

# WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL

**TO:** PERFORMANCE REVIEW SUB COMMITTEE - 19<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY  
2000

**SUBJECT:** WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

**FROM:** FINANCE

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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To seek Members' approval for the attached Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure.

2. DEFINITION

2.1 Whistleblowing is the convenient term that has emerged in recent years to describe the raising of a concern, usually by an employee, about misconduct, illegal practices and cover ups within an organisation.

3. REQUIREMENT FOR A POLICY

3.1 Whilst most organisations, particularly those that operate with a culture of honesty and openness, would welcome any disclosures of this type, media coverage of cases involving employees who have been dismissed as a result of "blowing the whistle" and the prospect of possible victimisation are two of the factors that have discouraged the process.

3.2 Bodies such as the LGMB, the Audit Commission and CIPFA consider that employees are often aware that a colleague may be involved in wrong doing or that a particular activity contravenes accepted or legal standards but they are reluctant to come forward and voice their concerns either out of a sense of loyalty or fear of management reprisals.

3.3 It is felt that employees are more likely to raise concerns within their organisation if there is a formally adopted whistleblowing policy which demonstrates a willingness to listen to and address concerns and at the same time offers safeguards such as confidentiality and the full backing and support of the organisation.

3.4 Although there is no statutory requirement for a Local Authority to set up formal whistleblowing procedures, the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, which protects employees who have suffered as a result of whistleblowing, strongly encourages the adoption of such procedures.

3.5 The Audit Commission issued an update in December 1999 to a report originally issued in December 1993 entitled Protecting the Public Purse (Ensuring Probity in Local Government) that is critical of the fact that half of Local Authorities have not established formal

whistleblowing arrangements. Their particular interest is the role of whistleblowing in helping to combat fraud and corruption.

3.6 The adoption of a formal policy and procedure falls in line with best practice.

#### 4. **BASIS OF POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

4.1 The attached policy and procedure is based on the LGMB model that was issued in January 1999. It has been amended to take account of local terminology and to incorporate suggested improvements after consultation with interested parties.

#### 5. **CONSULTATION**

5.1 The policy and procedure has the support of management and with the exception of one aspect it has the support of the recognised Trade Unions. MPO has reservations about Section 11 as it feels that offering employees the option to raise concerns outside the Council encourages them to do just that, rather than use internal mechanisms.

5.2 The offering of every reasonable safeguard to employees is intended to ensure that concerns are raised within the Council. The option of raising a concern outside the Council is not only consistent with the Council's culture of openness and honesty but it is a recommended feature of whistleblowing procedures as endorsed by the Committee on Standards in Public Life.

#### 6. **PUBLICITY AND REVIEW**

6.1 The policy will be made available and drawn to the attention of all employees.

6.2 The policy will be reviewed 12 months after the date of adoption by the Council.

#### 7. **KEY ISSUES STRATEGIES**

7.1 Although the policy does not assist the Council in the achievement of any of the Key Issues Strategies it will contribute to the Council's published aim on probity which is to maintain the highest possible standards in all the Council's activities.

#### 8. **RECOMMENDATION**

8.1 Members are asked to support the adoption of the Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure.

Richard Barr,  
Audit Services Manager

#### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**Nil**

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**Areas in District Affected:** Not applicable

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