

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

**REVISED WHISTLE-BLOWING POLICY**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

2. The Audit Committee is asked to note the revised whistle-blowing report and make any comments on the revisions.

**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 whistleblowing policy forms part of the Council's overall corporate governance framework.

**BACKGROUND**

4. The Council has a Whistleblowing Policy in place which is aimed at encouraging employees with serious concerns about any aspect of the Council's work to come forward and voice those concerns without fear of reprisals. It is intended to encourage and enable staff to raise serious concerns within the Council rather than overlooking a problem or blowing the whistle outside.
5. The Monitoring Officer has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of the Policy, which includes keeping a record of all whistleblowing cases. A summary of these cases will, in future, be reported to the Audit Committee as part of the Monitoring Officer's annual report on ethical governance activities. As the Whistleblowing Policy was last reviewed in 2010/11, the policy has been amended with the following:

- 5.1 The policy applies to members of the public, stakeholders, contractors as well as employees and workers.
  - 5.2 Whistle-blowers are asked to report their concerns to specific senior officers rather than to their managers. This ensures that senior management are aware of any matters and that the correct processes are followed and reported to the Monitoring Officer for the annual report.
  - 5.3 The policy gives clearer guidance to what is considered to be the sort of matters that amount to whistleblowing allegations.
  - 5.4 A factsheet and flow diagram have been drafted to assist people in understanding the policy.
  - 5.5 A number of good practice whistleblowing policies were considered whilst redrafting this policy and recent reports concerning whistleblowing in the NHS and at Rotherham were reviewed.
6. The Council recognises that the policy is only one step in ensuring an environment in which whistleblowing is encouraged. In addition:
- 6.1 An online course had been devised for all employees to take to better understand the process and the areas where whistleblowing is encouraged
  - 6.2 The policy will be available on the internet and intranet
  - 6.3 The new Policy will be promoted through the Council's information systems including updates for managers and for all staff. Updates will be provided for team briefing particularly to cover those that don't have internet access.
7. The Policy has been taken to the HR and TU Convenors Monthly meeting in March. They raised the following issues:
- 7.1 The union wanted assistance for employees wishing to bring a claim. At paragraph 8.8 of the Policy, provision has now been made for a Human Resources Organisational Officer to be allocated to an employee if they request to support them through the process.
  - 7.2 That the profile of the whistle-blowing policy be raised in team briefings and that those without internet access will be considered.
  - 7.3 Minor changes to the wording of the policy was recommended

## OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REASON FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

8. Not applicable – this report is primarily for noting.

## IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL’S KEY PRIORITIES

9.

Priority	Implications
We will provide strong leadership and governance, working in partnership.	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.

## RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

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

## LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

11. There are no specific legal implications associated with this report. The various policies and procedures outlined in this report refer to specific legislation where relevant.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

12. There are no specific financial implications arising from this report.

## EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

13. There are no specific equality implications arising from this report.

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

14. The revised whistleblowing policy  
Whistleblowing flowchart  
Whistleblowing fact sheet

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