



## **AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

**MEETING** : Thursday, 28th February 2013

**PRESENT** : Cllrs. Wilson (Chair), Hobbs (Vice-Chair), McLellan, Noakes, Wood and Gilson and Taylor

### **Others in Attendance**

Councillor Llewellyn, Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources

Jeff Ligo, Independent Consultant

Olwen Dutton, Partner, Bevan Brittan LLP

Sue Mullins, Monitoring Officer and Group Manager Legal and Democratic Services

Terry Rodway, Group Manager Audit and Assurance

Parvati Diyar, Democratic Services Officer

**APOLOGIES** : Cllr Porter

### **1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interests.

### **2. INVESTIGATION REPORT**

The Chair introduced Jeff Ligo, Independent Consultant and Olwen Dutton, Partner, Bevan Brittan to the Audit and Governance Committee.

The Audit and Governance Committee considered a report of the Monitoring Officer concerning the governance issues arising out of a series of anonymous allegations against Members and Officers of the Council, received by the Council in October and November 2012.

The Council's whistleblowing policy provides that when concerns about what is happening at work are notified to the Council, the Council has a responsibility to investigate the matter. The policy also states that it is much more difficult to look into matters raised anonymously but that the Council would still consider anonymous reports.

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The Monitoring Officer advised that the impact of the allegations had caused severe distress and upset to the individuals concerned, including their families, some of whom had been sent copies of the allegations directly.

She explained that investigation into the allegations were carried out both internally and externally and that the conclusions of both investigations were that there was no evidence to substantiate the allegations made and that the allegations were unfounded, unfair and malicious and appeared to be designed to cause anger, upset, distress and embarrassment to the individuals concerned.

**RESOLVED**

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That the Council's whistleblowing policy be reviewed, in consultation with staff and trade unions, to make it clear that the Council has the right not to investigate anonymous allegations which appear frivolous or malicious and are unsupported by credible evidence.
- (3) That the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer be requested to commission a review of the Council's corporate governance arrangements, as part of a peer review process during 2013/14.

**3. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED** that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the following item of business on the grounds that it is likely, in view of the nature of business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the press and public are present during consideration of these items there will be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended.

<b>Minute</b>	<b>Description of Exempt Information</b>
4 and 5	) Information relating to any individual (paragraph 1)
	) Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual (paragraph 2)

**4. INVESTIGATION REPORT**

The Audit and Governance Committee considered a further report of the Monitoring Officer concerning governance issues arising out of a series of anonymous allegations against Members and Officers of the Council.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

**5. INVESTIGATION REPORT**

The Audit and Governance Committee considered a report of the Group Manager, Audit and Assurance informing Members of the outcome of his investigation into the allegations made in a number of anonymous letters received by the Council.

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**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

**Time of commencement: 18:30 hours**

**Time of conclusion: 19:20 hours**

**Chair**