

Report for Information

Report to Audit committee
29 November 2011

Report of Head of law and governance

Subject Whistleblowing summary 2010-11

11

Purpose

To review allegations made in 2010-11 under the council's whistleblowing policy.

Recommendations

Members are asked to note the report.

Financial Consequences

There are no direct financial consequences arising from this report.

Risk Management

In conjunction with the council's enhanced anti-fraud strategies, the whistleblowing policy is intended to mitigate the risk of frauds against the council, by making it clear that all allegations of wrongdoing will be properly investigated.

Strategic Priority and Outcome/Service Priorities

The report helps to meet the strategic priority "One council:

- customer focus – putting customers at the heart of everything we do;
- continuous improvement of our services; and
- cost conscious – efficient and effective service delivery

Contact Officers

Philip Hyde
Steve Dowson

01603 212022
01603 212575

Background Documents

Report

Background

1. Audit Committee approved a revised whistleblowing policy in November 2008.
2. The policy supports the council's strategy to help fight internal fraud and corruption, but was expanded to include other types of "wrongdoing". It is intended to encourage and enable councillors, employees, contractors, suppliers, partners and members of the public to raise concerns with the council, rather than overlooking an issue or reporting the matter elsewhere.
3. This is in line with the Council's Code of Governance, where section 4 includes the following: "*Ensure that effective arrangements for whistleblowing are in place to which members, staff, all those contracting with or appointed by the Council and members of the public have access.*"
4. The policy seeks to let everybody know that the council wants "wrongdoing" to be reported, providing the council with the opportunity to deal with potentially damaging situations, rather than give rise to the possibility of financial loss, regulatory breach or damaged reputation.
5. The policy is available on the council intranet, website and e-councillor, and has been publicised via a managers' briefing, Innercity newsletter and leaflets for managers and staff. It has also been publicised to contractors, suppliers and other key partners.
6. The policy, which is due for review in 2011-12, commits the council to follow up all allegations and report the outcomes in an anonymous format to Audit Committee.

Summary of allegations and outcomes

7. A log has been set up in a protected area of the shared folder system to record allegations received and the outcomes of investigations. This report summarises allegations received in 2010-11.
8. An anonymous version of the log is shown at Annex 1. Two of the three cases were not strictly whistleblowing, but were logged for completeness and transparency.
9. The log only includes allegations which have been passed or made to the Head of Law and Governance, the Head of Finance or the Audit Manager. These are the three contacts specifically mentioned in the policy.

Conclusion

10. Allegations are being recorded and investigated in accordance with the policy. One serious internal issue was uncovered as a result of subsequent investigations, which led to a disciplinary hearing.

Whistleblowing Register 2010-11							
Date of Allegation	Case reference	How Received	Subject	Contact for investigation	Outcome	Date Case Closed	If whistleblower is an employee, date informed of outcome. (Informing non-staff is at our discretion)
25/02/2011	100901N	Emails	This case relates to a property transaction which has already been investigated by a previous monitoring officer. The latest correspondence was logged as whistleblowing, but following a review the council's solicitor judged that it should be treated as a complaint and a response was given accordingly	Head of Law and Governance	The matter was considered fully investigated in the past and no further action is necessary	28/03/2011	n/a
02/09/2010	100902N	In the course of a separate issue being discussed at a management team meeting, the name of one of our suppliers was recognised as a former member of staff	Possibility of improper award of housing repair work to former member of staff. Although no formal allegation was made, it was decided to log it as a whistleblowing case and initiate an investigation	Strategic Contracts Manager and Audit Manager	Investigation by Audit Manager, but no evidence of impropriety found	24/09/2010	n/a
07/02/2011	110203N	In person to Head of Finance	Inappropriate behaviour by member of staff	Head of Finance	Investigation and disciplinary hearing	18/02/2011	07/02/2011