

Audit Committee

23rd November 2020



Report of: Chief Internal Auditor

Title: Counter Fraud Update Report

Ward: N/A

Officer Presenting Report: Simba Muzarurwi – Chief Internal Auditor

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Recommendation

The Audit Committee note the Counter Fraud Update report for the period of 1st April to October 2020.

The Committee review and re-approve the Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy.

Summary

This Report provides the Committee with summary of the work undertaken by the Internal Audit – Counter Fraud team during April 2020 to October 2020.

Significant Matters Arising:

The key messages arising from this report are;

- International Fraud Awareness Week is from 15th to 21st November 2020 provides an opportunity to raise awareness of fraud matters.
- The work of the team has been significantly affected by the Covid 19 pandemic and priority has shifted to supporting the distribution of government support grants through a programme of fraud checking and policy / procedure advice.
- Work on tackling tenancy fraud has continued with 8 property regains or other positive housing outcomes to date.
- The Anti-fraud, bribery and corruption Policy has been reviewed.

1. Policy

Audit Committee Terms of Reference

2. Consultation

Internal – Corporate Leadership Board including S151 Officer, Cabinet Member for Governance, Resources and Finance.

External – N/A

3. Context

3.1 This is the half yearly update report outlining the counter fraud work that has taken place in Bristol City Council. The report is provided to:

- provide an overview of the work and results of the Counter Fraud and Investigation team during the period 1st April 2020 to 31st October 2020;
- demonstrate how the Council is dealing with some of the fraud risks it is subject to; and
- outline how resources available to the team are being used to tackle fraud.

The full report can be found at Appendix A

3.2 Key points arising from the Fraud Update Report:

- Fraud Awareness Week (week commencing 15/11/2020) has presented an opportunity to raise awareness of fraud risks faced by the Council with Members, management and the public.
- The work of the team has been significantly impacted by the Covid 19 pandemic requiring the team to shift priorities to support the response and distribution of business grants with a programme of fraud checking and policy advice.
- The work of the team continues to contribute benefits across the council including:
 - Identifying in excess of £1m to date of avoided costs relating to business grant claims
 - 8 positive housing outcomes and 2 positive other outcomes from continued work on tenancy fraud
- The Council's Anti -Fraud, Bribery and Corruption policy has been reviewed for approval by the Audit Committee.
- New whistleblowing arrangements continue to embed with three cases reported in the last three months.

4. Proposal

- 4.1 The Audit Committee notes the work of the Internal Audit – Counter Fraud and Investigations team during the period of covered by the report and the results there of.
- 4.2 The Audit Committee review and re-approve the Counter Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy and Strategy.

5. Other Options Considered – N/A

6. Risk Assessment

The work of Internal Audit Counter Fraud team reduces fraud losses and increases the potential for prevention and detection of such issues.

Public Sector Equality Duties

- 7a) Before making a decision, section 149 Equality Act 2010 requires that each decision-maker considers the need to promote equality for persons with the following “protected characteristics”: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. Each decision-maker must, therefore, have due regard to the need to:
 - i) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act 2010.
 - ii) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to --
 - remove or minimise disadvantage suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic;
 - take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of people who do not share it (in relation to disabled people, this includes, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities);
 - encourage persons who share a protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.
 - iii) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to –
 - tackle prejudice; and
 - promote understanding.
- 7b) No Equality Impact anticipated from this report.

Legal and Resource Implications

Legal – N/A

Financial – N/A

Land – N/A

Personnel – N/A

Appendices:

Appendix A – Internal Audit – Counter Fraud Update Report

Appendix A1 – Anti-fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers:

Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally Strategy