



Whistleblowing Policy

1 Introduction

Scarning Parish Council is committed to the highest standards of openness, honesty and accountability. It is important that any misconduct or wrongdoing by staff, members of the Council, contractors, or others acting on behalf of the Parish Council, is reported and properly dealt with. This policy sets out the way in which individuals, members of the Council, or its contractors, may raise any concerns they have and how those concerns will be handled.

2 Aim

The aim of this policy is to allow those with reasonable concerns to voice them without fear of reprisals. The 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.

The Parish Council acknowledges that some issues will need to proceed on a confidential basis.

This policy aims to:-

- Provide avenues for you to raise concerns and receive feedback in any action taken.
- Allow you to take the matter further if you are dissatisfied with the Council's response.
- Reassure you that you will be protected from reprisals 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 or wrongdoing. The Council will not tolerate harassment or victimisation, and will take all reasonable measures to protect the originator when a concern is raised.

The Parish Council will protect your identity when you raise a concern. It must be appreciated that a statement by you may be required as part of evidence and we may need to reveal your identity (for instance, 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 will be considered at the discretion of the Parish Council, dependent on 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 in the case of councillors and employees.

3 Examples of Serious Misconduct or Wrongdoing

This includes:-

- A criminal offence, for example theft, fraud or financial mismanagement
- Public interest disclosures
- Failure to comply with legal obligations
- Actions which endanger an individual's health or safety
- Actions which endanger the environment
- If the Parish Council uses its activities as a platform for extremist views or materials
- The conduct of the Council's contractors
- Actions which are intended to conceal any of the above or any other serious misconduct or wrongdoing

4 Procedure

Everyone should be aware of the importance of preventing and eliminating wrongdoing and misconduct. Members of the Council and its staff should be watchful for illegal or unethical conduct, and report anything of that nature that they become aware of. An instruction to cover up wrongdoing is a disciplinary offence. If told not to raise or pursue a concern, you should not agree to remain silent. You should report the matter to the Chair of the Parish Council or a member of the Council.

- As a first step, you should normally raise concerns with the Chair of the Parish Council. If you feel that you cannot approach the Chair of the Council, then you should approach the Parish Clerk or another member of the Parish 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 a particular situation. If you do not feel able to put your concern in writing, you can telephone or meet the appropriate person.
- The Council's Chair will determine the nature and sequence of the investigations relevant to each case.
- The action taken by the Parish Council will depend on the nature of the concern.
- If misconduct is discovered as a result of any investigation our Disciplinary Procedure (See the Parish Council's Disciplinary and Grievance Policy) will be used, in addition to any appropriate external measures.

5 Disclosure and Confidentiality

The Parish Council will treat personal data collected during this process in accordance with our Data Protection Policy.

Approved: November 2022. Reviewed without amendment February 2024.
Next review: February 2026.