

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Review of the Whistleblowing Policy 11th October 2012

Report of the Monitoring Officer

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To enable the Committee to consider and approve a revised Whistleblowing Policy, to be known as the "Raising Concerns Policy"

This report is public

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) **That the revised Raising Concerns Policy appended to this report be approved**

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 In conjunction with an Internal Audit report on reviewing corporate whistleblowing arrangements, Internal Audit and the Head of Governance as Monitoring Officer, have been reviewing the Council's Whistleblowing Policy to ensure that it is up to date and follows best practice.
- 1.2 The existing policy is appended to this report for members' information, together with the proposed revised version, which has been the subject of consultation with the trade unions.
- 1.3 The policy has been updated to ensure that it reflects best practice, and, in the review process, it has been compared with the policies of other local authorities.
- 1.4 The Policy has previously been called the "Whistleblowing Policy". However, the term 'whistleblowing' has in the past been confused with anonymous informing which could have a negative impact in terms of encouraging officers to raise any concerns they may have. Some organisations refer to "Raising Concerns" or "Speaking Up", in order perhaps to make it more clear what the policy is about. It was felt that "Raising Concerns" was perhaps a more appropriate title.
- 1.5 In conducting the review, the opportunity has been taken to take account of a Lancashire Supporting People "Safeguarding and Protection From Abuse Validation Inspection" on the sheltered housing service the council provides for Lancashire Supporting People. This is part of the accreditation to provide the service. The action required following the inspection was "to update the whistle blowing policy to include names and contact details for current external regulatory or professional bodies that are relevant to the work of the council given that potential users of the policy may not appreciate who the relevant bodies are or how to contact them." As a result, Appendix B has been amended to include the Homes and Communities Agency and Lancashire Supporting People.

1.6 A set of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and answers has also been developed to support the Policy, and this will be available on the Council's intranet..

1.7 The draft revised policy was circulated to the trade unions on the 8th August 2012 for their comments. Unison responded to the effect that they welcomed the changes and had no further comments.

2.0 Proposal Details

2.1 Approval of the whistleblowing policy falls within the terms of reference of this Committee, and the attached revised "Raising Concerns Policy" is therefore submitted for approval by the Committee.

2.2 It is intended that the Committee will continue to review the operation of the policy on an annual basis, in January each year.

3.0 Details of Consultation

3.1 The trade unions were consulted on the draft revised policy.

4.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

4.1 The options open to the Committee are to approve the attached revised policy, or to approve it with amendments, or not to approve an amended policy. The officer recommendation is to approve the attached revised policy, which it is considered reflects best practice.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

None directly arising from this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Human Resources:

Human resources will be responsible for including the policy within the induction process, and for ensuring that managers understand their role and responsibilities under the policy.

Information Services:

None

Property:

None

Open Spaces:

None

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The report has been prepared by the Monitoring Officer in her capacity as adviser to the Committee.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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