

SUBJECT:	COUNTER FRAUD POLICY/STRATEGY
DIRECTORATE:	CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND TOWN CLERK
REPORT AUTHOR:	AMANDA STANISLAWSKI, AUDIT MANAGER

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To present to Members an updated corporate Counter Fraud Policy/Strategy, for review/comment.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Council's Counter Fraud Policy/Strategy was last updated in 2021. The 2024 version takes account of the latest best practice guidance.
- 2.2 The Council has a range of Counter fraud policies, procedures, and guidance. The Corporate Policy/Strategy aims to provide the high-level framework and direction which guides activity and other policy areas.
- 2.3 Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally 2020 is the latest counter fraud and corruption strategy for local government. It provides a blueprint for a co-ordinated response to fraud and corruption perpetrated against local authorities with the support of those at the top.

3. Changes to the policy/strategy

- 3.1 In the main the updated policy/strategy is similar to the previous one in terms of content with the main change being a change in format. It also contains the revised document version control tables.
- 3.2 There is a more definite split between the Policy and Strategy, with the Policy setting out the Council's Counter Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy Statement. The strategy sets out what actions the Council proposes to take over the medium-term future to continue to develop its resilience to fraud and corruption.
- 3.3 The arrangements in place detailed within the Strategy continue to be split between the five key principles, Govern, Acknowledge, Prevent, Pursue and Protect and these are now shown in boxes with coloured banners to improve clarity. These have been checked and updated to reflect the current arrangements in place.
- 3.4 Elements such as the definitions and further information have been moved to the appendices.
- 3.5 The Counter fraud strategy roles are set out within the Strategy both for officers and members.

- 3.6 Various links have been added to further sources of information including crime prevention organisations, good practice and the Transparency Code. The link to the Friends against scams training contains useful information for identifying scams and spotting possible victims in the community.
- 3.7 In terms of implementing the Policy/Strategy there is a programme of work, to ensure a strong counter fraud culture across the Council led by officers with counter fraud responsibility. This annual counter fraud action plan is agreed by Corporate Management Team and the Audit Committee in June and reflects resources available. The action plan is linked to fraud risks. Outcomes from the plan are reported as part of the half yearly fraud reports to the Audit Committee.

4. Strategic Priorities

Adopting an appropriate Counter Fraud Policy and Strategy will contribute to all of the Council's strategic priorities by enhancing the robustness of the control environment and governance mechanisms that directly or indirectly support the priorities.

5. Organisational Impacts

5.1 Finance (including whole life costs where applicable)

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. However, the application of approved anti-fraud policies is intended to protect the Council against loss through fraud and corruption.

5.2 Legal Implications including Procurement Rules

There are no direct legal implications arising as a result of this report.

5.3 Equality, Diversity and Human Rights

The Public Sector Equality Duty means that the Council must consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work, in shaping policy, delivering services and in relation to their own employees.

It requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities

Due to the nature of this report there are no direct equality, diversity or human rights implications.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 That the Audit Committee review and comment on the updated Counter Fraud Policy/Strategy and refer to the Executive for approval.

Is this a key decision? No

Do the exempt information categories apply? No

Does Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules (call-in and urgency) apply? No

How many appendices does the report contain? 1

List of Background Papers: None

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