

Central Bedfordshire Council

AUDIT COMMITTEE

9 January 2017

Revised Confidential Reporting Code

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Purpose of this report:

The purpose of this report is to present the proposed revisions to the Confidential Reporting Code and seek approval for their submission to Full Council for approval.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to:

1. a) Consider and comment on the proposed revisions to the Confidential Reporting Code.
b) Recommend that the revisions be submitted to Full Council for approval.

Overview and Scrutiny Comments/Recommendations

This report is not scheduled to be considered by Overview and Scrutiny, as it is the responsibility of the Audit Committee to maintain an overview of the Council's Confidential Reporting Code and to recommend the Council on any amendments required thereto.

Background

1. The Audit Committee, at its meeting on 23rd January 2012, approved both the Anti Fraud and Corruption Strategy and the Confidential Reporting Code.
2. Both policies are contained within the Constitution. The Confidential Reporting Code is included within the Ethical Framework section whilst the Anti Fraud and Corruption Strategy is included within the Finance, Contracts and Legal section.
3. The Confidential Reporting Code has been refreshed to ensure that it is up to date and reflects current legislation and reporting channels within the Council. Work is progressing on updating the Anti Fraud and Corruption Strategy and this will be presented to a future meeting of this Committee.

4. The updated Code has been presented to senior managers for consideration and comment.

Confidential Reporting Code

5. The Public Interest 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.
6. The Code has been reviewed against government guidance and benchmarked against other authorities. There are no major revisions, however the Code has been updated to:
 - make reference to the recently updated list of prescribed persons and bodies
 - expand the section on confidentiality to make it clearer
 - make specific reference to “qualifying disclosures”, and
 - reflect current roles and responsibilities
7. Once considered by the Audit Committee and approved by Full Council the revised Code will be published on both the Council’s intranet and website and will be promoted as part of raising fraud awareness.

Council Priorities

8. The implementation of a robust anti fraud culture supports all the Council’s key priorities by encouraging probity and accountability across the Council.

Corporate Implications

Legal Implications

9. The Confidential Reporting Code is a key part of the Council’s Ethical Governance Framework and provides an element of assurance in respect of the Council’s fiduciary duty to the Council tax payers.
10. The Code ensures that the Council complies with the obligations and requirements in respect of protected disclosures under the Employment Rights Act 1996 (as amended by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 and the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013).

Financial Implications

11. None directly from this report.

Equalities Implications

12. None directly from this report.

Conclusion and next Steps

13. Central Bedfordshire Council is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. The Confidential Reporting (Whistle Blowing) Code contributes to promoting a robust but fair anti fraud culture
14. The Anti Fraud and Corruption Policy is also currently being reviewed. Once finalised, the proposed revisions will be presented to a future meeting of the Audit Committee.

Appendices

Appendix A – Confidential Reporting Code (also known as Whistle Blowing)

Background Papers

None