

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE



Report subject	Annual evolution of the 'Anti-Fraud & Corruption Policy, the 'Whistleblowing Policy' and the 'Declaration of Interests, Gifts & Hospitality Policy'
Meeting date	11 March 2021
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	<p>An annual review of the Council's Whistleblowing Policy and Anti-Fraud & Corruption Policy has taken place to ensure they are updated in line with best practice and legislation.</p> <p>Best practice suggests these policies should be approved by Audit & Governance Committee.</p> <p>Some minor amendments have been made to both policies including reference to the Council acting as a 'prescribed person' in the Whistleblowing Policy and reference to the new BCP Declaration of Interests, Gifts & Hospitality Policy in the Anti-Fraud & Corruption Policy. Both policies have updated contact details and some minor best practice wording changes.</p> <p>An annual review of the Council's Declaration of Interests, Gifts & Hospitality Policy has also taken place for consideration by Audit & Governance Committee prior to approval by the Corporate Management Board.</p> <p>A suggested additional requirement has been introduced for employees, below Tier4 and who use their own discretion to make eligibility decisions, award decisions or grant permissions, to make a declaration even if the declaration required is a 'Nil Declaration'.</p> <p>There are also some minor wording amendments.</p>
Recommendations	<p>It is RECOMMENDED that Audit & Governance Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • approve the Council's Whistleblowing Policy, Anti-Fraud & Corruption Policy • endorse the Declaration of Interests, Gifts & Hospitality Policy before formal approval by the Corporate Management Board.
Reason for recommendations	To ensure Council policies are regularly reviewed and updated in line with best practice and legislation.
Portfolio Holder(s):	Cllr Drew Mellor, Leader of the Council
Corporate Director	Graham Farrant, Chief Executive
Report Authors	Nigel Stannard Head of Audit & Management Assurance

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Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For recommendation approval

Background

1. Audit & Governance Committee Terms of Reference state the committee should “consider arrangements for counter-fraud and corruption, including ‘whistle-blowing’ and approval of the Anti-Fraud & Corruption Policy”.
2. The Council’s Declaration of Interests, Gifts and Hospitality Policy forms part of the governance arrangements for preventing fraud and corruption.
3. This report provides an updated Whistleblowing Policy, Anti-Fraud & Corruption Policy and Declaration of Interests, Gifts and Hospitality Policy following an annual review to ensure they are in line with best practice and current legislation.

Whistleblowing Policy

4. The Council’s Whistleblowing Policy seeks to enable individuals to feel confident in raising concerns in the public interest about suspected serious wrongdoing in the Council and its services without fear of reprisals or victimisation even where the concern or allegations are not subsequently confirmed by the investigation.
5. Some changes have been made to the policy including adding a section in relation to the Council acting as a ‘prescribed person’ and updating Adults safeguarding contact details.
6. Letter templates for the initial response and outcome confirmation to the whistleblower have also been included in the policy refresh along with an equalities impact assessment screening tool (updated).

Anti-Fraud & Corruption Policy

7. The purpose of the Council’s Anti-Fraud & Corruption Policy is to:
 - highlight relevant legislation
 - set out the Council’s approach to countering fraud and corruption
 - detail roles and responsibilities of officers and councillors and
 - provide further detailed guidance for officers and managers
8. Some minor changes have been made to the policy including reference to the new BCP Declaration of Interests, Gifts & Hospitality Policy, updated contact details and some minor best practice wording changes. An equalities impact assessment screening tool (updated) has also been included in the document.

Declaration of Interests Gifts & Hospitality Policy (for employees)

9. A new BCP Declaration of Interests, Gifts and Hospitality Policy was approved by the Corporate Management Board on the 3 March 2020 and was introduced for the 2020/21 financial year.
10. A suggested additional requirement has been introduced for employees, below Tier4 and who use their own discretion to make eligibility decisions, award decisions or grant permissions, to make a declaration even if the declaration required is a ‘Nil Declaration’. This change will enhance arrangements and further protect the Council and individuals from accusations of bias or wrongdoing.

11. Some minor wording amendments have also been made to the policy and the equalities impact assessment screening tool has been updated.

Training and Awareness

12. Further training and awareness will be carried out to ensure the policies are widely communicated, recognised and available.

Options Appraisal

13. An options appraisal is not applicable for this report

Summary of financial implications

14. There are no direct financial implications from this report. All three policies seek to establish strong governance arrangements to prevent financial loss through error or wrongdoing.

Summary of legal implications

15. The relevant legal implications (including non-compliance) are included in the attached policies.

Summary of human resources implications

16. The Council Policies apply to all relevant individuals acting on behalf of the Council.

Summary of sustainability impact

17. There are no direct sustainability impact implications from this report.

Summary of public health implications

18. There are no public health implications from this report.

Summary of equality implications

19. The equality implications have been considered as part of the development of the policies attached to this report.

Summary of risk assessment

20. There are no direct risk assessment implications from this report.

Background papers

None

Appendices

Appendix A - Whistleblowing Policy

Appendix B - Anti-Fraud & Corruption Policy

Appendix C - Declarations of Interests, Gifts & Hospitality Policy