

Report of:	Meeting	Date
Corporate Director Resources (Section 151 Officer)	Audit and Standards Committee	14 November 2023

**ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S COUNTER FRAUD POLICIES – ANTI-FRAUD, CORRUPTION AND BRIBERY, ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING, WHISTLEBLOWING AND GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY AND REGISTERING INTERESTS**

## 1. Purpose of report

1.1 Approval of the Council's Counter Fraud Policies, namely:

- Anti-Fraud, Corruption and Bribery;
- Anti-Money Laundering;
- Gifts and Hospitality and Registering Interests; and
- Whistleblowing.
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## 2. Outcomes

2.1 The ability to demonstrate that the council has arrangements in place that are designed to promote and ensure probity and propriety in the conduct of its business.

## 3. Recommendation

3.1 Members are asked to approve the revised policy documents detailed above at paragraph 1.1 and attached at Appendices 1-4.

## 4. Background

4.1 The council is determined to do everything it can to reasonably deter fraud, corruption and bribery across all areas of council activity. It works hard to encourage the detection, reporting and investigation of fraud and actively promotes a zero tolerance approach.

4.2 Counter fraud covers not just fraud threats from inside and outside of the organisation, but is also linked to areas like bribery, corruption and money laundering. The council has four main counter fraud policies which assists the organisation in maintaining and developing an effective counter fraud culture. They are as follows;

- Anti-Fraud, Corruption and Bribery;
- Anti-Money Laundering Policy and Procedure;

- Gifts and Hospitality and Registering Interests; and
- Whistleblowing.

**4.3** The general aim of these policies is to reduce the occurrence and impact of fraud, corruption and bribery on the organisation and provide an effective channel of communication for anyone who has concerns or suspicions of malpractice.

**4.4** The Audit and Standards Committee work programme allows for an annual review of all the above policies, with the last review being completed in November 2022.

## **5. Key Issues and proposals**

**5.1** The Anti-Fraud, Corruption and Bribery Policy has been amended as follows:

- to amend the figures in relation to the number of full time equivalents the council employed in 2022/23 and the total amount spent on providing services to the local community (Para 1.1);
- to reflect the council has a new Chief Executive (Para 3.7); and
- to reflect the amalgamation of the Audit and Standards Committees (Para 4.5).

**5.2** The Anti-Money Laundering Policy and Procedure – Duties of the Money Laundering Reporting Officer, has been amended to update the link to the National Crime Agency website, in particular to signpost the reader to the guidance on the completion of a Suspicious Activity Report (Para 4.5).

**5.3** The Gifts and Hospitality and Registering Interest's Policy has been amended as follows;

- to strengthen the rationale for not accepting any business gift or hospitality (Para 3);
- to stipulate that anything that may lead to allegations of bias or favouritism; whether it is financial or political, should now be declined (Para 4);
- to reflect that if gifts or hospitality over the value of £25 are offered to a senior officer or a key decision maker, then authorisation must be sought from the Chief Executive prior to accepting (Para 10);
- to remove the paragraph which refers to the acceptance of conventional hospitality e.g. meals out or golf days as the controls in place in respect of the limits over £25 already cover this (Para 14); and
- to reflect the amalgamation of the Audit and Standards Committee.

**5.4** The Whistleblowing Policy has been amended as follows;

- to reflect that's it's best practice to maintain confidentiality unless the law requires disclosure of details and to reiterate that staff can report concerns in the public interest without fear of reprisal (Para 1.2);

- To confirm there are existing procedures in place to enable staff to raise issues under the council’s Resolution Policy (Para 2.2);
- To confirm that a concern must be in the public interest (Para 2.4);
- To reiterate that the council want a culture where staff feel comfortable to make disclosures in the public interest (Para 4.1);
- To confirm all disclosures will be taken seriously, even if the concern is raised anonymously (Para 4.3);
- To include a number of other officers who can also receive disclosures (Para 5.1);
- To include the Audit and Risk Manager to the list of officers who can give advice and guidance on how to raise a concern and to also include specific email addresses in addition to telephone numbers (Para 5.6); and
- To reflect that any maliciously intended disclosures or those to the press or on social media will not qualify for protection (Para 7.3).

**5.5** The amended draft policies can be viewed at Appendices 1-4.

<b>Financial and legal implications</b>	
Finance	There are no specific financial implications arising from the adoption of these counter-fraud policies.
Legal	The Council’s counter-fraud policies assist in good governance and probity of council actions and decision-making.

**Other risks / implications: checklist**

If there are significant implications arising from this report on any issues marked with a ✓ below, the report author will have consulted with the appropriate specialist officers on those implications and addressed them in the body of the report. There are no significant implications arising directly from this report, for those issues marked with a x.

<b>risks/implications</b>	<b>✓ / x</b>
community safety	X
equality and diversity	X
sustainability	X
health and safety	X

<b>risks/implications</b>	<b>✓ / x</b>
asset management	X
climate change	X
ICT	X
Data protection	X

**Processing Personal Data**

In addition to considering data protection along with the other risks/ implications, the report author will need to decide if a ‘privacy impact assessment (PIA)’ is also required. If the decision(s) recommended in this report will result in the collection and

processing of personal data for the first time (i.e. purchase of a new system, a new working arrangement with a third party) a PIA will need to have been completed and signed off by Data Protection Officer before the decision is taken in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018

report author	telephone no.	email	date
Joanne Billington	01253 887372	<a href="mailto:joanne.billington@wyre.gov.uk">joanne.billington@wyre.gov.uk</a>	31.11.2023

<b>List of background papers:</b>		
name of document	date	where available for inspection
None		

### **List of appendices**

- Appendix 1 Anti-Fraud, Corruption and Bribery Policy
- Appendix 2 Anti-Money Laundering Policy and Procedure
- Appendix 3 Gifts and Hospitality and Registering Interest's Policy
- Appendix 4 The Whistleblowing Policy