

Finance

222 Upper Street

London N1 1XR

Report of: Corporate Director of Resources

Meeting of: Audit and Risk Committee

Date: 18 March 2024

Wards: All

Part of the report is not for publication as it contains exempt information under Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 Paragraphs 1, 2, 7 Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, namely: information relating to an individual, information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual and information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

THE APPENDIX TO THIS REPORT IS NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: Bi-Annual Whistleblowing Monitoring Report – 1 July 2023 to 31 January 2024

1. Synopsis

Background

- 1.1. This report seeks to provide assurance that whistleblowing arrangements are in place and operating effectively. The Council's Whistleblowing Officer is the Head of Internal Audit, Investigations and Risk Management. Whistleblowing arrangements are a key element of the Council's overall governance arrangements. It is the mechanism to empower the honest majority in the fight against fraud and corruption and is an integral part of the Council's Anti-fraud and Corruption strategy.
- 1.2. Whistleblowing allows employees and others to raise concerns surrounding potential fraud and corruption. There are separate reporting mechanisms for adult

and child protection allegations. Whistleblowing information is located within the Human Resources policies and procedures section of the Council's intranet.

- 1.3. The Council's Audit and Risk Committee receives bi-annual whistleblowing monitoring reports. The last update, covering the period from 1 February 2023 to 30 June 2023, was presented to the Audit and Risk Committee in September 2023. This report provides details of new referrals made between 1 July 2023 and 31 January 2024. The report also provides an update on referrals that were open at the time of the last report to the Committee in September 2023.

Summary update

- 1.4. On receipt of referrals, an assessment is undertaken in line with the Council's whistleblowing procedure. Where the referral meets the criteria for whistleblowing, the referral is logged as whistleblowing and is investigated accordingly.
- 1.5. During the period 1 July 2023 to 31 January 2024, a total of 13 referrals were assessed as having met the criteria for whistleblowing. This report provides an update on those referrals as well as four referrals that were previously reported to the Committee as open in September 2023.
- 1.6. Annual data is outlined below:

Year	Number of referrals investigated in line with the whistleblowing procedure
2021-22	6
2022-23	12
2023-24 (year to date 1 April 2023 to 31 January 2024)	15 (2 referrals received from 1/4/23 to 30/6/23 and 13 referrals received from 1/7/23 to 31/1/24)

- 1.7. A summary of status of referrals investigated in line with the whistleblowing procedure is outlined below:

New referrals since the last report to the Audit and Risk Committee as at 31 January 2024

a) Thirteen new referrals were assessed as meeting the criteria for whistleblowing in the period 1 July 2023 to 31 January 2024. The status of these referrals is as follows

Referral status	Council	Schools	Total
Open	5	1	6
Closed – allegations not substantiated/unable to pursue	4	2	6
Closed – allegations substantiated/partially substantiated	0	1	1
Total	9	4	13

Open referrals as reported to the Audit and Risk Committee as at 30 June 2023

b) Four referrals were listed as open during the last report to the Committee. The status of these referrals is as follows:

Referral status	Council	Schools	Total
Open	1	0	1
Closed – allegations not substantiated/unable to pursue	1	1	2
Closed – allegations substantiated/partially substantiated	0	1	1
Total	2	2	4

1.8. Additional detail is included in the private Appendix A.

2. Recommendations

2.1. To note the report.

3. Background

3.1. Effective whistleblowing arrangements are a key element of effective governance arrangements within the Council.

4. Implications

4.1. Financial Implications

4.1.1. The programme of work has been met from within the existing Internal Audit (Investigations) budget. The financial implications of individual investigations are met by local budgets.

4.2. Legal Implications

4.2.1. There are no legal implications arising from this report. Legal advice and support will be provided, where necessary, in relation to individual investigations.

4.3. Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030

4.3.1. There are some minor environmental implications arising from the investigation of whistleblowing instances, primarily from vehicles use and the energy costs of supporting the service (heat and electricity). There are potentially more substantial environmental implications associated with individual whistleblowing allegations, however in this reporting period no substantive implications have been identified.

4.4. Equalities Impact Assessment

4.4.1. The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

4.4.2. An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required in relation to this report, because the decision currently being sought does not have direct impact on residents.

5. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

5.1. To note the details of the bi-annual whistleblowing monitoring arrangements.

Appendices:

- Appendix A – Whistleblowing Monitoring Report (**Exempt – not for publication**)

Final report clearance:

As agreed by: Corporate Director of Resources

Date: 20 February 2024

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