



Open Report on behalf of Andrew Crookham – (Executive Director of Resources)

Report to:	Audit Committee
Date:	12 July 2021
Subject:	Annual Whistleblowing Report

Summary:

This report gives an overview of the Council's whistleblowing arrangements throughout the year 2020/21.

Recommendation(s):

Items to note:

- a) whistleblowing activity for 2020/21
- b) ongoing work to raise awareness and provide assurance on the effectiveness of the Council's arrangements for whistleblowing

Background

1. This report provides a summary and analysis of whistleblowing disclosures received by the Council during the period from April 2020 to March 2021. Details reported include:
 - Whistleblowing activity (and analysis of issues reported)
 - Disclosures made (analysed by type and Council director area) – to identify any trends emerging and to compare with activity from previous years
 - Resolution and outcomes from whistleblowing disclosures
 - Benchmarking of whistleblowing arrangements

Conclusion

2. The number of whistleblowing concerns (29) raised around Lincolnshire County Council activity in 2020/21 represented the first decrease on the previous period's activity in several years. The most likely explanation for the reduction in reports is that Covid-19 and the changes it brought in curtailing usual lifestyle and working arrangements may have led to less issues being reported from the workplace. We continued to receive referrals of potential fraud and policy breaches during the year.
3. The proportion of concerns reported relating to Schools and Children's Services remains the highest service area in terms of reports. However, the proportion of reports in this area did decline from 44% to 34% of calls. The unprecedented pandemic situation led to 31% of calls

received being Covid-19 related – these were mainly in the early stages of the pandemic and involved alleged guideline breaches.

4. We continue to receive high levels of disclosures made through the reporting line – well over the average number of calls received by councils within the CIPFA Fraud and Corruption Tracker report for 2020. This provides assurance that the Council's arrangements remain effective and that whistleblowers trust us to deal correctly with their disclosures. We are highly encouraged that 90% of reports in 2020/21 were not anonymous – this is further evidence of the effective operation of our arrangements to report whistleblowing concerns.

Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

Risk and Impact analysis completed

Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Whistleblowing Annual Report 2020/21

Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Lucy Pledge, who can be contacted on 01522 553692 or lucy.pledge@lincolnshire.gov.uk.