

# Forest Heath District Council

(This report is a key decision. This report has been subject to appropriate notice of publication under the Council's Access to Information Rules)

## Report of the Cabinet Member for Resources, Governance and Performance

**SPECIAL COUNCIL**

**26 SEPTEMBER 2012**

**COU12/593**

### **JOINT WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY** (Forward Plan Reference: JUL12(B)/05)

#### **Summary and reasons for recommendation(s)**

1. Good governance requires organisations to take malpractice seriously and to ensure that employees and others (for example, contractors, suppliers of goods and services, partner organisations, and members of the public) have adequate means to raise concerns about such malpractice. Forest Heath District Council has in place a Whistleblowing Policy which sets out its commitment and describes the protection available to those who raise matters of concern.
2. The Council's current Whistleblowing Policy was last revised in March 2009. It is good practice to review arrangements from time to time and as such a review of the Policy has been undertaken to ensure it continues to reflect best practice, legislation and shared services arrangements. The revised joint Policy between Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council is set out at **Appendix A** to this report.
3. This Policy aims to reassure employees and others that if they are faced with serious concerns regarding either Council, they can feel confident that their allegation will be treated in a correct and proper manner without fear of repercussions.

#### **Recommendation(s)**

**It is recommended that:**

1. **The Council adopts the revised joint Whistleblowing Policy between Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council.**
2. **The Portfolio Holder is given delegated authority to amend the Officer post titles where necessary regarding the reporting of whistleblowing concerns referred to within the Policy, following the upcoming senior management restructure.**

**Contact Details**

Name:

Title:

Telephone:

E mail:

**Portfolio Holder**

Cllr Stephen Edwards

Cabinet Member for Resources,  
Governance and Performance

01638 660518

[Stephen.Edwards@Forest-  
Heath.gov.uk](mailto:Stephen.Edwards@Forest-Heath.gov.uk)**Lead Officer**

Jon Snares

Internal Audit Manager

01638 719771

[Jon.Snares@Forest-  
Heath.gov.uk](mailto:Jon.Snares@Forest-Heath.gov.uk)**How will the recommendations help us meet our strategic priorities?**

1. The recommendations made in this report are intended to support and enhance the Council's ability to deliver its priorities.

**Wards affected**

2. All wards.

**Key issues**

3. The Whistleblowing Policy encourages and enables employees and others to raise serious concerns within an organisation rather than overlooking a problem or 'blowing the whistle' outside.
4. Employees and others are often the first to realise if there is something seriously wrong. However, they may not express their concerns as they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or to the organisation.
5. The Council's Whistleblowing Policy aims to:
  - encourage you to feel confident in raising serious concerns and to question and act upon concerns;
  - provide avenues for you to raise those concerns and receive feedback on any action taken;
  - ensure that you receive a response to your concerns and that you are aware of how to pursue them if you are not satisfied; and
  - reassure you that you will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation if you have raised any concern in good faith.
6. An effective Whistleblowing Policy which gives employees and others confidence to raise their concerns, including the option to access confidential advice is an essential part of good governance and will help organisations to identify and manage wrongdoing, risk and malpractice.

**Other options considered**

7. There are no alternative options as the Council needs to ensure it has adequate measures in place to ensure concerns are raised in the right way without fear, and to demonstrate how these concerns are dealt with.

### **Community impact**

8. None arising directly from this report.

### **What consultation has been undertaken and what were the outcomes?**

9. No alternative consultation has taken place or is planned for this document.

### **Financial and resource implications**

10. There are no specific financial implications arising from this report.

### **Risk management implications**

11. The Council could suffer reputational and other damage if malpractice goes undiscovered, or if disclosures are made in an inappropriate way.

### **Legal/Policy implications**

12. The proposed changes will ensure that the Council meets legislative requirements (Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 and the Bribery Act 2010) and continues to follow best practice guidelines (Whistleblowing Arrangements Code of Practice PAS 1998:2008).

### **Documents attached**

Appendix A – Whistleblowing Policy

### **Background papers**

N/A