**Shamley Green Village Hall Whistleblowing Policy**

**Introduction**

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (The ‘Whistleblowing’ Act) gives significant protection to employees and contractors who disclose information reasonably and responsibly in the public interest. The Act encourages people to raise concerns about malpractice in the workplace by providing protection from dismissal and victimisation. The genuinely self employed and volunteers are not covered by the Act.

This policy applies to all Trustees, employees, contractors, volunteers and users of Shamley Green Village Hall and it is written in the context of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

Trustees, employees, contractors, volunteers and users are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within an organisation. However, they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or to the organisation. They may also fear harassment or victimisation. In these circumstances it may be easier for them to ignore the concern rather than report what may just be a suspicion of malpractice.

A whistleblower is usually not directly or personally affected by the concern and therefore rarely has a direct personal interest in the outcome.

**Aims and Scope**

This policy is designed to enable trustees, employees, contractors, volunteers and users of Shamley Green Village Hall to raise concerns internally and to disclose information which the individual believes shows malpractice or impropriety. This policy is intended to cover concerns which are in the public interest ad these include:

1. Financial malpractice, impropriety or fraud or inappropriate use of other charity’s resources

b) Failure to comply with a legal obligation or statute

c) a health and safety risk to an individual(s)

d) Damage to the environment.

e) Conduct which is a breach of the law

f) Improper behaviour or unethical behaviour.

g) a failure in the protection of children or vulnerable adults.

h) Attempts to conceal any of these.

**Safeguards**

This policy is designed to offer protection to those trustees, employees, contractors, volunteers and users of Shamley Green Village Hall who disclose such concerns provided the disclosure is made:

• in good faith

• in the reasonable belief of the individual making the disclosure that it tends to show malpractice or impropriety.

It is important to note that no protection from internal disciplinary procedures is offered to those who choose not to use the procedure.

Shamley Green Village Hall is committed to good practice and high standards and wants to be supportive of trustees, employees, contractors and volunteers.

Shamley Green Village Hall recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. If what is reported is true, the whistleblower should have nothing to fear because they will be doing a duty to Shamley Green Village Hall and those for whom the Hall is providing a service.

Shamley Green Village Hall will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect a whistleblower when they raise a concern in good faith.

Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice will not influence or be influenced by any disciplinary or redundancy procedures that already affect staff and volunteers.

**Confidentiality**

Shamley Green Village Hall 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 Shamley Green Village Hall. In exercising this discretion, the factors to be taken into account will include:

• The seriousness of the issues raised

• The credibility of the concern

• The likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources

**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 a frivolous, malicious or vexatious allegation, and particularly if the individual persists with making them, appropriate disciplinary action may be taken against that individual.

**Whistleblowing Officer**

The current Trustee designated to handle whistleblowing concerns is Mike Band and shall be known as the Whistleblowing Officer. The concern should be reported in the first instance to the Whistleblowing Officer. His contact details are: landline 01483 892880 and mobile 07734 911649. If the matter concerns involves the Whistleblowing officer, the matter should be raised with another Trustee or the chair.

**How to raise a concern**

Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing at the earliest opportunity so that action can be taken. A written report should mention the following:

• the background and history of the concern (giving relevant dates);

• the reason for the concern

Although the whistleblower is not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of an allegation, they will need to demonstrate that there are reasonable grounds for concern.

**Actions that Shamley Green Village Hall will take**

The investigating officer should follow these steps:

• Full details and clarifications of the complaint should be obtained.

• In order to protect individuals and those accused of misdeeds or possible malpractice, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take.

• Within 10 days, acknowledge to the complainant that the complaint has been received; indicate how it is proposed to deal with the matter and inform them whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not.

• Inform the person against whom the complaint is made as soon as is practically possible. And inform them of their right to be accompanied by a trade union or other representative at any future interview or hearing held under the provision of these procedures.

• Consider the involvement of/communication to appropriate external authorities e.g. Police, Charity Commission, National Lottery, Surrey safeguarding bodies, at this stage and consult with the Chairman

• The Whistleblowing Officer and the Chair will make recommendations to the Management Committee re actions to be taken.

**Responsible officer**

The Whistleblowing Officer has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy. They will maintain a record of concerns raised and the outcome (but in a form which does not endanger confidentiality) and will report as necessary to the Management Committee. If the Whistleblowing Officer is the subject of a complaint, the Chair will assume this role and responsibility.

**Raising concerns with external bodies**

Shamley Green Village Hall Trustees hopes that trustees, employees, contractors, volunteers and users will feel reassured and able to raise issues through Shamley Green Village Hall internal procedures. However, they do recognise and accept that there may be circumstances where matters can be reported to an outside body, eg the police or Health and Safety Executive or Trade Union, if they wish to or if they are unhappy with the outcome of the internal process. Provided the matter is raised in good faith and it is reasonable in the circumstances to disclose it to an external authority no disciplinary sanctions will result.

Approved by Shamley Green Village Hall Management Committee

July 2024