

**HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**AUDIT COMMITTEE  
18 JULY 2018 AT 2.00 PM**

Agenda Item  
No:

**12**

**WHISTLEBLOWING ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18**

**Report of the Director of Resources**

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**1. Purpose of Report**

To provide members with an overview of the disclosures made through the Council's whistleblowing process and the operation of the Whistleblowing Procedure in the year 2017/18.

**2. Summary**

- 2.1 The Council's Whistleblowing Procedure provides that a report will be made annually to the Audit Committee on the operation of the Procedure and on the whistleblowing allegations made during the period covered by the report.
- 2.2 The number of concerns raised under the Whistleblowing Procedure in 2017/18 was 7 and of these allegations 4 proceeded to an investigation.

**3. Recommendations**

The Committee is invited to note the contents of the report and the on-going work to raise awareness and provide assurance on the effectiveness of the Council's whistleblowing arrangements

**4. Background**

- 4.1 The Council's Whistleblowing Procedure is intended to provide a means for employees and others (including agency workers, contractors working for or providing services to the County Council) to raise concerns about any suspected serious misconduct, wrong doing, financial irregularity or possible unlawful action in a way that will ensure confidentiality and protect those who raise such concerns in the

reasonable belief that it is in the public interest to do so from being victimised, discriminated against or disadvantaged.

- 4.2 The Whistleblowing Procedure provides that a report will be made annually to the Audit Committee on the operation of the Procedure and on the whistleblowing allegations made during the period covered by the report.
- 4.3 The Chief Legal Officer in her role as Monitoring Officer has overall responsibility for the Whistleblowing Procedure. The Chief Legal Officer meets regularly with the Head of Assurance Services and the Assistant Director – HR Services (all three of whom are ‘Reporting Officers’ as defined in the Whistleblowing Procedure) to monitor the effectiveness of the Whistleblowing Procedure, any allegations made under it and learning from the allegations/process.
- 4.4 During the year 2017/18 the campaign to raise awareness of the Whistleblowing Procedure (‘Speak Out’) has continued with regular publicity on the intranet and by the use of posters in the Council’s offices.
- 4.5 The Council’s Whistleblowing Policy was refreshed in 2017 and the revised Policy was approved by Council at its meeting on 18 July 2017.

## **5. Whistleblowing Allegations 2017/18**

- 5.1 The Chief Legal Officer maintains a register of whistleblowing allegations that are made through the Whistleblowing Procedure. The number of allegations that are included in the register for 2017/18 is 7. The numbers for the preceding 3 years are:
  - 2014/15 - 5
  - 2015/16 – 3
  - 2016/17 – 6
- 5.2 Of the 7 allegations received in 2017/18, 5 were from employees or former employees, 1 was from a volunteer and 1 was from the former employee of a contractor. The allegations concerned:
  - a) Adult safeguarding/ health and safety issues ( 2 allegations)
  - b) Inappropriate involvement by an officer in contracting activities (1 allegation)
  - c) Misuse of public funds (1 allegation)
  - d) Bullying and harassment and discrimination (2 allegations)
  - e) Inappropriate recruitment practice (1 allegation)
- 5.3 Investigations were undertaken into the allegations relating to adult safeguarding/health and safety issues, the inappropriate officer

involvement in contracting activities and the allegation concerning misuse of public funds.

- 5.4 After investigation it was determined that in one of the adult safeguarding/health and safety allegations the matters alleged had either been brought previously to management's attention, investigated and appropriate action taken or no further action was deemed necessary. The outcome of the other adult safeguarding/health investigation is awaited.
- 5.5 The allegations concerning inappropriate involvement by an officer in contracting activities and misuse of public funds were determined to be unfounded.
- 5.6 The bullying and harassment and discrimination allegations and the allegation of inappropriate recruitment practice were not investigated under the whistleblowing procedure but were referred to HR for consideration.

## **6. Work Programme in 2018/19**

- 6.1 The Chief Legal Officer, Head of Assurance Services and the Assistant Director - HR will continue to meet in 2018/19 to review the effectiveness of the Whistleblowing Procedure at the Council and in particular will:
  - a) continue to look at ways of raising awareness of the Council's whistleblowing procedures amongst all staff;
  - b) develop a Whistle-blowing module on i-Learn ensuring the integration on the iLearn platform of that module with the Fraud module

### ***Background documents***

Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 and associated guidance