

APPENDIX A:

SUMMARY OF ANNUAL REVIEW OF WHISTLEBLOWING ARRANGEMENTS

Background

The Council is committed to conducting its business with honesty and integrity and to this end it expects that all employees operate on the same basis. 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.

Scope and Approach

The purpose of the review was to assess the:

- Adequacy and effectiveness of the City Council's whistleblowing arrangements.
- Awareness of the Whistleblowing Procedure amongst City Council Staff.
- Confidence which City Council Staff have in the whistleblowing arrangements.
- Extent to which recommendations made in the 2017/18 review were implemented.

The review included:

- Discussions with the Human Resources Advisor who has prime responsibility for maintaining the Whistleblowing Register and routing all whistleblowing allegations to the correct person/department.
- A survey of 100 City Council employees.
- An exercise to test the effectiveness of the procedures in place when a Whistleblower chooses to report concerns of malpractice.

The review covered the Council's Whistleblowing Procedure. It did not cover the Safeguarding reporting arrangements or whistleblowing in schools.

The response rate to the survey was limited with only 22 responses received. This level of response may not provide a fully reflective view of arrangements but the results are detailed below as indicating potential issues. It is anticipated that for next year's review a much wider survey is completed to improve the level of feedback which can inform improvements required going forward.

Summary of Findings and Conclusions

- The Council has a procedure for reporting and recording whistleblowing allegations and a central record is in place. However, the status of investigations is not always kept up to date in the register.
- All recommendations made as a result of the 2017/18 annual review have been implemented.
- There are good levels of awareness of the procedure following continual promotion via electronic screens, posters, the intranet site (the source), team meetings and payslips. All respondents to the survey indicated an awareness of the procedure.
- Five whistleblowing reports have been received during 2018/19 to date. Responses to the survey indicate that some staff have not reported concerns. Reasons given for not

reporting concerns were fear of reprisal, concern that nothing would be done or a lack of evidence to enable a report to be made.

- Three out of five respondents to the survey who had reported concerns demonstrated dissatisfaction with the response to their report.
- The 'test exercise' of reporting a concern demonstrated that whilst the concern was recorded and routed correctly, the ease with which matters can be reported can be improved.

Recommendations

Internal Audit made four recommendations, including:

- The need to reinforce the message and actively demonstrate support for whistleblowing by:
 - Emphasising that:
 - There are legal protections available for whistleblowers
 - The Council take allegations of malpractice seriously
 - Whistleblowing is valued
 - Considering the internal publication of 'high profile' whistleblowing investigations. This will both re-inforce the message that whistleblowing is taken seriously and act as a deterrent.
- Improving the current reporting arrangements to ensure that callers hear a specifically tailored whistleblowing message if calling when the HR Advice Centre is not staffed/closed.

All recommendations were agreed by the HR Department.