

Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee

10am, Tuesday 14 June 2022

Whistleblowing update

Item number
Executive/routine
Wards
Council Commitments

1. Recommendations

1.1 To note whistleblowing activity for the quarter 1 January – 31 March 2022.

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 January – 31 March 2022.
- 2.2 This reporting period covers months twenty-two to twenty-four of coronavirus pandemic measures, with restrictions easing significantly but a significant number of Council staff 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 19 new disclosures:

Category	Number of disclosures
Major/significant disclosures	3
Minor/operational disclosures	13
Category still to be determined	3
Non-qualifying disclosures	0

- 4.2 The number of disclosures received is similar to the previous quarter when there were 21.

Susanne Tanner QC Led Inquiry and Review

- 4.3 During the quarter the Monitoring Officer and Governance Manager participated in a series of meetings and workshops that form part of a programme of work to progress and implement the recommendations of the inquiry and review.
- 4.4 The Monitoring Officer has put in place dedicated resource to commence work on a revised whistleblowing policy, incorporating the recommendations of the review.
- 4.5 The recruitment of additional resource for the Governance Team commenced.
- 4.6 Interim triage arrangements commenced, with fortnightly meetings between Governance, Human Resources and Legal Services.
- 4.7 At present the existing policies, systems and processes remain in place, pending the design and implementation of new systems and processes and onboarding and training of new staff to deal with triage and investigations.
- 4.8 The Governance team continues to work with HR, Legal Services and Safecall to process and progress whistleblowing matters in the most effective way possible, however this small team also has a significant role in delivering the elected member related programme of work for the May 2022 elections.
- 4.9 As a result, it will take some time for the Tanner recommendations to be fully implemented and there will need to be a period of transition from the old to the new model of working. This may not match the expectations of those using or involved with the service however, who will not see wholesale change immediately.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Significant focus will be required to deliver the Council's action plan in response to the outcome of the whistleblowing culture review and this will be the priority in activity undertaken in the short and longer term.
- 5.2 A revised whistleblowing policy, that will reflect the recommendations of the Tanner Report, 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 January – 31 March 2022 totalled £15,038.82 (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.