



**Corporate Policy &
Resources Committee**

**Thursday, 13 February
2025**

Subject: Review of the Whistleblowing Policy

Report by:

Assistant Director People and Democratic
Services

Contact Officer:

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Purpose / Summary:

To present the revised Whistleblowing Policy for
consideration, including the renaming of the
policy.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

1. That the revised and renamed 'Reporting a Concern (Whistleblowing) Policy' be approved.

IMPLICATIONS

Legal:

This policy is drafted in accordance with the Employment Rights Act 1996, as amended by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998

Financial: FIN/136/25/JSCC/SL

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Staffing: This Policy relates to staff and will proceed through the usual JSCC process. As previously requested by Management Team, this Policy has been sent to members of the Wider Management Team for their consideration and comments.

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights:

The Policy provides a method through which individuals can report breach of equality legislation should they suspect it is occurring.

Data Protection Implications:

The Policy itself refers to compliance with GDPR and the Data Protection Act 1998

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:

None from this report

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations:

The purpose of the Policy is to encourage reporting of wrongdoing, including suspected criminal activity.

Health Implications:

None from this report

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

<https://democracy.west-lindsey.gov.uk/ielIssueDetails.aspx?IId=18185&PlanId=0&Opt=3#AI15882>.

Risk Assessment:

To not have a revised, up to date Policy to enable concerns to be reported could result in people not understanding where or how to raise a Whistleblowing concern.

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

No

X

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

No

X

1. Background

- 1.1 The Council is committed to encouraging the highest possible standards of behaviour and promote a culture of openness, probity, and accountability of all employees, council contractors and agency workers. The Council's Whistleblowing Policy is drafted in accordance with the legislation and legal protections are in place for those who make a qualifying disclosure.
- 1.2 The Whistleblowing Policy was last considered by Corporate Policy and Resources in April 2022. The Policy has since been reviewed and was brought to Management Team on 30th September 2024, where Management Team requested that the Policy be presented before the Wider Management Team at the next meeting (December 2024). Following discussion of the December WMT agenda, it was decided that the revised Policy be circulated by email to WMT for their comments and this was actioned. Comments were received from three members of WMT and these were that the Policy was "comprehensive" and "good". One comment received referred to providing more clarity that an employee has somewhere to raise their concerns if they feel harassed or victimised as a result of raising a concern. This point has been addressed in the Policy by informing employees that they should contact the People Services Manager or the Monitoring Officer straight away if they feel they are being harassed or victimised because they have raised a concern under this Policy.
- 1.3 An annual report on Whistleblowing activity is taken through the Governance and Audit Committee process. The current report was presented to the Governance and Audit Committee on 21st January 2025.
- 1.4 The Policy has been reviewed and is at Appendix 1. It was presented to the Joint Staff Consultative Committee at their meeting on 23rd January 2025 where it was accepted and recommended to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee for approval.

2. Changes made following review

- 2.1. The Policy did not require many changes as it already covers the detail, contacts, and guidance that would be expected in such a Policy. A notable change is the name of the Policy itself. It is suggested the policy be retitled "Reporting a Concern (Whistleblowing) Policy" It is appropriate that the term "Whistleblowing" remain in the title as this differentiates the Policy from other complaint/grievance policies.
- 2.2. The previous Policy did say that individuals could not approach the media directly as it would breach the Council's media policy. Further to consultation with the Communications Manager, it is suggested this element is removed as it does not feel in keeping with the principles of openness and accountability, and the Council's media policy does not prevent individuals from speaking to the media in any event.

- 2.3. In relation to GDPR and data protection, it is suggested that this section is shortened slightly, and more emphasis is given to the practicalities of raising a concern and how the Council will deal with this. The Policy does still contain reference to GDPR and data protection and all information received through the Policy will be treated in accordance with the legislation surrounding data protection.
- 2.4. Following discussion at the Joint Staff Consultative Committee, it was noted that the policy (Section 9) lacked a space for users to provide feedback on the process, which was deemed crucial for inclusion. It was agreed that a section on feedback would be added to indicate feedback was welcomed regarding the application and administration of the policy and that any feedback should be directed to the Monitoring Officer.

3. Next Steps

- 3.1 Subject to final approval from the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee it is suggested the Governance and Audit Committee receive the amended Policy (once approved) for noting purposes as this Committee receives information on how many whistleblowing concerns are raised annually.