

Anti-Fraud & Corruption Strategy and Whistleblowing Procedure

Audit Committee

26 January 2010

Author: Monitoring Officer and
Head of Internal Audit

Parish / Wards Affected: All

Purpose

To inform Members that the Monitoring Officer and Head of Internal Audit will be reviewing the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy, Whistleblowing Policy and Fraud Response Plan in consultation with relevant parties. Any comments from Members on the Strategy and associated documents would be welcome

Recommendation

- That Audit Committee review the strategy, whistleblowing policy and fraud response plan and make any recommendations regarding any necessary changes.

1. Reasons

- 1.1 To ensure that the Council's Policies on Anti-Fraud and Corruption and Whistleblowing are up-to-date and reflect best practice.
- 1.2 To ensure that Members and officers are made aware of how to identify the types of fraud, how it occurs, indicators of potential fraud and how to respond if it is discovered.

2. Detail

- 2.1 The Council controls millions of pounds of public money and takes very seriously the high expectations of the public and the degree of scrutiny to which the affairs of the Council are subject.
- 2.2 In carrying out its functions and responsibilities the Council wishes to promote a culture of openness and fairness and expects that elected members and employees at all levels will adopt the highest standards of propriety and accountability. The Council also wishes to promote a zero-tolerance to fraud and corruption. Proper accountability, achieved through probity, internal control and honest administration is therefore essential.
- 2.3 The Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy sets out measures designed to frustrate any attempted fraudulent or corrupt acts and the steps to be taken if such action occurs.

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- 2.4 The Council's Whistleblowing Policy supports the Strategy and makes it clear that concerns can be raised without the fear of reprisals. It is intended to encourage and enable employees, Members and Governors to raise serious concerns within the Council, irrespective of seniority, rank or status, rather than overlooking a problem or reporting the matter externally.
- 2.5 The Internal Audit section have also developed a Fraud Response Plan and Fraud Awareness Guide that is being rolled out to relevant Members and staff during 2010.
- 2.6 All of the above documents are attached as appendices.
- 2.7 Internal Audit is also working closely with colleagues in Bristol, South Gloucestershire, Bath and North East Somerset and North Somerset to develop a Fraud Investigation toolkit. Once drafted this will also be brought to a future meeting of Standards Committee.
- 2.8 The Monitoring Officer and the Head of Internal Audit will be reviewing these documents in consultation with relevant parties and will report back to the next meeting of this Committee on the findings of the review.

Alternative Options

None

Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- There are no direct financial or procurement implications. The cost of carrying out any investigations is currently borne by the Monitoring Officer or Internal Audit's budget.

Legal / Human Rights Implications

- The policies and procedures have been written to take account of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 and takes account of other relevant legislation such as the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000, the Local Government Act 1972 and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003.

Links to Corporate Plans and Policies (in particular to Swindon 2010 Promises)

- The outcome of complaints links with the theme 'Council for the Future' and the wish to improve the Council's performance and ensure that the Council's corporate governance system are considered to be accountable, effective and transparent (Objective 1).

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Consultees

- The Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

Background Papers and Appendices

- Appendix 1: Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy
- Appendix 2: Whistleblowing Policy
- Appendix 3: Fraud Response Plan