

Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee

10am, Tuesday 8 June 2021

Whistleblowing update

Item number
Executive/routine
Wards
Council Commitments

1. Recommendations

1.1 To note whistleblowing activity for the quarter 1 January – 31 March 2021.

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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 2021.
- 2.2 This reporting period covers months ten to twelve of coronavirus pandemic measures, with national lockdown restrictions continuing and most Council staff still working remotely, many of those from home.

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) 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 twelve new disclosures:

| Category | Number of disclosures |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Major/significant disclosures | 0 |
| Minor/operational disclosures | 9 |
| Category still to be determined | 1 |
| Non-qualifying disclosures | 2 |

- 4.2 The number of disclosures received was down on the 26 in the previous quarter but was still towards the upper end of what might usually be expected.

- 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 confidential enquiries.
- 4.4 Proposed amendments to the whistleblowing policy have been shared with the Trade Unions for agreement ahead of presentation to the Policy and Sustainability Committee for approval. The proposed amendments include recommendations from committee, workshop outputs and process improvements implemented by the Monitoring Officer, including:
- 4.4.1 additional guidance for whistleblowers;
 - 4.4.2 further clarity on roles and responsibilities;
 - 4.4.3 strengthened reporting and scrutiny;
 - 4.4.4 the new process for monitoring the implementation of management actions;
 - 4.4.5 an updated Integrated Impact Assessment section; and
 - 4.4.6 an updated flowchart at Appendix 1.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Proposed amendments to the whistleblowing policy will be presented to the Policy and Sustainability Committee for approval once agreement has been reached with the Trade Unions. 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 2021 totalled £13,725.00 (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.