WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Introduction

There may be times when employees may have some concerns about what is happening at work. Usually these concerns are easily resolved. However, if it is considered that these concerns are about unlawful conduct, a breach of legal obligation, financial malpractice, danger to either the public or the environment, or deliberate covering up of information tending to show any of the aforementioned, it may be difficult to know what to do.

Antrim Borough Council has introduced this procedure to enable employees to raise concerns about such malpractice at an early stage and in the correct manner. In doing so due regard has been given to the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

If an employee considers that there is something which management should be aware of, they should use this procedure. If, however, it is a problem regarding their own personal position, the Grievance Procedure should be invoked. This Whistleblowing Procedure is primarily for concerns where the interests of others or of the Council itself are at risk.

Employee Protection

The Council and Chief Executive are committed to this policy. If an employee raises a genuine concern under this policy, they will not be at risk of losing their job or suffering any form of retribution as a result. Provided they are acting in good faith, it does not matter if they are mistaken. This assurance does not extend to an employee who maliciously raises a matter or raises a matter they know to be untrue. Where a matter is raised in an inappropriate or malicious manner management will, where necessary, take disciplinary action.

Management will not tolerate the harassment or victimisation of an employee raising a genuine concern. If an employee is found to be harassed or victimised for raising a genuine concern in the correct manner, the disciplinary procedure will be invoked. A concern may be raised in confidence under this policy where the employee's identity will not be disclosed without their consent. If the situation arises where management are not able to resolve the concern without revealing the employee's identity (for instance due to a court case), management will discuss the matter with the employee to see whether and how it can proceed.

While management may consider anonymous reports, this policy is not appropriate for concerns raised anonymously.

Management Involvement

Once the employee has informed management of the concern, management will look into the matter to assess what initial action is required. This may involve an internal inquiry or a more formal investigation. Management will inform the employee who is handling the matter. If the employee has any personal interest in the matter, management should be informed from the outset. If the matter raised falls more properly within the Grievance Procedure management will inform the employee accordingly.

While the purpose of this policy is to enable management to investigate possible malpractice and take appropriate steps to deal with it, management may not always be able to tell the employee the precise action taken, where this would infringe a duty of confidence owed by the council to another party.

How to raise a concern internally

If an employee has a genuine concern about malpractice, it should be initially raised in confidence with their Line Manager either orally or in writing. This will be forwarded to the relevant Director and\or Assistant Director of Human Resources. Details and evidence should where possible be provided to support such an allegation. Malicious, slanderous, or libellous allegations will not be accepted under this policy and all concerns which employees may have must be raised in the correct manner.

If the employee feels unable to raise the matter with their Manager, for whatever reason, the matter may be raised with the Human Resources section. Details and evidence should, where possible, be provided to support such an allegation.

While management cannot guarantee that they will respond to all matters in the way that the employee might wish, they will try to handle all matters fairly and properly.

All allegations or concerns will be treated seriously by management.