

## **Wiltshire Council**

### **Standards Committee**

**25 April 2014**

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## **Wiltshire Council's Whistleblowing Arrangements Status Report**

### **Purpose of Report**

1. To provide Standards Committee members with an update on the effectiveness of Wiltshire Council's whistleblowing arrangements. .

### **Background**

2. Part 3 of Wiltshire Council's constitution states that the Standards Committee will have responsibility for oversight of the council's arrangements for whistleblowing.
3. The Monitoring Officer is responsible for the operational oversight of the whistleblowing policy, and the Head of Governance is responsible for implementing the operational arrangements. A copy of the policy is attached at Appendix 1.
4. The whistleblowing policy is published on the intranet. There is a dedicated hotline number for people to call if they wish to raise a concern under the whistleblowing policy. Calls are received by the Customer Care Unit, and an urgent alert raised and forwarded to the Head of Governance.
5. The Head of Governance, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, is responsible for making appropriate arrangements for whistleblowing concerns to be investigated.

### **Main Considerations for the Committee**

6. In 2012 the Head of Governance conducted a complete review of the whistleblowing arrangements to ensure that they complied with good practice. The review resulted in minor amendments to the existing policy.
7. In 2013 the Care Quality Commission reviewed the policy and requested some further minor amendments. They asked the council to include contact details for Public Concern at Work, and for a list of external regulators' contact details to be reviewed and amended. These amendments were made in October 2013.
8. In 2013 four matters were raised and investigated under the whistleblowing policy. In 2014 to date one concern has been raised. In all cases where the concern has been substantiated, appropriate action has been taken to address the issue raised. Remedial action is overseen by the Monitoring Officer and the Corporate Leadership Team.

9. In 2013 Public Concern at Work launched the [Whistleblowing Commission](#) chaired by Sir Anthony Hooper to examine the effectiveness of whistleblowing in the workplace and to make recommendations for change.
10. The Commission recommended the introduction of a statutory code of practice for whistleblowing arrangements that would apply to employers, workers and their representatives and to be taken into account by courts considering whistleblowing issues.
11. The Commission further recommended that this Code could be used by regulators to assess the effectiveness of the whistleblowing arrangements of those that they regulate. The [Code of Practice](#) has 15 recommendations for raising, handling, training and reviewing workplace whistleblowing.

Key requirements include:

- confidentiality will be maintained where requested;
  - clear assurances are given to staff about protection from reprisal;
  - specific individuals have responsibility for the arrangements;
  - there is a need for greater oversight of whistleblowing arrangements by non-executive directors or equivalent; and
  - there is a review of the effectiveness of the arrangements and publication of key data.
12. The recommendations made by the Commission have formed part of Wiltshire Council's whistleblowing arrangements for many years, and it is therefore unlikely that the introduction of a statutory code of practice would require any significant changes in the council's existing arrangements for receiving and handling whistleblowing cases.

### Conclusion

13. The Council has put in place a framework and procedures for receiving and investigating whistleblowing concerns. The framework is reviewed on an on-going basis, and complies with good practice. Monitoring of the effectiveness of these arrangements will allow the council to make any adjustments to improve the operational efficiency of the whistleblowing arrangements

### **Proposal**

14. Members of the Standards Committee are asked to note this report.

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**Background Papers:** The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this report: None