

AUDIT COMMITTEE – 12TH JULY 2017

Report of the Head of Strategic Support

Part A

ITEM 11 Annual Update re: the Anti- Fraud & Corruption Strategy and Whistle Blowing Policy

Purpose of Report

To provide information on the operation of the Anti-Fraud & Corruption Strategy and Whistle-blowing Policy during 2016/17.

Recommendations

The Committee is requested to note the information on the operation of the Anti-Fraud & Corruption Strategy and Whistle-blowing Policy.

Reason

To ensure the Committee is kept up to date on the operation of the policies, and instances where they have been applied.

Policy Justification and Previous Decisions

The Council is obliged under the Public Interest Disclosure Act to maintain a Whistle-blowing Policy, designed to encourage staff, elected Members, contractors and the public to raise legitimate concerns about wrong-doing within the Council without fear of reprisal. In line with its role of community leadership, and its responsibilities for the stewardship of public funds, the Council also has an Anti-fraud & Corruption Strategy setting out how cases of fraud and corruption will be prevented, and how suspicions will be dealt with.

Implementation Timetable including Future Decisions

Updates will continue to be provided to the Committee on an annual basis.

Report Implications

The following implications have been identified for this report.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications relating to this report

Risk Management

The risks associated with the decision the Committee is asked to make and proposed actions to mitigate those risks are set out in the table below.

Risk Identified	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Management Actions Planned
Failure to maintain the documents in an up to date and accessible manner could result in adverse comment from the Audit Commission, and relevant parties not raising concerns.	Unlikely	Moderate	Continue to provide awareness training to all new staff as part of their Induction process, and to provide the Whistle-blowing Policy to potential contractors during the procurement process.

Background Papers: None

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Part B

1. Background

All new members of staff receive awareness training re the documents as part of their Induction process. The Whistle-blowing Policy is also provided to potential suppliers as part of the procurement process.

2. Policy Documents

The documents have been reviewed and have been amended to reflect the arrangements for the referral of suspected cases of housing and council tax benefit fraud to the Department for Work and Pensions Fraud and Error Service where the case is reported by either a Council employee, Councillor or a member of the public.

3. Whistleblowing Notifications

There have been no formal notifications under the Whistle-blowing Policy during 2016/17.

4. Fraud

Investigation of housing benefit fraud is now undertaken by the DWP Single Fraud Investigation Service and the DWP Fraud and Error Service.

One internal investigation has been undertaken in respect of shopping vouchers which had been awarded to a Council tenant by a local charity and were to be delivered to the Council Offices. When the vouchers were not received within the expected timescale, enquiries with the charity and subsequently with the Post Room found that a package from the charity, which had been sent by recorded delivery, had been received at the Council Offices. It was not possible to track the package or its contents beyond the point of receipt when signed for. Following this incident, revised procedures for handling recorded/special delivery post have been introduced in the Post Room.

The National Fraud Initiative (NFI) 2016 exercise undertaken by the Cabinet Office identified 5,490 matches: investigation of the matches is ongoing.