

BA-PHALABORWA MUNICIPALITY



WHISTLE BLOWING POLICY

2024/25

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Protected Disclosure Act came into effect on the 16th February 2001. The Act is commonly referred as the Whistle Blowing Act. In order to remain in compliance with the Act, the Municipality has created the Whistle Blowing policy with the following objectives:

- To encourage the reporting of matters that may cause financial and non-financial loss to the Municipality, or damage the Municipality's reputation;
- To enable the Municipality to effectively deal with reports from whistle blowers by providing clear guidelines for the disclosure of such information and protection against reprisal as a result of such disclosure;
- To provide for the appropriate infrastructure including alternative mechanism for reporting.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY

- Strive to create a culture which will facilitate the disclosure of information by employees and the public relating to criminal and other irregular conduct in the workplace in a responsible manner by providing clear guidelines for the disclosure of such information and protection against reprisals as a result of such disclosure; and
- Promote the eradication of criminal and other irregular conduct within Ba- Phalaborwa Municipality.

3. SCOPE OF THE POLICY

The Whistle Blowing Policy is not a replacement for the existing Grievance procedure and therefore grievances should not be reported in terms of this policy. Any grievance should be lodged in accordance with the provisions of the Grievance Procedure.

The policy is designed to deal with concerns raised in relation to issues relating to fraud, corruption, misconduct and malpractice within and around Ba-Phalaborwa Municipality.

In terms of the Protected Disclosure Act the following can be raised:

- a) That a criminal offence has been committed, is being committed or is likely to be committed;

- b) That the person has failed, is failing or is likely to fail to comply with any legal obligation to which that person is subject;
- c) That a miscarriage of justice has occurred, is occurring and is likely to occur;
- d) That the health and safety of any individual has been, is being or is likely to be endangered;
- e) That the environment has been, is being or is likely to be damaged;
- f) Unfair discrimination as contemplated in the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000;
- g) That any matter referred to paragraphs (a) to (f) has been is being or is likely to be deliberately concealed.

4. PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

This policy has been developed to give effect to the Protection Disclosure Act, namely;

- a) To protect an employee from being subjected to occupational detriment on account of having made a protected disclosure
- b) To provide for the remedies in connection with any occupational detriment suffered on account of having made disclosure; and
- c) To provide for the procedures in terms of which an employee can, in a responsible manner, disclose information regarding improprieties by his or her colleagues, other stakeholders and employer.
- d) To protect the rights of anyone (employees and members of the public) who blows the whistle and ensure that their identity remains anonymous if they chose not to disclose their identity.

This policy is intended to encourage employees and the public to report the matter as set out under paragraph 2 (a) to (f) by providing procedures and mechanisms for such reporting as well as ensuring that anyone who make such reports in good faith are not victimized, harassed and do not suffer any detriment.

This is in line with the promotion or creating awareness of standards of appropriate and accepted employee conduct and establishing a common understanding of what is acceptable and what is unacceptable behaviour.

5. WHO CAN RAISE A CONCERN?

Any member of staff or the public who has a reasonable belief that there is fraud or corruption or misconduct relating to any of the protected matter specified in paragraph 2 may raise a concern under the procedure detailed below. Concerns must be raised without malice, in good faith and not for a personal gain and the individual must reasonably believe that the information disclosed, and any allegations contained in it are substantially true. The issues raised may relate to any member or group of staff or councillors employed by the municipality.

5.1 HARASSMENT OR VICTIMISATION

Ba-Phalaborwa Municipality acknowledges the fact that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of fear of reprisals from those responsible for the irregularity.

Ba-Phalaborwa Municipality will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take the necessary action to protect the whistle-blower when they raise a concern in good faith.

Any act of harassment or victimisation should be reported to the Accounting Officer or alternatively, to the Manager: Risk Management and SAPS. This does not mean that if an employee is already the subject of disciplinary or other action, that action will be halted as a result of their whistle blowing.

6. Reward system for whistle-blower's reporting on cable theft or vandalism of electrical infrastructure

The municipality is offering a monetary reward for crime tips leading to the arrest and prosecution of criminals who steal the municipality electrical infrastructure (copper cables and transformers only).

The purpose of the reward system is to address the issue of cable theft within the municipality, with each incident of cable theft the municipality is losing hundreds of thousands of rands. The reward system strategy aims to encourage—through financial incentives and anonymity—reporting of theft of copper cable incidents by reluctant or fearful residents who have witnessed or have important information about the

crime. Such reports provide information which helps local law enforcement apprehend criminal suspects, reduce crime, reduce the trading of stolen goods.

Terms and Conditions of the reward

- 6.1 A reward of R50 000 be given to informants whose information lead to the successful arrest and prosecution (sentenced/jailed) of criminals who steal the municipality electrical infrastructure (copper cables and transformers only). The reward will only be paid upon successfully arrest and prosecution of the thieves.
- 6.2 The reward is not applicable to employees and immediate family members of the people working in the municipality. Service providers contracted to the municipality and employees of any other law enforcement agency.
- 6.3 The theft or the planned theft should be linked to the municipal electrical network.
- 6.4 A person can only claim the reward once in three years.
- 6.5 People are at liberty to report anonymously and their identity will not be disclosed.
- 6.6 The informant must not be involved in the crime.
- 6.7 The information provided must be valuable and lead to the arrest of the perpetrators.
- 6.8 A committee comprising of three Senior Managers and Risk Management as the secretariat should be established to adjudicate on the reward claims received and recommendations made to the Accounting Officer for approval.

7. GUARANTEES AND PROTECTION

Confidentiality will be maintained, and nobody will be penalized for disclosing in good faith, information that might be in interest of Ba-Phalaborwa Municipality, every effort will be made not to reveal the identity of the whistle blower unless he/she so wish.

Ba-Phalaborwa Municipality is will ensure that any member of staff/employee who makes a disclosure in the above-mentioned circumstances will not be penalized or suffer any occupational detriment for doing so. Occupational detriment as defined by the Act includes being subjected to disciplinary action, dismissed, suspended, demoted, transferred against your will, harassed, denied promotion, subjected to terms and

condition of employment or retirement which are altered or kept altered, intimidated, refused a reference or being provided with an adverse reference, as a result of your disclosure.

If you raise a concern in good faith in terms of this policy, you will not be at risk of losing your job or suffer any form of retribution as a result.

This guarantee and protection/assurance is not extended to employees who maliciously raise matters they know to be untrue.

Ba-Phalaborwa Municipality will not tolerate the harassment or victimization of anyone raising a genuine concern.

If the situation arises where we are not able to resolve the concern without revealing your identity for example where your evidence is needed in formal forums, consultations will be done of how the matter may proceed.

The officials dealing with the reported cases will sign the declaration of confidentiality to ensure that the rights of whistle-blower's (including those who opted to remain anonymous) are protected. Confidentiality will also assist on ensuring that there are limited interference during the investigation of the case.

8.REPORTING PROCEDURE.

If you have a concern about malpractice, raise it first with the Manager: Risk Management verbally, in writing or with the Municipal Manager and you may remain anonymous when making such reports. If you substantial reason to believe that there would be a cover-up or that evidence will be destroyed or that the matter might not be handled properly, you may raise your concern in good faith with the member of the Executive Council in the Municipality or through the National fraud hotline. All individuals (including the community) who have concerns are encouraged to report to through the above procedure. Cases can also be reported to the Provincial Anti-Fraud and Corruption hotline, Public Protector and National Fraud and Corruption hotline.

9. INDEPENDENT ADVICE

If you are unsure whether to use this procedure or you want independent advice at any stage, you may contact your personal legal adviser, or your labour organization.

10. HOW THE MUNICIPALITY WILL RESPOND.

The action taken by the Municipality will depend on the nature of the concern reported. The possible actions open to the Municipality are to:

- Investigate internally; and /or refer the matter to South African Police Service or other relevant law enforcement agency, if applicable

Initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form the investigation should take. Concerns raised may not necessary require an investigation to resolve them.

The amount of contact between the investigation officer and the person raising the concern (if not anonymous) will depend on the nature of the concern raised and the investigations which may require to be performed. If required, further information maybe sought from the person who made the report.

All investigations will be handled confidentially and will not be discussed with person other than those who legitimately have the right to such information.

11. FALSE AND MALICIOUS ALLEGATION

Those wishing to make reports must guard against making allegations which are false and made with malicious intent. Persons making such reports will not enjoy the protection offered by the Protected Disclosure Act. Furthermore, there are resources and cost implication in respect to initiating investigation, which need to be considered in the event of false or malicious information.

A member of staff who does not act in good faith or who makes an allegation without having reasonable grounds for believing it to be substantially true, or who makes it maliciously or vexatious, may be subject to disciplinary proceedings.

By using this policy, you will help Ba-Phalaborwa Municipality achieve the objectives as provided in the Act and manage risks.

12. CREATING AWARENESS

- In order for the policy to be sustainable, it must be supported by a structured education, communication and awareness programme.

- It is the responsibility of all Directors and Managers to ensure that all employees, are made aware of, and receive appropriate training and education with regard to the whistle blowing policy.

13. SOURCES OF REFERENCE

- The Protected Disclosure Act No. 26 of 2000
- The Bill of rights as contained in The Constitution Act of 1996
- The Labour Relation Act of 1995
- Promotion of Access to Information Act

14. REVIEWAL

The policy will be reviewed annually.

15. APPROVAL

Date: 09 May 2024

Council Resolution Number: 825/24