

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

AUDIT COMMITTEE

14 February 2007

Report of the Director of Finance

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 CONFIDENTIAL REPORTING CODE

Summary

This report informs Members of concerns raised using the Confidential Reporting Code and the outcomes of any resulting investigations.

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 The Council has a Confidential Reporting Code (“Whistleblowing” Code) to enable concerns to be raised by staff of stakeholders. The Code sets out how matters will be investigated.
- 1.1.2 All concerns raised by the Code are reported to Members of the Audit Committee as part of the overall governance process. In addition action is considered on what lessons can be learnt and what improvements to systems can be made.

1.2 Concerns Raised

- 1.2.1 Members will recall that a concern was raised by a member of Administrative Services who had noticed an increased telephone bill in one area. The investigation into this matter has been concluded.
- 1.2.2 There were three agency temps whose personal use of the Council’s telephone was investigated. The initial concern related to a temp employed at Martin Square to provide a Benefits presence following the relocation of Benefits staff at Kings Hill. Following an increase in the telephone call cost an analysis of calls was undertaken. A total value of calls of £587.18 (including VAT) were identified as being personal. The person responsible had moved on and was no longer in the employ of the Agency. However, the Agency did contact him and he has repaid the sum in full.
- 1.2.3 The next instance was a temp supplied to replace the first temp at Martin Square. Their use of the telephone was also examined and they were found to have made personal calls to the value of £97.41(including VAT). This temp was working for the Council at the time of the investigation and, after apologising, agreed to repay the cost of calls in full.

- 1.2.4 The third case investigated was the temp employed at Tonbridge Castle. Again they were employed to maintain a Benefits presence upon relocation of staff. An analysis of the calls made from the Council extension identified personal calls to the value of £321.86. This temp was still working for the Council at the time of the investigation and, after apologising, agreed to repay the cost of calls in full.
- 1.2.5 All the cost of the calls identified has been fully recovered.
- 1.2.6 The Director of Finance had also approached the Agency in order to seek compensation for the productive time paid whilst these calls were being made, but the Agency denied any responsibility for the actions of their temps as per their contract with the Council. That said, the Agency did assist in seeking reimbursement from the agency temps. In view of these problems, we shall be wary of using staff from the Agency again.
- 1.2.7 In the period following the initial investigation of these concerns the Council has changed telephony line suppliers for a trial period. Part of the service of the new provider is the ability to monitor telephone usage with on-line access to call usage. Warning reports can also be automatically issued for calls over a pre-set amount.
- 1.2.8 The Director of Finance has also issued an email to all staff notifying them of the change and reminding staff of the Council's view towards private use of telephones.
- 1.2.9 As part of the Key Lines of Enquiry review carried out by the Audit Commission they reviewed the embedment of risk management and anti-fraud procedures within the Council. As a result, all staff will be required to acknowledge their awareness of the Council's policies as part of the appraisal process.

1.3 Legal Implications

- 1.3.1 There are no legal implications that have arisen from this investigation.

1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.4.1 The change in telephony supplier and reminder to staff on personal use of the Council telephones is expected to minimise further abuse.

1.5 Risk Assessment

- 1.5.1 There are no significant risks that have been identified as the result of this investigation.

Background papers:

contact: David Buckley

Internal Audit Files

Sharon Shelton
Director of Finance