

Sevenoaks Town Council

FRAUD POLICY

Responsibilities of Members of Staff

on Discovery or suspicion of Fraud, Misconduct, or Wrongful Doing by Others

As part of an effective system of internal control, the Council is required to have procedures in place for members of staff to be able to report, in total confidence, any evidence or suspicions of wrongdoing by others within their department.

It is hoped you will never have the need to use these instructions. However if a situation does arise which causes you worry or concern, the procedures outlined below are designed to enable you to report to the right person who will know what to do next.

What to do and what **not** to do

First of all, **don't** worry.

Instead you should act in accordance with the instructions set out in this policy, which are designed to ensure that further impartial checks are carried out before any appropriate action is taken. These procedures should also give you the reassurance that all reported incidents will be properly and fully investigated. Whether this proves to be groundless or not, provided that you have acted in good faith and in the best interests of the Council, there will be absolutely no adverse consequences for you.

Please note that you are **not** expected to know the precise nature of any wrongdoing, nor its extent. In particular you are **not** authorised to carry out any investigation work on your own account to obtain evidence or confirm your suspicions.

In no circumstances should you confront any member of staff whom you suspect of any wrongdoing.

These arrangements are an important and integral part of the Council's control systems. All members of staff are given a copy of this policy and are expected to understand and comply with it.

Who you should contact

All staff should address their suspicions to the Finance Officer, who has responsibility for internal control.

Contact may be made either by telephone or in writing to the Town Council offices with the envelope marked "Private and Confidential - to be opened by addressee only". As

the Finance Officer is employed part-time, you may in an emergency, or as a matter of preference, contact the Town Clerk.

In exceptional circumstances (or if your suspicions involve the Finance Officer or Town Clerk), you should contact the Chairman of the Personnel Committee, who is wholly independent of the town's administrative staff. Depending on the nature of the suspicion, he/she will either take up the matter with the Town Clerk or contact the Council's external auditors.

The Chairman of the Personnel Committee may be contacted either via the Town Council Offices, Bradbourne Vale Road or at his/her home address – all councillor contact details are on the STC website and in the Your Town newsletter.

You should **not** discuss your suspicions with anyone else - this includes your line manager if you have one.

What happens next?

Once you have reported your suspicions, you should await acknowledgement. You should **not** discuss your suspicions with anyone in the meantime.

You may be requested to attend an interview, and this will be arranged in absolute privacy.

Keep a copy of any report or item submitted. If you have not had any response from the Finance Officer, Town Clerk or Chairman of Personnel Committee within two weeks you should contact the Mayor.

You should also contact the Chairman of the Personnel Committee or Mayor if you are not satisfied in any way with the initial response you have been given, for example if you are asked to do anything in connection with your suspicions which you consider improper or beyond the scope of your normal duties.

Remember: you are **not** expected to form any judgment about your findings. The responsibility of every employee is primarily to notify one (or more if you wish) of the contacts named above, who will know what further procedures will need to be taken.

The Legal Position

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 gives statutory protection to any employee who, with "reasonable belief", discloses information suggesting that a criminal offence has been committed or that there has been a failure to comply with any legal obligation, or that such facts are being deliberately concealed. The disclosure must be made to the employer's representatives, as directed in this memorandum unless there are exceptional circumstances for not doing so. Further guidance may be obtained in confidence from the Audit Commission's hotline on 020 7630 1019.