

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Director of Corporate Services

Audit and Performance Review Committee – 8 March 2006

Subject: Review of arrangements for complying with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1999

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on the changes that have been made to the Council's arrangements for Confidential Reporting.

2. Background

- 2.1 West Dunbartonshire Council has had a Confidential Reporting Policy, or whistleblowing policy, in place since 2000.
- 2.2 At the Audit and Performance Review Committee held on 14 September 2005, elected Members were advised that it was proposed to introduce a dedicated telephone hotline operated by Internal Audit to support the WDC Confidential Reporting Policy.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1 The whistleblowing hotline is scheduled to be launched on 6 March 2006. This hotline will be available Monday to Thursday between 8.45 a.m. and 4.45p.m. and Friday between 8.45 and 3.55 p.m. Outwith these hours, an answering machine will take messages.
- 3.2 The intention of this hotline is to enhance the existing whistleblowing arrangements by promoting the more proactive involvement of Internal Audit in the overall process.
- 3.3 The whistleblowing hotline is supported by other methods through which employees can contact Internal Audit, namely:

Email

Whistleblowing@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Post

West Dunbartonshire Council
PO Box 5197
Dumbarton
G82 9AB

Intranet / Internet

A form will be available on the Intranet or Internet for completion and submission electronically.

3.4 Posters advising employees of the revised reporting facility through which they can report wrongdoing are in the process of being distributed throughout the Council. In addition, cards containing the above contact details will be distributed to departments in mid March, with the request that they are cascaded to all employees. In April, all employees will be advised of the revised whistleblowing arrangements via a payslip message.

3.5 Since this report will be printed and issued to elected Members before the launch date of the Whistleblowing hotline, it is proposed to table the revised Confidential Reporting policy on the day of the Audit and Performance Review Committee. The revised policy does not come into effect until 6 March 2006.

4. Personnel Issues

4.1 This policy does have the potential to cause personnel issues, dependent on the circumstances or findings of any concern raised by an employee. The Council's agreed employment related procedures will be used in such events.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 The setting up of the whistleblowing hotline has cost around £300 in terms of publicity material and an answering machine. The day to day operation of the hotline will be absorbed into the existing Internal Audit workload.

5.2 The cost of introducing the whistleblowing hotline has been accommodated within the departmental budget provision.

6. Conclusions

6.1 The introduction of the whistleblowing hotline enhances the existing Confidential Reporting policy by providing an additional mechanism for employees to raise concerns.

7. Recommendations

7.1 Members are asked to note these developments relating to Confidential Reporting in the Council.



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Background Papers: Audit and Performance Review Committee –
14 September 2005

Wards Affected: All