

**BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL  
AUDIT COMMITTEE  
28<sup>th</sup> June 2013**

**Report of: Service Director Finance**

**Title: Social Housing Fraud – DCLG Funding**

**Ward: City Wide**

**Officer presenting report: Alison Mullis/Melanie Henchy-  
McCarthy, Chief Internal Auditor  
Teresa Marston, Fraud Team Manager**

**Contact telephone number: 0117 92 22448/ 0117 3005006**

**Summary**

For Information – to advise Committee of the Council's successful bid to fund further Tenancy Fraud and misuse work.

**Policy**

This report is submitted in accordance with the Audit Committee's Terms of Reference.

**Consultation**

Internal – None Necessary

External – None Necessary

**1. Background**

- 1.1 On 18<sup>th</sup> January 2013, the Committee received a report updating Bristol's progress in dealing with social housing fraud and misuse.
- 1.2 Activities so far have included a publicity campaign, establishing a dedicated resource to deal with suspected fraud, participation in data matching initiatives as well as working with Bristol

Housing Partnership to assist social landlords in tackling fraud and abuse.

- 1.3 The provision of funding made available by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in 2010 provided the impetus for this work and through close working with Housing Policy, Estate Management, Home Choice Bristol, Legal Services and Social Housing providers some considerable success has been achieved with 81 properties being recovered up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013.

## **2. Funding Opportunity**

- 2.1 On 28<sup>th</sup> January 2013 the DCLG wrote to Councils advising that further funding of £9.5 m had been made available for 2013/14 and 2014/15 to help tackle social housing fraud and bids were invited.
- 2.2 An application was submitted by Bristol and on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2013 confirmation was received that Bristol was the only authority in the South West and one of just 62 councils to receive an award. The funding awarded is £196K and will support and enhance the work already being undertaken for a further two-year period. The funding will allow the appointment of a Housing Officer who, with their technical knowledge and expertise, can work collaboratively with Tenancy Fraud and Legal staff to recover properties taking both civil and criminal action and making the best use of the new Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act Legislation 2013.
- 2.3 Bristol has already been mentioned as a site of good practice in the recent Fighting Fraud Locally 2012 Review and this funding will reinforce Bristol's reputation as the lead authority in the South West for tackling social housing fraud and help fund an ambitious programme of activity going forward.

## **3. Finance / Risk**

- 3.1 This funding will secure the work being undertaken by Internal Audit and ensure that resources are available up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 to investigate social housing fraud which nationally is estimated to cost the taxpayer as much as £900million each year.

#### **4. Equalities Impact Assessment**

4.1 No implications arising from this report

#### **5. Legal and Resource Implications**

**Legal** - none sought.

**Resources** – None as funding provided by DCLG Grant

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

**Background Papers:** None