

Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee

10am, Thursday 9 March 2017

Whistleblowing update

Item number	7.10
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 October to 31 December 2016.

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 launched its confidential whistleblowing hotline service, provided by independent company Safecall, on 12 May 2014.
- 2.2 This report covers the period from 1 October to 31 December 2016.

Main report

Reports to Safecall

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

Category	Number of disclosures
Major/significant qualifying disclosures	1
Minor/operational qualifying disclosures	1
Category to be determined	0
Non-qualifying disclosures	3

Whistleblowing Review - Action Plan Progress

- 3.2 Progress has been made against all outstanding actions from the plan, though some work streams have progressed more slowly than was anticipated due to resourcing pressures.

- 3.3 The Council's Whistleblowing Policy has been reviewed to reflect the findings of the pilot review and will be presented to the Finance and Resources Committee for approval in March 2017.
- 3.4 A whistleblowing toolkit, to assist all of those who might be involved in the process, is being drafted for publication on the Orb.
- 3.5 A guide and toolkit for investigating officers has been drafted and is currently being tested by a senior manager investigating a minor disclosure.
- 3.6 Safecall have identified a suitably skilled and qualified expert to assist with the delivery of investigative training to the Council's nominated investigating officers. With service area reviews nearing completion, it is hoped that it will shortly be possible to compile a new list of nominees from service areas to be trained as investigating officers.

Scottish Parliament Public Petitions Committee

- 3.7 The Committee wrote to the Chief Executive on 16 September 2016 inviting the Council to comment on Petition PE1605 (Whistleblowing in the NHS – a safer way to report mismanagement and bullying).
- 3.8 The petitioner had cited the Council's whistleblowing arrangements, in particular the provision of an independent hotline, as a potential model for NHS Scotland.
- 3.9 The Interim Head of Strategy & Insight, who manages the service on behalf of the Council, responded on behalf of the Chief Executive.
- 3.10 The Committee subsequently asked the Interim Head of Strategy & Insight to appear before them, on 9 February 2017, to answer members' questions relating to whistleblowing arrangements at the Council.

CIPFA Public Finance Innovation Awards 2017

- 3.11 The Council's whistleblowing service has been shortlisted as a finalist in the Good Governance Award category, to be decided in London in April 2017.

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 for the three month period 1 October to 31 December 2016 was £4,725 + VAT.

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 A range of stakeholders, including whistleblowers and trades unions, were consulted during the pilot review.
- 9.2 There has been consultation with the trades unions to secure a local agreement in relation to the revised whistleblowing policy.

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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Chief Executive

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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	