



Doncaster Council

19th October 2020.

**To the Chair and Members of the
Audit COMMITTEE**

UPDATE TO THE WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. To encourage employees, workers, service users, stakeholders and members of the public to report their concerns to the Council, particularly with regard to modern slavery, the Council have revised its whistleblowing policy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. The Audit Committee is asked to review and, as appropriate, make recommendations on the revised whistle-blowing report.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?

3. The Council is committed to maintaining the highest standards of governance including the elimination of fraud and corruption and to ensuring that all activities are conducted ethically, honestly, openly and accountably so as to protect public safety and public money. In addition, the Council expects the highest standards of conduct and integrity from all that have dealings with it including staff, councillors, suppliers, partners, volunteers and the public. Policies and procedures are in place to outline the standards required and enable any person to raise genuine concerns they may have about the conduct of anybody acting for or on behalf of the Council. The whistle-blowing policy forms part of the Council's overall corporate governance framework.

BACKGROUND

4. The Monitoring Officer has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of the Whistleblowing Policy, which includes keeping a record of www.doncaster.gov.uk

all whistleblowing cases and presenting a summary of these to the Audit Committee on an annual basis. The Whistleblowing report was revised in July 2015 with the key changes :

5.1 The Policy applies to members of the public, stakeholders, and contractors as well as employees.

5.2 Whistle blowers were asked to report their concerns to specific senior officers rather than to their managers. This ensured that senior management were aware of any matters and that the correct processes were followed and reported to the Monitoring Officer for the annual report;

5.3 The Policy gives clearer guidance as to what was considered to be the sort of matter that amounted to whistleblowing allegations; with a factsheet and flow diagram had been drafted to assist people understand the policy.

5. Doncaster Council has signed up to the 'Charter Against Modern Slavery'. authorised at Cabinet on 30th June 2020. Part of the requirement of the Charter are that the Council have a Whistleblowing policy and procedures that details our commitment to stop modern slavery and we wish to and encourage reporting in this policy.

6. Councils from across the political spectrum have signed up to the Council Charter Against Modern Slavery; to ensure exploitation has no place in their supply chains. The Co-operative Party's Charter against Modern Slavery goes further than existing law and guidance, committing councils to proactively vetting their own supply chain to ensure no instances of modern slavery are taking place. In view of this the following has been included at 2.12 of the Whistleblowing Policy:

Modern Slavery

Modern slavery is the illegal exploitation of people for personal or commercial gain, often in conditions, which the victim cannot escape.

Doncaster Council is committed to ensuring that this exploitation does not occur in any of the Council's activities and that staff and the public have the opportunity to report suspicions to the appropriate place. Staff or members of the public who suspect that modern slavery or human trafficking may be happening through any of the council's activities, particularly in service delivery via third parties, should contact one of the officers listed in section 7. More information and advice can be found on the government's website on modern slavery: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/modern-slavery>

7. The Council also want to encourage whistle-blowers to speak up. Where they wish to remain anonymous, it can be difficult to investigate matters without requesting further detail or information. Therefore paragraph 5.3 has been added in requesting an anonymous form of contact be provided. *. 'If you do wish to remain anonymous we will respect your wishes but it would useful if you could provide us with a means of contact that does not reveal your identity that would allow us to obtain further information. '*

8.. A whistleblowing human resources course is available on the training portal. Following approval of this revised policy, the Monitoring Officer will send a reminder to staff with regard to the policy and the process if they do wish to raise concerns.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9. To amend the policy in accordance with our commitments to fight modern slavery and to allow us to investigate anonymous complaints.
10. To not update the whistleblowing policy.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

11. To demonstrate and implement policies and practices that could prevent modern slavery through the Council's supply chains.

IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY OUTCOMES

12.

	Outcomes	Implications
	<p>Connected Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A modern, efficient and flexible workforce • Modern, accessible customer interactions • Operating within our resources and delivering value for money • A co-ordinated, whole person, whole life focus on the needs and aspirations of residents • Building community resilience and self-reliance by connecting community assets and strengths • Working with our partners and residents to provide effective leadership and governance 	<p>The work undertaken by the Audit Committee helps to ensure openness, transparency and probity in the way that the Council conducts its business. This, in turn, helps to increase the public's confidence in local governance and in the high ethical standards of their local representatives.</p>
;	<p>Doncaster Working: Our vision is for more people to be able to pursue their ambitions through work that gives them and Doncaster a brighter and prosperous future;</p>	<p>Signing up to the Charter commits the council to take more rigorous steps in ensuring there is no modern slavery through its supply chains. This protects the staff of suppliers that the Council contract with.</p>

RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

13. There are no identified risks associated with this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials HP..... Date...29.9.20..]

14. The Modern Slavery Act 2015 places certain legal duties upon public and private organisations. The charter goes beyond legal requirements but does require that the Council has a whistleblowing system that enables staff to blow the whistle on any suspected examples of modern slavery.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials PH Date 28/09/2020]

15. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

HEALTH IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials...RS..Date ...23/09/2020]

16. Whistleblowing is a key contribution to effective governance and good governance is a contributor to good health and wellbeing. This policy recognises the importance of addressing harassment and modern slavery and so will contribute to good health and wellbeing

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials KG Date: 29.09.20..]

17. Along with a module on Whistleblowing, there is an additional module on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking. Managers should be made aware of the addition to the whistleblowing policy and ensure that their teams are also aware of this and the training available.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials...HP..... Date...29.9.20.....]

18. The adoption of the Charter and its reference in the whistleblowing policy will ensure higher standards in relation to tackling the issues faced by certain sectors of society with regards to modern slavery.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

19. Local Government Association (LGA) guide on how councils can tackle modern slavery. (<https://www.local.gov.uk/modern-slavery-council-guide>)

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

20. Local Government Association (LGA)

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