

**North East Derbyshire District Council**

**Standards Committee**

**5th March 2026**

**Annual Review of Whistleblowing Policy**

**Report of the Monitoring Officer**

Classification: This report is public

Report By: **Andrew Smith, Deputy Monitoring Officer**

Contact Officer: **Andrew Smith, Deputy Monitoring Officer**

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**PURPOSE / SUMMARY**

The Whistleblowing Policy should be reviewed annually and the number of confidential disclosures reported to Standards Committee. This was last done on the 5<sup>th</sup> March 2025.

A refresh and update has been undertaken and is being reported to Members.

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**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Note the number of whistleblowing disclosures received in the 2025 calendar year as set out in Section 1.4.
2. Endorse the implementation actions at Section 2.6, including an annual awareness campaign and targeted training for managers, investigators and Members.
3. Approve publication of the revised policy on the Council website and intranet, and delegate authority to the Monitoring Officer to make future minor (non-material) updates to contact details and prescribed persons.
4. Approve the revised Whistleblowing Policy (Appendix 1) reflecting legal and best-practice updates set out in Section 2.

## IMPLICATIONS

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**Finance and Risk:** Yes  No

**Details:** Minimal direct cost; potential small costs for communications/training and graphic redraft of the flowchart can be met from existing budgets. Strengthened arrangements reduce risk of fraud, safeguarding failures and regulatory criticism.

On Behalf of the Section 151 Officer

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**Legal (including Data Protection):** Yes  No

**Details:** The updates restate statutory protections under PIDA 1998 (Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998) and the ERRA 2013 (Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013) public interest test; they also clarify safeguarding routes under the Children Act framework and Care Act 2014 statutory guidance. The Whistleblowing Register will be maintained in accordance with GDPR/Data Protection Act 2018 with defined retention, access controls and reporting. Further details as in report.

On Behalf of the Solicitor to the Council

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**Staffing:** Yes  No

**Details:**

On behalf of the Head of Paid Service

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## DECISION INFORMATION

<b>Decision Information</b>	
<b>Is the decision a Key Decision?</b> A Key Decision is an executive decision which has a significant impact on two or more District wards or which results in income or expenditure to the Council above the following thresholds:  <b>NEDDC:</b> <b>Revenue - £125,000</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Capital - £310,000</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Please indicate which threshold applies</i>	No
<b>Is the decision subject to Call-In?</b> (Only Key Decisions are subject to Call-In)	No
<b>District Wards Significantly Affected</b>	None
<b>Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) details:</b>	
<b>Stage 1 screening undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completed EIA stage 1 to be appended if not required to do a stage 2</li> </ul>	Not applicable
<b>Stage 2 full assessment undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completed EIA stage 2 needs to be appended to the report</li> </ul>	No, not applicable
<b>Consultation:</b> <b>Leader / Deputy Leader</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Cabinet</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>SMT</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Relevant Service Manager</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Members</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Public</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Other</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes  Details: Standards Committee

<b>Links to Council Plan priorities;</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>A great place that cares for the environment</b></li> <li><b>A great place to live well</b></li> <li><b>A great place to work</b></li> <li><b>A great place to access good public services</b></li> </ul>
Continually improve Council Services to deliver excellence and value for money.

## REPORT DETAILS

### 1 **Background** (reasons for bringing the report)

In accordance with the Policy, the Monitoring Officer maintains the Whistleblowing Register and reports annually to Members. For the 2025 calendar year, the number

of disclosures recorded is 0. Outcomes and learning themes (if any) will be summarised verbally at Committee and in the confidential register.

- 1.1 Whistleblowing is a report from an employee, Member or other person about suspected wrongdoing within the organisation. The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 requires employers to refrain from dismissing workers and employees or subjecting them to any other detriment because they have made a protected disclosure.
- 1.2 Whistleblowing policies should foster a climate of openness and transparency in which individuals in the workplace do not feel that they will be victimised, harassed or suffer any reprisals if they raise concerns about wrongdoing within the organisation. The Government expects all public bodies to have adequate whistleblowing procedures in place.
- 1.3 The Whistleblowing Policy was last reviewed in March 2025 when no substantive changes were recommended other than housekeeping amendments.
- 1.4 In accordance with the Whistleblowing Policy, the Monitoring Officer has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of the Policy, and will maintain a record of concerns raised and the outcomes. The Monitoring Officer is also required to report as necessary to Council on instances of Whistleblowing. There have been no instances to report for the 2025 calendar year. Two disclosures were received but neither of these was a whistleblowing disclosure in relation to the actions of North East Derbyshire District Council and so they have not been recorded as whistleblowing disclosures.

## **2. Details of Proposal or Information**

1. Summary of material changes proposed to the Policy:
  - 1.1. Add definitions section (Whistleblowing, Worker, Protected Disclosure, Public Interest test) and clarify scope for contractors, agency workers and volunteers (signposts to PIDA coverage).
  - 1.2. Strengthen reporting routes: confirm internal points of contact (Line Manager, Service Manager, Internal Audit, Monitoring Officer, Section 151 Officer, Head of Paid Service) with generic emails; allow escalation to prescribed persons and Protect (the UK whistleblowing charity).
  - 1.3. Clarify anonymous reporting: concerns will be assessed and investigated where possible, with practical guidance on evidential sufficiency.
  - 1.4. Set service standards: acknowledgment within 2 working days; decision on approach within 10 working days; proportionate updates thereafter.
  - 1.5. Explicit anti-victimisation examples and risk assessment for those raising concerns; cross-reference to Dignity at Work / Grievance policies.

- 1.6. Safeguarding signposts: children (Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023) and adults (Care Act 2014 statutory guidance) – such concerns may need immediate referral via statutory pathways.
  - 1.7. Data protection and records: describe Whistleblowing Register governance, access, retention and GDPR basis; annual reporting to Standards/Audit Committee.
  - 1.8. Remove legacy references (e.g., Audit Commission) and update external contacts (External Auditor, Police) using role-based rather than named contacts.
  - 1.9. Redraw and replace the flowchart for clarity and accessibility (high-resolution version).
2. Implementation actions and timeline:
    - 2.1. Publish updated policy and quick-read one-page guide on intranet/website within 10 working days of approval.
    - 2.2. Briefing note to all staff and Members; targeted sessions for managers and investigators within 8 weeks.
    - 2.3. Update contact points (generic emails) and set up shared mailbox for whistleblowing disclosures.
    - 2.4. Replace flowchart on website and in staff handbook; ensure accessibility compliance (WCAG 2.2 AA).
    - 2.5. Schedule annual metrics report to Standards Committee (number and themes; no identifying information).
  3. There are no instances of Whistleblowing to report to Members.
  4. The policy, once approved by Standards Committee, will be on the Council's website.

### **3 Reasons for Recommendation**

- 3.1 To ensure that the Whistleblowing Policy is up to date and regularly reviewed and considered by Members.
- 3.2 There are no instances of Whistleblowing to report to Members.

### **4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection**

- 4.1 There are no alternative options as the Policy needs regular review.

## **DOCUMENT INFORMATION**

Appendix No	Title
1	Whistleblowing Policy April 2026
<p><b>Background Papers</b> (These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Cabinet you must provide copies of the background papers)</p>	
<p><b>None</b></p>	

### **APPENDIX A – Summary of policy changes for 2026 review**

Definitions and scope clarified; expanded coverage signposted for workers under PIDA.

Updated reporting routes and contact points; inclusion of Protect as an external advice route.

Anonymous reporting handling clarified.

Service standards for handling concerns introduced.

Anti- victimisation safeguards expanded with examples.

Safeguarding signposts (children and adults) strengthened.

Register and data governance set out; annual reporting to Committee.

Obsolete references (Audit Commission) removed; external contacts modernised.

Flowchart replaced with accessible, high- resolution version.