



## WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

(Making a disclosure in the public interest)

### PRINCIPLES

Stainton Village Hall Committee is committed to the highest standards of openness, probity and accountability.

An important aspect of accountability and transparency is a mechanism to enable trustees, volunteers and users of Stainton Village Hall to voice concerns in a responsible and effective manner. There are areas where confidentiality should be respected nevertheless, where an individual discovers information which they believe shows serious malpractice or wrongdoing in relation to the hall, and which should be disclosed internally without fear of reprisal.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act gives legal protection to employees against being dismissed or penalised by their employers as a result of publicly disclosing certain serious concerns. The Committee has endorsed the provisions set out below to ensure that no trustees or volunteers should feel at a disadvantage in raising legitimate concerns.

It should be emphasised that this policy is intended to assist individuals who believe they have discovered malpractice or impropriety. It is not designed to question financial or business decisions taken by Stainton Village Hall Committee nor should it be used to reconsider any matters, which have already been addressed under harassment, complaint, disciplinary or other procedures.

### SCOPE OF POLICY

This policy is intended to cover the disclosure of concerns that are in the public interest and may at least initially be investigated separately but might then lead to the invocation of other procedures e.g. police involvement. These concerns could include:

- financial malpractice or impropriety or fraud;
- failure to comply with a legal obligation or statutes;
- dangers to health and safety or the environment;
- criminal activity;
- improper conduct or unethical behaviour; and
- attempts to conceal any of these.

## POLICY

### **Protection**

This policy is designed to offer protection to those trustees and volunteers at Stainton Village Hall who disclose such concerns provided the disclosure is made:

- in good faith; and
- in the reasonable belief of malpractice or impropriety.

In an extreme case, malicious or wild allegations could give rise to legal action on the part of the persons complained about.

### **Confidentiality**

Stainton Village Hall Committee will treat all such disclosures in a confidential and sensitive manner. The identity of the individual making the allegation may be kept confidential so long as it does not hinder or frustrate any investigation. However, the investigation process may reveal the source of the information and the individual making the disclosure may need to provide a statement as part of the evidence required.

### **Anonymous Allegations**

This policy encourages individuals to put their name to any disclosures they make. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less credible, but they may be considered at the discretion of the Chairperson.

### **Untrue Allegations**

If an individual makes an allegation in good faith, which is not confirmed by subsequent investigation, no action will be taken against that individual. In making a disclosure the individual should exercise due care to ensure the accuracy of the information. If, however, an individual makes malicious or vexatious allegations, and particularly if he or she persists with making them, action may be taken against that individual.

## PROCEDURE FOR MAKING A DISCLOSURE

On receipt of a complaint of malpractice, the Committee member or volunteer who receives and takes note of the complaint must pass this information as soon as is reasonably possible to the Chairperson or Vice Chairperson who will nominate an investigator. If the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson are both involved in the complaint an external party will be nominated.

If there is evidence of criminal activity then the investigator should inform the police. Stainton Village Hall Committee will ensure that any internal investigation does not hinder a formal police investigation.

## **Timescales**

The investigator should ensure that the investigations are undertaken as quickly as possible without affecting the quality and depth of those investigations.

The investigator should, as soon as practically possible, send a written acknowledgement of the concern to the complainant and thereafter report back to them in writing the outcome of the investigation and on the action that is proposed (marked “confidential”).

## **Investigating Procedure**

- Full details and clarifications of the complaint should be obtained.
- The investigator should inform the individual against whom the complaint is made as soon as is practically possible. The individual will be informed of their right to be accompanied by a colleague at any future interview held under the provision of these procedures.
- The investigator should consider the involvement of the Stainton Village Hall CIO’s auditors and the police at this stage.
- The allegations should be fully investigated by the investigator with the assistance where appropriate, of other individuals / bodies.
- A judgement concerning the complaint and validity of the complaint will be made by the investigator. This judgement will be detailed in a written report containing the findings of the investigations and reasons for the judgement.
- The Chairperson will decide what action to take.
- The complainant should be kept informed of the progress of the investigations and, if appropriate, of the final outcome.
- If appropriate, a copy of the outcomes will be used to enable a review of procedures.
- If the investigation finds the allegations unsubstantiated and all internal procedures have been exhausted, but the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, Stainton Village Hall Committee recognises the lawful rights of individuals to make disclosures to prescribed persons or body (e.g. the Health and Safety Executive). A full list of prescribed people and bodies can be found on the Government Website ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)).

## **REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed annually following the AGM.

Stainton Village Hall Committee  
May 2020