

# Guildford Borough Council

**Report to:** Corporate Governance & Standards Committee

**Date:** 6 June 2024

**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Report of:** Monitoring Officer

**Author:** Susan Sale, Strategic Director of Legal & Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer

**Email:** [susan.sale@guildford.gov.uk](mailto:susan.sale@guildford.gov.uk)

**Executive Portfolio Holder/ Lead Councillor responsible:** Merel Rehorst-Smith

**Email:** merel.rehorst-smith@guildford.gov.uk

**Report Status:** Open

## Annual Whistleblowing Report 2023-24

### 1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report presents the annual Whistleblowing Report of the Council to the Corporate Governance and Standards Committee to improve transparency and accountability. The report summarises the whistleblowing activity over the last year and analyses the effectiveness of the Council's system.
- 1.2 The annual Whistleblowing Register has been redacted and is attached as **Appendix 1**.

### 2.0 Recommendation to Committee

The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 Review the contents of the annual Whistleblowing Report to satisfy itself that the governance arrangements are operating effectively.
- 2.2 Make any recommendations for improvement.

### **3.0 Reasons for the Recommendation**

- 3.1 This Committee is a key component of the authority's corporate governance regime. The Committee provides an independent and high-level focus on the assurance and reporting arrangements that underpin good governance.
- 3.2 The Committee has, within its terms of reference in Part 3 of the Constitution: 'To consider an annual report of the operation of the Whistleblowing Policy, including incidents reported' (para 14).

### **4.0 Purpose of the Report**

- 4.1 The Monitoring Officer is obliged to provide an annual report of all whistleblowing matters received. The purpose of this report is to satisfy such reporting requirements and appraise the Committee of the whistleblowing disclosures, the outcomes of any investigations, the recommendations and the actions taken during 2023-24.

### **5.0 Strategic Priorities**

- 5.1 To demonstrate our commitment to listening to and acting upon complaints; and
- 5.2 To demonstrate commitment to transparency and accountability.

### **6.0 Background**

- 6.1 The Council is required to have an effective Whistleblowing Policy and arrangements in place. It is considered good governance to present an annual Whistleblowing Report and Register to Councillors.

### **7.0 Consultations**

- 7.1 Consultation has taken place with the Council's Corporate Management Board.
- 7.2 Consultation has taken place with the Leader of the Council and the relevant Portfolio Holder.

### **8.0 Key Risks**

- 8.1 The purpose of the Whistleblowing Register is to ensure resilience and robust service delivery in accordance with good practice. The progress

made towards openness, transparency and good governance has mitigated any risks to service failure or non-compliance and should now provide confidence to the Council.

## **9.0 Financial Implications**

9.1 There are no direct financial consequences arising from this report.

## **10.0 Human Resource Implications**

10.1 There are no direct human resource implications arising from this report. Any action taken in respect of any employees has been taken in compliance with the Council's relevant Human Resources Policies.

## **11.0 Equality and Diversity Implications**

11.1 There are no direct equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

## **12.0 Legal and Governance Implications**

12.1 The current Whistleblowing Policy provides that the Monitoring Officer is responsible for the operation of the policy and is obliged to receive and record any whistleblowing disclosures and promptly investigate them as appropriate.

## **13.0 Conclusions**

13.1 All allegations and disclosures made under the Whistleblowing Policy are taken very seriously and robust investigations were undertaken.

13.2 Following consideration of the findings of the investigations, recommendations were made and action was implemented.

13.3 The Corporate Governance and Standards Committee should satisfy itself that the governance arrangements are operating effectively.

## **14. Background Papers**

None

## **15. Appendices**

Appendix 1: Guildford Borough Council Whistleblowing Register 2023-24