

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Audit Committee - 18 April 2017

Report of Chief Finance Officer

Status: For Consideration

Key Decision: No

This report supports the Key Aim of Effective Delivery of the Corporate Plan

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Scholey

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Recommendation to Audit Committee: That Members review and approve the proposed amendments to the Council's Whistleblowing Policy.

Reason for recommendation: Section 8 of the Whistleblowing Policy states that this Policy is subject to annual review by the appropriate committee, in this instance the Audit Committee, and will take into consideration the views of users of the Policy and any relevant professional or regulatory changes.

This report sets out the proposed amendments to the Council's existing Whistleblowing Policy, which was approved by the Audit Committee in January 2015.

Introduction

- 1 This report sets out the proposed amendments to the Council's Whistleblowing Policy, which incorporates the requirements of the new Statutory Code of Practice, recommended by the Whistleblowing Commission in 2013.
- 2 The Whistleblowing Commission was established in February 2013 by the Whistleblowing Charity, 'Public Concern at Work'. The Commission produced a code of practice in 2013, which is intended to make whistleblowing more effective within organisations and recommends that it be rooted in statute. The code could be taken into account in court cases and by regulators.
- 3 The Code of Practice provides practical guidance to employers, workers and their representatives and sets out recommendations for raising, handling, training and reviewing whistleblowing in the work place.

Summary of Issues Raised Within the Report

- 4 The Council's existing whistleblowing policy substantially meets the code requirements. However, where appropriate, amendments have been made to close any gaps identified under the new code. The whistleblowing policy reflects Sevenoaks Council's existing anti-fraud and corruption framework.
- 5 A sound whistle blowing arrangement is an essential part of good governance. Sevenoaks Council is committed to good governance and robust anti-fraud and corruption arrangements.
- 6 Details of Amendments to the Policy.

The existing whistleblowing policy is largely consistent with good practice and is attached as an appendix to this report. Only minor changes have been made where appropriate, to reflect the new Code of Practice. The changes made are set out below for easy identification by Members. The Strategic Management Team has reviewed the changes. The changes are set out on the following sections of the policy, attached as Appendix A to this report:

- References made with regard to contacting the Anti-Fraud Team about a whistleblowing concern have been replaced with the Internal Audit Team.
- Revision of the whistleblowing hotline and email address (see section 4.1)

Key Implications

Financial

This report has no financial implications.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

The Council is required to have sound anti-fraud and corruption arrangement as part of its overall governance framework. By adopting the requirements of The Whistleblowing Commission's Code of Practice, the Council will be compliant with regulatory requirements, as well as ensuring that it has effective arrangements in place to manage the risk of fraud occurring.

Equality Assessment

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

Conclusion

The Council is required to have sound anti-fraud and corruption arrangement as part of its overall governance framework. By adopting the requirements of The

Whistleblowing Commissions' Code of Practice, the Council will be compliant with regulatory requirements.

Appendices Appendix A - Whistleblowing Policy 2017

Background Papers: Whistleblowing Policy 2016

<S:\Charter and Other Policy Documents\Whistleblowing Policy\SDC\Whistleblowing Policy Final Oct 2016.docx>

Adrian Rowbotham
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