

Audit Committee



26 September 2024

Title	Annual Review of the Confidential Reporting Code
Purpose of the report	To note
Report Author	Karen Limmer, Group Head of Corporate Governance
Ward(s) Affected	All Wards
Exempt	No
Exemption Reason	N/A
Corporate Priority	Services This item is not in the current list of Corporate Priorities but still requires a Committee decision.
Recommendations	Committee is asked to: Note that the review of the Confidential Reporting Code by the Monitoring Officer has taken place and agree to retain the current policy.
Reason for Recommendation	The current Code is fit for purpose and covers all relevant matters.

1. Summary of the report

What is the situation	Why we want to do something
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An annual review of the Confidential Reporting Code is required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure continued good governance within the council and to protect employees.
This is what we want to do about it	These are the next steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note the review that has taken place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If no amendments are required, the Code will be reviewed again next year.

- 1.1 This report seeks to advise and update members on the outcome of the annual review of the Confidential Reporting Code by the Monitoring Officer and to provide an update on the number of whistleblowing case raised under the Code in the past year.

2. Key issues

- 2.1 The Confidential Reporting Code forms part of the Council's Constitution and sets out how to raise serious concerns about any aspect of the Council's work. It also sets out legal protection against reprisals under the Public Interest disclosure Act 1998.
- 2.2 There is a requirement for the Confidential Reporting Code (the Code) to be reviewed annually by the Council's Monitoring Officer and this is then reported to the Audit Committee.
- 2.3 The Code details:
 - (a) The nature of concerns which may be reported;
 - (b) Other policies such as the Grievance Procedure which exist to deal with employment issues including bullying or harassment;
 - (c) Safeguards against harassment or victimisation as a result of raising a concern;
 - (d) Processes for raising and dealing with concerns including the various officers and organisations who could be contacted.
- 2.4 In November 2023 a review of the Code was reported to the Audit Committee. The Monitoring Officer concluded that the current Code is effective and did not require amendment.
- 2.5 The Code is currently communicated via different media: indirectly through the intranet and posters on staff boards, as well as presentations at staff meetings.
- 2.6 A compulsory training module on the Code exists in the Workrite e-learning facility which staff are required to complete every twelve months.
- 2.7 The Monitoring Officer has concluded that the current Code continues to be effective and does not require modification save updating contact details. The updated Code is attached at **Appendix A**.
- 2.8 Since the Code was last reviewed, three matters have been raised. One did not amount to whistleblowing and the other two have been duly investigated.

3. Options analysis and proposal

- 3.1 The Audit Committee can agree to continue with the current Code or can recommend suggested amendments. If there are suggested amendments these will need to be recommended to the Council for consideration.

4. Financial management comments

- 4.1 Not applicable.

5. Risk management comments

- 5.1 The number of concerns raised under the Confidential Reporting Code are considered to be fairly low. There is a central register to support the logging of matters which will also highlight any recurring concerns.

6. Procurement comments

- 6.1 Not applicable.

7. Legal comments

- 7.1 The Employment Rights Act 1996 as amended by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 provides protection to employees who raise awareness about malpractice in the workplace.

8. Other considerations

- 8.1 There are none.

9. Equality and Diversity

- 9.1 The Code is accessible by all.

10. Sustainability/Climate Change Implications

- 10.1 There are none.

11. Timetable for implementation

- 11.1 If the Audit Committee agrees that no changes are required, the policy will continue to apply. If amendments are recommended, these would not come into effect until adopted by Council.

12. Contact

- 12.1 Karen Limmer k.limmer@spelthorne.gov.uk

Background papers: There are none.

Appendices:

Appendix A Confidential Reporting Code