



Audit and Standards Committee Report

Report of: David Hollis, Interim Director Legal & Governance

Date: 9 March 2023

Subject: Whistleblowing Policy

Author of Report: Elyse Senior-Wadsworth, Head of HR

Summary:

This report updates the Committee on the review of the Councils Whistleblowing Policy and application.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Audit and Standards Committee:

- Benchmarking with core cities on numbers and nature of Whistleblowing complaints
- Rewrite of policy but no substantive changes, launch with communication in April.
- Local communication to highlight local delivery context.

Background Papers: None

Category of Report: OPEN

Statutory and Council Policy Checklist

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| Financial Implications |
| NO – Tony Kirkham |
| Legal Implications |
| NO – David Hollis |
| Equality of Opportunity Implications |
| NO – James Henderson |
| Tackling Health Inequalities Implications |
| NO |
| Human rights Implications |
| NO: |
| Environmental and Sustainability implications |
| NO |
| Economic impact |
| NO |
| Community safety implications |
| NO |
| Human resources implications |
| NO |
| Property implications |
| NO |
| Area(s) affected |
| None |
| Is the item a matter which is reserved for approval by the City Council? |
| NO |
| Press release |
| NO |

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

1. Introduction

Whistleblowing is a required policy and forms part of every employees' terms and conditions. The current policy 'See It Say It' has been in place since 2018.

2. Current position

Numbers of whistleblowing complaints are very low with only 1 complaint progressing to investigation stage each year for the last 3 years, with none so far this year.

More complaints are received but do not meet the requirement to be a whistleblowing complaint. The two main reasons complaints do not progress are lack of actionable evidence or a conflict with another process. (WB complaints cannot be because an individual is unhappy with their experience in a different complaints process)

The very low numbers are however themselves a concern. Whereas it could be taken as an indication that complaints are satisfactorily resolved through other means or as an organisation, we have a high standard of personal and financial standards, the complex environment of employee relations would suggest this is unlikely.

In other areas of employee relations, we are seeing increased complaints raised and strong evidence there are more, and people are reluctant to raise formal complaints.

Previous report agreed a review of the policy was overdue and this has now been done. The policy could be more simply written, more concise but it is factually and functionally adequate. Content needs to be urgently updated as these are out of date. Issues are more about the application of the policy and process.

3. Plans to publicise Whistleblowing, and associated ways to raise concerns.

April will see some wider work on performance and accountability across all officers so there will be a good opportunity to remind people of the policy, its purpose and how to raise concerns.

Locally focused communication and management team brief will be used to raise awareness rather than the broad corporate channels used previously.

4. Contact Advisors

Contact Advisers have a role that is broader than Whistleblowing and the other aspect of their function is under full review (linked to Dignity and Respect at Work) so a refresh and of the training and publicity of the support will be possible linked to that work.

5. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Audit and Standards Committee:

Agree to

- Benchmarking with core cities on numbers and nature of Whistleblowing complaints
- Rewrite of policy but no substantive changes, launch with communication in April.
- Local communication to highlight local delivery context.