

**Audit and Standards Committee – 29<sup>th</sup> March 2017**

**Report of the Monitoring Officer**

**Whistleblowing Policy**

**Purpose of Report**

1. To monitor the operation of the Council's Whistleblowing Policy.

**Background**

2. 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.
3. The Policy was first introduced in July 1999 and was last updated in February 2017. A copy of the current policy is attached at Appendix 1. There were no key changes to the document, just minor updates regarding contact details.
4. 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 February 2017 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?**

5. There have been 9 reports of use of the Policy that relate to People and Place Directorates.
6. Investigations have been concluded on 6 of the matters:-
  - (a) two were proven:-
    - (i) Cyber fraud – the case was proven and the money recovered.
    - (ii) Advertising Scam – Case proven and stopped.
  - (b) four were not proven.

The three cases that are ongoing include investigation into the misuse of a blue badge, theft and corruption.

**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, events, management meetings, posters on noticeboards, annual reminders and the induction process.

**Are there regular checks of posters and leaflets to make sure that they are up to date and readily available?**

8. All Directorates report that regular (i.e. at least annually) checks do take place and any missing or out-dated posters are replaced. Where posters are not used, the policy itself is made available to managers or is displayed on a prominent notice board.

**What is the outcome of your Directorate's review of the policy?**

9. A small number of anonymous allegations are received each year, usually aimed at a manager or senior officer, which after investigation are usually identified as malicious - this places a considerable strain on staff resources. Greater emphasis should be placed on the Whistleblowing Policy as the preferred and in many cases the only way to deal with this type of confidential issue, with set protocols being established in relation to anonymous allegations with the emphasis on removing malicious intent. Managers are fully informed with regard to the Policy and apply it in line with corporate guidance.

**Finance**

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

**Law**

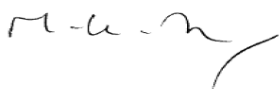
11. The relevant legislation is contained in the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 which affords some statutory protection for whistle-blowers.

**Equality Impact**

12. This report takes into account the Council's policy on equality and diversity and an Equality Impact Assessment has been produced.

**Recommendation**

13. It is recommended that the Committee note the outcome of the recent monitoring of the Whistleblowing Policy.



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**List of Background Papers**

Various emails from Directorates