

WHISTLEBLOWING (PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURE) POLICY

REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICE



For Approval

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval of the Authority's Whistleblowing (Public Interest Disclosure) Policy attached as Appendix A.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To approve the Authority's Whistleblowing (Public Interest Disclosure) Policy attached as Appendix A.

3. WHISTLEBLOWING (PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURE) POLICY

- 3.1 The Authority's Whistleblowing (Public Interest Disclosure) Policy aims to set out the ways in which all employees, elected members of the Fire Authority, contractors, agency staff or anyone working on behalf of the Fire Authority (classed as 'Workers' within the policy) can safely report serious organisational concerns which fall within the scope of 'public interest disclosure'.
- 3.2 The Policy has been reviewed in line with the Brigade's Key Document Framework, and to address one of the recommendations made by HMICFRS in its report 'Values and culture in fire and rescue services' specifically: Recommendation 1: By 1 October 2023 chief fire officers should make sure their services provide a confidential way for staff to raise concerns and that staff are aware of whistleblowing processes. Additionally, the review has considered 'good practice' which has been gained from a range of sources which include other fire and rescue services, Cleveland Police, ACAS, and the UK Government Whistleblowing policy.
- 3.3 As a result of this review work, a revised policy is attached at Appendix A for members' considerations and approval. The amendments to the original policy include greater clarity on the various mechanisms available for raising whistleblowing concerns, how concerns will be dealt with, and the support available to any member of staff who raises a concern.

- 3.4 The Whistleblowing Policy and associated procedure will be one of a suite of policies that will be subject to an 'Integrity Health Check;' which will require all employees on an annual basis, to confirm that they have read and understood the contents of specified policies and procedures. This will provide the Brigade with assurance that staff are aware of how to raise a concern, and in this instance, through the Whistleblowing policy. It will also provide evidence to HMICFRS relating to how the Brigade has actioned recommendation 1 with regards to raising staff awareness of its whistleblowing processes. The whistleblowing policy will be communicated to all staff, along with other ways to report concerns following approval of this policy.
- 3.5 The Whistleblowing Policy has been equality impact assessed in accordance with the Brigade's procedure. The findings of the Impact Assessment conclude that the Policy and Procedure does not have a detrimental impact on any group of staff, including those with one or more protected characteristics.
- 3.6 The Whistleblowing Policy has been subject to consultation with Unison and the Fire Brigades' Union and no issues have come to light.

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