

Report to: Governance, General Purposes & LGR Committee – 5 February 2026

Lead Officer: Francesca Whyley, Monitoring Officer

Report Summary	
Report Title	Whistleblowing Policy Annual Report
Purpose of Report	An annual report to update the Committee on the implementation of the Council's Whistleblowing Policy.
Recommendations	That the Governance, General Purposes & LGR Committee: a) note the contents of the report; b) agree minor changes to the Whistleblowing Policy to reflect changes to Committees and Monitoring Officer contact details and to reflect changes in employment legislation; and c) agree to further promotion of the Policy to staff in 2026.
Reason for Recommendations	To keep Committee updated as to the operation of the Whistleblowing Policy and to ensure it remains up to date and well promoted.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Council's Whistleblowing Policy was last updated in 2023 following review by the Audit & Governance Committee. No changes were considered necessary in 2024 and the last annual report was presented to the Audit & Governance Committee in February 2025 with no changes recommended.
- 1.2 In 2025 the Monitoring Officer reported that work had been undertaken to promote the existence of the Policy through the Council's staff newsletter and posters. The Policy itself is available on the staff intranet pages as well as the Council's website.
- 1.3 The Policy is clear and provides detailed information on how whistleblowing complaints will be dealt with. The Policy provides assurance to those raising a complaint that they will be treated fairly. Review of the Policy was previously a function of the Audit & Governance Committee. With the establishment of two separate committees to cover audit and governance functions, this annual report now falls within the remit of the Governance, General Purposes & Local Government Reform Committee and as such the Policy needs to be updated to reflect that.

- 1.4 Since the last review of the Policy there has been a change to the Monitoring Officer position. Again, this change and the updated contact details need to be reflected within the Policy.
- 1.5 The Employment Rights Act 2025 was given royal assent in December 2025. By virtue of this legislation sexual harassment will become a 'qualifying disclosure' under whistleblowing law from April 2026. This will mean protection from detriment and unfair dismissal for whistleblowers making a sexual harassment disclosure. The current Whistleblowing Policy lists sexual abuse as an example of a concern that may be raised through the Whistleblowing Policy, it is proposed that sexual harassment is also included in that list at para 3.4 of the policy to reflect the legislative change.
- 1.6 There have been two reports under the Whistleblowing Policy in 2025. Details of whistleblowing complaints are confidential, but a record of the complaints is available for internal and external auditors if inspection is required. One complaint related to staff and one to contractors.

2.0 Proposal /Options Considered

- 2.1 It is proposed that Members note the detail within the report in relation to the implementation and operation of the Council's Whistleblowing Policy.
- 2.2 It is proposed that Committee approve minor changes to the Policy to reflect changes in Committee roles and the contact details for the Monitoring Officer as well as the inclusion of sexual harassment as an example of a complaint under the policy. Once the Policy is updated it will be shared with the Council's wholly owned companies Active 4 Today and Arkwood developments as a template. Given the minor nature of the changes proposed which do not substantially alter the content of the Policy no consultation is proposed.
- 2.3 In order to ensure continued awareness of the Policy and reporting process for Whistleblowing complaints it is proposed that further communication of the Policy to staff is undertaken in 2026.

3.0 Implications

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection; Digital & Cyber Security; Equality & Diversity; Financial; Human Resources; Human Rights; Legal; Safeguarding & Sustainability and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

Implications Considered			
Yes – relevant and included / NA – not applicable			
Financial	NA	Equality & Diversity	Yes
Human Resources	Yes	Human Rights	NA
Legal	Yes	Data Protection	Yes
Digital & Cyber Security	NA	Safeguarding	NA
Sustainability	NA	Crime & Disorder	NA
LGR	NA	Tenant Consultation	NA

Legal Implications

- 3.1 The Council should have a clear policy and process setting out how Whistleblowing can be reported and managed through the organisation. Within the Policy itself, detail of the relevant legislation is provided including reference to the Public Interest Disclosure Act which provides certain protection from unfair treatment of whistleblowers.

This Committee are the relevant Committee to review performance under the Policy and approve amendments.

Any Whistleblowing Complaint is treated as confidential.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

The current Whistleblowing Policy is attached at **Appendix 1**

The last Annual Report on the Council's Whistleblowing Policy can be found here

<https://democracy.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk/documents/s22050/Item%2014%2019.02.25%20Whistleblowing%20Policy%20Annual%20Report.pdf>