



AUDIT – 10TH DECEMBER 2014

SUBJECT: ADOPTION OF REVISED WHISTLE BLOWING POLICY

REPORT BY: ACTING DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES & SECTION 151 OFFICER

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update for members of the Audit Committee on the adoption of a revised Whistle Blowing Policy.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Whistle Blowing Policy is intended to encourage and enable employees to raise concerns with the Council without fear of victimization, subsequent discrimination or embarrassment. This policy supports the Council's anti-fraud and corruption strategy.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Authority through this Committee has an obligation to maintain and monitor the standards of conduct throughout the Council's workforce.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Previous reports to the Audit Committee on the 6th of November 2013 and the 11th of June 2014 have consulted members on the implementation of a revised Whistleblowing policy for the Authority.
- 4.2 This report provides an update for members, on the adoption of a revised policy.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 Officers worked with the Charity Public Concern at Work, who were identified as being able to support best practice in this area. Officers have been able to access best practice guidance and support from Public Concern at Work to assist in the development of a new Whistleblowing Policy.
- 5.2 Members may also wish to note that there is an ongoing facility provided for employees to access the confidential support helpline provided by Public Concern at Work. This will enable them to make contact in a confidential manner, should they wish to seek independent advice.
- 5.3 The revised Policy is drafted in plain English, to encourage a wide understanding by employees. This policy has been developed with the support of the Improving Governance Programme Board.

- 5.4 The Policy has now been through the full consultation process which included P& R Scrutiny, Managers, Employees and Trades Unions.
- 5.5 Cabinet at its meeting on the 12th of November recommended the adoption of the Policy to full Council, with a minor amendment for clarity. Council formally approved the new Policy at its meeting on the 18th of November (please see appendix 1 for the full report), and granted permission for the Monitoring Officer to make the necessary amendments to the Council's Constitution.
- 5.6 The policy has now been placed on the HR Portal for employees to be able to access. A Communication and Awareness Training plan will now be developed to ensure that the new arrangements are widely communicated and understood by employees.

6. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 None directly arising from this Information Report, however the views of the Council's Equalities Officer have been considered as part of the adoption of a new Policy.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There is a small membership cost (£1600 & Vat) for joining Public Concern at Work, which has been met from existing budgets. As arrangements for communicating the policy and training of key employees are developed there will be some small costs. Again these will be met from existing budgets.

8. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no personnel implications of introducing the Policy.

9. CONSULTATIONS

- 9.1 The Improving Governance Project Board has been involved in the decision to partner with Public Concern at Work. Full consultation has been undertaken as outlined in Paragraph 5.4 and 5.5 above.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 Members of the Audit Committee are asked note the adoption of the revised policy.

11. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 To update members on the adoption of a new Policy.

12. STATUTORY POWER

- 12.1 Local Government Act 2000, Public Disclosure Act 1998.

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Appendices:
Appendix 1 Council Report – 18th November 2014