

# Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee

10am, Tuesday 23 March 2021

## Whistleblowing update

Item number  
Executive/routine  
Wards  
Council Commitments

### 1. Recommendations

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1.1 To note whistleblowing activity for the quarter 1 October – 31 December 2020.

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# Report

## Whistleblowing update

### 2. Executive Summary

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- 2.1 This report provides a high-level overview of the operation of the Council's whistleblowing service for the quarter 1 October – 31 December 2020.
- 2.2 This reporting period covers months seven to nine of coronavirus pandemic measures, with national lockdown restrictions continuing and most Council staff still working remotely, many of those from home.

### 3. Background

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- 3.1 The Council's whistleblowing service (including a confidential reporting line) is contracted to an independent external organisation, currently Safecall Limited.
- 3.2 The Council's Whistleblowing policy (section 4.3.2) notes that quarterly summary reports on whistleblowing activity will be presented to the Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee.

### 4. Main report

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#### 4.1 Disclosures

During the reporting period Safecall received twenty-six new disclosures:

Category	Number of disclosures
Major/significant disclosures	3
Minor/operational disclosures	19
Category still to be determined	3
Non-qualifying disclosures	1

- 4.2 The number of disclosures received in this quarter increased significantly, partly attributable to nine disclosures raising the same or very similar concern within one

service unit. It is also possible that internal communications and external coverage of the ongoing review of whistleblowing culture at the Council has led to an increase in disclosures.

- 4.3 The Monitoring Officer's team assisted the Pinsent Masons review team during the reporting period in the provision of documents and other records relevant to their confidential enquiries.
- 4.4 The review of the whistleblowing policy will progress to Trade Union consultation in the coming weeks, with presentation to the Policy and Sustainability Committee for approval thereafter.

## **5. Next Steps**

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- 5.1 Trade Union consultation at 4.4 will take place as soon as possible.

## **6. Financial impact**

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- 6.1 Costs incurred for the whistleblowing service during the three-month period 1 October – 31 December 2020 totalled £9,425.00 (excluding VAT).

## **7. Stakeholder/Community Impact**

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- 7.1 The whistleblowing policy was developed and agreed to complement management reporting arrangements and to ensure all matters at the Council are fully transparent and officers are accountable.
- 7.2 The aim of the policy and the appointment of an independent service provider is to empower employees to report suspected wrongdoing as early as possible in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated appropriately; that they will be protected from victimisation and other forms of detriment; and that their confidentiality will be maintained.
- 7.3 The whistleblowing policy, and subsequent reviews, have been consulted on with the trades unions to secure a local agreement.

## **8. Background reading/external references**

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- 8.1 [Finance and Resources Committee 23 May 2019: item 7.20 Whistleblowing Policy](#)

## **9. Appendices**

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- 9.1 None.