

# **BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Audit, Standards and Governance Committee**

**13<sup>th</sup> July 2026**

## **Report: Whistleblowing, Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policies**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Simon Nock
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Assistant Director	Debra Goodall
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Wards Affected	ALL
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	No
Relevant Council Priority	Underpins all council priorities
Key Decision NO – Information only	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

### **1. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The Audit, Standards and Governance Committee is asked to RESOLVE to:**

- 1.1 Consider, with appropriate comment, the contents of the Whistleblowing Policy, Corporate Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy and Anti-Money Laundering Statement.
- 1.2 Confirm that the policies provide an appropriate framework for the prevention, detection, reporting and investigation of fraud, bribery, corruption and related financial misconduct.

### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1. The purpose of this report is to present the updated Whistleblowing Policy, Corporate Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy and Anti-Money Laundering Statement for Audit, Standards and Governance Committee consideration and recommendation for approval.
- 2.2. The policies forms a key component of the Council's governance framework and supports the Council's commitment to maintaining the highest standards of integrity, accountability, transparency and stewardship of public funds.

**Whistleblowing Policy**

- 2.3. The Whistleblowing Policy forms a key element of the Council's wider governance, ethical and counter-fraud framework and provides an important mechanism through which concerns can be raised and addressed at an early stage.
- 2.4. The policy reinforces the Council's commitment to maintaining an open and transparent culture in which employees, workers, contractors and others connected with the Council feel able to raise genuine concerns regarding wrongdoing, malpractice, fraud, corruption, financial mismanagement, health and safety matters or other issues that are in the public interest. The policy is designed to provide assurance that concerns can be raised without fear of victimisation, harassment or detriment where disclosures are made in good faith.
- 2.5. The revised policy strengthens reporting arrangements by providing multiple routes through which concerns can be raised, including management channels, senior officers, a dedicated whistleblowing email facility and a confidential whistleblowing hotline. It also provides greater clarity regarding the assessment, investigation and escalation of concerns, including referrals to Internal Audit, External Audit, regulatory bodies and the Police where appropriate.

**Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy**

- 2.6. Fraud, bribery, corruption and other financial irregularities present significant financial, legal and reputational risks to local authorities. Effective counter-fraud arrangements are fundamental to protecting public resources, maintaining public confidence and supporting good governance
- 2.7. The Council has historically maintained a range of counter-fraud related policies and procedures. This revised policy brings together the Council's overarching approach into a single corporate framework which clearly sets out expectations, responsibilities, reporting arrangements and governance arrangements for Members, officers and third parties.

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- 2.8. The policy has also been updated to reflect changes in legislation, emerging fraud risks and current best practice within local government. In particular, the policy acknowledges the corporate offence of failure to prevent fraud introduced through the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023 and reinforces the Council's expectation that proportionate arrangements are maintained to prevent fraud and financial misconduct.
- 2.9. The policy adopts a clear zero-tolerance approach to fraud, bribery, corruption, theft and other forms of financial irregularity. It confirms the Council's commitment to preventing, detecting, investigating and taking appropriate action where concerns arise.
- 2.10. Key features include:
- Establishment of a single overarching policy framework linking together the Council's Constitution, Codes of Conduct, Financial Procedure Rules, Contract Procedure Rules, Whistleblowing Policy, Gifts and Hospitality arrangements and Anti-Money Laundering requirements.
  - Clear definition of the responsibilities of Members, officers, managers, Internal Audit, the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer in preventing and responding to fraud and corruption.
  - Strengthened reporting and escalation procedures, including clear routes for employees, Members and the public to report concerns.
  - Defined investigation arrangements to ensure allegations are assessed consistently and investigated by appropriately qualified officers, with referrals to external agencies where necessary.
  - Reinforcement of expectations relating to gifts, hospitality, conflicts of interest, facilitation payments and kickbacks, all of which can present corruption risks if not properly managed.
  - Inclusion of practical guidance and indicators to support awareness and detection of fraud and bribery risks across the organisation.
- 2.11. The policy recognises that effective counter-fraud activity extends beyond investigation and enforcement. It places significant emphasis on prevention, organisational culture, management responsibility, internal controls and risk management as the first line of defence against fraud and corruption.

- 2.12. The Audit, Standards and Governance Committee is identified within the policy as the principal Member body responsible for receiving assurance over the Council's anti-fraud arrangements and oversight of fraud-related activity reported through Internal Audit.
- 2.13. The policy also provides a framework for corporate recording, reporting and monitoring of fraud-related matters, supporting transparency and continuous improvement of the Council's control environment.

### **Anti-Money Laundering Arrangements**

- 2.14. The Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy incorporates an updated Anti-Money Laundering Statement. Whilst the Council is not directly regulated under the Money Laundering Regulations for most of its activities, it remains subject to relevant legislation including the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 and the Terrorism Act 2000.
- 2.15. The Statement sets out the Council's approach to identifying and reporting suspected money laundering activity and confirms the roles of the Money Laundering Reporting Officer and Deputy Money Laundering Reporting Officers. It also reinforces employee responsibilities in relation to recognising and reporting concerns and avoiding any actions that could constitute "tipping off".

### **Conclusion**

- 2.16. In summary, the revised Whistleblowing Policy, Corporate Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy and Anti-Money Laundering Statement strengthen the Council's governance framework, reflect current legislative requirements and clearly articulate the Council's expectations regarding ethical conduct and the protection of public funds.
- 2.17. Adoption of the policies will support the Council's continuing commitment to robust governance, effective risk management and the prevention and detection of fraud, bribery, corruption and financial crime.

- 2.18. The Whistleblowing policy complements and supports the Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy by promoting early reporting of concerns and establishing clear protections for whistleblowers. Together, the documents provide a comprehensive framework for preventing, detecting and responding to fraud, corruption, misconduct and other forms of wrongdoing, whilst supporting the Council's commitment to high standards of governance, accountability and stewardship of public resources.

### **Status of Policies**

- 2.19. The policies attached to this report are substantially complete. Finalisation processed will include adding relevant contact details and any comments to be incorporated from Members before publication on the Council's website.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1. There are no direct financial implications from this report although, clearly, these policies articulate the Council's expectations regarding ethical conduct and the protection of public funds.

### **4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report although, clearly, these policies articulate the Council's expectations regarding ethical conduct and the protection of public funds.

### **5. OTHER - IMPLICATIONS**

#### **Local Government Reorganisation**

- 5.1. There are no direct implications arising from this report in relation to Local Government Reorganisation or Devolution.

#### **Relevant Council Priority**

- 5.2. Financial resilience and good governance underpin the council's ability to meet all of its priorities.

#### **Climate Change Implications**

5.3. None directly resulting from this report

**Equalities and Diversity Implications**

5.4. No adverse impacts resulting from the content of this report

**6. RISK MANAGEMENT**

6.1. The absence of an effective and up-to-date counter-fraud framework and reporting process could increase the Council's exposure to financial loss, fraud, bribery, corruption, regulatory non-compliance and reputational damage. The policies included within this report help mitigate these risks by establishing clear responsibilities, reporting arrangements, investigation procedures and governance oversight. Furthermore, the policy supports compliance with relevant legislation and strengthens the Council's overall system of internal control and assurance

**7. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 7.1. Appendix A - Whistleblowing Policy
- 7.2. Appendix B - Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy
- 7.3. Appendix B (Appendix 3) - Anti-Money Laundering Statement

# **Whistleblowing Policy**

**Redditch Borough Council  
Bromsgrove District Council**



***Date of Issue: August 2026***  
**Version 2.0**

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## **1. Introduction**

Employees are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within the Council, but may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking out would be disloyal to their colleagues or the Council. Employees may also fear harassment or victimisation and may feel that it would be easier to ignore the concern rather than report what may be just a suspicion of malpractice. However this is not a culture that the Council wishes to encourage.

We are committed to the highest possible standards of openness, accountability and probity. In line with that commitment we encourage Employees with serious concerns about the Council's work to come forward and voice those concerns. This Policy document makes it clear that anyone wishing to highlight wrongdoings can do so without fear of reprisals and is intended to encourage and enable employees and other workers to raise concerns within the Council rather than overlooking a problem or blowing the whistle outside.

## **2. Who does this policy apply to**

This Policy applies to all employees of the Council, officers, consultants, self-employed contractors, casual workers, agency workers, volunteers, and interns (collectively referred to as **Employees** in this policy).

## **3. Aims and scope of this policy**

The purpose of this policy is: -

Provide confidential avenues for Employees to raise concerns and receive feedback on any action taken;  
Allow Employees to take the matter further if they are not satisfied with the Council's response; and  
Reassure Employees that they should be able to raise genuine concerns without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

## **4. What is whistleblowing**

**Whistleblowing** is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work. The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 gives legal protection to Employees against being dismissed or penalised by their employers for publicly disclosing serious concerns falling into certain specified categories. This policy is designed to be used to raise serious concerns which are in the public interest. Examples of serious misconduct or malpractice which may prompt such a disclosure are:-

- Criminal activity
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation
- Miscarriage of justice
- Endangering of health and safety
- Damage to the environment
- Bribery, financial fraud or financial mismanagement
- The deliberate concealment of any of the above matters.

A “**whistleblower**” is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to any of the above. If Employees have any genuine concerns related to suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting any of the Council’s activities (a “**whistleblowing concern**”) they should report it under this Policy.

This Policy should not be used for complaints relating to an employee’s own personal circumstances, such as the way they have been treated at work. In those cases, the employee should use the Grievance Procedure or the Bullying and Harrassment.

If a complaint relates to an employee’s own personal circumstances but they also have wider concerns regarding one of the areas set out above (for example, a breach of our internal policies), the employee should discuss with a member of the Council’s leadership team which route is the most appropriate.

If Employees are uncertain whether something is within the scope of this Policy, they should seek advice from a member of the Council’s leadership team.

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This Policy has been implemented following discussion with the recognised trade unions. It has been formally adopted by the Council.

This Policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment or other contract to provide services and the Council may amend it at any time with consultation where appropriate.

## **5. Safeguards**

### **5.1 Protection from harassment or victimisation**

The Council is determined that the culture and tone of the organisation is one of honesty and opposition to all forms of wrongdoing.

The Council recognises that the decision to report a concern is a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of reprisal from those committing the wrongdoing. Therefore, the Council will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take action to protect Employees when they raise a concern in good faith.

Whistleblowers must not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a concern. Detrimental treatment includes dismissal, disciplinary action, threats or other unfavourable treatment connected with raising a concern. Victimising whistleblowers or deterring them from raising a concern about fraud, corruption or any other matter will not be tolerated and will be considered as a disciplinary offence. If Employees believe that they have suffered any such treatment, or if they are not happy with how their concerns has been handled, they should inform those persons referred to in section 6 immediately. If the matter is not remedied Employees should raise it formally using the Council's Grievance Procedure.

Employees must not threaten or retaliate against whistleblowers in any way. If Employees are involved in such conduct then Employees may be subject to disciplinary action.

### **5.2 Confidentiality and support**

The Council hope that Employees will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this Policy. However, if Employees do not want their name to be disclosed, the Council will do its best to protect the identity of Employees who raise a concern. It must be appreciated that the investigation process may reveal the source of the information and a statement by the whistleblower may be required as part of the evidence (albeit that it may be presented anonymously). If it is necessary for anyone investigating a whistleblower's concern to know the

whistleblower's identity, the Council will discuss this with the whistleblower.

The Council recognises that the type and level of support offered will depend upon the person concerned. Employees are, therefore, encouraged to talk to the person that they raised the concern with, and/or can contact the confidential Employee Assistant Programme (EAP) found on the Orb.

### **5.3 Anonymous disclosures**

This Policy encourages Employees to put their name to any allegation they make as concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful. Employees should be aware that proper investigation may be more difficult or impossible if the Council cannot obtain further information from a whistleblower. It is also more difficult to establish whether any allegations are credible.

### **5.4 Untrue allegations**

There is a need to ensure that any investigation process is not misused and therefore any abuse such as raising unfounded, false or malicious allegations will be dealt with as a disciplinary matter.

### **5.5 Safeguarding concerns**

Allegations of abuse of children and vulnerable adults will always be reported in line with our Safeguarding Policy via a safeguarding lead.

## **6. How to raise a concern**

As a first step Employees should raise concerns with their immediate manager or superior.

Where the matter is more serious or Employees feel that their line manager or superior has not addressed the concern, or if Employees prefer not to raise it with them for any reason, Employees should contact one of the following:-

- Assistant Director for your team
- Human Resources and Organisations Development Manager

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- Monitoring Officer or Deputy Monitoring Officer
- Chief Executive
- Section 151 Officer

Employees may raise concerns in writing to the Council's Monitoring Officer using the following address:

Redditch Borough Council  
Town Hall  
Walter Stranz Square  
Redditch  
Worcestershire  
B98 8AH

Bromsgrove District Council  
Parkside  
Market Street,  
Bromsgrove,  
Worcestershire  
B61 8DA

Concerns may also be raised via the Council's central whistleblowing email account: **xxxxxxx**

This email account is monitored in accordance with the Council's whistleblowing procedures, and all disclosures received through this route will be handled confidentially and managed in line with this policy.

The Council provides a confidential Whistleblowing Hotline, operated via the Audit function.

This facility enables employees, workers and third parties to raise concerns in confidence and, where appropriate, anonymously.

The Whistleblowing Hotline can be accessed via:xxxxxxxxxxxx

All concerns raised through the hotline will be recorded, assessed and managed in accordance with this policy and the Council's established whistleblowing procedures.

If an individual wishes to set out the background to their concern in writing and provide documents in support, this would be helpful. Alternatively, they may choose to explain the reasons for their concern verbally. A note of this conversation will be taken. Employees will be asked to agree to or amend the written note which may be used as evidence in any investigation and a copy of the written record will be provided to the whistleblower. We will also aim to give you an indication of how we propose to deal with the matter.

Although Employees are not expected to prove the truth of an allegation, they will need to demonstrate that there are sufficient grounds for their concern. Employees should remember that the earlier they express their concern, the easier it may be for action to be taken. If in doubt, Employees should contact one of the persons set out above and talk to them about the situation before formally making the allegation.

Whistleblowing concerns may sometimes relate to the actions of a third party such as a customer, supplier or service provider. In some circumstances the law will protect Employees if they raise the matter with the third party directly. However, Employees are encouraged to report such concerns internally first, in line with this Policy and should contact the persons detailed for guidance.

## **7. Detection and investigation**

Reporting is an essential element of the Whistleblowing Strategy and all allegations of wrongdoing will be forwarded to the Council's Monitoring Officer for investigation. This will ensure that:

- Incidents are correctly collated;
  - There is consistent treatment;
  - Evidence is collected properly and as early as possible;
- and
- Experienced Officers are available to investigate the claim.

Once a concern is raised, initial assessment and enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate (this will depend on nature and scale of alleged wrongdoing and the evidence that is available) and, if so, what form it will take. Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation.

Within ten (10) working days of a concern being raised (if raised with one of the internal contacts), the Officer contacted will write to the whistleblower:

- Acknowledging that the concern has been received;
- Indicating how the matter is likely to be dealt with;
- Supplying the whistleblower with information on Employees support mechanisms in place; and
- Giving an estimate of how long the investigations will take.

The matters raised may:

- Be investigated internally;
- Be referred to the Police;
- Be referred to the Council's External Auditor
- Form the subject of an independent inquiry;

or any combination of all four of the above avenues.

The amount of contact between the Officers considering the issues and the whistleblower will depend on the nature of the matters raised, the potential difficulties involved and the clarity

of the information provided. If necessary, further information will be sought from the whistleblower and the whistleblower will be informed of the progress of the investigation and its likely timescale. Depending on the circumstances, the whistleblower may be asked to maintain confidentiality and should treat any information about the investigation as confidential.

Whistleblowers may be required to attend additional meetings in order to provide further information. When any meeting is arranged with the whistleblower, if they so wish, they may be accompanied by a trade union or a colleague, such a person must respect any confidentiality that applies including the confidentiality of any disclosure and any subsequent investigation.

The Council will take steps to minimise any difficulties which Employees may experience as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if Employees are required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings, the Council will advise the whistleblower about the procedure.

The Council's Disciplinary Procedures will be used where the outcome of the investigation indicates improper behaviour.

The Council will inform the Police to be made aware of and to independently prosecute offenders where financial impropriety is discovered or a criminal offence has been committed.

Arrangements will be put in place to ensure that if requested, and subject to legal constraints, a report back to the whistleblower indicating the outcome of the investigation and any proposed action will be made. However, sometimes the need for confidentiality may prevent information being shared which may include specific details of the investigation, an outcome or any disciplinary action taken as a result.

## **8. Further reporting routes**

This Policy is intended to provide Employees with an internal route for reporting their concerns within the Council. In most circumstances, you should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally. However if Employees feel unable to report concerns internally or in circumstances where it may be appropriate for

Employees to report concerns to an external body then Employees should contact.

- “Protect” / National Whistleblowing Helpline for advice.
- The Green House, 244-254 Cambridge Heath Road, London, E2 9DA
- Telephone: 020 3117 2520
- Website: <https://protect-advice.org.uk/>

**However, Employees must remember that if the matter is taken outside the Council they must have reasonable grounds for suspicion and should not disclose confidential information unless it can be shown to be in the public interest.** Therefore, the Council strongly encourages Employees to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external and the Council encourages Employees to report such concerns internally first in line with this Policy.

It will very rarely, if ever, be appropriate to alert the media. Employees are strongly advised not to refer any concerns they may have to the media TV, radio, press, websites or social media.

Adverse publicity may damage the reputation of the Council and by going to the media Employees may be in breach of their contract of employment and subject to disciplinary action. Employees may also lose their right to statutory protection against whistleblowing. In addition, it could leave the whistleblower more exposed to publicity and to counter allegations/actions by those accused.

However, disclosures made outside the Council are protected provided they are not made for personal gain and they were not raised internally because there was a reasonable belief of victimisation or that there would be a cover up, and the matter was exceptionally serious.

## **9. What happens when an employee is the subject of a concern in accordance with the Public Interest Disclosure Act?**

The Council believes that everyone has the right to be treated fairly and in accordance with the principles of natural justice, and will therefore apply these principles to Employees if they are the subject of someone voicing their concern.

The following steps will be taken by the Council if Employees are the subject of such a concern:

- When appropriate Employees will be informed both verbally and in writing of the concern, and will be advised to seek the advice of their trade union, solicitor or professional association.
- There will be nominated people available for support who will be responsible for advising Employees at regular intervals on how the investigation is proceeding.
- Employees may be suspended from work on full pay during the investigative process but this will not be regarded as a punitive measure. It will be used in circumstances, where for example, public interest is likely to be high or where, it may aid the investigation itself.

- Employees will be advised of the outcome of the investigation and how this may impact their employment with the Council as soon as possible, once the investigation has been concluded.

## **10 Corporate Reporting and Assurance**

The Council will maintain appropriate records of all whistleblowing concerns and ensure that effective internal controls are in place to support the secure recording, handling and monitoring of such cases.

The Monitoring Officer is responsible for oversight of whistleblowing arrangements and will report, as appropriate, to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee on the number, nature and outcomes of whistleblowing cases, ensuring appropriate confidentiality is maintained.

## **11. Review**

This policy will be reviewed by CMT on a regular basis to ensure that it remains relevant and is kept up to date.

**NOTE:** *We reserve the right to vary the content of this document where appropriate.*



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[www.bromsgrove.gov.uk](http://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk)

# **Corporate Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy**

## **And Anti-Money Laundering Statement**

## Introduction

The Council takes its legal responsibilities very seriously and will uphold all laws relevant to countering fraud, bribery and corruption. The Council is determined to maintain its reputation as an authority which will not tolerate fraud, bribery, corruption, theft or abuse of position for personal gain, wherever it may be found in any area of Council activity, and takes its responsibilities to protect the public purse very seriously.

To achieve this goal the Council will work to identify and eliminate any form of fraud, bribery and corruption through this anti-fraud, bribery and corruption policy (the “**Policy**”), through its wider counter-fraud framework and associated policies, and through risk assessment, ongoing monitoring and review. The Council takes a zero-tolerance approach to fraud, bribery and corruption, while ensuring that any response is proportionate, evidence-based and procedurally fair.

The Council recognises that fraud and other forms of financial irregularity can undermine the standards of public service it seeks to achieve, reduce the level of resources and services available to residents, and have serious consequences for public confidence in the Council.

Elected Members and employees play a key role in counter-fraud initiatives. This includes providing a corporate framework within which counter-fraud arrangements can flourish, promoting an anti-fraud culture, and leading by example. This should provide a sound defence against internal and external abuse of public funds and support the high standards of conduct expected by the Council. The Council has adopted relevant principles and is committed to embedding effective standards for countering fraud and corruption to support good governance and sound financial stewardship.

Through the ‘Whistleblowing Policy’ employees are encouraged to report any suspicion of bribery, fraud or corruption, safe in the knowledge that they can report concerns in confidence and without risk of reprisal. The Council recognises that prevention and, where necessary, investigation of fraud, bribery and corruption is an important aspect of its duties. This Policy sets out the key responsibilities within the Council for fraud prevention, what to do if fraud is suspected and the action that will be taken by management. The Policy provides overarching governance to the Council’s suite of counter-fraud policies and procedures, including:

- the Council’s Constitution, including the Members’ Code of Conduct, Officers Code of Conduct, Contract Procedure Rules and Financial Procedure Rules
- the Whistleblowing Policy
- the Gifts and Hospitality Policy
- the Anti-Money Laundering Statement (see Appendix 3)

- the Acceptable Use of Electronic Services Information Security Policy
- contract terms and conditions and standard instructions for tenderers

## Policy Statement

The Council is committed to maintaining the highest standards of honesty, integrity, accountability and transparency in the conduct of its business. It takes a zero-tolerance approach to fraud, bribery, corruption, theft and other forms of financial irregularity, and will take appropriate action where concerns are identified or substantiated.

The Council will not offer, promise, give, request or accept bribes, improper inducements or any other advantage intended to influence decisions, secure favourable treatment or obtain an improper benefit. The Council will not engage indirectly in bribery, fraud or corruption through third parties, nor will it encourage, permit or tolerate such behaviour by anyone acting for or on its behalf.

The Council will maintain and enforce effective systems, procedures and controls to prevent, detect, investigate and respond to fraud, bribery and corruption. Allegations will be considered carefully and, where appropriate, investigated in accordance with this Policy, the Council's counter-fraud framework, disciplinary procedures and relevant legal requirements.

This Policy supports the Council's wider governance framework, including the Constitution, Codes of Conduct, Financial Procedure Rules, Contract Procedure Rules, Whistleblowing Policy, Gifts and Hospitality arrangements, Anti-Money Laundering Statement (Appendix 3) and related counter-fraud procedures.

Under the terms of this Policy all employees and elected Members are prohibited from soliciting, arranging or accepting bribes intended for the benefit of the Council, or for their personal benefit, or for the benefit of the employee's family, associates or acquaintances. This Policy extends to all the Council's business dealings, transactions and decisions and reflects the Council's expectation that those associated with it will act with honesty and integrity and be accountable for their actions.

### **Objective of the Policy**

The purpose of this Policy is to:

- a) set out our responsibilities, and of those working for and on our behalf, in observing and upholding our position on fraud, bribery and corruption
- b) provide information and guidance to those working for and on our behalf on how to recognise and deal with bribery and corruption issues.

This Policy aims to provide a coherent and consistent framework to enable the Council's employees and Elected Members to understand and implement arrangements enabling compliance.

### **Definitions**

For the purposes of this Policy, the following definitions apply.

#### **What is Fraud?**

The Fraud Act 2006 identifies fraud as a single offence which can be committed in three ways: false representation, failure to disclose information where there is a legal duty to do so, and abuse of position. Put simply, fraud is an act of deception intended to make a gain, cause a loss, or expose another to a risk of loss.

The Council also notes the corporate criminal offence of failure to prevent fraud introduced by the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023, which came into force in September 2025. Where applicable, and in any event as a matter of good governance, the Council will maintain proportionate arrangements intended to prevent fraud by employees, agents or associated persons

#### **What is Bribery?**

Bribery is an inducement or reward offered, promised, given, requested or accepted to gain personal, commercial, regulatory or contractual advantage. It may involve financial or other advantages and can arise directly or indirectly.

There are four key offences under the Bribery Act 2010: bribery of another person, accepting a bribe, bribing a foreign public official, and failure by a commercial organisation to prevent bribery. The Council recognises the importance of maintaining adequate procedures to prevent bribery and to protect itself against the risk of corporate liability. The Bribery Act 2010 makes it possible for individuals to be convicted where they are deemed to have given consent or tacit approval to the giving or receiving of a bribe. This Policy, the Council's Codes of Conduct, the Whistleblowing Policy and staff training arrangements are intended to support the Council's arrangements for preventing bribery and corruption.

#### **What is Corruption?**

Corruption is the deliberate misuse of a position for direct or indirect personal gain. The Council defines corruption as the offering, giving, soliciting or accepting of any inducement or reward which would influence the actions of the Council, its members or its employees.

## **Scope**

This Policy applies to all Council activities, services, decisions, transactions and business dealings, whether undertaken directly by the Council or on its behalf. It applies to all individuals and organisations who work for, act on behalf of, provide services to, receive funding from, or otherwise engage with the Council, including:

- employees, whether permanent, fixed-term, temporary, casual or agency
- elected Members and independent Members
- volunteers, trainees and secondees
- contractors, consultants, suppliers, agents and advisers
- partners, joint venture partners and Council-funded organisations
- third-party representatives and business partners
- service users
- members of the public.

For the purposes of this Policy, a “third party” means any individual or organisation that the Council, its employees or Members may deal with in the course of Council business. This includes actual or potential suppliers, contractors, consultants, advisers, partners, agents, representatives, public bodies and any other person or organisation associated with the Council.

The Policy covers fraud, bribery, corruption and other forms of financial irregularity, including theft, false accounting, misuse of Council assets, misuse or unlawful disclosure of information, abuse of position, conflicts of interest, and irregularity involving the improper use of information technology systems.

For partners, suppliers and other third parties, the Council will seek to promote standards and arrangements consistent with this Policy and will take appropriate action where conduct falls below the standards expected.

## Policy Aims and Objectives

This Policy aims to:

- Promote and embed a strong anti-fraud culture across the Council, reinforcing a clear zero-tolerance approach to fraud, bribery and corruption.
- Safeguard Council resources by preventing losses through fraud and ensuring funds are directed towards delivering high-quality services for Bromsgrove residents and visitors.
- Develop and provide clear recommendations to inform policies, procedures, risk management approaches and controls, reducing the Council's exposure to fraudulent activity.
- Deter and prevent fraud, bribery and corruption and, where required, detect and investigate suspected or known incidents.

- Maintain and operate effective counter-fraud systems and procedures, ensuring resources are sufficient, proportionate and delivered by appropriately skilled staff.
- Support and enable the application of appropriate sanctions and the full recovery of losses.
- Foster an environment that encourages the reporting of genuine concerns or suspicions of fraudulent activity.
- Protect the rights of individuals who raise legitimate concerns, ensuring they are treated fairly and confidentially.
- Collaborate with partners and relevant investigative bodies to strengthen and continuously improve the Council's resilience to fraud and corruption.

## The Council's Approach

All stakeholders play a role in reducing the risk of fraud. Members and senior management are particularly well placed to set the ethical tone of the organisation and play a critical role in promoting a culture of high ethical standards and integrity.

Members and employees must lead by example by complying with established rules and procedures and by ensuring that all practices and processes are lawful, transparent and honest.

Managers take responsibility for identifying and managing fraud risks within their service areas and for ensuring these risks are properly considered when delivering strategic priorities, business plans, projects and programmes.

Senior managers should include within their Annual Governance Statements clear reference to the actions they have taken to counter fraud, bribery and corruption within their areas of responsibility.

Members play an important role, and the Council encourages open and honest dialogue between members and employees to support effective governance and risk management.

Managers apply appropriate supervision, robust recruitment and selection processes, effective scrutiny and professional scepticism as standard management practices. These measures reinforce positive attitudes and help create an environment that actively opposes fraudulent activity, rather than signalling distrust.

The Council relies on strong corporate governance arrangements as a key safeguard against fraud and corruption. The Audit, Standards and Governance Committee provide a principal forum for overseeing anti-fraud, bribery and corruption activity and reviews assurance provided by managers, members,

risk management and other business intelligence as part of the Council's second line of defence.

**What employees must not do**

It is unacceptable and a criminal offence for employees (or someone on an employee's behalf) to:

- give, promise to give, offer, request or accept a payment, gift or hospitality with the expectation or hope that improper advantage will be received, or to reward a business advantage already given
- give, offer, promise, request or accept a gift or hospitality during any procurement, contract management, regulatory decision-making or tender process, if this could be perceived as intended or likely to influence the outcome
- give, promise to give, accept or offer a payment, gift or hospitality to or from a government official, agent or representatives or public official or representative without the prior approval of Line Manager or to "facilitate" or expedite a routine procedure
- accept or request a payment, gift or hospitality from a third party that employees know or suspect is offered or provided with an expectation that a business advantage will be provided by the Council to them or anyone else in return
- retaliate against or threaten another person who has refused to commit a bribery offence or who has raised concerns under this Policy
- engage in any other activity in breach of this Policy (or that might lead to a breach).

**Breaches of this Policy**

Any employee who breaches this Policy will face disciplinary action, which could result in summary dismissal for misconduct or gross misconduct. Disciplinary action will be taken in addition to, or instead of, criminal proceedings, depending on the circumstances of each individual case.

The Council reserves the right to terminate its contractual relationship with other individuals and organisations working on our behalf if they breach this Policy.

**Role and responsibilities of Elected Members**

As elected representatives, all Members of the Council have a duty to the

citizens of the district to protect the Council from any acts of fraud and bribery and ensure that resources are used prudently and within the law to safeguard public money, including ensuring they do not procure an advantage improperly. Elected Members are required to operate and adhere to the Council's Constitution, which incorporates a Code of Conduct for Members (the "Code"). Please refer to Part 20 of the Constitution.

The Code includes rules regarding:

- the disclosure of relationships;
- the declaration of gifts and hospitality; and/or
- registering personal interests.

Elected Members are also referred to the Code of Conduct for Councillors in relation to Gifts and Hospitality set out at Part 21 of the Constitution. This sets out the process that should be followed by elected Members when declaring gifts. See further below under "Record Keeping".

### **Facilitation Payments and Kickbacks**

**"Facilitation Payments"** are typically small, unofficial payments made to secure or expedite a routine or necessary action (for example, by a public or government official) and **"Kickbacks"** are typically payments made in return for a business favour or advantage. We do not make, and will not accept, Facilitation Payments or Kickbacks of any kind and they will not be tolerated. Employees must avoid any activity that might lead to a Facilitation Payment or Kickback being made or accepted by us or on our behalf, or that might suggest that such a payment will be made or accepted. If employees are asked to make a payment on our behalf, employees should always be mindful of what the payment is for and whether the amount requested is proportionate to the goods or services provided. Employees should always ask for a receipt which details the reason for the payment. If employees have any suspicions, concerns or queries regarding a payment, employees should raise these with their Line Manager.

### **Gifts and Hospitality**

The Council's policy on gifts and hospitality for employees has been updated and is now found within the Officers' Code of Conduct. A copy can be found on the Orb.

### **Public contracts and failure to prevent bribery**

The Council is committed to complying with all relevant bribery and corruption legislation. In relation to public contracts, this includes - but is not limited to - the Public Contract Regulations 2015 (the "2015 Regulations"). Under the 2015 Regulations, contracting authorities shall exclude a supplier from participation

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in a procurement procedure where they have established that supplier has been convicted of certain offences, including bribery. In circumstances where legislation does not stipulate a mandatory exclusion, the Council has the discretion to exclude organisations on the grounds of bribery and corruption.

## **Record Keeping**

We must keep records and have appropriate internal controls in place which will evidence the business reasons for:

- receiving or declining gifts and hospitality which are offered to employees or elected Members; and/or
- providing gifts or hospitality on behalf of the Council to third parties

Employees must ensure that any gift or hospitality for employees that is accepted, offered or refused, is declared and recorded in writing in the Corporate Gift and Hospitality Register. The Register is held centrally by the Democratic Services and will be subject to managerial review

Any gifts or hospitality received by Elected Members must be reported to the Council's Monitoring Officer in accordance with Part 21 of the Constitution (Gifts and Hospitality – Code of Conduct for Councillors).

## **Reporting, Advice and Support**

The Council requires all suspected fraud, bribery, corruption, theft or other financial irregularity to be reported promptly and handled in accordance with clear governance arrangements. Timely reporting is essential to protect evidence, safeguard public funds, support appropriate investigation and ensure that concerns are managed consistently and confidentially.

Employees should normally raise concerns with their line manager in the first instance. Where this is not appropriate, including where the line manager may be implicated or the matter is particularly serious or sensitive, concerns should be reported directly to the Monitoring Officer, Head of Internal Audit, the Section 151 Officer, or in line with the Council's Whistleblowing Policy or Anti-Money Laundering Statement (Appendix 3).

Elected Members should report concerns to the Monitoring Officer, Section 151 Officer or Head of Internal Audit, as appropriate to the nature of the concern.

Members of the public may raise concerns through the Council's published reporting routes, complaints arrangements, elected Members, External Auditor or other appropriate external bodies.

Managers who receive allegations or concerns must not investigate the matter themselves unless authorised to do so. They must escalate concerns without

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delay to the Monitoring Officer, Head of Internal Audit or the Section 151 Officer. Where the allegation relates to an employee, managers should also seek advice from Human Resources before taking any action that may affect employment procedures. Where an allegation involves, or may involve, an elected Member, the Monitoring Officer must be notified.

The Monitoring Officer, Head of Internal Audit and Section 151 Officer will assess reported concerns and determine the appropriate response, including whether the matter should be investigated by Internal Audit, referred to management for investigation or action under Internal Audit guidance, referred for consideration under disciplinary procedures, or reported to an external agency such as the Police, Department for Work and Pensions, HM Revenue and Customs, or another relevant body.

No officer or Member with an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest should be involved in assessing, investigating or deciding the outcome of a concern

All reports must be handled sensitively and confidentially. Information should only be shared with those who need to know to assess, investigate or respond to the matter. Any person implicated in the allegation must not be involved in the reporting, assessment or decision-making process.

The Council's Whistleblowing Policy provides a route for employees to raise serious concerns where they do not feel able to use normal reporting arrangements. The Council will take reasonable steps to protect individuals who raise genuine concerns from victimisation, harassment or retaliation, and will manage reports in accordance with the Whistleblowing Policy, disciplinary procedures and relevant legal obligations.

The purpose of these reporting arrangements is to:

- ensure that suspected fraud, bribery and corruption is reported and assessed consistently
- preserve evidence and protect the integrity of any investigation
- ensure that appropriate officers are notified at the earliest opportunity
- support correct application of employment, governance and legal procedures
- enable proportionate and timely investigation by suitably experienced officers or investigators
- protect the confidentiality and rights of all parties
- safeguard the interests of the Council, residents, service users and the public purse.

Practical guidance on how to report a concern, including key contact routes and immediate do's and don'ts, is set out in the section "**What to Do If You Suspect Fraud.**"

**A summary reporting process is included at Appendix 1.**

### **Investigations**

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All reported concerns will be assessed to determine whether an investigation is required and, if so, the most appropriate way to proceed. The assessment will take account of the seriousness, sensitivity, complexity and potential financial or reputational impact of the matter.

The Monitoring Officer, Head of Internal Audit and Section 151 Officer (and other relevant senior officers where appropriate), will normally determine who should lead or support the investigation. Internal Audit will normally lead investigations involving significant, complex or high-risk allegations. In lower-risk or service-specific cases, managers may be asked to undertake fact-finding or investigation activity, but only where authorised and guided by Internal Audit.

Investigations must be carried out in a proportionate, objective and confidential manner. Officers involved in an investigation must take appropriate steps to preserve evidence, avoid alerting individuals who may be implicated, and protect the integrity of any potential disciplinary, civil or criminal proceedings.

Where an allegation relates to an employee, Human Resources advice must be sought at an appropriate stage to ensure that any employment action is handled in accordance with the Council's disciplinary procedures.

Where an allegation involves, or may involve, an elected Member, the Monitoring Officer must be involved so that any Code of Conduct or governance implications can be considered.

The Council may work with, or refer matters to, relevant external bodies where appropriate, including the Police, Department for Work and Pensions, HM Revenue and Customs, the Immigration Service, External Audit or other regulatory or enforcement agencies. Decisions to refer matters externally will be made in accordance with the Council's governance arrangements and having regard to the nature and seriousness of the allegation.

Investigations will be conducted in accordance with relevant legislation, Council policies and professional standards. This includes, where applicable, requirements relating to data protection, surveillance, investigatory powers, money laundering, whistleblowing, employment procedures and evidence handling.

At the conclusion of an investigation, an outcome report including findings and recommended actions will be reported to the appropriate senior officer, the Section 151 Officer and/or the Monitoring Officer, as relevant. Outcomes may include disciplinary action, referral to external agencies, recovery of losses, improvements to systems and controls, or no further action where the allegation is not substantiated.

### **Potential Outcomes**

An investigation may result in one or more of the following outcomes:

**Criminal prosecution**

The Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the relevant senior officer, Head of Internal Audit and Monitoring Officer will authorise referral to the Police where appropriate.

**Disciplinary action**

The relevant senior officer, taking appropriate Human Resources advice, will determine whether disciplinary action is required in relation to an employee. At the conclusion of an investigation, the Head of Internal Audit will produce a formal report. Where fraud by an employee is proven, it will normally be treated as gross misconduct and may result in dismissal. Where fraud is not proven, the Council may still consider matters under its disciplinary procedures.

**Recovery of losses**

The Council will seek to recover all losses through civil or criminal proceedings where legally permissible and cost-effective. Losses caused by employees may be recovered through lawful and appropriate routes, which may include salary deductions, pension-related routes, insurance arrangements, civil recovery or criminal compensation orders, subject to legal, HR and pension scheme advice. The senior officer will also notify the Insurance Service where an insurance claim may be appropriate.

**Improvement of controls**

Where investigations identify weaknesses in systems, supervision or controls, management must implement an action plan to address those weaknesses and reduce the risk of future fraud or error.

**Outcomes for Elected Members**

The Chief Executive and the Monitoring Officer will advise on appropriate action in cases involving elected members.

**Recording**

The Head of Internal Audit will maintain a fraud database to record summary details of financial irregularities and investigation outcomes. This will include:

- date received
- nature/category of allegation
- service area
- value/risk exposure where known
- assessment decision
- investigation outcome
- sanctions/recovery/control actions
- reporting status.

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The Head of Internal Audit will include summary information on completed investigations into suspected fraud, bribery or corruption within routine progress reports to the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee, including cases subject to Police investigation. The Head of Internal Audit will also report annually on fraud and corruption activity through:

- The National Fraud Initiative
- The Local Government Transparency Code.

Where fraud has occurred, managers must take prompt action to strengthen systems, controls and procedures to prevent recurrence. Investigations may also identify weaknesses in supervision or control arrangements, and managers must address these issues without delay.

## **What to Do If You Suspect Fraud**

Anyone who suspects fraud, bribery or corruption must report their concerns immediately. Prompt reporting helps protect evidence and enables the Council to take swift and appropriate action.

You can report your concerns through any of the following routes:

- Your immediate supervisor or line manager, or a more senior manager where the seriousness or sensitivity of the issue requires it, or where the manager may be implicated.
- The Head of Internal Audit - Chris Green (Tel xxxx xxx xxxx)
- Section 151 Officer - James Walton (Tel xxxx xxx xxxx)
- Monitoring Officer – Claire Felton (Tel xxxx xxx xxxx)
- The Whistleblowing Hotline (xxxx xxx xxxx)

### **Do:**

Act quickly and report your concerns as soon as possible.

Record your suspicions, noting what you have seen, heard or discovered.

Preserve any evidence you hold and keep it secure until you can pass it to the Head of Internal Audit, provided this does not risk alerting the suspected individual.

Identify yourself when reporting, as you may hold important information that supports the investigation.

Remain outwardly calm and continue your normal duties while the matter is addressed.

### **Do not:**

Delay reporting, as this may allow evidence to be lost or destroyed.

Approach or accuse individuals directly, as this may compromise the investigation.

Discuss the matter with others, as you may not know who else is involved.

Carry out your own investigation, as this could contaminate evidence and jeopardise any criminal proceedings.

## **Safeguards**

The Council takes steps to protect anyone who raises genuine concerns:

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Protection from victimisation: The Council will act to protect individuals from harassment, bullying or retaliation. Any mistreatment of a whistleblower will be treated as a disciplinary matter.

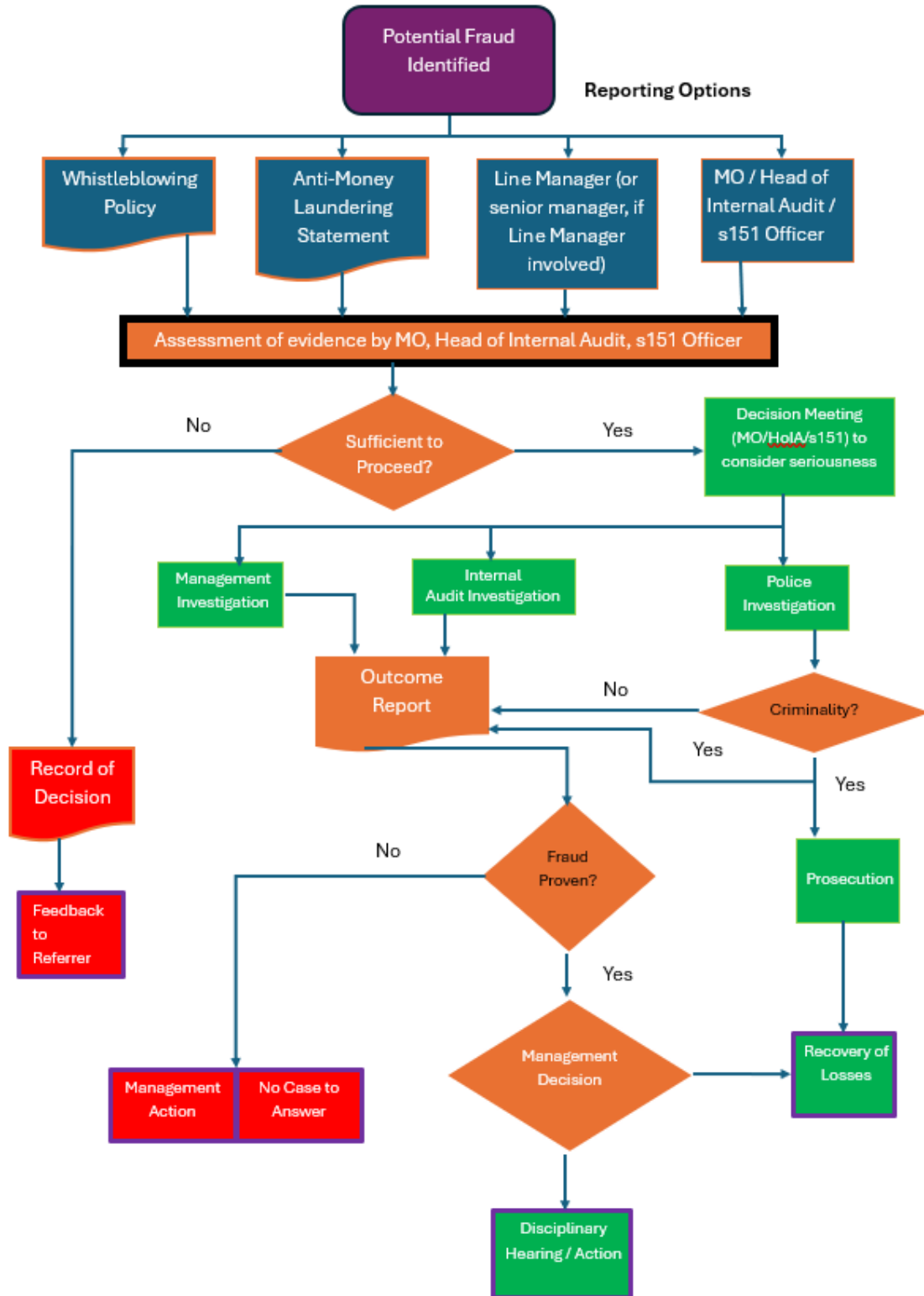
Confidentiality: The Council will make every effort to protect your identity where requested. However, the investigation process may reveal the source of information, and you may be asked to provide a statement as part of the evidence.

Anonymous referrals: The Council does not encourage anonymous reports, as they can limit the ability to investigate effectively. However, the Council will review and assess all reports of suspected fraud, bribery or corruption, regardless of how they are made.

Malicious referrals: Where a referral is found to be malicious or made for personal gain, the Council may take action under its Disciplinary Policy or relevant contractual arrangements. The appropriate senior manager will consider any action before it is taken.

**Appendix 1**

Reporting Process



**Appendix 2**

Example Red Flags of Bribery

The following is a list of example red flags that may arise during the course of employees working for us and which may raise concerns under various anti-bribery laws and anti-corruption laws. The list is not intended to be exhaustive and is for illustrative purposes only to aid employees' understanding of bribery.

If employees encounter any of these red flags while working for us, employees must report them promptly to employee's line manager or to the Section 151 Officer or using the procedure set out in the Whistleblowing Policy.

- a) Employees become aware that a third party engages in, or has been accused of engaging in, improper business practices;
- b) Employees learn that a third party has a reputation for paying bribes, or requiring that bribes are paid to them or has a reputation for having a "special relationship" with foreign government officials;
- c) A third party requests payment in cash and/or refuses to sign a formal commission or fee agreement, or to provide an invoice or receipt for a payment made;
- d) A third party requests that payment is made to a country or geographic location different from where the third party resides or conducts business;
- e) A third party insists on receiving a commission or fee payment before committing to sign up to a contract with us or carrying out a government function or process for us;
- f) A third party requests an unexpected additional fee or commission to "facilitate" a service;
- g) A third party demands lavish entertainment or gifts before commencing or continuing contractual negotiations or provision of services;
- h) A third party requests that a payment is made to "overlook" potential legal violations;
- i) A third party requests that employees provide employment or some other advantage to a friend or relative;
- j) Employees receive an invoice from a third party that appears to be non-standard or customised;
- k) A third party insists on the use of side letters or refuses to put terms agreed in writing;

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- l) Employees notice that we have been invoiced for a commission or fee payment that appears large given the service stated to have been provided;
- m) A third party requests or requires the use of an agent, intermediary, consultant, distributor or supplier that is not typically used by or known to us;

Employees are offered an unusually generous gift or offered lavish hospitality by a third party.

**Appendix 3**

# **Anti-Money Laundering Statement**

## **1. Introduction**

Bromsgrove District Council is committed to ensuring that it is not exposed to money laundering or terrorist financing activity and that it complies with relevant legislation and best practice.

Whilst the Council is not directly regulated under the Money Laundering Regulations in most of its activities, it is still subject to key offences under legislation such as the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 and the Terrorism Act 2000. Employees therefore have a responsibility to remain alert and report any suspicions.

The Council has appointed a Money Laundering Reporting Officer (MLRO):

MLRO: James Walton, Director of Finance (s151 Officer)

Deputy MLROs: Debra Goodall (Deputy s151 Officer), Claire Felton (Monitoring Officer)

## **2. Scope**

This policy applies to all Council employees, members and anyone acting on behalf of the Council.

### **What is money laundering?**

Money laundering is the process of making money or assets obtained through crime appear legitimate. It can also include handling, using or facilitating the use of criminal property.

In a local authority context, risks are generally low but may arise through interactions with customers, payments, refunds or property-related transactions.

### **Possible signs (high level)**

Staff should be alert to unusual or suspicious behaviour, for example:

- Unusual or excessive cash payments
- Requests involving third parties without clear reason

- Overpayments followed by refund requests
- Reluctance to provide basic information
- Transactions that appear inconsistent with normal expectations

These indicators do not prove wrongdoing but may give rise to suspicion.

### **3. What Should I Do?**

If you become aware of, or suspect, money laundering:

- Do not ignore it – failing to act may expose you to liability
- Stay calm and act normally – do not alert the individual
- Keep it confidential – only discuss on a strict need-to-know basis (“tipping off” is an offence)
- Report it promptly – contact the MLRO or a Deputy MLRO as soon as possible
- Follow instructions – do not investigate yourself or take further action unless advised

Prompt reporting protects both you and the Council.

### **4. Disclosure**

If you know or suspect that money laundering may be taking place, you must report it as soon as possible to the MLRO or a Deputy.

You should report where, for example:

- There are unusual levels of cash involved
- A transaction or pattern of activity appears inconsistent with what you would normally expect
- You have any reasonable grounds for suspicion, even if you are unsure

Do not delay reporting, and do not discuss your concerns with anyone other than the MLRO/Deputy MLRO

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