

STANDARDS COMMITTEE		
Report Title	ANNUAL REVIEW OF WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY AND REFERRALS	
Key Decision		Item No. 3
Ward		
Contributors		
Class	Part 1	Date: 8 MARCH 2011

1 Summary

This report sets out the referrals made under the Council's Whistleblowing Policy since 24th June 2010 and the action taken in response.

2 Recommendations

To note the referral and the action taken.

3 Background

3.1 The Council issued a whistleblowing policy in 1998. It has been reviewed regularly since then, most recently in June 2010. A copy of the current policy appears at Appendix 1. It is not proposed to change the policy now. Its purpose is to provide a means by which complaints of malpractice or wrongdoing can be raised by those who feel that other avenues for raising such issues are inappropriate, whether because they fear repercussions or for some other reason. As members of the Committee will see, the policy confirms that as far as possible, those raising complaints will be treated confidentially should they so wish. Members will also note that complaints may be raised in relation to councillors, employees, contractors or suppliers.

3.2 The Head of Law, as the Council's Monitoring Officer, receives referrals under the procedure. She then either investigates personally or refers to another senior officer to investigate as appropriate, depending on the circumstances of the complaint.

4 Referrals

4.1 There has been only one referral under the policy since the last report considered by this Committee. A summary appears below.

- 4.2 An anonymous note addressed " To Whom It May Concern" was received through the post by the Head of Law on the 30th June 2010. The complainant sought to question the procurement processes and subsequent payments made by the Regeneration Directorate to a sole trader.
- 4.3 The Head of Law referred the complaint to the Council's Internal Audit Department and required that they conduct an investigation and report back to her and the relevant Executive Director.
- 4.4 The business in question was a business providing IT systems maintenance, advice and support to the Council. The business was also engaged in ensuring driver and vehicle compliance with statutory regulations and was also working on developing a compliance monitoring system and data bases of fleet vehicles and of drivers' licences.
- 4.5 An investigation was undertaken and a report prepared by the Group Finance Manager within Customer Services. He reported that the business had in fact provided an effective and flexible IT support service to the Council over many years. He reported that due to the effectiveness of the services provided this had limited the identification of alternative providers, other than the occasional request to the Council's corporate IT provider.
- 4.6 The investigation report concluded that historically proper procurement procedures had not been followed. However proper payment procedures were being adhered to. The investigation report concluded that it would not be practical to put in place a procurement process for the ongoing services but any future commissioning will comply with the Council's procurement regulations.
- 4.7 Procurement practice across the Council is one of the work streams in this years Audit Plan.

5 The Whistleblowing Policy

The Whistleblowing Policy is attached at Appendix 1. No amendment to the policy is proposed at this stage. Members of the Committee are asked to note that the policy appears on the Council's website, is referred to in the Council's Guide for Contractors and all new employees are informed about it in their induction process. Another article in Lewisham Life and mangers Guide is proposed for this year in addition to the existing publicity measures to keep the profile of the poliicy high.

6 Legal & Financial Implications

There are no specific legal or financial implications arising from this report.