

Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee

10am, Thursday 28 January 2016

Whistleblowing update

Item number	7.6
Report number	
Executive/routine	
Wards	

Executive summary

This report provides a high level overview of the operation of the Council's whistleblowing hotline for the period 1 September to 30 November 2015.

Links

Coalition pledges	P27
Council outcomes	CO15, CO25, CO27
Single Outcome Agreement	

Whistleblowing update

Recommendations

- 1.1 To note the report.

Background

- 2.1 The Council's objective of introducing and developing good governance and best practice in its approach to whistleblowing arrangements took a major step forward with the launch of its new confidential hotline service on 12 May 2014, provided by independent company Safecall.
- 2.2 Committee has previously considered update reports in September and November 2014 and in March, June and October 2015. This report covers the period from 1 September to 30 November 2015.

Main report

Reports to Safecall

- 3.1 During the reporting period Safecall received six new reports as follows:

Category	Number of disclosures
Major/significant qualifying disclosures	0
Minor/operational qualifying disclosures	5
Non-qualifying disclosures	1

Whistleblowing pilot review

- 3.2 The Finance and Resources Committee agreed to support a one-year pilot of the whistleblowing service, with a review at six months to determine whether the

arrangements increased the reported frequency of protected disclosures and to confirm the service represents value for money.

- 3.3 The review was completed in August 2015 with conclusions and recommendations reported to Finance and Resources Committee on 27 August 2015.
- 3.4 An action plan was approved to develop the existing service and prepare for the procurement of continued service on expiry of the pilot term. Progress against the action plan is being monitored with re-procurement the focus of activity during early December.
- 3.5 Provision of guidance and information to staff was the priority from mid December onwards, with policy and procedure updates and training for investigating managers planned for the new year.

Measures of success

- 4.1 Employees feel able to report suspected wrongdoing as early as possible in the knowledge that:
 - 4.1.1 their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated appropriately;
 - 4.1.2 they will be protected from victimisation; and
 - 4.1.3 the provisions of the whistleblowing policy ensure all matters at the Council are fully transparent and officers are accountable.

Financial impact

- 5.1 The cost of the whistleblowing hotline between 1 September and 30 November 2015 was £7,398.
- 5.2 The costs are within the estimated budget for the pilot and are monitored regularly.

Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 The whistleblowing policy was developed and agreed to complement existing management reporting arrangements and to ensure employees have the right to raise concerns in the knowledge that they will be taken seriously, that matters will be investigated appropriately and confidentiality will be maintained.

Equalities impact

- 7.1 There are no direct equalities implications arising from this report.

Sustainability impact

8.1 There are no sustainability implications arising from this report.

Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 Consultation was undertaken with the trades unions to secure a local agreement.
- 9.2 A range of stakeholders, including whistleblowers and trades unions, were consulted during the pilot review.

Background reading/external references

[Finance and Resources Committee 19 September 2013: item 7.2 - Revised Whistleblowing Policy](#)

[Finance and Resources Committee 27 August 2015: item 7.13 - Review of Whistleblowing Arrangements](#)

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Links

Coalition pledges	P27 – seek to work in full partnership with Council staff and their representatives.
Council outcomes	CO15 – the public is protected. CO25 – the Council has efficient and effective services that deliver on objectives. CO27 – the Council supports, invests in and develops our people.
Single Outcome Agreement Appendices	