

1.	Meeting:	Standards Committee
2.	Date:	10 th September 2015
3.	Title:	Whistleblowing Allegations Received
4.	Directorate:	Resources & Transformation

5. Summary

- 5.1 This report outlines details of an exercise undertaken to ascertain how many whistleblowing allegations have been received by the council over the last three years and where appropriate, how these allegations have been dealt with.
- 5.2 The whistleblowing procedure relates to complaints received under the council confidential reporting code.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 That the committee notes the report.
- 6.2 That the committee request any further action they deem appropriate.

7. Proposals and Details

- 7.1 The underpinning delivery plan for victims of child sexual exploitation provides for 'putting in place strong whistleblowing arrangements'.
- 7.2 The terms of reference for the committee includes:

'To establish and monitor the operation of the complaints procedures and whistleblowing procedures'
- 7.3 At the last meeting members requested that an audit be undertaken to ascertain how many whistleblowing complaints have been received within the last three years and details of what happened in respect of those complaints.
- 7.4 Following the meeting, all strategic directors and directors were written to asking for details of any whistleblowing complaints received in the last three years.

Responses revealed that a total of eight complaints had been received as follows:

1. An anonymous complaint was received. This was in relation to an allegation of possible benefit fraud by an employee of the council. Internal checks did not disclose any matters of concern. The matter was then referred to the Department of Work and Pensions Benefit Fraud Department to take any action deemed appropriate.

As the complaint was anonymous it was not possible to give feedback to the complainant.

2. A complaint about resourcing decisions, lack of recognition and praise from a manager. The complaint was made in 2013. An internal investigation was conducted. The matter was completed in 2015 with all officers involved remaining in the Council.
3. A complaint about working relationships was received and investigated. It became clear that there were irreconcilable differences between the parties. Within the assistance of ACAs the matter was resolved through Judicial Mediation.
4. An allegation of financial mismanagement at a school was received. The matter was investigated by the Councils internal audit team. The allegations were not substantiated. This matter was reported to the Standards Committee on 12th June 2014.
5. An allegation in November 2012 about a potential inappropriate relationship between an officer and a contractor. The investigation revealed several procedural weaknesses in awarding contracts but the complaint was not substantiated. Management were informed and an internal audit report produced.
6. An allegation in November 2013 of a manipulation of information to meet performance targets. There did appear to be some truth to the allegations but the manipulation was undertaken by an external contractor. Management were informed and an internal audit report produced.
7. A complaint that staff had removed “scrap metal” belonging to the Council and sold it for profit which the staff kept. The findings supported the evidence and both officers were disciplined and received final written warnings.
8. An allegation in January 2015 that an officer of the Council was engaged in other employment activity whilst on sick leave. The allegation was substantiated and the employee resigned before the disciplinary process was completed.

8. Finance

- 8.1 Any expense in investigating these complaints is contained within departmental budgets.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

- 9.1 If the whistleblowing procedure is not regularly reviewed there is a risk that the corporate governance of the council will deteriorate. This in turn could have adverse consequences for the services provided by the council for the community as a whole

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

- 10.1 It is the responsibility of the Standards Committee to review and monitor the implementation of the confidential reporting code.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

- 11.1 The Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council confidential reporting code.

Contact Name: *Angela Harwood, Legal Adviser, Legal and Democratic Services
telephone 01709 254466 or e-mail angela.harwood@rotherham.gov.uk*