

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

4 October 2006

WHISTLEBLOWING ARRANGEMENTS - PROGRESS REPORT

Purpose of Report

1. To provide members with information about the implementation of the council's new whistleblowing arrangements.

Background

2. The Standards Committee has responsibility for oversight of the council's ethical governance arrangements. It has received a series of reports relating to the council's whistleblowing procedures, which the Audit Commission recommended should be reviewed.
3. In January 2006 members received a report containing an action plan for implementing new a new whistleblowing procedure. They asked for officers to bring them a report updating time on progress against that action plan in December 2006. The action plan has been implemented in its entirety since June 2006, so officers considered it to be appropriate to bring the date of the progress report forward to this meeting.

Progress against the implementation plan

4. The implementation plan brought to this committee in January 2006 outlined a number of actions that needed to be taken in order to implement the new procedures. These fell under the broad headings of:
 - Drafting the procedures to accompany the new policy
 - IT, telephony and data capture
 - Training
 - Publicity
5. The procedures and support structures were finalised and agreed in February 2006.
6. In March 2006 work began on developing the IT support system began. It was decided that those who wished to make a whistleblowing allegation should be able to use a dedicated telephone number coming through to the Customer Care Unit, who would take down the caller's contact details and pass the complaint on to nominated officers for investigation. Allegations would be progressed through the customer relationship management system on a closed user group basis.
7. In April 2006 the IT development was completed, and the telephony necessary to enable a dedicated telephone number to be set up was arranged. Customer care staff were trained in handling whistle blowing calls.

8. In June 2006 the new procedure went live. It was publicised to staff on the council's intranet site, and by means of the monthly team briefing: "News and Views".

Recommendations

9. That members note the contents of this report.
10. That members receive an annual report on the operation of the council's whistleblowing arrangements.

Risk Assessment

11. There are no risks associated with recommendations made in this report.

Financial Implications

12. None.

Environmental Impact

13. None.

Legal Considerations

14. Not applicable.

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