

24 November 2020

Report of	Monitoring Officer	Author	Andrew Weavers ☎ 282213
Title	Review of the Council's Ethical Governance Policies		
Wards affected	Not applicable		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report requests the Committee to review the Council's updated Ethical Governance policies. These are the key policies which set out the standards of conduct and integrity that the Council expects of councillors, staff, partners, suppliers and customers when conducting Council business. They contain procedures for dealing with breaches of the policies and processes to be followed.
- 1.2 The report also requests the Committee to recommend to Full Council to include the updated policies in the Policy Framework which comprises all of the Authority's key policies.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 To recommend to Full Council that it adopts the statement of intent in relation to ethical governance.
- 2.2 To review the following revised policies:
 - Anti-Fraud and Corruption
 - Whistleblowing
 - Anti-Money Laundering
 - Covert Surveillance
 - Information Security
 - Data Protection
 - Acceptable Use
 - Data Retention
 - Income and Debt Management

and to recommend to Full Council that they be approved for inclusion in the Council's Policy Framework.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Council is committed to maintaining the highest standards of governance including the elimination of fraud and corruption and to ensuring that all activities are conducted ethically, honestly, openly and accountably in order to protect public safety and public money.
- 3.2 A varied range of policies and procedures form the Corporate Governance framework and a selection of these relate to Ethical Governance - those specifically regarding conduct and integrity.

- 3.3 The Ethical Governance policies set out the standards of conduct and integrity that it expects from staff, elected members, suppliers, partners, volunteers and the public. Breaches of the policies will be pursued, and procedures have been introduced to enable any person to raise genuine concerns they may have about the conduct of anybody acting for or on behalf of the Council.
- 3.4 At its meeting on 6 December 2018 Full Council adopted a statement of intent in relation to both Ethical and Corporate Governance which gave a high organisational commitment to zero tolerance of fraud, corruption and bribery. Accordingly, it is now appropriate to refresh the statement of intent which is attached at Appendix 1. The Committee is recommended to refer this to Full Council for adoption.

4. Review of Ethical Governance Policies

- 4.1 The Anti-Fraud and Corruption, Whistleblowing, Anti-Money Laundering, Information Security, Data Protection, Covert Surveillance and Income and Debt policies were last reviewed by this Committee at its meeting on 26 November 2019. The Ethical Governance policies were subsequently adopted as part of the Council's Policy Framework by Full Council.

The following table indicates the number of times a policy was invoked in the past year and where appropriate whether it was effective.

Policy	No. of times invoked during 2017/18	No. of times invoked during 2018/19	No. of times invoked during 2019/20	Whether procedures effective
Anti-Fraud and Corruption	None	None	None	n/a
Whistleblowing	None	1	None	n/a
Anti-Money Laundering	None	None	None	n/a
Covert Surveillance	None	None	None	n/a
Information Security	None	None	None	n/a
Data Protection	None	None	None	n/a

The Anti-Fraud and Corruption, Whistleblowing, Anti-Money Laundering, Data Protection, Information Security, Acceptable Use and Data Retention policies have all been reviewed to ensure that they remain fit for purpose and no changes are proposed to these policies which are appended to this report.

- 4.2 The Monitoring Officer writes an annually to both Members and Officers reminding them of their obligations regarding the Anti-Fraud and Corruption and Whistleblowing policies. Councillors have recently received updated data protection training from the Council's IT team.
- 4.3 In March 2020 the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office undertook its periodic inspection of the Council's compliance with its obligations under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000. This involved a review of the Council's Covert Surveillance Policy and associated procedures. The inspection found that the Council's policy was sound but made some recommendations how the policy could be further improved. All of the recommendations have been included in the updated policy. The recommendations focused on updating legislative references and further guidance regarding the review and destruction of surveillance material. The Investigatory Powers Commissioners office noted that the Council had not used the powers since the date of the last inspection which was November 2016.

- 4.6 The Income & Debt Management Policy has been reviewed and there are no proposed changes for this year. The processes are still relevant and meet legislative requirements, whilst supporting strong collection rates. During the last full financial year, the Council achieved high collection rates for Council Tax and Business Rates, achieving 97.80% collection of Council Tax, with an increase in tax base of £6.6million and achieving collection of 98.71% for Business Rates.
- 4.7 The Council continues to improve processes to support residents and businesses to pay on time, including the use of text messages, email and more complex enforcement where necessary.

5. Strategic Plan References

- 5.1 The manner in which the Council governs its business is an underpinning mechanism in the Council's Strategic Plan priorities to set out the direction and future potential for our Borough.

6. Publicity Considerations

- 6.1 The Council's ethical governance policies will be published on the Council's website.

7. Financial, Equality, Diversity and Human Rights, Consultation, Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety, Health and Safety, Risk Management and Environmental and Sustainability Implications

- 7.1 None.