

Arun District Council

REPORT TO:	Audit & Governance Committee – 27 February 2025
SUBJECT:	Updated Whistleblowing Policy
LEAD OFFICER:	Daniel Bainbridge – Group Head for Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer
LEAD MEMBER:	Councillor Matt Stanley
WARDS:	All
CORPORATE PRIORITY / POLICY CONTEXT / CORPORATE VISION:	
The revised Whistleblowing Policy aligns with legal and regulatory requirements, promoting transparency, accountability and ethical governance within Arun District Council.	
DIRECTORATE POLICY CONTEXT:	
Although there is not a legal obligation to have a whistleblowing policy, local authorities are expected to have one in place that is reviewed periodically and it is best practice to operate a policy that protects the confidentiality of whistleblowers.	
FINANCIAL SUMMARY:	
There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.	

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Council has a Whistleblowing Policy that has recently been reviewed and updated by the Group Head for Law and Governance and the HR Manager. This amended policy is being submitted to the Audit and Governance Committee for approval.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Audit & Governance Committee considers and approves the revised Whistleblowing Policy for adoption by the Council.

3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 3.1 The updated Whistleblowing Policy is attached to this report at Appendix 1. The current version of the policy is attached at Appendix 2.
- 3.2 The purpose of the Whistleblowing Policy is to allow workers to raise concerns about unethical, illegal or improper conduct that they believe to be in the public interest without fear of retaliation. All council policies are subject to periodic review and although the current policy has been kept up-to-date and relevant, amendments have been made to the policy as detailed in this report that require approval at this Committee meeting.

4. DETAIL

4.1 The Council's Whistleblowing Policy sets out the procedure for reporting a concern and includes the contact details of the nominated officers within the council who will ensure the proper process is followed. Some minor changes have been made to the policy as follows: -

1. Responsibility for the policy has been transferred to the Group Head of Law & Governance and no longer sits with the Group Head of Finance and the Internal Audit team. This is because the Chief Executive considers that the whistleblowing 'function' should sit with the Monitoring Officer, and the Group Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer) and the Group Head of Law & Governance (Monitoring Officer) agree with this transfer of responsibility.
2. The HR Manager will assume responsibility for whistleblowing concerns in the absence of the Group Head for Law & Governance. This is because, based on experience, employees are likely to raise issues of this nature with Human Resources in the first instance. This will also help to ensure that disclosures under the policy are not overlooked due to any absences.
3. The procedure to be followed has been explained in more detail to ensure individuals are well-informed and confident that their concerns will be taken seriously and handled confidentially.
4. The whistleblowing telephone line has been removed as the majority of calls related to benefit fraud. Instead, reference has been made to the Government's benefit fraud line.

4.2 As is best practice, the policy also signposts workers to external organisations who can offer advice on guidance to workers who are considering raising a concern.

4.3 The Council is committed to conducting business with honesty and integrity and expects all staff to maintain high standards of conduct. However, all organisations face the risk of things going wrong from time to time, or of unknowingly harbouring illegal or unethical conduct. A culture of openness and accountability is essential in order to prevent such situations occurring or to address them when they do occur.

4.4 Workers are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within an organisation. Whistleblowing is viewed by the Council as a positive act that can make a valuable contribution to the Council's efficiency and long-term success.

5. CONSULTATION

5.1 Unison has been consulted on this policy as has the Corporate Leadership Team.

6. OPTIONS / ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

- 6.1 Although the Council is not legally required to have a policy, it provides all councillors and staff with an awareness of their rights under the Public Interests Disclosure Act 1998. Having a policy in place also promotes a culture of transparency and integrity, ensuring that the Council is accountable for its actions.

7. COMMENTS BY THE GROUP HEAD OF FINANCE/SECTION 151 OFFICER

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with this report, indirect costs are borne by Officers time budgeted for.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 There is a risk of not having a Whistleblowing Policy in place, in that disclosures are not made, or not made in a transparent way, or dealt with in accordance with process, or that disclosures are made externally without exhausting any internal process. Without a Whistleblowing Policy there is a greater risk of wrongdoing going unchecked within the Council.

9. COMMENTS OF THE GROUP HEAD OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE & MONITORING OFFICER

- 9.1 Legislation relating with whistleblowing can be located within the Employment Rights Act 1996 (as amended by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998). It provides the right for a worker to take a case to an employment tribunal if they have been victimised at work or dismissed because they have raised a concern classed as whistleblowing under the legislation.

10. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

- 10.1 The adoption of the revised whistleblowing policy will foster a culture of transparency, accountability and trust within the organisation. The policy provides clear guidelines and protections for employees who raise concerns, which is crucial for encouraging early reporting of misconduct or unethical behaviour, thereby protecting Arun District Council's reputation.

11. HEALTH & SAFETY IMPACT

- 11.1 No such implications associated with this report.

12. PROPERTY & ESTATES IMPACT

- 12.1 No such implications associated with this report.

13. EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) / SOCIAL VALUE

This policy supports equality and social value by providing all employees, regardless of background or role, with a safe way to report concerns. It ensures fairness by protecting employees from discrimination and retaliation, ensuring an inclusive and ethical workplace.

14. CLIMATE CHANGE & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT/SOCIAL VALUE

No such implications associated with this report.

15. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

No such implications associated with this report.

16. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACT

No such implications associated with this report.

17. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION / DATA PROTECTION CONSIDERATIONS

No such implications associated with this report.

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

[Whistleblowing policy](#)