

EFFINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL

STATEMENTS OF GUIDANCE AND POLICY

4. Whistleblowing

The 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. The Whistle-Blowing Policy encourages people to raise serious issues directly with the Parish Council rather than overlooking the problem or blowing the whistle outside.

STATEMENT OF POLICY

The following statement of policy was adopted by Effingham Parish Council at its meeting of 28 February 2012.

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 whistle-blowing 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 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.

This policy encourages you to put your name to your allegation. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful, but they will be considered at the discretion of the Parish Council.

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 malicious or made out of mischief may lead to serious repercussions.

HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN

1. As a first step, you should normally raise concerns with the Chairman, (or in his absence the Vice Chairman) or Clerk. If you feel that you cannot approach the Parish Council, then you may approach the Monitoring Officer at Guildford Borough Council

2. 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
3. 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.

HOW THE PARISH COUNCIL WILL RESPOND

The Chairman (or in his absence the Vice-Chairman) 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. The matters raised may be: -

- investigated internally
- investigated by the Monitoring Officer at Guildford Borough 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 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.

HOW THE MATTER CAN BE TAKEN FURTHER

The 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, Guildford Borough Council
- Police
- Professional Organisation
- Charity "Public concern at work" 0207 404 6609

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