

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Audit Committee
Date of Meeting:	21 September 2016
Subject:	Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy
Report of:	Simon Dix, Finance and Asset Management Group Manager
Corporate Lead:	Rachel North, Deputy Chief Executive
Lead Member:	Councillor D J Waters
Number of Appendices:	One

Executive Summary:

The Counter Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy has been developed and updated to confirm latest legislation and to reflect the changes brought about by the creation of the Single Fraud Investigation Services (operated by the Department for Work and Pensions) which subsumed the Council's responsibilities for investigating Housing Benefit Fraud.

The Policy has been developed in consultation with other Gloucestershire authorities and West Oxfordshire District Council in order to provide a platform for the operation of the counter fraud unit.

Recommendation:

To RECOMMEND TO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE the approval of the updated Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy.

Reasons for Recommendation:

In administering its responsibilities; this Council has a duty to prevent fraud and corruption, whether it is attempted by someone outside or within the Council such as another organisation, a resident, an employee or Councillor. The Council is committed to an effective counter fraud and corruption culture, by promoting high ethical standards and encouraging the prevention and detection of fraudulent activities, thus supporting corporate and community plans.

Resource Implications:

There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report. However, the adoption of this Counter Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy will help support the prevention and detection of fraud and reduce potential financial loss to the Council.

Legal Implications:

As detailed within the Policy.

Risk Management Implications:

If the Council does not have effective counter fraud and corruption controls it risks both assets and reputation.

The Council is required to adopt a Counter Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy to enable Officers to proactively tackle fraudulent activity against the Council or other public sector bodies.

Performance Management Follow-up:

None directly arising from the report.

Environmental Implications:

None directly arising from the report.

1.0 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

1.1 The Council's existing Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy was approved by Executive Committee in May 2013. It is recommended good practice that the Policy is updated at least every three years.

2.0 UPDATED POLICY

2.1 The draft Counter Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy (Appendix A) has been developed to reflect latest legislation and to reflect the changes from the creation of the Single Fraud Investigation Services (operated by the Department for Work and Pensions) which subsumed the Council's responsibilities for investigating Housing Benefit Fraud.

2.2 Following the change in responsibility for investigating Housing Benefit Fraud, the Gloucestershire authorities and West Oxfordshire successfully bid for £403,000 from the Department of Communities and Local Government to develop a counter fraud unit on behalf of the organisations. The formation of a regional counter fraud team will be able to utilise data matching to gather intelligence and skilled investigators to help counter all forms of fraud against the Councils and Social Housing Providers in the region.

2.3 The draft Policy has been developed in consultation with all of the Gloucestershire authorities and West Oxfordshire District Council to provide a platform for the operation of the counter fraud unit. It should also be recognised that the service is a partnership, so coordinating Policy across multiple organisations is critical to the success of the partnership.

2.4 This Policy highlights the key legislation and the roles and responsibilities of Members, Officers and other parties.

3.0 CONSULTATION

3.1 The Policy has been prepared and drafted by the Audit Cotswolds Counter Fraud Team, which is the lead for the Gloucestershire Counter Fraud project. The Policy has been initially compiled from a review of all policies across the region and current legislation.

3.2 Following the initial drafting of the Policy, the document was circulated to Section 151 Officers at all partner sites (Gloucestershire Districts and the County Council, plus West Oxfordshire District Council) for review.

3.3 This draft was then presented to the Corporate Governance Group for initial comment.

4.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

4.1 Anti-Fraud, Corruption and Bribery Policy approved by Executive Committee in May 2013.

5.0 RELEVANT GOVERNMENT POLICIES

5.1 None.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (Human/Property)

6.1 As detailed within the Policy.

All Council employees and casual workers will need to be made aware of the changes to the updated Policy.

It will be essential that the Counter Fraud Team and the HR Team work closely together on any issues relating to staff investigations as the Council's Disciplinary Process will need to be followed and the process managed carefully to ensure any criminal investigation is not compromised and that HR Policies are not breached.

7.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS (Social/Community Safety/Cultural/ Economic/ Environment)

7.1 None.

8.0 IMPACT UPON (Value For Money/Equalities/E-Government/Human Rights/Health And Safety)

8.1 None.

9.0 RELATED DECISIONS AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT FACTS

9.1 None.

Background Papers: None.

Contact Officer: Emma Cathcart, Audit Cotswolds Tel: 01285 623356

Email: Emma.Cathcart@cotswold.gov.uk

Appendices: A – Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy.