

1. Purpose

Berryfields Parish Council (BPC) is committed to the highest standards of openness, integrity, and accountability. This policy provides a framework for employees, councillors, volunteers, and contractors to raise concerns about wrongdoing in the workplace without fear of reprisal.

It aims to:

- Encourage early disclosure of genuine concerns
- Ensure such concerns are handled promptly, fairly, and confidentially
- Protect individuals from detriment or victimisation when raising concerns in good faith.

2. What is Whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is the reporting of certain types of wrongdoing that are in the public interest. It covers concerns that go beyond personal grievances and may include:

- Criminal offences (e.g. fraud, bribery, corruption)
- Breaches of legal obligations
- Miscarriages of justice
- Health and safety risks
- Environmental damage
- Concealment or deliberate cover-up of any of the above.

Personal employment concerns (such as pay or working conditions) should be raised under the **Grievance Policy**.

3. Principles

- BPC promotes a culture of openness and accountability
- Everyone covered by this policy should feel able to report genuine concerns without fear of victimisation
- All reports will be taken seriously, investigated appropriately, and treated confidentially.

4. Who Does This Policy Apply To?

This policy applies to:

- Employees (including temporary, fixed-term, zero-hours)
- Councillors
- Volunteers and contractors
- Agency workers and consultants working with or on behalf of BPC.

5. Reporting a Concern

Notify

Concerns should normally be raised in writing to the **Clerk**. If the concern involves the Clerk, it should be reported directly to the **Chair of the Council**.

The report should include:

- The nature of the concern
- Relevant background and dates
- Why the individual is concerned.

You do not need to prove the allegation but should have reasonable grounds for believing the information is true.

6. Investigation Procedure

Investigate

- The Clerk (or Chair, where appropriate) will arrange a confidential and thorough investigation
- Concerns involving potential breaches of the councillor **Code of Conduct** will be referred to the **Monitoring Officer** of the principal authority
- Those involved may be asked to provide statements or evidence
- Investigations will be carried out promptly, fairly, and objectively.

Conclude

- Findings will be reported to the Council
- If misconduct is found, appropriate action (disciplinary or otherwise) will be taken
- Where necessary, matters may be referred to external authorities (e.g. the police, Environment Agency, or HMRC)
- The original whistleblower will be informed of the outcome, subject to legal and confidentiality considerations.

7. Confidentiality

- BPC will make every effort to keep the identity of whistleblowers confidential. However, in some cases, disclosure may be necessary for a proper investigation or as required by law.
- Anonymous concerns will be considered, but anonymity may limit the ability to investigate fully.

8. Acting in Good Faith

- Individuals must act in good faith and have reasonable belief that the concern raised indicates wrongdoing.
- Malicious or knowingly false allegations will be treated as a disciplinary matter.

9. Protection from Retaliation

- Under the **Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA)**, individuals are protected from dismissal or other detriment as a result of whistleblowing in good faith.
- BPC will not tolerate harassment or victimisation of anyone raising a concern under this policy.
- Any retaliation should be reported immediately to the Clerk or Chair and will be treated as misconduct.

10. External Reporting

If the whistleblower believes the matter has not been properly addressed internally, they may raise it with an appropriate prescribed body such as:

- The external auditor
- The local Monitoring Officer
- The Environment Agency
- The Health and Safety Executive
- The police or other regulatory authorities.

We encourage internal reporting first, so that BPC has the opportunity to address issues quickly and fairly.

11. Monitoring and Review

- The Council will review the operation and effectiveness of this policy annually or when legislation or best practice changes.
- The Clerk will maintain a confidential log of all whistleblowing concerns and outcomes.

Document History

Approved and adopted

January 2026

(version 1)