

Report To:	STANDARDS AND PERSONNEL APPEALS COMMITTEE
Date:	19 MARCH 2024
Heading:	WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY ANNUAL UPDATE
Executive Lead Member:	NOT APPLICABLE
Ward/s:	NOT APPLICABLE
Key Decision:	NOT APPLICABLE
Subject to Call-In:	NOT APPLICABLE

Purpose of Report

The report provides the Committee with an update in relation to how the Whistleblowing Policy has operated in the preceding 12 months.

Recommendation(s)

Committee is asked to note how the Whistleblowing Policy has operated during 2023/24.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

To ensure the Committee is adequately informed to enable it to monitor the operation of the Whistleblowing Policy in accordance with the Committee's Terms of Reference as set out in the Constitution. To ensure the Whistleblowing Policy is reviewed regularly and kept up to date.

Alternative Options Considered

As the report is for noting, there are no alternative options considered.

Detailed Information

Whistleblowing Policy

The Council has in place a Whistleblowing Policy which sets out a process for people to confidently report concerns, such as fraud. This policy makes it clear that people can report their concerns without fear of reprisals.

Paragraph 8.1 of the Whistleblowing Policy states that:

“The Monitoring Officer has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy. This Officer maintains a record of concerns raised and the outcomes (but in a form which does not endanger your confidentiality) and will report these to the Standards and Personnel Appeals Committee and the Audit Committee once a year. The Whistleblowing Policy will also be reviewed on a bi-annual basis.”

A review of the policy has been undertaken and no changes are required at this time.

The Audit Committee received a whistleblowing update report at its meeting on 29 February 2024. The Committee noted the operation of the Policy over the preceding 12 months as set out below.

Application of Policy during the Preceding 12 Months

During the period starting April 2023 to the present, there have been **three** reports made under the whistleblowing policy drawn to the Monitoring Officer’s attention.

Complaint 2023-01

The complaint was raised anonymously. The complaint related to the practices of a third party supported housing supplier. Following internal review of the allegations made, the matter was referred to the Regulator for Social Housing. There were no further actions recommended for the Council to undertake.

Complaint 2023-02

The complaint was raised by a member of the public who made allegations that a member of staff was involved in sending malicious correspondence. The Monitoring Officer carried out an investigation into the allegation and found no evidence of the involvement in such activity by a member of staff. The Monitoring Officer liaised with the police in relation to the allegations. There were no further actions recommended.

Complaint 2023-03

The complaint was raised by a member of public relating to the processes for disposing of the Council's old fleet vehicles. The Monitoring Officer looked into the allegations made. The Council's practices relating to the sale of no longer fit for purpose vehicles had been considered as part of an internal audit review during 2021/22. The internal audit review concluded that there was substantial assurance and made recommendations on how to improve controls further included the procurement process for engaging auction houses for the disposal of old vehicles. The procurement of this service was underway at the time the matter was investigated. As such, satisfactory assurance is in place regarding the sale of old fleet vehicles and therefore no further action was recommended.

Previous Application of Policy

The following table sets out the application of the Whistleblowing Policy for the past 9 years to the present date:

YEAR	TOTAL NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS	NO FURTHER ACTION	MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS	DISCIPLINARY/ GRIEVANCE INVESTIGATION
2015	2	1	1	0
2016	2	0	1	1
2017	3	1	1	1
2018	3	1	0	2
2019	4	3	1	0
2020	1	0	1	0
2021	0	0	0	0
2022	1	1	0	0
2023	3	3	0	0
2024 to date	0	0	0	0

Implications

Corporate Plan:

To ensure we deliver high-quality public services we have adopted a set of corporate values which underpin the successful delivery of our priorities. How we work is as important as what we do. The Council's values are:

- People Focussed
- Honest
- Proud
- Ambitious

Legal:

The Whistleblowing Policy has been written to take account of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 which protects workers making disclosures in good faith. [RLD 19/02/2024]

Finance: No direct financial implications arising from this report. [PH 20/02/2024].

Budget Area	Implication
General Fund – Revenue Budget	None
General Fund – Capital Programme	None

Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	None
Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	None

Risk:

Risk	Mitigation
Failure to maintain integrity and confidence in the Whistleblowing Policy and its applications.	Annual reporting to the Audit Committee and Standards and Personnel Appeals Committee. Annual update on the application of the policy. Update reporting in accordance with the policy to the Whistleblower (if identified). Identification of trends in disclosure to inform Management. The review ensures compliance with the governance framework and assists with the annual governance review.

Human Resources:

Regular review, maintenance and consistent application of the Whistleblowing Policy infers good employment practices. As such it is important to maintain the integrity of the policy. There are no other Human Resource issues identified in the report. [KB 20/02/2024]

Environmental/Sustainability:

There are no Environmental/Sustainability issues identified in the report or the policies reviewed.

Equalities:

There are no equalities issues identified as a direct result of the report. Equalities issues would be considered as part of any whistleblowing investigation.

Other Implications:

None

Reason(s) for Urgency

Not applicable

Reason(s) for Exemption

Not applicable

Background Papers

Not applicable

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