

Audit Committee

21st January 2019



Report of: Chief Internal Auditor

Title: Whistleblowing Arrangements – Annual review

Ward: Citywide

Officer Presenting Report: Jonathan Idle – Chief Internal Auditor

Recommendation

The Audit Committee notes the audit opinion on the 'Whistleblowing' arrangements in Bristol City Council and supports the recommendations for improvement.

Summary

The Audit Committee is responsible for ensuring that arrangements are in place for the proportionate and independent investigation, and follow-up action of Whistleblowing allegations, in line with recommended best practice. An annual audit review of Whistleblowing arrangements takes place to enable the Audit Committee to exercise its governance role over Whistleblowing arrangements. This is the second of such reviews.

The significant issues in the report are:

An audit review of Whistleblowing arrangements in Bristol City Council has been completed, of which full details can be seen at Appendix A.

In summary the key findings from the review are:

- The Council has a Whistleblowing Procedure which has been well communicated. A survey demonstrates good levels of awareness of the procedure.
- Recommendations from the 2017/18 review have been implemented.
- Improvements are required to enhance confidence and support reporting of suspected concern.



Policy

The Council is committed to conducting its business with honesty and integrity. In this context, the Council has a Whistleblowing Procedure which is designed to ensure that employees can report any concerns they may have regarding wrongdoing or dangers arising from Council activities

Consultation

1. **Internal**
HR, s151, Corporate Leadership Board
2. **External**
N/A

Context

3. The Council is committed to conducting its business with honesty and integrity and to this end it expects that all employees operate with the same honesty and integrity. In this context, the Council has a Whistleblowing Procedure which is designed to ensure that employees can report any concerns they may have regarding wrongdoing or dangers arising from Council activities.
4. An Internal Audit review of the Council's Whistleblowing arrangements has been undertaken. The scope, main findings and recommendations of the review are summarised in Appendix A.

Proposal

5. The Audit Committee note the findings of the Internal Audit report on Whistleblowing arrangements and endorse the recommendations, ensuring their implementation.

Other Options Considered

6. N/A

Risk Assessment

7. Failure to define and promote 'Whistleblowing arrangements' and for employees to have confidence in 'Whistleblowing arrangements' could result in malpractice going undetected, financial loss and possible reputational damage to the City Council.

Public Sector Equality Duties

- 8a) Before making a decision, section 149 Equality Act 2010 requires that each decision-maker considers the need to promote equality for persons with the following "protected characteristics": age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. Each decision-maker must, therefore, have due regard to the need to:
 - i) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under

the Equality Act 2010.

- ii) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to --
 - remove or minimise disadvantage suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic;
 - take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of people who do not share it (in relation to disabled people, this includes, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities);
 - encourage persons who share a protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.
- iii) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to –
 - tackle prejudice; and
 - promote understanding.

8b) The recommendations have no specific bearing on equality issues.

Legal and Resource Implications

Legal

Legal Services have provided views on the recommendations and the agreed recommendations have reflected their advice.

Legal advice provided by Husinara Jones (Senior Practitioner – Solicitor)

Financial

(a) Revenue

Not applicable

(b) Capital

Not applicable

Land/Property

Not applicable

Human Resources

HR advice provided by Mark Williams – Head of HR

Appendices:

Appendix A – Summary of Internal Audit Report, Annual Review of Whistleblowing Arrangements

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers:

- PAS1998 Whistleblowing Code of Practice