

Raising concerns (Whistleblowing) Policy

INTRODUCTION

1. Employees are often the first to realise that there may be something wrong within the Council. Usually these concerns are easily resolved. However, when the concern feels serious because it is about a possible fraud, corruption or misuse of position that might affect others or the Council itself, it can be difficult to know what to do.

2. You may be worried about raising such a concern and may think it best to keep it to yourself, perhaps feeling it's none of your business or that it's only a suspicion. You may feel that raising the matter would be disloyal to colleagues, managers or to the Council. You may decide to say something but find that you have spoken to the wrong person or raised the issue in the wrong way and are not sure what to do next.

3. The Public Interest Disclosure Act provides workers with protection from dismissal or other damage as a result of making a disclosure of information in the public interest about wrongdoing at work. The Chief Executive, Chief Officers and Members are committed to adhering to the Public Interest Disclosure Act and to provisions contained therein. Provided you are acting honestly and reasonably believe it to be in the public interest, it does not matter if you are mistaken.

4. The Council is committed to running the organisation in the best way possible and to do so we need your help. We have introduced this policy to reassure you that it is safe and acceptable to speak up and to enable you to raise any concern you may have about malpractice at an early stage and in the right way. Rather than wait for proof, we would prefer you to raise the matter when it is still a concern.

5. This Raising Concerns Policy is intended to encourage and enable employees and members to raise serious concerns. This policy applies to all those who work for us; whether full-time or part-time, employed through an agency, contractors or as a volunteer. If you have a concern, please let us know.

6. These procedures are in addition to the Council's complaints procedures and other statutory reporting procedures applying to some departments. If, however, you wish to make a complaint about your employment or how you have been treated, please use the grievance procedure - which you can get from One Bromley or HR officer. This Raising Concerns Policy is primarily for concerns where the interests of others or of the organisation itself are at risk. These include:

- conduct which is an offence or a breach of law
- disclosures related to miscarriages of justice
- health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees
- the unauthorised use of public funds
- possible fraud and corruption
- sexual, physical, verbal or financial abuse of clients

If in doubt - raise it!

OUR ASSURANCES TO YOU

7. The Chief Executive, Chief Officers and Members are committed to this policy. If you raise a genuine concern under this policy, you will not be at risk of losing your job or suffering any form of retribution as a result. We will not tolerate the harassment or victimisation of anyone raising a genuine concern. Provided you are acting honestly and reasonably believe it to be in the public interest, it does not matter if you are mistaken or if there is an innocent explanation for your concerns. Of course we do not extend this assurance to someone who maliciously raises a matter they know is untrue.

8. With these assurances, we hope you will raise your concern openly. However, we recognise that there may be circumstances when you would prefer to speak to someone in confidence first. If this is the case, please say so at the outset. If you ask us not to disclose your identity, we will not do so without your consent unless required by law. You should understand that there may be times when we are unable to resolve a concern without revealing your identity, for example where your personal evidence is essential. In such cases, we will discuss with you whether and how the matter can best proceed.

9. Please remember that if you do not tell us who you are it will be much more difficult for us to look into the matter. We will not be able to protect your position or to give you feedback. Accordingly you should not assume we can provide the assurances we offer in the same way if you report a concern anonymously.

10. If you are unsure about raising a concern you can get independent advice from Protect- *formerly Public Concern at Work* which is an independent charity on 020 3117 2520 or by email at whistle@protect-advice.org.uk. Their lawyers can talk you through your options and help you raise a concern about malpractice at work.

HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN INTERNALLY

11. As a first step, you should normally raise concerns with your immediate manager or team leader. This depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of the malpractice.

12. If you are unable to raise the matter with your manager, for whatever reason, please raise the matter with:

Mark Bowen

Director of Corporate Services
Bromley Civic Centre,
Stockwell Close,
Bromley, Kent.

T: 020 8313 4355

F: 020 8290 0608

mark.bowen@bromley.gov.uk

OR

David Hogan

Head of Audit
Bromley Civic Centre,
Stockwell Close,
Bromley, Kent.

T: 020 8313 4886

david.hogan@bromley.gov.uk

13. If these channels have been followed and you still have concerns, or if you feel that the matter is so serious that you cannot discuss it with any of the above, please contact

Ade Adetosoye OBE

Interim Chief Executive
Bromley Civic Centre,
Stockwell Close,
Bromley, Kent.
T: 020 8313 4652

ade.adetosoye@bromley.gov.uk

Cllr Neil Reddin - Chairman,

Audit Sub-Committee
c/o Members' Room,
Bromley Civic Centre,
Stockwell Close,
Bromley, Kent.
BR1 3UH
T: 07850 921767

neil.reddin@bromley.gov.uk

OR Cllr Robert Evans - Vice Chairman,

Audit Sub-Committee
c/o Members' Room,
Bromley Civic Centre,
Stockwell Close
Bromley, Kent.
BR1 3UH
T: 07733116799

robert.evans@bromley.gov.uk

14. The concern could be raised verbally or in writing. If you want to raise the matter in confidence, please say so at the outset so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

HOW THE COUNCIL WILL RESPOND

15. Once you have told us of your concern, we will assess it and consider what action may be appropriate. This may involve an informal review, an internal inquiry or a more formal investigation. We will tell you who will be handling the matter, how you can contact them, and what further assistance we may need from you.

16. If you ask, we will write to you summarising your concern and setting out how we propose to handle it and provide a timetable for feedback. If we have misunderstood the concern or there is any information missing please let us know.

17. When you raise the concern it will be helpful to know how you think the matter might best be resolved. If you have any personal interest in the matter, we do ask that you tell us at the outset. If we think your concern falls more properly within our grievance, bullying and harassment or other relevant procedure, we will let you know.

18. Whenever possible, we will give you feedback on the outcome of any investigation. Please note, however, that we may not be able to tell you about the precise actions we take where this would infringe a duty of confidence we owe to another person.

MONITORING / OVERSIGHT

19. The Monitoring Officer (who is the Director of Corporate Services) has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy. That officer maintains a record of concerns raised and the outcomes (but in a form which does not endanger your confidentiality) and will report as necessary to the Council.

HOW THE MATTER CAN BE TAKEN FURTHER

20. While we hope this policy gives you the reassurance you need to raise such matters internally, we recognise that there may be circumstances where you can properly report matters to outside bodies, such as regulators or the police. Public Concern at Work (see paragraph 10) or your union will be able to advise you on such an option and on the circumstances in which you may be able to contact an outside body safely.