Council will decide how to respond in a responsible and appropriate manner under this policy. Usually this will begin with internal enquiries but may progress to either a formal or informal investigation, depending upon the nature of the concern. The Council will endeavor to complete the investigation within a reasonable time scale.

The investigation may be conducted by a team of three Councillors, selected by the Full Council, depending upon the nature of the concern.

The Council will keep the Employee informed of the progress of the investigation. However, the Council will not be obliged to reveal information which would infringe the confidentiality of others, the Data Protection Act or any other Statutory obligation.

Raising your concerns externally

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to give Employees the opportunity and protection they need to raise concerns internally. The Council would expect that in almost all cases, raising concerns internally would be the most appropriate action to take.

However, if for whatever reason Employees feel that they cannot raise their concerns internally and reasonably believe that the information and allegations are substantially true, they can consider raising the matter with the appropriate regulator, such as the Standards Board or Association of Local Councils.

Public Concern at Work is an independent charity whose main objective is to promote compliance with the law and good practice in the public, private and voluntary sectors. They can be contacted at www.pcaw.co.uk

If you have any questions regarding this policy and procedure, please feel free to discuss the matter with the Parish Clerk.

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