

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

10TH FEBRUARY 2025

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT – SHEENAGH REES

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: All wards

Whistleblowing Policy

1. Purpose of Report:

The purpose of this report is to seek Member approval to implement a revised Whistleblowing Policy.

2. Executive Summary:

A review of the Whistleblowing Policy has been undertaken following a request from the Council's Standards Committee. One of the remits of the Standards Committee is to oversee the whistleblowing regime, in particular to consider and recommend procedures in respect of the following:

- (a) Whistleblowing arrangements
- (b) Anti-Fraud/Corruption or malpractice strategy.

This policy has been reviewed by a working group involving Council Managers, Joint Trade Union and HR representatives and has been to the Standards Committee to provide any comments or recommendations for consideration as they consider appropriate.

3. Background

The Council has adopted a Whistleblowing Policy in line with the requirements of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

In the policy 'Whistleblowing' means the reporting by employees of suspected misconduct, illegal acts or failure to act within the Council. The aim of the Policy is to encourage employees and others who have serious concerns about any aspect of the Council's work to come forward and voice those concerns.

Employees are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within the Council. 'Whistleblowing' is viewed by the Council as a positive act that can make a valuable contribution to the Council's efficiency and long-term success. It is not disloyal to colleagues or the Council to speak up. The Council is committed to achieving the highest possible standards of service and the highest possible ethical standards in public life and in all of its practices. To help achieve these standards it encourages freedom of speech.

Importantly the policy also provides protection for workers who report allegations of such malpractice or misconduct.

The whistleblowing policy is designed to ensure that all allegations of malpractice or misconduct are thoroughly investigated and suitable action taken where necessary.

The policy is intended to encourage and enable workers to raise serious concerns within the Council, rather than overlooking a problem or 'blowing the whistle' outside.

4. Review of the Policy

The review of the policy was informed by the working group consisting of managers, HR and Joint Trade Union representatives. With a focus on ensuring the policy was both easy to understand and raise a complaint for individuals who would also be reassured about their protections when doing so.

Summary of Key Changes:

Streamlined policy

Key parts of the policy have been streamlined providing more user-friendly information and language around what constitutes a whistleblowing complaint and how it should be reported.

Whistleblower Protections

The changes include enhanced information on protection for whistleblowers including greater detail in relation to harassment and victimisation.

Employee Support

The policy also emphasises the support available to employees that blow the whistle including a commitment to redeployment if necessary.

5. Financial Impacts:

No impacts.

6. Integrated impact assessment:

A first stage impact assessment has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its legislative duties (under the Equality Act, the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. The first stage assessment, attached at appendix 1 has indicated that a more in-depth assessment is not required. A summary is included below:

“A full impact is not required as there is no impact on any protected group. It also has no negative impact on bio-diversity or the Welsh Language”.

7. Valleys Communities Impacts:

No Impacts.

8. Workforce Impacts:

The changes made to the policy will help to protect employees that whistle blow, ensuring they have a clear process for raising concerns and feel protected during the course of any associated investigation and beyond.

9. Legal Impacts:

The Council has adopted a Whistleblowing Policy in line with the requirements of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

10. Risk Management Impacts:

No impact.

11. Crime and Disorder Impacts

No impact.

12. Counter Terrorism Impacts

No impact

13. Consultation:

There is no requirement under the Constitution for external consultation on this item. However, trade unions colleagues have been fully consulted on the policy as well as the Council's Standards Committee and both have confirmed their agreement with it.

14. Recommendations:

It is **RECOMMENDED** that Members **APPROVE** the implementation of the revised Whistleblowing Policy.

FOR DECISION

15. Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Whistleblowing Policy

Appendix 2 - Integrated Impact Assessment Screening Form

16. List of background papers:

None.

17. Officer Contact

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