

Whistleblowing Policy

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Authority is committed to ensuring that it operates with high standards of honesty, integrity and accountability. The Authority encourages all members to come forward and voice any suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible, in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated as appropriate. The aim of this policy is to ensure members feel comfortable raising genuine concerns without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken.
- 1.2. The policy applies to all members appointed to any of the Authority's committees.
- 1.3. This policy does not form part of any other contract to provide services, and the Authority may amend it at any time.

2. Aim and Scope of this policy

- 2.1. This policy aims to:
 - provide a procedure in the event that members wish to raise concerns, together with the appropriate contact persons for them to approach for advice and guidance;
 - inform members of their ability to take the matter further if they are dissatisfied with the Authority's response; and
 - reassure members that they will be protected from reprisals if they raise genuine concerns in line with this policy.

What is whistleblowing?

- 2.2. "Whistleblowing" is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work. This may include:
 - Bribery;
 - Facilitation of tax evasion;
 - Failure to comply with any legal obligation;
 - Fraud or other criminal activity;
 - Miscarriages of justice;
 - Danger to health and safety;
 - Damage to the environment;

- A breach of the Authority’s Standing Orders or internal policies and procedures;
 - Conduct falling below the Authority’s standards or practice which damages the Authority’s reputation; and
 - The deliberate concealment of any of the above.
- 2.3. A “whistle-blower” is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to any of the above. If members have any genuine concerns related to suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting any of the Authority’s activities, they should report it under this policy.
- 2.4. If members wish to make a complaint relating to a code of conduct issue, they should use the Authority’s Code of Conduct Complaints Procedure. If, however, their complaint also involves concerns regarding one of the bullet point reasons listed above, they should discuss their concern with the Chair of the Authority (or, if the concern is about them, the Monitoring Officer or other designated officer appointed by them). A full list of contacts is set out in section 9.
- 2.5. If members are uncertain about whether their concern falls within the scope of this policy, the Authority encourage members to seek advice from the Chair of the Authority.

3. Safeguards

Protection for Members

- 3.1. Members must not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a concern and the Authority will not tolerate any such conduct. Detrimental treatment includes disciplinary action, threats or other unfavourable treatment connected with raising a concern. If members believe that they have suffered any such treatment, members should inform the Chair immediately. If the matter is not resolved, members should raise it formally under the Authority’s Code of Conduct Complaint procedure.
- 3.2. Members must not threaten or retaliate against whistle-blowers in any way. The Authority will subject members to code of conduct action if they carry out such conduct.

Confidentiality

- 3.3. The Authority encourage members to feel able to voice any concerns openly. However, if members wish to raise the concern confidentially, the Authority will respect their wish and do its best to protect their identity. It may however be appropriate for the purpose of the investigation process to reveal the source of the

information and include their statement of disclosure. If this is necessary, the Authority will discuss this with them in advance.

- 3.4. If members have any particular concerns about possible reprisals if their identity is revealed, they should report this to the Monitoring Officer. Appropriate measures can be taken to preserve members confidentiality. If members are in any doubt, they can seek advice from Protect (the independent whistleblowing charity) who offer a confidential helpline. Their contact details are at the end of this policy.

Anonymous Allegations

- 3.5. This policy encourages members to raise their concerns without the need to do so anonymously. The Authority will of course try to investigate any concerns raised (even those raised anonymously) however, concerns expressed anonymously may be more difficult or impossible to investigate if the Authority are unable to obtain further information. The following will be considered to determine whether the Authority can consider a concern raised anonymously:

- the seriousness of the issue(s) raised; and
- the credibility of the concern(s).

Untrue Allegations

- 3.6. If members raise an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, action will not be taken against them. If, however, members raise a malicious or vexatious allegation they know to be untrue, then the Authority will not investigate the case further and will instigate code of conduct action against them.

4. How to Raise a Concern

- 4.1. The Authority would encourage members to raise concerns with the Chair. This depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and whether they feel comfortable raising it to them. Alternatively, members may prefer to approach the other officers listed in section 9.
- 4.2. The Authority will arrange a meeting with them to discuss the concern as soon as possible after the concern has been raised. Members may bring a companion, who may be a member, to any meetings under this policy. The companion must respect the confidentiality of the meeting and any subsequent investigation. The Authority want to ensure that members feel comfortable raising any concerns therefore, it may be possible for the meeting to be held at a 'neutral' venue (i.e. away from their normal office or other work base).

- 4.3. The Authority will take a written note of the meeting and will provide you with a copy after the meeting. The Authority will also aim to give you an indication of how the Authority propose to deal with the matter.

5. How the Authority will Respond

- 5.1. Once a concern is raised, the Authority will take action by carrying out an initial assessment to determine the scope of any investigation, if appropriate. The Authority will also consider whether any concerns or allegations fall within the scope of other procedures (for example discrimination issues).
- 5.2. The action taken by the Authority will depend on the nature of the concern. The matters raised may:
- be investigated internally, in which case one of the designated officers will determine the appropriate investigatory measures. Staff with specialist knowledge of the subject matter may also be part of the investigation; or
 - be referred to an external party (for example, but not limited to, the Police or auditors).
- 5.3. The Authority aim to keep members informed of the progress of any investigation. Following the initial meeting, the Authority will write to them to:
- acknowledge that the concern has been disclosed;
 - indicate how it proposes to deal with the matter;
 - advise them whether initial enquiries have been made;
 - advise them whether further investigations will take place, and if not, why not; and
 - give an estimate of how long it will take to provide an outcome.
- 5.4. Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without further investigation. Alternatively, members may be required to attend additional meetings in order to provide further information.
- 5.5. At the conclusion of any investigation, a report will be produced highlighting the main findings. This will be shared with those who have a genuine and legitimate need to know. The designated officer will endeavour to keep members informed of the progress of the investigation, but will not necessarily be able to share either the final report or the conclusions of the investigation with them due to confidentiality. Members should treat any information about the investigation as confidential.

6. Other Action

If you are not satisfied

- 6.1. Whilst the Authority cannot guarantee the outcome members are seeking, it will try to deal with their concern fairly and in an appropriate way.
- 6.2. If members are not satisfied with how the concern has been handled, members may raise it to one of the contacts set out at the end of this policy.

External Disclosures

- 6.3. This policy is intended to provide members with an avenue within the Authority to raise concerns, start investigation and remedy any wrongdoing. The Authority hopes that members will be satisfied with any action taken and, in most cases, members should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally.
- 6.4. The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for members to report their concerns to an external body such as a regulator. The Authority strongly encourages members to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. An appropriate contact is the independent whistleblowing charity, Protect, who operate a confidential helpline and who also have a list of prescribed regulators for reporting certain types of concern. Their contact details are at the end of this policy.
- 6.5. For whistleblowing on matters relating to failures of public authorities to comply with environmental law, the prescribed body is the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP). Its mission is to protect and improve the environment by holding government and other public authorities to account. The OEP's powers and duties include scrutinising environmental improvement plans and targets, scrutinising environmental law, advising government on environmental law and enforcing against failures to comply with environmental law.
- 6.6. Where members wish to raise matters outside of the Broads Authority, whistleblowing through the OEP, rather than disclosing an issue publicly may help avoid reputational damage and could enable to identify systematic problems within or across organisations at the earliest opportunity. This could be, for example, by failing to take proper account of environmental law when carrying out activities or by unlawfully performing, or failing to perform, any activities which have to be carried out under environmental law. More information on the OEP's whistleblowing policy is available on its [website](#).
- 6.7. Whistleblowing concerns usually relate to conduct of members at the Authority however, they may sometimes relate to actions of a third party (such as suppliers). In some circumstances, the law will protect members to raise the matter with the third party directly. However, the Authority encourages members to report such

concerns internally first. Members should contact one of the designated Broads Authority officers to discuss this.

7. Support for Whistle-blowers

- 7.1. The Authority wants to support members who raise concerns as much as possible and encourages members to be open and transparent if they feel they need extra support.
- 7.2. If members do not wish to speak internally at the Authority, a confidential support and counselling hotline is available to whistle-blowers who raise concerns under this policy. The contact details are set out at the end of this policy.

8. Responsibility for the success of this policy

- 8.1. The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for this policy, and for reviewing the effectiveness of actions taken in response to concerns raised under this policy.
- 8.2. The Director of Finance has day to day operational responsibility for this policy, and members should refer any questions about this policy to them in the first instance. The Director of Finance must ensure that regular and appropriate training is provided to all managers and other members who may deal with concerns or investigations under this policy.
- 8.3. All members are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they use it to disclose any suspected wrongdoing or danger.

9. Contacts

Internal

Job Title	Contact Details
Chair	Harry Blathwayt harry.blathwayt@north-norfolk.gov.uk
Vice-chair	Tristram Hilborn tristram.hilborn@gmail.com
Chief Executive	John Packman 01603 756019 John.packman@broads-authority.gov.uk
Director of Finance	Emma Krelle 01603 756060 Emma.krelle@broads-authority.gov.uk

Job Title	Contact Details
Director of Operations and Data Protection Officer	Rob Rogers 01603 756085 Rob.rogers@broads-authority.gov.uk
Director of Strategic Services	Marie-Pierre Tighe 01603 756027 Marie-pierre.tighe@broads-authority.gov.uk
Monitoring Officer	Jonathan Goolden Monitoring.officer@broads-authority.gov.uk
Head of Internal Audit	Teresa Sharman 01603 430138 Teresa.Sharman@southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk

External

Organisation	Contact Details
Protect (Independent whistleblowing charity)	Helpline: 0203 117 2520 Online form: Contact our Advice Line - Protect - Speak up stop harm (protect-advice.org.uk) Website: www.protect-advice.org.uk
External Audit	David Riglar 01223 394400 Email: driglar@uk.ey.com Ernst & Young LLP One Cambridge Square, Cambridge North, Cambridge CB4 0AE
Norfolk Constabulary (for all suspected breaches of the law)	Operations and Communications Centre Jubilee House Falconers Chase Wymondham NR18 0WW Call: 101
Office for Environmental Protection	The Disclosure Team Office for Environmental Protection Wildwood Drive Worcester, WR25 2QT Email: whistleblowing@theoep.org.uk Call: +44 (0)330 236 92109 Website: theoep.org.uk

10. Review

- 10.1. This Strategy will be reviewed every three years, or more frequently where there are significant changes to legislation within which the Authority operates.

Version history

- 1.1 Adopted by Broads Authority 29 July 2022
- 1.2 Added paragraphs on external disclosures to include the Office for Environmental Protection and updates to section 9 (contacts) – approved by Management Team 1 October 2024