

REPORT TO: WEST OF ENGLAND AUDIT COMMITTEE
DATE: 16 OCTOBER 2020
REPORT TITLE: WECA WHISTLEBLOWING AUDIT REVIEW (2020/21)
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Purpose of Report

1. To present the summary findings of the Internal Audit review of WECA's Whistleblowing arrangements following work completed in September 2020.

Impact of Covid-19 pandemic

The Combined Authority has actively reviewed its key activities and work programme to reflect changing priorities as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Specific issues relating to the Covid-19 situation that impact on, or are addressed through, this report are as follows:

- There are no specific impacts from Covid-19 in relation to this report. However, it is imperative that the Authority maintains strong governance processes and controls during these uncertain times.

Recommendation

- (1) To note the findings of the Whistleblowing audit at the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) attached at Appendix 1;
- (2) That the Management response set out in Appendix 2 be noted;

Background / Issues for Consideration

- 2 A review of WECA's Whistleblowing arrangements was conducted in August / September 2020 as part of the Counter Fraud Arrangements Audit on WECA's 2020/21 Internal Audit Plan. As at the time of writing this report, the detailed internal audit report was still in draft format and therefore a summary of the key findings has been attached at Appendix 1. An update of Whistleblowing arrangements was requested by Members at the July 2020 Audit Committee.
- 3 The draft (WECA) management responses to the recommendations made by Internal Audit are detailed in Appendix 2.

Consultation

- 4 The scope for the internal audit review of WECA's Whistleblowing arrangements was agreed with the Director of Legal Services and the Director of Investment & Corporate Services – with the corresponding findings, draft recommendations and corresponding action plan currently being finalised.

Risk Management/Assessment

- 5 An effective and accessible Whistleblowing policy is a core component of the authority's overall governance and risk management arrangements.

Public Sector Equality Duties

- 6 No significant implications. Whistleblowing arrangements, and reporting channels, should be clearly communicated and be fully accessible to all.

Finance Implications, including economic impact assessment where appropriate:

- 7 No direct financial implications. This internal audit review was undertaken within the scope, and agreed fee structure, of the 2020/21 approved internal audit plan.

Legal Implications:

- 8 No direct implications.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Whistleblowing Internal Audit (draft) Findings

Appendix 2 – WECA (draft) management responses to the recommendations made by internal audit.

West of England Combined Authority Contact:

Any person seeking background information relating to this item should seek the assistance of the contact officer for the meeting who is Ian Hird / Tim Milgate on 0117 332 1486; or by writing to West of England Combined Authority, 3 Rivergate, Temple Quay, Bristol BS1 6EW; email: democratic.services@westofengland-ca.gov.uk