ST MARY STOKE

Life-changing FAITH | Renewed HOPE | Committed LOVE

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Parochial Church Council of St Mary Stoke, Ipswich

1. Purpose

1.1 St Mary Stoke PCC is committed to the highest standards of openness, integrity and accountability. This policy provides a route for staff, volunteers, and PCC members to raise genuine concerns about malpractice, without fear of victimisation, discrimination, or disadvantage.

1.2 This policy is not the correct route for personal grievances (which should follow the applicable grievance procedure) or complaints about services received (which should follow the Complaints Policy and Procedure). Safeguarding concerns about the welfare of a child or vulnerable adult should always be raised immediately in line with the Safeguarding Policy, in addition to, or instead of, this policy.

2. Who Can Raise a Concern

2.1 This policy applies to all PCC members, employees, volunteers, and contractors working on behalf of St Mary Stoke.

3. What Is Covered

A whistleblowing concern is a genuine concern, in the public interest, about malpractice within the PCC's activities. This may include:

- A criminal offence, or failure to comply with a legal obligation.
- Financial impropriety, fraud, or misuse of the PCC's funds or property.
- A safeguarding risk or failure to follow safeguarding procedures.
- A danger to the health and safety of any individual.
- Damage to the environment.
- A miscarriage of justice.
- Conduct likely to damage the reputation of the PCC or the wider Church.
- Deliberate concealment of any of the above.

4. How to Raise a Concern

4.1 Wherever possible, concerns should be raised informally in the first instance with the Incumbent or PCC Secretary.

4.2 Where the concern is more serious, or the individual does not feel it is appropriate to raise it informally, it should be put in writing to the Incumbent or PCC Secretary, setting out the background and history of the concern, giving names, dates and places where possible, and the reason why the individual is concerned about the situation.

4.3 Where the concern involves the Incumbent or PCC Secretary, it should instead be raised with a Churchwarden or the Archdeacon.

4.4 Concerns can also be raised directly with external bodies where appropriate – see Section 7.

5. How a Concern Will Be Handled

5.1 The person receiving the concern will acknowledge it promptly, normally within 5 working days, and will consider what action is required, which may include an informal investigation, a formal

investigation, or referral to another body (for example the Police or the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser).

5.2 Concerns will be treated confidentially wherever possible. The individual's identity will not be disclosed without their consent, unless required by law or necessary to properly investigate the concern.

5.3 The individual raising the concern will, so far as possible, be kept informed of the outcome, though full details of any investigation or action taken may not always be able to be shared, for example for confidentiality or legal reasons.

5.4 Concerns may be raised anonymously; however, this may limit the PCC's ability to investigate fully or provide feedback.

6. Protection for Those Raising Concerns

6.1 The PCC will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation of anyone who raises a genuine concern in good faith under this policy, even if the concern turns out to be mistaken.

6.2 This protection does not extend to an individual who makes an allegation they know to be false, or who acts maliciously.

6.3 Individuals who are workers (including employees) are also protected under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, where a disclosure qualifies as a “protected disclosure” under that Act.

7. Raising a Concern Externally

Where an individual does not feel able to raise a concern internally, or is not satisfied with the PCC's response, concerns may be raised with:

- The Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser – for safeguarding concerns – Karen.Galloway@cofesuffolk.org.
- The Archdeacon – for concerns about clergy or parish governance – archdeacon.rich@cofesuffolk.org.
- The Charity Commission – for concerns about the PCC's conduct as a charity – gov.uk/complain-about-charity.
- The Police – for concerns involving a criminal offence.
- The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) – for concerns about data protection.

8. Review

8.1 This policy will be reviewed annually by the PCC.

Prepared for St Mary Stoke PCC.