

CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF: GOVERNANCE AND CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE
DATE: 5th JULY 2023
REPORT OF: DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE
AUTHOR: ANDREW LEADBETTER

SUBJECT: WHISTLEBLOWING ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

Purpose of Report

1. To provide Members with information about whistleblowing for 2022-23.

Recommended That: Members

[1] note the contents of the Report.

Background

2. “Whistleblowing” is the term used to describe the raising of a concern by a worker who considers that there has been wrongdoing or malpractice by his employer or fellow workers and where it is in the public interest to do so.
3. The legislation, initially introduced in 1998, is designed to reduce malpractice in organisations and to ensure individuals can report malpractice without fear of reprisals. Provided they satisfy certain conditions in the way they report the wrongdoing the law protects workers from dismissal or detriment. Employees, trainees and agency workers are classed as workers.

Information

The Authority’s Policy and Procedure on Whistleblowing

4. The Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure was last reviewed by officers and Members in July 2022. It was determined during this review that the Policy and Procedure appeared to remain fit for purpose. The next review of the Policy and Procedure is due in July 2024. Given that there are likely to be new Members of the committee the Policy and Procedure is attached to this report as Appendix 1.

Whistleblowing Complaints

5. The Service has engaged an organisation called Safecall to provide an outsourced whistleblowing hotline. It enables anonymous reporting and is said to “allow employees to speak up and report their concerns to the highest levels of management”.
6. The Safecall service was promoted by the Health and Safety Manager in May 2023. The Article, that was contained in the staff newsletter “The Green” is attached to this report in Appendix 2. It was previously promoted as part of communications following the publication of the London Fire Brigade Culture Review and in September 2022. These examples are also included within Appendix 2.
7. The Service has not been contacted by Safecall in 2022-23.

Whistleblowing Audit Activity

8. An internal audit is to be conducted shortly concerned with Whistleblowing. This was prompted by His Majesty’s Inspectorate for Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services report entitled Values and Culture in the Fire and Rescue Service. The Audit will be conducted in the next quarter.

Financial Implications

9. There are no additional resource implications arising from this report.

Legal Implications

10. The Policy and Procedure seeks to ensure compliance with the legislation and mitigate risks to the reputation of the Service and the Fire Authority.

Equality & Diversity Implications

11. The Policy and Procedure minimise the risk of reprisals against those raising concerns and allow possible concerns about discriminatory practices to be raised internally and dealt with appropriately without recourse to litigation.

Environmental Implications

12. There are no environmental implications.

**CONTACT: DONNA LINTON, FIRE SERVICE HQ, WINSFORD
TEL [01606] 868804**

BACKGROUND PAPERS: NONE