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| Report To: | STANDARDS AND PERSONNEL APPEALS COMMITTEE |
| Date: | 18 MARCH 2025 |
| Heading: | WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY ANNUAL UPDATE |
| Executive Lead Member: | NOT APPLICABLE |
| Ward/s: | NOT APPLICABLE |
| Key Decision: | NO |
| Subject to Call-In: | NO |

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:

- 1. Approve the minor amendment to the Whistleblowing Policy as set out in the report and Appendix 1.**
- 2. Note, how the Whistleblowing Policy has operated during 2024/25.**

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

The recommended policy change relates to contact officer details and 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 a minor change is recommended at section 5.1 to amend the contact details of the Section 151 Officer – see Appendix 1.

The Audit Committee will also receive a whistleblowing update report at its meeting on 27 March 2025 to approve the amendment.

Application of Policy during the Preceding 12 Months

During the period starting April 2024 to the present, there have been **four** reports made under the whistleblowing policy drawn to the Monitoring Officer’s attention.

Complaint 2024-01

The complaint was raised anonymously. The complaint related to the conduct of an officer. Following an investigation under the Whistleblowing Policy the Monitoring Officer recommended that the complaint be formally investigated under the Council’s Disciplinary Policy. The outcome of the disciplinary matter is ongoing.

Complaint 2024-02

The complaint was raised by a member of the public who made allegations that a member of staff’s conduct breached the Employee Code of Conduct in that they abused their position of trust. The Monitoring Officer carried out an investigation into the allegation. The allegation was found to be outside the scope of the Employee Code of Conduct and there were no further actions recommended.

Complaint 2024-03

The complaint was raised anonymously. It was alleged that a member of staff’s conduct breached the Employee Code of Conduct in that they abused their position of trust. The Monitoring Officer looked into the allegations made and could find no evidence to suggest that the Code had been breached and there were no further actions recommended.

Complaint 2025-01

The complaint alleges bullying by an officer. The matter is being investigated and remains ongoing.

Previous Application of Policy

The following table sets out the application of the Whistleblowing Policy for the past 10 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 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 2024 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 1 |
| 2025 to date | 1 - ongoing | | | |

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 26/02/2025]

Finance: There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. [PH 06/03/2025].

| Budget Area | Implication |
|--|-------------|
| General Fund – Revenue Budget | N/A |
| General Fund – Capital Programme | N/A |
| Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget | N/A |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme | N/A |
|---|-----|

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 27/02/2025]

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.

Report Author and Contact Officer

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