

STANDARDS COMMITTEE - 14TH DECEMBER 2004

CONFIDENTIAL REPORTING POLICY

REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1. To monitor the operation of the Council's Confidential Reporting Policy, and to consider a modification.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1. Within its terms of reference, the Standards Committee is responsible for advising the Council on its Confidential Reporting (i.e. whistleblowing) Policy and monitoring its operation.
- 2.2. The Policy was introduced in July 1999 and was last updated in October 2003. A copy of the current Policy is attached at Appendix 1.
- 2.3. In my capacity as Monitoring Officer I have been monitoring the Policy annually by surveying each directorate and asking a number of standard questions. The survey for the current year was undertaken during this summer and the results are set out below.
- 2.4. **What is the outcome of your directorate's review of the Policy?**
- 2.4.1 The Directorate of Law and Property has suggested that paragraph 3.1.2 of the Policy should be amended by inserting the following clause after "true" in line 2: -
"or if you have reasonable grounds for believing that it is true....."
This is a sensible suggestion because even if a concern does not prove to be true, it may none the less have been raised in good faith and based on reasonable grounds.
- 2.4.2 The Directorate of Social Services states that the Policy remains a useful additional safeguard for employees to raise issues of concern. It contributes to the general culture of openness and transparency that is promoted within the directorate, and supports employees in making appropriate challenges.
- 2.5. **Are you aware of any use of the Policy by your staff and, if so, please provide appropriate details?**
- 2.5.1 There has been no reported usage of the Policy this year.

- 2.5.2 However, the Directorate of Education and Lifelong Learning has advised that an issue was raised at a secondary school last year. An Assistant Director and the Deputy Head of Personnel became involved but despite their attempts to get the individuals involved to raise the matter under the Policy, they decided not to pursue it.
- 2.5.3 Social Services state that two cases have been brought to their attention but they were resolved using the grievance procedure and management actions. The employees involved were able, with support, to raise the issues with the appropriate next level of manager who took the appropriate action.
- 2.5.4 Finally, Audit Services received a report via the external auditors in connection with another directorate, which was investigated by Audit Service in accordance with their normal procedure.
- 2.6. **How are your staff reminded of the existence of the Policy e.g. newsletters and briefings?**
- 2.6.1 Generally directorates make use of briefings, newsletters, posters and leaflets. In addition, the Policy is discussed by the Finance Departmental Management Team every six months and their discussion is minuted. Furthermore, this year Finance have published a Message of the Day providing a link to the Policy.
- 2.6.2 In Housing employees are reminded of the existence of the Policy via twice-yearly core briefs and all employees are made aware of it as part of their internal induction process. Corporately the Policy continues to be included in new starters' information and the Corporate Induction.
- 2.6.3 Social Services publicise the scheme through an item in the HR (i.e. Human Resource) Briefing which is sent to all managers and is available on Intranet. An item is also planned for the core brief this year. They also include it in their induction process.
- 2.6.4 In the Directorate of the Urban Environment the updated Policy was reissued to all Assistant Directors and Heads of Service last year requesting that they bring the Policy to the attention of their employees. In addition employees are reminded of the Policy on an annual basis.
- 2.7. **Are there regular checks of posters and leaflets to make sure that they are up to date and readily available?**
- 2.7.1 Generally, all directorates report that regular checks do take place. However, Social Services state that their posters need refreshing around the directorate and a new supply has been ordered.

3. PROPOSAL

- 3.1. It is proposed that the Committee note the outcome of the recent monitoring of the Confidential Reporting Policy and recommend to the Executive that the Policy be updated as indicated in paragraph 2.4.1. of this report.

4. FINANCE

- 4.1. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

5. LAW

- 5.1. The Council appoints employees in order to undertake its various statutory functions under Section 112 of the Local Government Act 1972. Section 111 of the 1972 Act enables the Council to do anything which is calculated to facilitate or which is conducive or incidental to the discharge of its functions.

6. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

- 6.1. The Confidential Reporting Policy complies fully with the Council's policies on equal opportunities and diversity.

7. RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 It is recommended that the Committee note the outcome of the recent monitoring of the Confidential Reporting Policy and recommend to the Executive that the Policy be updated as indicated in paragraph 2.4.1. of this report.

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J. Polychronakis
Monitoring Officer

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LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Various e-mails from Council Directorates in 2004.

