

Anti-Fraud and Corruption

Fraud and Corruption within the public sector costs the taxpayer hundreds of millions of pounds each year and is on the increase. All public sector organisations are likely to be affected in some way by fraudulent or corrupt activity.

Babergh District Council is committed to the prevention, detection and investigation of all forms of fraud and corruption whether they are attempted from within or external to the organisation.

The Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy outlines the measures currently in place. The Council is not however complacent. Help us to stop the fraudsters by reporting suspected fraud and corruption to the Council.

What to do if you suspect fraud

[The Council's Whistleblowing Procedure](#)

[What an employee of the Council should do if they suspect fraud, theft or corruption](#)

[What a member of the public / outside organisation should do if they suspect fraud, theft or corruption](#)

[To report suspected Housing & Council Tax Benefit Fraud online.](#)

[To read the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy](#)

What is Whistleblowing?

Staff, Members and others closely involved with the Council, for example Contractors, are often the first to know when someone inside or connected to the Council is doing something improper or illegal. They may however, be reluctant to report the matter, because of feelings of loyalty to colleagues, or fear of reprisals or disciplinary action.

The Council recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, but it will not tolerate the harassment or victimisation of anyone raising a genuine concern.

Whistleblowing allows you to report improper or illegal activities without fear of reprisals. These could be: -

- Criminal offences such as fraud and corruption
- Failure to comply with legal obligations
- Miscarriages of justice
- Actions which may endanger the health or safety of Council staff, Members or the public
- Actions which cause damage to the environment
- Inappropriate behaviour such as bullying or harassment
- Actions which are intended to conceal any of the above.

How are Whistleblowers Protected from Reprisals

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (The Act) protects whistleblowers from any reprisals as long as they meet the rules set out in the Act:-

- You must disclose the information in good faith
- You must believe it to be substantially true
- You must not act maliciously or make false allegations
- You must not seek any personal gain

Babergh's Whistleblowing Procedure gives you assurance that your concerns can be raised in confidence and that the Council will do its utmost to protect the identity of those who do not want their name to be disclosed. However, there may be circumstances where the whistleblower is needed as a witness. In these circumstances the matter will be disclosed with you at the earliest opportunity.

What An Employee Of The Council Should Do If They Suspect Fraud

If you suspect fraud, theft or corruption being committed within the Council or committed against the Council there are a few simple guidelines that should be followed:-

1. Make an immediate note of your concern

Note all relevant details, what was observed, details of conversations, the date, time and name of the parties involved. Do not attempt to investigate the matter yourself.

2. Convey your suspicions to the person in the following list, with whom you are most comfortable:

Chief Executive

Deputy Chief Executive

A Corporate Director

Head of Finance

Monitoring Officer

Audit Manager

Union Representative

The Council's external Auditor

If you wish to report your concerns confidentially, email the Audit Manager, whistleblower@babergh.gov.uk

If you do not feel able to report your suspicions to anyone within the Council you can talk to the Audit Commission on a special phone line 0845 052 2646

Or you can contact Public Concern at Work, an independent charity that provides free advice to employees who wish to express concerns about fraud or other serious malpractice. Their telephone number is 020 7404 6609

3. Deal with the matter promptly

A delay may cause the Council to suffer further financial loss.

Don't

1. Do nothing

2. Be afraid of raising your concerns

You are protected by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 from any recrimination from your employer as a result of voicing a reasonably held suspicion.

The Council will treat any matter you raise sensitively and confidentially.

3. Approach or accuse any individuals directly

4. Try to investigate the matter yourself

There are special rules surrounding the gathering of evidence. Any attempt to gather evidence by people who are unfamiliar with these rules may jeopardise any subsequent case.

Internal Audit are trained in handling investigations in the proper manner.

5. Convey your suspicions to anyone other than those with the proper authority

Please remember it is your duty to report any suspected improper or illegal activity, please read the full [Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy](#)

What A Member of the Public / Outside Organisation Should Do If They Suspect Fraud

Introduction

This guidance explains how the Council will react when it receives a concern under its [Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy](#), which includes a Whistleblowing Procedure.

Please be assured that your concern will be treated in confidence at all times.

Concerns received will probably require different responses. This guidance is intended to provide you with an idea of the steps we will generally follow when a concern is received.

The guidance applies to all suppliers, contractors and members of the public who wish to raise a serious or sensitive concern about a potential criminal offence, breach of the law, health and safety or environmental issue.

What you need to tell us

If you have a concern then please raise it with us sooner rather than later. We would much rather be told about a concern and investigate it, even if the investigation shows your concern was unfounded, than not know about the matter in the first place.

It is best if your concern is raised in writing and that you provide your name and some contact information. A telephone number is sufficient.

When you first raise your concern we will treat it in good faith and accept that it is true. You should however try and avoid making your concern anonymously. If your concern is justified, but made anonymously, we may still be unable to investigate it if we can't contact you to obtain further information. Please think carefully about remaining anonymous.

You need to tell us as much as you can about your concern. Please try and provide some background information and all the names, dates and places that are relevant. If you have any documentary evidence to support your concern then please tell us about that as well. The more information you are able to provide the easier it will be for us to investigate your concern.

If you are uneasy about putting your concern in writing then contact us using one of the methods below and ask for a meeting, which doesn't have to be at the Council's offices. If you wish you can bring other people to the meeting if that will reassure you.

It is important that whichever method you use to make your concern, you make it clear that you are raising the issue as a whistleblower. This gives you additional statutory rights.

How to contact us

You can contact us by-

Sending an email to whistleblower@babergh.gov.uk

Writing a letter, clearly marking the envelope Strictly Private & Confidential to:
Audit Manager

Babergh District Council

Corks Lane

Hadleigh

Suffolk

IP7 6SJ

No matter which method you use to contact us, all the information you provide will be treated in confidence.

Who will investigate your concern?

All concerns are passed to the Council's Audit Manager as soon as they are received. All emails are accessible only by the Audit Manager. Post that is marked 'strictly private and confidential' will be passed unopened to them.

What we will do

Once you have told us of your concern the Audit Manager will look into it to assess what action should be taken. The initial assessment may involve an internal inquiry or a more formal investigation.

If the Audit Manager believes that your concern is valid, but should not be classed as a Whistleblowing concern, e.g. a potential breach of planning consent, then they may pass your concern to a member of staff in the relevant department to investigate. Your concern will be passed on anonymously; your details will remain confidential.

Depending on the outcome of the initial assessment we may decide that your concern is valid but that we have insufficient information to continue with the investigation. If this happens we will try and obtain further information to allow us to continue with the investigation. If this is not possible and no other option is available to us, we may request you to gather additional information on our behalf. You are under no obligation to do this however.

Once we have validated your concern and have sufficient information to continue, your concern will be investigated.

All meetings, decisions and actions taken in dealing with the concern will be recorded in writing.

Letting you know what we're doing

If you have provided contact information you will be told who is handling the matter, how you can contact them and whether your further assistance may be needed. If you request it, we will write to you summarising your concern and setting out how we propose to handle it.

When the investigation has been completed we will contact you again with as much detail about the investigation as we are able to provide. Please note that we may not be able to tell you the precise action we have taken, as this may infringe a duty of confidence owed by us to someone else.

What if we take no action?

If after undertaking the initial assessment and speaking with you, we feel that we do not have sufficient information to undertake an investigation into your concern then we will tell you. If you are unhappy about this, you should contact the Chief Executive, who will decide if any further action needs to be taken.

Maintaining confidentiality

We will do our utmost to protect your identity. If it has to be disclosed to allow us to undertake disciplinary or other more serious action against any wrongdoer, then we will discuss this with you. In some circumstances, especially if the Police are involved, we may be legally obliged to disclose your identity without your consent. Again, we will discuss this with you.

If you feel that you are being harassed or victimised because you have raised a concern then you must let us know. We will take action to protect you as long as we believe that your concern was raised in good faith.

Who to report to externally

If you sincerely believe that, by raising your concern with us, you will be subject to victimisation or reprisals of whatever sort, or that evidence to support your concern will be destroyed, then you should raise the matter with an external organisation, such as the Audit Commission on their confidential public interest disclosure line 0845 052 2646 or Public Concern at Work, an independent charity that provides free advice to employees who wish to express concerns about fraud or other serious malpractice. Their telephone number is 020 7404 6609.

When raising a concern externally remember to make it clear that you are raising the issue as a whistleblower. This gives you additional statutory rights.

Reporting a concern

Use this email address to report your concerns or suspicious activity: whistleblower@babergh.gov.uk. The email will be submitted directly and confidentially to the Council's Audit Manager.

Please give consideration as to the content of your email. Ensure you state clearly the details of your concern. Please consider whether or not you wish to be contacted in order to discuss your concern further, if so, please give your preferred method of contact and contact details, e.g. contact name, address, email address or telephone number.

Remember, concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful and are not so likely to be so effective. They will be considered at the discretion of the Council.

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Acting Audit Manager