

Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee

10am, Tuesday 14 December 2021

Whistleblowing update

Item number
Executive/routine
Wards
Council Commitments

1. Recommendations

1.1 To note whistleblowing activity for the quarter 1 July – 30 September 2021.

Andrew Kerr

Chief Executive

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Report

Whistleblowing update

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report provides a high-level overview of the operation of the Council's whistleblowing service for the quarter 1 July – 30 September 2021.
- 2.2 This reporting period covers months sixteen to eighteen of coronavirus pandemic measures, with restrictions easing significantly but continuing government advice to work from home where possible. As a result, significant numbers of Council staff are still working from home.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Council's whistleblowing service (including a confidential reporting line) is contracted to an independent external organisation, 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

4.1 Disclosures

During the reporting period Safecall received seven new disclosures:

Category	Number of disclosures
Major/significant disclosures	0
Minor/operational disclosures	6
Category still to be determined	0
Non-qualifying disclosures	1

- 4.2 The downward trend in the number of disclosures received has levelled off, from 26 in the fourth quarter of 2020 to 12 in the first quarter of 2021, eight in the second quarter and seven in this reporting period.
- 4.3 The Monitoring Officer's team continued to assist the Pinsent Masons review team in the provision of documents and other information relevant to their enquiries.
- 4.4 Consultation with the Trade Unions on amendments to the Whistleblowing Policy was delayed by the volume of work before the Trade Unions consultative group. It has been agreed by the Monitoring Officer and the consultative group that this work will be progressed following the imminently expected outcome of the Susanne Tanner QC whistleblowing culture review, which it is anticipated may include policy recommendations of its own.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 It is anticipated the outcome of the whistleblowing culture review will inform activity in the short and longer term. A revised whistleblowing policy will be presented to the consultative group with the Trade Unions in due course and thereafter to the Policy and Sustainability Committee for approval. If approved, it will be sent to members of GRBV for information.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 Costs incurred for the whistleblowing service during the three-month period 1 July – 30 September 2021 totalled £5,225.00 (excluding VAT).

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 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

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

9. Appendices

9.1 None.