

# Audit Committee

20<sup>th</sup> November 2023



**Report of:** Chief Internal Auditor

**Title:** Counter Fraud Update

**Ward:** Citywide

**Officer Presenting Report:** Simba Muzarurwi – Chief Internal Auditor

## Recommendation

The Audit Committee note the Half Year Fraud Report for the 2023/24 financial year.

## Summary

This Report provides the Committee with summary of the work undertaken by the Internal Audit – Counter Fraud team from April 2023 to October 2023.

## Significant Matters Arising:

The key messages arising from this report are;

- Counter-fraud work in key fraud risk areas continues to contribute significant benefits across the Council in the fight against fraud. Annexure A of this report details these benefits and advises how key fraud risks to the council are being tackled.
- The National Fraud Initiative (NFI) fraud hub has now been implemented enhancing the Council's arrangements for detecting and investigating fraud.
- High level details of outcomes from internal and whistleblowing investigations completed during the period under review are covered in Appendices 1 and 2.

**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:

- give an overview of the work and results of the Counter Fraud and Investigation team during the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023;
- demonstrate how the Council is dealing with some of the fraud risks it is subject to;

3.2 The full report can be found at Annexure A.

3.3 Key points arising from the Fraud Update Report:

- The team has delivered 34 positive housing outcomes (*for example a property recovered for re-let or false housing application cancelled*)
- Through the tenancy fraud work the team has achieved notional savings of £4 million and recoverable savings of over £560,000.00
- Bespoke fraud training has been delivered to various teams across the Housing and Landlord Services.
- A total of 124 fraud referrals were received during the period covering tenancy fraud, blue badges, social care, council tax reduction and employees.
- A total of 10 whistleblowing cases have been closed during the period under review while four are currently in progress.
- Outcomes from internal investigations are summarised in Appendix 1.
- Outcomes from Whistleblowing investigations are summarised in Appendix 2.

**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.

**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:

**Annexure A** - Counter Fraud Update Report

**Appendix 1** – Outcomes from Internal Investigations

**Appendix 2** – Outcomes from Whistleblowing Investigations

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

### Background Papers:

