

Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee

10am, Tuesday 23 August 2022

Whistleblowing update

Item number
Executive/routine
Wards
Council Commitments

1. Recommendations

1.1 To note whistleblowing activity for the quarter 1 April – 30 June 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 April – 30 June 2022.

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) provides 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 16 new disclosures:

Category	Number of disclosures
Major/significant disclosures	5
Minor/operational disclosures	9
Category still to be determined	1
Non-qualifying disclosures	1

- 4.2 The number of disclosures received is similar to the previous quarter when there were 19. This is a significant overall increase in quarterly activity when compared to previous years.

Susanne Tanner QC Led Inquiry and Review

- 4.3 During the quarter the Monitoring Officer and Governance Manager continued to contribute to the programme of work to progress and implement the recommendations of the inquiry and review. This report is not intended to be an update on this workstream, which will continue to be reported as agreed by Council.
- 4.4 There is now an advanced draft of the revised whistleblowing policy and toolkit which incorporate all recommendations of the review and these have also been reviewed by Pinsent Masons. The policy will now go through the usual process prior to recommendation for adoption, including relevant impact assessments and engagement with staff and trade union colleagues.
- 4.5 Interim arrangements for disclosure triage continues, with fortnightly meetings between Governance, Human Resources and Legal Services.
- 4.6 The first stage of recruitment of additional resource for the Governance Team concluded and three new Governance Officers started in post in June. This has assisted with managing the increased volume of disclosures being received.
- 4.7 The onboarding and training of new staff to deal with triage and investigations continues and it is anticipated that some new arrangements will start to be introduced over the summer.
- 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, whilst continuing to deliver the programme of work following the May 2022 Council elections.
- 4.9 Existing policies, systems and processes remain in place, pending the implementation of new systems and processes. However, wherever possible, Safecall, the Monitoring Officer, the Governance Team and HR colleagues are applying the principles of the Tanner recommendations to current operating arrangements.

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. It is imperative that this is a change in overall culture, of which whistleblowing is only a small but important part.
- 5.2 A revised whistleblowing policy, which reflects 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 April – 30 June 2022 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.