

## WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

### Report by Chief Officer - Resources

**Audit Committee: 10 March 2021**

**Subject: Public Interest Disclosures and other Internal Audit Investigations  
1 July to 31 December 2020**

#### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to advise Committee of the outcome of investigations into allegations and disclosures in line with public interest disclosure and business irregularities policies received by Internal Audit between 1 July to 31 December 2020.

#### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1** It is recommended that Members note the content of this report.

#### **3. Background**

- 3.1** A disclosure in the public interest is where a concern is raised by a Council employee about a danger or illegality that has a public interest aspect to it. A confidential reporting facility is managed by Internal Audit as part of the WDC Public Interest Disclosure Policy. Internal Audit maintains a central record of all concerns raised under the Public Interest Disclosure Policy. All such disclosures are investigated by Internal Audit, including liaising with Services and HR as appropriate
- 3.2** Members of the public can also contact Internal Audit to raise issues of concern and such matters are investigated as appropriate, although they are not regarded as public interest disclosures in terms of legislation.

#### **4. Main Issues**

##### Public Interest Disclosure Cases

- 4.1** There were 4 outstanding cases reported in the previous report submitted to committee on 16 September 2020, now progressed as detailed below:

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Date Received</b>	<b>Detail</b>	<b>Status</b>
23/20	12/10/19	Allegation that materials are being misappropriated by a member of staff and sold on.	Investigation complete. Draft report being prepared for management with recommendations for improvement.
30/20	5/2/20	Allegation that materials	Linked investigation – 23/20.

		are being misappropriated by a member of staff and sold on.	As above
31/20	25/2/20	Allegation that employee is off sick but is posting on social media about holidays and socialising.	Referred to the Service and an investigation has now been completed. No further action requires to be taken.
32/20	30/3/20	Allegations that employee is misusing council vehicle for personal use. Employee was also observed loading black bags into council vehicle at home address but destination was unknown.	Unable to substantiate misuse of council vehicle due to lack of tracking information as device was faulty. Management confirmed that in relation to the black bags that the employee was allowed to dispose of personal/home waste in the yard skip during lockdown. Report issued with recommendations to management to prevent the risk of similar allegations arising in the future. These will be followed up by Internal Audit to ensure they have been implemented.

**4.2** There were 4 disclosures received during the period 1 July to 31 December 2020 as follows:

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Date Received</b>	<b>Detail</b>	<b>Status</b>
04/21	31/8/20	Allegation that employees within service are using vehicles for personal use.	Ongoing investigation.
05/21	8/10/20	Allegation that a child is collected from school in a WDC vehicle.	Ongoing investigation.
06/21	18/11/20	Allegation of lack of social distancing amongst adults at Football grounds.	Referred to Leisure Trust.
07/21	1/12/20	Allegation that three Council employees are not abiding by Government Guidelines on Social Distancing while carrying out household waste collection.	Referred to Service.

**4.3** Activity relating to public interest disclosure for recent reporting periods is as follows:

<b>Period</b>	<b>No. of Cases</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> January 2016 to 30 <sup>th</sup> June 2016	4
1 <sup>st</sup> July 2016 to 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2016	6
1 <sup>st</sup> January 2017 to 30 <sup>th</sup> June 2017	1
1 <sup>st</sup> July 2017 to 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2017	7
1 <sup>st</sup> January 2018 to 30 <sup>th</sup> June 2018	2
1 <sup>st</sup> July 2018 to 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2018	3
1 <sup>st</sup> January 2019 to 30 <sup>th</sup> June 2019	5
1 <sup>st</sup> July 2019 to 30 <sup>th</sup> June 2020	8
1 <sup>st</sup> July 2020 to 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2020	4

Other investigations

**4.4** There was one case recorded as outstanding in the previous report, submitted to committee on 16 September 2020, which has been progressed as detailed below:

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Date Received</b>	<b>Detail</b>	<b>Status</b>
25/20	22/11/19	Allegation of theft of income.	Ongoing investigation.

**4.5** A total of 2 cases were received by Internal Audit during the period 1 July to 31 December 2020 as follows:

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Date Received</b>	<b>Detail</b>	<b>Status</b>
03/21	14/7/20	Banking irregularity highlighted by the relationship manager of WDC bank account.	Ongoing investigation.
08/21	11/12/20	Anonymous complaint about organisational restructure.	Referred to senior management as an operational matter. Briefings for Elected Members and Employees have already been undertaken. No further action required.

**4.6** Activity relating to other investigation cases for recent reporting periods is as follows:

<b>Period</b>	<b>No. of Cases</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> January 2017 to 30 <sup>th</sup> June 2017	3
1 <sup>st</sup> July 2017 to 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2017	5

1 <sup>st</sup> January 2018 to 30 <sup>th</sup> June 2018	5
1 <sup>st</sup> July 2018 to 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2018	4
1 <sup>st</sup> January 2019 to 30 <sup>th</sup> June 2019	14
1 <sup>st</sup> July 2019 to 30 <sup>th</sup> June 2020	8
1 <sup>st</sup> July 2020 to 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2020	2

## **5. People Implications**

**5.1** There are no personnel implications with this report.

## **6. Financial and Procurement Implications**

**6.1** There are neither financial nor procurement implications with this report.

## **7. Risk Analysis**

**7.1** There are risks to the Council in financial, legal, operational and reputational terms of not providing a service to enable a disclosure in the public interest and to ensure that all public interest disclosure and other concerns raised with Internal Audit are properly investigated.

## **8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)**

**8.1** There is no requirement to undertake an equality impact screening.

## **9. Consultation**

**9.1** This report has been subject to consultation with appropriate Chief Officers.

## **10. Strategic Assessment**

**10.1** The Public Interest Disclosure Policy and Business Irregularity Procedures contribute to the Council's strategic priorities by ensuring that early warnings of malpractice may mitigate the extent of financial losses to the Council, contribute to better asset management by utilising employees to manage risks to the organisation's reputation and support fit for purpose services through the continuation and promotion of robust employment practice.

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**Stephen West**  
**Chief Officer - Resources**  
**Date: 10 March 2021**

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**Appendix:** None

**Background Papers:** Public Interest Disclosure Policy agreed by the  
Corporate Services Committee on 13 August 2014;  
Business Irregularity Procedures

**Wards Affected:** All