

# New whistleblowing procedure to be trialled by council

The City of Edinburgh Council may agree next week to carry out a pilot of a new whistleblowing hotline to provide staff with a confidential route to raise concerns about wrong-doing, malpractice or any other serious risk to the Council. The council is keen to protect its staff from victimisation and is also keen to ensure that all matters of council business are fully transparent and accountable.

The new arrangements, which are intended to strengthen the Council current governance measures, will allow calls to be handled by an external company, and all concerns logged and reported to the Council's Governance committee.



Vice-Convener of  
Finance – Bill  
Cook

Councillor Bill Cook, who leads on HR issues for the Finance committee, said: “This revised policy sets out to help staff play their full role in identifying risk and malpractice. It’s critical that staff have the right to raise concerns in the knowledge that they will be taken seriously, that these will be investigated appropriately, and confidentiality will be maintained”.

“The members of the Governance committee, which is chaired by an opposition councillor, will play a vital role in this, working with the hotline provider to ensure there is proper scrutiny of the issues brought to its attention.”

The hotline provider will decide if a concern is a 'minor/operational' or 'major/significant' whistleblowing disclosure.

In the case of major or significant concerns, the provider will always be responsible for the investigation and reporting that to the Governance committee. In the case of minor or operational concerns, the provider has the discretion to ask a Council manager investigate and report back to them.

Staff will still have the option of reporting concerns to a manager in the Council, who will then be obliged to report that to the hotline provider.

The provider will prepare quarterly and annual summary reports of issues raised and prepare independent investigative and outcome reports on staff disclosures. A full record will be maintained and provided to the Governance committee. Other monitoring reports will be produced for other Council committees and senior managers.

The estimated cost of the scheme per year is £78,000. It is hoped to have the scheme running by early 2014 following a procurement process. The pilot is planned to run for one year with a review after six months. Full details of the proposed scheme are contained in a report to the Council's Finance and Budget committee.