

To: Joint Audit Committee

Date: 10th September 2013

By: Alison Bolton, Chief Executive

Title: Whistle Blowing – Policy Statement and Procedures

Purpose of Report/Issue:

The Audit Committee has a role to review and monitor the effectiveness of the Police & Crime Commissioner's policy on whistle-blowing. This report sets out the PCC's whistle-blowing policy statement and also describes the procedures in place that allow staff within the Office of the PCC to whistle-blow. A separate report has been prepared which sets out the arrangements for Surrey Police.

Recommendations

That the Committee note the report.

Risk – None arising.

Equalities / Human Rights Implications – no specific implications are raised by this report.

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Background

The law protects an employee from dismissal or other adverse treatment if they disclose criminal behaviour, a breach of a legal obligation or other specific forms of misconduct to their employer or to the appropriate body.

The Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner has in place a whistle-blowing policy statement, as follows:

“The Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner (OPCC) in Surrey is committed to the highest possible standards of honesty and openness, probity and accountability. The OPCC seeks to conduct its business in a responsible manner, ensuring that all its activities are open and effectively managed and that its integrity is sustained. It expects the same standards from the Force it oversees.

In line with that commitment, the OPCC encourages any of its staff - and indeed the Force’s personnel - who have concerns about any aspect of the Force or OPCC’s work to come forward and voice those concerns. The OPCC must ensure that policies are in place to enable people to expose any wrong-doing or misconduct and to support and protect those who do so.”

This policy is published on the PCC’s website. Staff are aware of the procedures for whistle-blowing. The OPCC’s team is a small one and to date, the procedures have not needed to be used.

The PCC’s view on whistle-blowing

Kevin Hurley is a strong advocate of robust arrangements that facilitate whistle-blowing and has spoken publicly about the need to ensure that public servants are able to speak out and expose wrong-doing. He has raised concerns in the national press that, in the aftermath of various recent scandals, there is a danger in the public sector that where people who might once have spoken out about wrong doing have fewer avenues to do so. The Commissioner has expressed a view that it is vitally important for faith in public institutions and their integrity that whistle-blowers should be encouraged to speak out.

Procedures for Whistle-blowing in the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner

If a member of staff in the Office of the PCC identifies concerns about the proper conduct of public business, value for money, fraud or corruption, they would need to disclose this to the auditor appointed by the Audit Commission (i.e. Grant Thornton). If a disclosure concerns the personal conduct of the PCC, staff would need to report this to the Independent Police Complaints Commission.

Oversight of Police Arrangements

The PCC, as part of his oversight role, needs to ensure that the Force has proper whistle-blowing arrangements in place and determine whether these

are being used appropriately and whether the policies are effective in identifying malpractice. Surrey Police colleagues are

The PCC will look to the Audit Committee to provide this assurance as it has a specific responsibility to review and monitor the effectiveness of the Chief Constable's policies on whistle-blowing.