
Meeting: **Audit Committee**

Date: **17 July 2009**

Subject: **Anti Fraud and Whistleblowing Policies**

Report of: **Director of Corporate Resources**

Summary: An Anti Fraud and Corruption Strategy has been produced for Central Bedfordshire, in consultation with officers and the Unions.

The Confidential Reporting (“Whistleblowing”) Policy, originally included within the Ethical Framework of the Constitution, has been amended to incorporate officers’ roles and responsibility and other feedback from relevant officers and Unions.

Contact Officer: Nick Murley, Assistant Director of Audit and Risk

Public/Exempt: Public

Wards Affected: All

Function of: Audit Committee

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Audit Committee:

- 1. Approves the Anti Fraud and Corruption Policy attached at appendix 1.**
- 2. Recommends to the Constitutional Advisory Group that the Anti Fraud and Corruption Policy is added to the Constitution under the section Ethical Framework.**
- 3. Approves the changes to the Confidential Reporting Policy attached at appendix B and refers them to the Constitutional Advisory Group for inclusion in the Constitution.**

Background

1. The Anti Fraud and Corruption Policy has been produced for Central Bedfordshire and incorporates feedback from relevant officers and the Unions.

2. A Confidential Reporting (“Whistleblowing”) Policy has been produced to supplement the Anti Fraud and Corruption Strategy. This has been produced in consultation with relevant officers and the Unions. The original policy, included within the Ethical Framework of the Constitution was based on best practice.
3. The policies were presented to the Standards Committee for their comments on the 17 July 2009 and the minutes from that committee will be circulated at the meeting.
4. **Anti Fraud Strategy and Corruption Strategy**
The Anti Fraud and Corruption Strategy sets out in detail the Council’s approach to dealing with suspected fraud, corruption, and misappropriation across the organisation, including members, officers, contracting partners and external individuals and organisations.
5. The strategy is in four sections:
 - Part 1 outlines the policy and emphasises the seven key concepts upon which the policy is based, namely culture, deterrence, prevention, detection, investigation, sanction and redress.
 - Part 2 outlines the Prosecution Policy, and emphasises the Council’s determination to seek appropriate sanction and redress against any individual or organisation that seeks to defraud the Council.
 - Part 3 of the Strategy explains how managers should deal with suspicions of fraud and what steps they should take on discovering a fraud. For operational reasons, this has been omitted from the publication and will be made available separately to service area managers.
 - Part 4 gives contact details for further information.
6. **Confidential Reporting Policy**
The Public Interests Disclosure Act 1998 encourages individuals to raise concerns about malpractice in the workplace, and this policy document makes it clear that employees can raise serious concerns without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage and is intended to encourage individuals to raise concerns within the Council.

Conclusion and Next Steps

7. Central Bedfordshire Council is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. The Anti Fraud and Corruption Strategy and Confidential Reporting (Whistleblowing) Policy are two key documents which contribute to promoting a robust but fair anti fraud culture.
8. If approved the Anti Fraud and Corruption Strategy will be distributed to all employees and Members and captured on the Intranet. To enhance the content of in the Constitution, the committee may also recommend to the Constitution Advisory Group that it is included in the Ethical Framework section.
9. Any amendments to the Confidential Reporting Policy will be referred to the Constitutional Advisory Group for inclusion in the Constitution.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

The implementation of a robust Anti Fraud culture supports all 5 key Council priorities by encouraging probity and accountability across the Council.

Financial:

None

Legal:

These policies are key parts of the Council's Ethical Governance Framework and provide an element of assurance in respect of the Council's fiduciary duty to the Council Tax payers.

In particular, the Confidential Reporting Policy should ensure that the Council complies with its obligations in respect of protected disclosures under the Employment Rights Act 1996.

Risk Management:

None

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

Trade unions consulted.

Equalities/Human Rights:

None

Community Development/Safety:

None

Sustainability:

None

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Anti Fraud and Corruption Strategy

Appendix 2 – Confidential Reporting (Whistleblowing) Policy

Background:

None