



STANDARDS COMMITTEE:

19 March 2019

Report of: Borough Solicitor and Borough Treasurer

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SUBJECT: WHISTLEBLOWING CODE

Wards affected: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide an update to the Council's Whistleblowing Code.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 That the updated Whistleblowing Code, as set out in Appendix 1, be considered and endorsed.

2.2 That it be noted that the Whistleblowing Code is to be considered further by the Audit and Governance Committee and Council.

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 Whistleblowing occurs when an employee or contractor provides certain types of information to the Council which has come to their attention through work. Usually concerns are about danger or illegality that could potentially affect others.

3.2 Whistleblowing acts as an instrument of good corporate governance and helps demonstrate a culture within an organisation that is open, honest, accountable and transparent. It can also aid in the detection and prevention of fraud or misconduct.

3.3 The Government expects all public bodies to have a Code in place and Whistleblowing schemes in local authorities in England are assessed regularly as part of external audit review.

4.0 CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS

- 4.1 The Council has had a Whistleblowing Code in place for many years and in 2010 and 2014 it was reviewed and updated to ensure compliance with the Code of Practice produced by the British Standards Institution, Public Concern at Work and updates to legislation and good practice.
- 4.2 The Code has continued to work well in practice. The Council has robust systems of internal control, a strong regulatory environment and effective Codes of Conduct, which means that cases of suspected impropriety are rare.
- 4.3 The Code is the subject of regular reminders ensuring that employees are aware of the Code, understand the necessity to express concern quickly, know how to proceed under its provisions and have trust in the process to ensure that whatever action is necessary will be undertaken without any repercussions for themselves.
- 4.4 It is also explicitly stated that the Council is committed to protecting and supporting those individuals who speak out, as, without their actions, the repercussions could be of significant detriment to the Council. Effective action will be taken, where necessary, to rectify concerns raised and prevent further instances occurring or a situation escalating.
- 4.5 The Council is committed to regularly reviewing the Code to ensure compliance with current best practice and this has recently been undertaken. There are no significant changes to advise of as there are no such changes in law or good practice impacting, so only minor changes are proposed.
- 4.6 Once considered by the Committee the matter will be referred on to Audit and Governance Committee and Council for consideration. Trade Unions will also be given the opportunity to provide comment. The finalised version will of the updated Code will then be circulated to all staff and Councillors, promoted through team briefings, and in staff circulars. Service Managers will also promote the document with their contractors and suppliers as appropriate.

5.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no significant sustainability impacts associated with this report and, in particular, no significant impact on crime and disorder (it is a helpful process to assist the addressing of potential issues of crime but arrangements are already in place).

6.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 All the activity referred to in this report is covered by existing budget provisions.

7.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 Good whistleblowing procedures can protect the Council against numerous risks, and by encouraging employees and others to raise concerns, can help deter wrongdoings, detect problems early, minimise costs and potential compensation claims and maintain and enhance reputation.

Background Documents

None

Equality Impact Assessment

The decision does not have any direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders. Therefore no Equality Impact Assessment is required.

Appendices

1. Appendix – Whistleblowing Code – track changes 2019