

Item

## Whistleblowing policy

**To:**

Civic Affairs Committee [13/07/2022]

**Report by:**

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**Wards affected:** All

### 1. Introduction / Executive Summary

- 1.1 Counter fraud policies are part of the Council's internal controls, which contribute to maintaining good governance.
- 1.2 The Council maintains a Prevention of Fraud and Corruption (PFC) Policy, and in line with good practice it is reported annually to this Committee. This establishes and communicates our Counter Fraud Framework.
- 1.3 Our Whistleblowing Policy supports our Counter Fraud Framework, and we have reviewed this Policy to ensure it is up to date and reflects good professional practice.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The committee should review and approve the Whistleblowing Policy.

### **3. Background**

- 3.1 The Council introduced the Prevention of Fraud and Corruption (PFC) Policy in 1998, and in line with good practice the Policy is reviewed and reported annually to this Committee. Guidance and best practice is issued periodically from counter fraud agencies, such as the National Crime Agency, CIPFA, the Cabinet Office and the Whistleblowing charity Protect. We are keen to maintain effective policies, by implementing good practice and controls as they develop.
- 3.2 Our Whistleblowing Policy supports our Counter Fraud Framework. It was developed in accordance with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, and updates have been regularly reported to the Civic Affairs Committee.
- 3.3 The Policy provides a procedure for employees, councillors, contractors and agency workers to report concerns about wrongdoing, risk or malpractice.

### **4. Policy review**

- 4.1 Both the Internal Audit and Human Resources teams reviewed the Whistleblowing Policy, to ensure it continues to meet best practice standards, and it has been updated.
- 4.2 The Policy has been consulted upon with the Senior Management Team and the Unions. The reviewed Policy is appended to this report for approval by the Civic Affairs Committee.
- 4.3 It is important that employees and contractors are aware of this policy, and promotional material will be used to raise awareness.

## 5. Summary of updates

5.1 Below is a summary of changes to our Policy and processes:

Theme	Details
Language	<p>The Policy continues to reflect Public Interest Disclosure Act and has not needed to be changed significantly.</p> <p>We have taken the opportunity to reflect the latest terminology and language recommended by the Whistleblowing Charity, Protect, to help make the Policy easy to read and accessible.</p> <p>We have provided clarity on how concerns are handled, and the sharing of data, which helps support good information governance.</p>
Accessibility	<p>The Council has a Whistleblowing telephone hotline and email account to help people report concerns.</p> <p>Reporting concerns can be a complex and daunting process. We have developed an Online Form to help guide people through the process of providing the right information, and this will help us to respond quickly to their concerns.</p>
Engagement	<p>The Council has a broad estates portfolio with colleagues working across many sites. Further changes to working practices have developed since the pandemic, such as hybrid and increased remote working.</p> <p>We are keen to promote the Policy to all colleagues and are developing a communication program. This includes producing posters for display in sites where colleagues may have limited internet access.</p>

## **6. Conclusions**

- 6.1 The Council remains committed to providing services carried out in accordance with the highest ethical standards and takes steps to proactively prevent fraud and investigates concerns.
- 6.2 The review of policies is completed to help embed effective standards for countering fraud and corruption. This supports good governance and demonstrates effective financial stewardship and strong public financial management.
- 6.3 As anti-fraud and corruption is part of our governance framework, it is appropriate that the Civic Affairs committee is responsible for reviewing and approving policies in this area when there has been a significant change or review.

## **7. Implications**

### **(a) Financial Implications**

None.

### **(b) Staffing Implications**

None.

### **(c) Equality and Poverty Implications**

None.

### **(d) Net Zero Carbon, Climate Change and Environmental Implications**

None.

### **(e) Procurement Implications**

None.

### **(f) Community Safety Implications**

None.

## **8. Consultation and communication considerations**

None required.

## **9. Background papers**

Background papers used in the preparation of this report:

- [Anti-fraud and Corruption Strategy](#)

## **10. Appendices**

- a) Whistleblowing policy

## **11. Inspection of papers**

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact Jonathan Tully, Head of Shared Internal Audit Service, tel: 01223 - 458180, email: [jonathan.tully@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:jonathan.tully@cambridge.gov.uk).