

Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee

10am, Tuesday 3 December 2019

Whistleblowing update

Item number
Executive/routine
Wards
Council Commitments

1. Recommendations

1.1 To note whistleblowing activity for the period 1 July – 30 September 2019.

Andrew Kerr

Chief Executive

Contact: Nick Smith, Council Monitoring Officer/Head of Legal and Risk

E-mail: nick.smith@edinburgh.gov.uk | Tel: 0131 529 4377

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 period 1 July – 30 September 2019.

3. Background

- 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) requires that quarterly summary reports on whistleblowing activity are presented to the Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee.

4. Main report

4.1 Disclosures

During the reporting period Safecall received two new disclosures as follows:

Category	Number of disclosures
Major/significant disclosures	0
Minor/operational disclosures	2
Category still to be determined	0
Non-qualifying disclosures	0

- 4.2 The current contract with Safecall Limited for the provision of whistleblowing services will end on 11 May 2020. Governance and Procurement are progressing

review of the current contract, costs and requirements to procure a new contract for whistleblowing services starting on 12 May 2020.

- 4.3 A number of the members of the Governance, Risk and Best Value committee participated in a joint member/officer workshop to review current contractual and operational arrangements on 23 October 2019.
- 4.4 A number of improvements were proposed, including:
- 4.4.1 the introduction of final closure reports to Committee on all major investigations, outlining the actions taken to address the recommendations in reports (to take immediate effect);
 - 4.4.2 the introduction of additional process steps to clarify responsibilities and decision making;
 - 4.4.3 additional guidance for whistleblowers up front on the level of feedback that can be expected on the outcome of investigations; and
 - 4.4.4 amendments to the Whistleblowing policy in March 2020 (next scheduled review) to reflect the above.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 The improvements outlined at 4.4.2 and 4.4.3 will be implemented at the appropriate point in the process to prepare for the new contract in May 2020.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 The cost of the whistleblowing service for the three-month period 1 July to 30 September 2019 was £4,725 (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.