

CONFIDENTIAL REPORTING CODE (WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY)

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Summary and Recommendation:	That the Committee notes the report.
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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Council has had a Confidential Reporting Code for approximately eight years. It was last reviewed in early 2006. At a recent meeting of the Committee a request was made for a report on the Code to be presented to a future meeting.

2. HISTORY, CONTENTS AND AWARENESS

- 2.1 The introduction of a Confidential Reporting Code was prompted by the Public Interest Disclosure Act, which introduced statutory protection for whistle-blowers.
- 2.2 The Confidential Reporting Code has an application which is wider than a Whistle-blowing Policy, although it is sometimes popularly known as the Council's Whistle-blowing Policy. The Confidential Reporting Code invites all members of the public to "blow the whistle" on any aspect of the Council. A Whistle-Blowing Policy only relates to "whistle-blowing" by employees or certain types of staff on temporary agency appointments, albeit that those persons have statutory protection provided they fulfil the criteria in the Public Interest Disclosure Act.
- 2.3 When reviewed in 2006, the Code was amended by reference to researching good examples of practice in other local authorities and by making an effort to re-write the Code in plainer English.
- 2.4 The Code emphasises respect for the confidentiality of any complainant and that the way in which complaints are dealt with will be tailored in accordance with the circumstances of each case.
- 2.5 Although the Head of Legal and Democratic Services has overall responsibility for the Code complaints can be dealt with in any number of ways. The only stipulation is that within 10 working days of receipt of any concern being raised, the relevant officer will:-
- Acknowledge the concern has been received;
 - Indicate how the officer proposes to deal with it;
 - Give an estimate of how long it is likely to take to provide a final response;
 - Supply information on staff support mechanisms;
 - Say whether further investigations will take place, and if not, why not.

2.6 A shortfall identified from the previous Code was that it was not well advertised. In response to this we have:-

- Made the Code available on the Intranet (under Human Resources and Documents with a link to it from Legal);
- Made the Code similarly available on our website;
- Produced posters, many of which are on notice boards around the offices;
- At the time of its adoption, produced a press release, which received press coverage;
- Made a presentation on the Code to our Managers Group's monthly meeting;
- Arranged for our contractors to be given a copy of the Code.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Members are asked to note the report.

List of Appendices

A – Confidential Reporting Code

B – Copy of Poster

List of Background Documents:

Poster	Press Release
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List of Consultees: Chief Executive;
Head of Finance and Business Development;
Audit and Fraud Prevention Manager.