

## UPDATED WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

<b>Summary:</b>	North Norfolk District Council has a Whistleblowing Policy which is for review every 3 years. The present Whistleblowing Policy has been reviewed, updating the relevant key persons under the policy and providing a more streamlined procedure. So as to comply with paragraph 8.6 of the policy, this revised policy has been to CLT for approval, prior to its being submitted to the Governance Risk and Audit Committee (GRAC)
<b>Options considered:</b>	To adopt the revised Whistleblowing Policy. It is not feasible to be without a Whistleblowing Policy.
<b>Conclusions:</b>	The revised Whistleblowing Policy is attached. It is requested that it be considered for approval.
<b>Recommendations:</b>	<b>That GRAC considers and approves the revised Whistleblowing Policy.</b>
<b>Reasons for Recommendations:</b>	Having a Whistleblowing Policy creates an open culture and communicates to staff that the Council acts in the public interest, taking wrongdoing seriously. The policy sets out the procedure where a person wishes to raise a concern, and persons who can be contacted. It provides a protected process and procedure for dealing with the concern.

### LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS AS REQUIRED BY LAW

*(Papers relied on to write the report, which do not contain exempt information and which are not published elsewhere)*

Cabinet Member(s)                      Ward(s) affected: All

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 North Norfolk District Council has a Whistleblowing Policy. It is to be reviewed every three years. The current version is August 2018. The policy has been reviewed. In accordance with paragraph 8.6, Unison, Senior Officers as listed at Appendix A, and the Corporate Leadership Team have been consulted prior to submitting this amended policy to GRAC. Unison, HR and the Internal Audit Manager have also been consulted.

## **2. Main changes to the Whistleblowing Policy**

- 2.1 The Whistleblowing Policy provides a framework to enable members of staff to disclose public interest concerns in a safe way within the Council. The policy sets out who the key people are in this framework and how a concern can be reported. The previous policy included the creation of a "Whistleblowing Evaluation Panel" comprising all four Responsible Officers who would handle the allegation and determine whether an investigation or other action was appropriate. This was considered to be an extra step in the process which could ultimately slow things down. It has been removed from the new policy. Instead, a disclosure can be made to one of the four Responsible Officers, who will then determine whether an investigation should be commenced.
- 2.2 Other key changes are the names and roles of those who are Responsible Officers. It should also be noted that the leading charity regarding Whistleblowing has changed its details from Public Concern at Work, to "Protect" - this is reflected in the policy. Reference to organisations no longer in existence has been removed.

## **3. Corporate Plan Objectives**

- 3.1 Whistleblowing can potentially affect all of the Corporate Plan objectives. Employees may be the first to notice unacceptable actions within the Council and this may be connected to one or more of the priorities as contained within the current Corporate Plan.

## **4. Medium Term Financial Strategy**

- 4.1. None specifically identified.

## **5. Financial and Resource Implications**

- 5.1. There is no specific resource implication in adoption of this revised policy. Having a Whistleblowing Policy in place could potentially save the Council from financial loss, where an appropriate disclosure is made.

## **6. Legal Implications**

- 6.1. The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 as amended, provides for a process whereby employees can disclose a concern internally without going, for example, straight to the press. The adoption of an appropriate policy protects the Council as employees would generally be expected to use this procedure

to report a concern.

## **7. Communications**

- 7.1. The Whistleblowing policy is revised, with a slightly new process, and with Responsible Persons identified. The policy will need to be communicated to all staff and the new policy added to the intranet where approved.

## **8. Risks**

- 8.1. As a Local Authority, not having an adequate Whistleblowing Policy would risk concerns not being disclosed, or being disclosed to other organisations.

## **9. Sustainability**

Not applicable

## **10. Climate / Carbon impact**

Not applicable

## **11. Equality and Diversity**

- 11.1 The policy makes it clear that employees and others can raise matters in good faith without fear of discrimination or disadvantage and that all individuals will be equally able to raise concerns with suitable provision to ensure such (see paragraphs 1.8 and 1.9).

## **12. Section 17 Crime and Disorder considerations**

Having a Whistleblowing Policy directly addresses the duty to consider crime and disorder reduction. It provides for a procedure to allow for the reporting of concerns, including criminal wrongdoing, which might otherwise remain unreported and impact upon the community.

## **13. Conclusion and Recommendations**

- 13.1. The revised Whistleblowing Policy is attached. It is requested that it be considered and approved.