

CONFIDENTIAL REPORTING CODE (WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY)

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Summary and Recommendation: That the Committee notes the report.

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 Audit Committee a request was made for a report on the Code to be presented to a future meeting. This report largely reproduces the report to Audit Committee. As can be seen from the Code, I am asked in any case to report to the Standards Committee yearly on the Code.

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. Council approved the new Code in February 2007.

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.

