



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot  
Neath Port Talbot Council

## **NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

**11<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

**Report of the Chief Finance Officer – Huw Jones**

**Matter for Information**

**Wards Affected: ALL**

**Whistleblowing Arrangements.**

#### **1. Purpose of Report**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with details of the Council's whistleblowing arrangements and to provide a summary of the number of referrals received and investigated by Internal Audit during the last 5 financial years.

#### **2. Executive Summary**

2.1 The Council has had a Whistleblowing Policy (copy attached as appendix 1 to this report) in place for a number of years. It was last updated in April 2022.

2.2 Whistleblowing arrangements are well embedded across all Council services and the policy is readily available to staff on the Council's Intranet site.

2.3 The Whistleblowing Policy forms an important part of the Council's overall governance arrangements.

### **3. Background**

- 3.1 Whistleblowing is used to describe situations where an employee provides information to their employer or a regulator which has come to their attention through work.
- 3.2 Whistleblowing is therefore making a disclosure in the public interest and occurs where an employee raises a concern about danger or illegality that affects others. Examples of concerns which could be reported include:
- Unlawful conduct
  - Disclosures which relate to miscarriages of justice
  - Health & Safety risks
  - Damage to the environment
  - The unauthorised use of public funds
  - Possible fraud, bribery, corruption or malpractice
  - Abuse of service users
  - Unethical conduct
- 3.3 The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 protects a worker who reports concerns about where they work if they genuinely believe that their concerns are true.

### **4. Number of concerns raised and investigated 2019 to date**

4.1	2019/20	4
	2020/21	9
	2021/22	11
	2022/23	7
	2023/24	3 as at Feb 2024

The concerns raised covered a range of service areas and related in the main to perceived misconduct.

### **5. Actions taken and outcomes**

- 5.1 All Whistleblowing allegations received, actions taken and outcomes are reported to the Governance & Audit Committee

- 5.2 All allegations received were assessed, whether made anonymously or not and investigated by either the Audit Manager or the Senior Auditor.
- 5.3 Where the Whistleblower made themselves known they were kept abreast of the investigation progress.
- 5.4 Formal reports were issued where appropriate in line with normal Internal Audit protocols i.e. copied to the Chief Executive, the responsible Corporate Director and Head of Service, Chief Finance Officer in his role as Section 151 Officer and Audit Wales our external auditors. Where an allegation could be disproved quickly e.g. where it related to the Whistleblower perceiving acceptable conduct to be inappropriate a report would not be issued. These instances, tend to relate to the use of Authority vehicles or equipment or staff not being in work when the Whistleblower assumes they should be.
- 5.5 When appropriate disciplinary action was taken in line with the Authority's Disciplinary Policy and Processes.
- 5.6 Where the investigation highlighted any internal control weaknesses recommendations were made within the report to strengthen the controls operating.

## **6. Conclusion**

- 6.1 Whistleblowing is well embedded within the Council which is evidenced by the number and range of disclosures made.
- 6.2 None of the allegations received to date have been deemed to be malicious.

## **7. Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Whistleblowing Policy.

**8. Financial Impacts**

None.

**9. Integrated Impact Assessment**

There is no requirement to undertaken an Integrated Impact Assessment as this report is for information purposes.

**10. Valley Communities Impacts**

No impact

**11. Workforce Impacts**

No impact

**12. Legal Impacts**

No impact

**13. Risk Management Impacts**

There is no requirement for external consultation on this item

**14. Consultations**

There is no requirement for external consultation on this item.

**15. Recommendation**

That members note the contents of this report.

**Officer Contact**

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