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**Meeting of the Audit and Standards Committee – 25<sup>th</sup> September 2023**

**Report of the Monitoring Officer**

**Whistleblowing Policy**

**Purpose of Report**

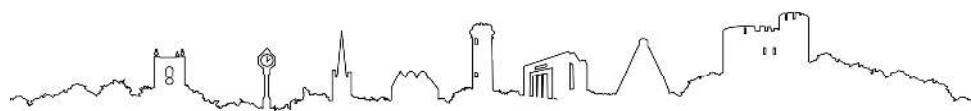
1. To approve the recent revision of the Council's Whistleblowing Policy and to monitor the operation of the Policy.

**Recommendation**

2. It is recommended that the Committee note and approve the recent revision of the Whistleblowing Policy and note its operation to date.

**Background**

3. Within its terms of reference the Audit and Standards Committee is responsible for advising the Council on its Whistleblowing reporting policy and monitoring its operation.
4. The Policy was first introduced in July 1999 and was last updated and approved by Audit and Standards Committee at its meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022. A copy of the fully refreshed, updated draft policy is attached. See Appendix A. The policy has been circulated to HR and Audit colleagues, Union Representatives and Directorates by way of a consultation and all comments received have been taken into consideration.
5. In my capacity as Monitoring Officer I regularly monitor the Policy by surveying each Directorate and asking a number of standard questions. The latest survey was undertaken during August 2023 and the results are set out below.



**Are you aware of any use of the Policy by your staff and, if so, please supply appropriate details?**

6. There have been two anonymous whistleblowing referrals about the same issue received since the policy was reviewed in 2022. The issue was referred to the Directorate of Finance and Legal and the concerns were investigated, no breach identified and the relevant team were updated by email.

**How are your staff reminded of the existence of the policy e.g. newsletters and briefings?**

7. Generally Directorates make use of briefings, emails, Newsletters, Corporate Communications, management meetings, posters on noticeboards, annual reminders and the induction process. Once the revised policy is approved awareness reminders will be communicated corporately, uploaded to the Business News area of Connect/Sharepoint and uploaded to Revolution for Schools.
8. Directorates will place copies of the Whistleblowing poster in prominent work areas.

**Finance**

9. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

**Law**

10. The relevant legislation is contained in the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 which affords statutory protection for whistle-blowers.

**Risk Management**

11. The Whistleblowing Report and Policy does not create any risks for the Council, but by having a Whistleblowing Policy it does help for potentially serious issues to be identified and addressed.

**Equality Impact**

12. This report takes into account the Council's policy on equality and diversity.

## **Human Resources/Organisational Development**

13. This policy has been circulated and consulted upon with Human Resources/Organisational Development.

## **Commercial/Procurement**

14. There are no commercial/procurement considerations associated with this report.

## **Council Priorities and Projects**

15. The Whistleblowing Policy forms part of the Council's overall governance arrangements. Effective governance is essential to underpin the successful delivery of key Council priorities including the Borough Vision, Council Plan and Future Council Programme.



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## **List of Background Papers**

Various emails from Directorates