

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

AUDIT COMMITTEE - 13 MARCH 2013

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND SUPPORT SERVICES

ANTI-FRAUD AND ANTI-CORRUPTION STRATEGY AND
DISCLOSURE (WHISTLEBLOWING) CODE

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report

- To update existing strategies and policies in accordance with the business arrangements within the Council.

<u>RECOMMENDATION FOR AUDIT COMMITTEE: That:</u>	
(A)	The revised Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Strategy and Disclosure (Whistleblowing) Code be approved.

1.0 Background

1.1 The Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Strategy and Disclosure (Whistleblowing) Code was approved by Audit Committee on 2 September 2009. Annual reviews were undertaken by officers in 2010 and 2011 with minor amendments being made to both documents. The amendments were made to reflect the revised Internal Audit arrangements as the Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS) took on auditing responsibilities from June 2011. Specific responsibility for any matters raised under the Whistleblowing Code was also transferred to SIAS.

2.0 Report

2.1 The Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Strategy and Disclosure (Whistleblowing) Code have been reviewed by the Director of Finance and Support Services, the Director of Neighbourhood Services, the Manager of Corporate Risk and the Head of SIAS.

2.2 Two significant amendments have been made that are reflected in both documents:

- Previously the whistleblowing facility was made available to all members of the public. This went far beyond recommended guidelines. Whistleblowing arrangements usually only apply to all those working for a Council, suppliers and those providing services under a contract with the Council. Whistleblowing procedures provide safe and confidential avenues for these parties and their identities are protected. The Whistleblowing Code is not considered to be an appropriate avenue for contacting the Council. In order to avoid any further possible confusion, the facility for all members of the public to use the whistleblowing route has been removed. The intended route for all enquires is that they are initially handled by Customer Services, who will either answer the enquiry or put the enquirer in contact with a department/officer.
- As previously stated SIAS initially took on responsibility for taking forward matters raised under the Whistleblowing Code. This has on occasions created administration difficulties with SIAS perhaps being too far removed from the Council and requiring significant guidance before moving forward. The intention is therefore to bring whistleblowing arrangements back in-house. The Manager of Corporate Risk, in his governance role, will take on responsibility for managing any whistleblowing issues. The Risk Assurance Officer will pick up any issues in the absence of the Manager of Corporate Risk.

2.3 The Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Strategy (**Essential Reference Paper 'B'**) helps the Council to foster a culture of integrity, honesty and openness throughout the organisation. Fraud and corruption are not tolerated or given tacit consent, and all should be alert to any evidence of irregularities and be ready to act upon such evidence.

2.4 The Disclosure (Whistleblowing) Code (**Essential Reference Paper 'C'**) encourages all those working for the Council, suppliers and those providing services under a contract with the Council to report any reasons to suspect fraud and corruption, without fear of reprisals. The code details the ways in which such information will be handled and followed up.

3.0 Implications/Consultations

3.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

Background Papers

Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Strategy and Disclosure (Whistleblowing) Code – Audit Committee 2 September 2009.

Contact Member: Councillor Tony Jackson
Leader of the Council
Ext 1642
anthony.jackson@eastherts.gov.uk

Contact Officer: Adele Taylor
Director of Finance and Support Services
Ext 1406
adele.taylor@eastherts.gov.uk

Report Author: Chris Gibson
Manager of Corporate Risk
Ext 2073
chris.gibson@eastherts.gov.uk