

INTERNAL AUDIT COUNTER FRAUD UPDATE

Cabinet Member for Finance & Commissioning



Date: 28 November 2023
Agenda Item:
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Key Decision? NO
Local Ward Members Full Council

**AUDIT &
MEMBER
STANDARDS
COMMITTEE**

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 To provide the Committee with an update on counter fraud.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To endorse the contents of this Counter Fraud update report.

3. Background

- 3.1 The system of internal control is designed to manage risk (including fraud), to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.
- 3.2 As well as operation of the overall system of control, counter fraud work this financial year has included National Fraud Initiative (NFI), the Cabinet Office's national data matching service. New matches continue to be received and processed.
- 3.3 The Council's counter fraud plan is detailed at Appendix 5 of the Counter Fraud and Corruption Policy Statement, Strategy & Guidance Notes **Appendix 1** of this report.
- 3.4 There has been one 'whistleblowing' incidents reports during the year 2023/24 which is currently being reviewed. This means that we have had one in the last five years.
- 3.5 Committee will be aware that that its meeting on 12 November 2020 it was agreed that the review cycle for all Fraud Policies would be extended from annually to four years around elections cycle with a two year light touch review (unless there is a major change required in accordance with legislation/best practice) with minor amendments delegated to the Shared Head of Audit/Principal Auditor to undertake. In line with this delegation the Audit Manager have completed a refresh of the documents outlined below.
- Counter Fraud and Corruption Policy Statement, Strategy & Guidance Notes (**Appendix 1**)
 - Confidential reporting (Whistleblowing) Policy (**Appendix 2**)
 - Anti- Money Laundering Policy (**Appendix 3**)
 - Prevention of the Facilitation of Tax Evasion Policy (**Appendix 4**)

All changes and refreshed elements are highlighted in 'yellow' within the attached Appendices.

It is noted that the appendices contained with this report only relate to the Council and LWMTS will be looking to develop their own policies.

- 3.6 Subsequent to the endorsement of the appendices these will be communicated to all staff and held on the Council's Intranet site.

Alternative Options	N/A
Consultation	Consultation has taken place with appropriate Officers within the Council and Leadership Team.
Financial Implications	None directly identified however potential loss of assets and monies due to failure to comply with the Policies as defined.
Approved by Section 151 Officer	Approved.
Legal Implications	Potential legal action/reporting to Police required.
Approved by Monitoring Officer	Approved.
Contribution to the Delivery of the Strategic Plan	Safeguarding and protecting Council assets.
Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Implications	No equality, diversity or human rights implications arising from this report.
Crime & Safety Issues	Legal compliance with legislative requirements.
Environmental Impact	None arising.
Data Assessment	None arising.
GDPR/Privacy Impact Assessment	Legal compliance with legislative requirements.

	Risk Description & Risk Owner	Original Score (RYG)	How We Manage It	Current Score (RYG)
A	<p>The Council does not have in place approved policies and procedures that have been created to protect Council's assets</p> <p>The risk would impact on both governance and internal control processes within the Council.</p> <p>Assistant Director Finance and Commissioning (Section 151)</p>	<p>Likelihood: Yellow</p> <p>Impact: Red</p> <p>Severity: Red</p>	<p>Regular review and refresh of policies covering Fraud, Whistleblowing, Anti-Money Laundering and Tax Evasion based on good practice.</p> <p>These policies have been reviewed and updated to reflect current needs of governance and internal control requirements.</p>	<p>Likelihood: Green</p> <p>Impact: Yellow</p> <p>Severity: Yellow</p>
B	<p>Due to significant organisational change policies of the Council are not fully embedded in working practices</p>	<p>Likelihood: Yellow</p> <p>Impact: Red</p> <p>Severity: Red</p>	<p>Regular review and refresh of policies with communication to all staff and respective training delivered</p>	<p>Likelihood: Green</p> <p>Impact: Yellow</p> <p>Severity: Yellow</p>

Assistant Director Finance and Commissioning (Section 151)			
<p>C Potential failure to report fraud and not comply with legislative requirements.</p> <p>Assistant Director Finance and Commissioning (Section 151)</p>	<p>Likelihood: Yellow Impact: Red Severity: Red</p>	<p>Regular review and refresh of policies covering Fraud, Whistleblowing, Anti-Money Laundering and Tax Evasion based on good practice.</p> <p>These policies have been reviewed and updated to reflect current needs of governance and internal control requirements.</p>	<p>Likelihood: Green Impact: Yellow Severity: Yellow</p>

Background documents	
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Relevant web links	
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**COUNTER FRAUD AND
CORRUPTION POLICY
STATEMENT, STRATEGY &
GUIDANCE NOTES**

November 2023

Document Location

This document is held by Lichfield District Council, and the document owner is the Chief Executive

Printed documents may be obsolete. An electronic copy is available on Lichfield District Council's Intranet. Please check for current version before using.

Revision History

Revision Date	Version Control	Summary of changes
November 2020		Refresh
October 2021		Refresh
November 2022		Refresh
November 2023		Scheduled Review

Approvals

Name	Title	Approved
Audit & Member Standards Committee	Committee Approval	
Leadership Team	Leadership Approval	Yes
Chief Executive Approval	Policy Owner Approval	Yes

Document Review Plans

This document is subject to a scheduled review every 4 years in accordance with the election cycles. Updates shall be made in accordance with business requirements and changes and will be with agreement with the document owner.

Distribution

The document will be available on the Intranet and the website.

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LICHFIELD DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNTER FRAUD AND CORRUPTION POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.0 The Council fully recognises its responsibility in relation to the spending of public money (Protecting the Public Purse) and is committed to the fullest support for Members and Staff in upholding the reputation of the Council and maintaining public confidence in its integrity. It also recognises its responsibilities under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, Money Laundering Regulations 2017, Criminal Finances Act 2017 (Part 3) and the Bribery Act 2010.
- 2.0 The Council acknowledges the threats of fraud and corruption and the harm that they can cause. The Council is committed to maintaining an ethical culture which does not and will not tolerate any form of fraud and corruption. Any such issues will be thoroughly investigated and, if confirmed, dealt with rapidly in the strongest possible way. We will seek the strongest possible sanctions against those who seek to defraud the Council. This includes taking appropriate action against Staff, Members, contractors, external individuals and organisations.
- 3.0 To deliver the Council's corporate priorities, aims and strategic objectives we need to maximise the financial resources available to us. In order to do this we must reduce the risk of fraud to an absolute minimum.
- 4.0 This Policy Statement, together with the Counter Fraud & Corruption Strategy and Guidance Notes, is intended to provide advice and information to Staff and Members, but suppliers, contractors and the general public are also encouraged to use this advice and guidance.

Chief Executive

Leader of the Council

COUNTER FRAUD AND CORRUPTION STRATEGY

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This strategy is a key element of the Council's overall corporate governance arrangements which aim to ensure the Council is well managed and does the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable way. The Council has a range of other interrelated policies and procedures that provide a corporate framework to counter fraud activity. These have been formulated in line with appropriate legislative requirements and include:

- Financial Procedure Rules,
- Contract Procedure Rules,
- Codes of Conduct,
- Whistleblowing Policy,
- Accounting procedures and records,
- Sound internal control systems,
- Effective Internal Audit,
- Effective recruitment & selection procedures,
- Disciplinary Procedures,
- Fraud Response Plan,
- Anti Fraud Framework for the Benefits Section,
- General Data Protection Policy,
- IT Security Policy,
- Constitution,
- Scheme of Delegation,
- Members Handbook,
- Code of Corporate Governance,
- Gifts & Hospitality Policy & Register,
- Anti-money Laundering Policy,
- Prevention of the Facilitation of Tax Evasion Policy
- Other council procedures as appropriate,
- Any relevant professional Codes of Ethics or obligations.

1.2 All references to fraud within this document include any type of fraud-related offence. Fraud, theft, bribery and corruption are defined as follows:

Fraud – “the intention to make gain or cause loss by false representation, failure to declare information or abuse of position”. The Fraud Act 2006

Theft – “ a person shall be guilty of theft if he/she dishonestly appropriates property belonging to another with the intention of permanently depriving the other of it”. The Theft Act 1968.

Bribery – “A person (“P”) is guilty of an offence if either of the following cases applies.

Case 1 is where—

- (a) P offers, promises or gives a financial or other advantage to another person, and
- (b) P intends the advantage—
 - (i) to induce a person to perform improperly a relevant function or activity, or
 - (ii) to reward a person for the improper performance of such a function or activity.

Case 2 is where—

- (a) P offers, promises or gives a financial or other advantage to another person, and
- (b) P knows or believes that the acceptance of the advantage would itself constitute the improper performance of a relevant function or activity. (The Bribery Act 2010)

Corruption – there is no universally accepted definition of corruption, but it is generally understood to involve the abuse of office and position to benefit a third party (an individual, business or other organisation), in return for payment or other reward. (HM Government – UK Anti-Corruption Strategy 2017 – 2022)

1.3 A dishonest act or fraudulent activity may be, but is not limited to, an act or activity that is unethical, improper, or illegal such as:

- theft of an asset including, but not limited to, money, tangible property, intellectual property etc;
- misappropriation, misapplication, destruction, removal, or concealment of property;
- false claims and/or misrepresentation of facts;
- alteration or falsification of paper or electronic documents, including the inappropriate destruction of paper or electronic documents;
- inappropriate use of computer systems including hacking and software piracy;
- embezzlement;
- bribery, or corruption of any kind;
- unlawful or undeclared conflict of interest;
- unauthorised use or misuse of Council property, equipment, materials or records.

1.4 Although a dishonest or fraudulent act may have criminal and/or civil law consequences, the Council is not required to use a determination by a criminal or civil body as the basis for determining whether an act is dishonest or fraudulent, nor must the act rise to the level of a crime or violation of civil law in order to constitute a violation of the Council's Code of Conduct or other

associated policies.

- 1.5 The Council also expects that individuals and organisations (e.g. partners, suppliers/contractors and service users) which it comes into contact with, will act towards the Council with integrity and without actions involving fraud or corruption. The Council in turn will endeavour to ensure that all of its dealings will be on the same basis.
- 1.6 In administering its aims and responsibilities the Council is totally committed to deterring fraud and corruption, whether it is attempted on or from within the Council, and is committed to an effective counter fraud and corruption strategy designed to:
 - limit, as far as possible, the opportunities to commit fraudulent acts - **prevention**,
 - enable any such acts to be **detected** at an early stage, and
 - deal with any subsequent **investigations** in a prompt, thorough and professional manner.
- 1.7 Overall responsibility for dealing with fraud and corruption rests with the Assistant Director – Finance & Commissioning, who is the nominated Section 151 Officer having a statutory duty under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 to ensure that there are proper arrangements in place to administer the Council's financial affairs.
- 1.8 Internal scrutiny of the Council's various activities occurs as a result of:-
 - the Assistant Director – Finance & Commissioning (Section 151) responsibilities and Section 114 Local Government Finance Act 1988 responsibilities,
 - the establishment of sound Internal Audit arrangements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, and
 - the responsibilities placed on the Governance Manager (Monitoring Officer) under Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.
- 1.9 External scrutiny of the Council's various activities occurs as a result of involvement by:-
 - Local Government Ombudsman,
 - External Auditor,
 - Central Government Departments and Parliamentary Committees,
 - HM Revenues and Customs,
 - The Department for Work and Pensions
 - The general public.

1.10 This Counter Fraud and Corruption Strategy is based on a series of comprehensive and inter-related procedures designed to deter any attempted fraudulent or corrupt act. These cover:-

- Culture,
- Prevention,
- Detection and Investigation,
- Recovery, Sanction and Redress,
- Training and Awareness,
- Sharing Information,
- Implementing the Strategy.

2.0 Objectives

2.1 The key objectives of this Counter Fraud and Corruption Strategy are to:

- Increase awareness of the counter-fraud responsibilities at all levels within and outside the Council;
- Further embed and support the effective management of fraud risk within the Council;
- Support counter-fraud activities across the Council;
- Minimise the likelihood and extent of loss through fraud and corruption.

2.2 All of the above will directly support the achievement of the Council priorities whilst ensuring that statutory responsibilities are met.

3.0 Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 Roles and responsibilities for identifying and mitigating against the risk of fraud must be clearly understood and embraced effectively.

3.2 The risk of fraud and corruption is considered in the Council's corporate risk management arrangements. Members of Leadership Team and Service Managers must therefore ensure that:

- Their risk register accurately reflects the risk of fraud and corruption including any emerging risks;
- Controls, including those in a computerised environment and for new systems and procedures, are effective and are properly maintained and documented;
- There is compliance with the Council's Financial Procedure Rules and associated guidance, Contract Procedure Rules and any other relevant codes of practice;
- Those engaged in countering fraud and corruption, have the appropriate authority, skills and knowledge to undertake this work effectively;

- That the necessary framework agreements to counter fraud are in place where the Council is working with other organisations either by way of contract or partnership. The Council will not knowingly enter into any contractual agreement with an organisation that fails to comply with its Code of Practice and/or other related procedures.
- Findings from fraud investigations lead to relevant system changes.

4.0 Culture

- 4.1 The Council has determined that the culture and ethics of the Authority are one of honesty and openness in all its dealings, with opposition to fraud and corruption. This strategy forms part of the governance arrangements for the authority.
- 4.2 The Council's Members and staff play an important part in creating and maintaining this culture. They are encouraged to raise any matters that concern them relating to the Council's methods of operation in accordance with this Counter Fraud & Corruption Strategy or the Council's Whistleblowing Policy.
- 4.3 The Council is committed to driving down all Fraud. Both public perception and organisational culture play key roles in achieving this aim. All Members and staff are therefore required to report any suspected or known frauds. Failure to do so may result in Disciplinary action.
- 4.4 Staff are required to declare any situation or transaction in which they may have an interest e.g. processing a relative's claim, appointing a member of staff. In such cases, staff will be removed from taking any further part in the transaction.
- 4.5 The Council's Whistleblowing Policy ensures that those raising concerns know they will be treated seriously and their concerns are properly investigated in a confidential and impartial manner. In raising concerns staff can be assured that they will be protected if the disclosure is made in the public's interest and will not affect their employment situation or future prospects with the Council.
- 4.6 Staff should raise their concerns with the Audit Manager (Shared Service), or in their absence with a member of the Internal Audit Team. Where staff feel unable to raise concerns with the Audit Manager (Shared Service), they can raise their concern with their line manager, who must immediately inform the Audit Manager (Shared Service). Under no circumstances should any investigations be undertaken by management.
- 4.7 In addition, a confidential reporting hotline, **via email** has been set up for staff and members of the public to report any concerns. Anyone using this facility should provide as much information as possible to ensure the concern can be properly investigated, including leaving your name and contact number, if

possible. Concerns made anonymously are much less powerful, but they will be considered in an appropriate manner.

- 4.8 Alternatively, use the Council's website 'Report It' function.
- 4.9 For housing benefit fraud issues, concerns should be raised by contacting the National Benefit Fraud hotline on 0800 854 440 or online at <https://www.gov.uk/report-benefit-fraud>.
- 4.10 Elected Members, suppliers, contractors, and the general public are also encouraged to report concerns through any of the above routes.
- 4.11 Unless there are good reasons to the contrary, any allegations received by way of confidential letters or telephone calls will be taken seriously and investigated in an appropriate manner. All allegations received in this manner should immediately be forwarded to the Audit Manager (Shared Service).
- 4.12 All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal the identity of anyone reporting an incident or concern. At the appropriate time the council will discuss the role of the person reporting the matter as a witness and whether and how the matter can proceed with.
- 4.13 Formal reports will be issued aimed at addressing control weaknesses and these will be reported to the Audit & Member Standards Committee in the Audit Manager (Shared Service)'s progress report.
- 4.14 The Nolan Committee set out the seven guiding principles that apply to people who serve the public. The Council will develop our working behaviour around these principles, which are attached as Appendix 1.

5.0 Prevention

5.1 Staff

- 5.1.1 Staff recruitment is through the Company, LWMTS (Talent Aquisition) whereby candidates will be proactively sought to fill vacancies. The Council recognises that a key preventative measure in the fight against fraud and corruption is to take effective steps at the recruitment stage to establish, as far as possible, propriety and integrity of the individual. Offers of employment are conditional subject to satisfactory clearances, including references for the previous 3 years of employment, evidence of right to work in the UK and a satisfactory Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), if applicable. Qualifications will be verified. In this regard temporary, agency and contract staff should be treated in the same manner as permanent staff. Service Managers are responsible for ensuring agencies engaged for the supply of temporary staff have rigorous vetting processes and that references are sought direct from previous clients with regard to the suitability and integrity of the candidate.

- 5.1.2 Staff of the Council are expected to follow the Council's Code of Conduct, any Code of Conduct relating to their personal Professional Body and also abide by the terms and conditions of employment as set out in the Contract of Employment and the National Scheme of Conditions. The Council will report any known impropriety to the relevant Institution for them to consider appropriate disciplinary action.
- 5.1.3 Staff are reminded that they must comply within Section 117 of the Local Government Act 1972 which requires any interests in contracts that have been or are proposed to be entered into by the Council to be declared. The legislation also prohibits the acceptance of fees or rewards other than by means of proper remuneration. Details are described within the Code of Conduct.
- 5.1.4 Managers and staff are required to observe the formal Disciplinary Policy & Procedure.
- 5.1.5 All staff are required to declare in a public register (held by the Governance Manager (Monitoring Officer) any offers of gifts or hospitality which are in any way related to the performance of their duties in relation to the Authority. Staff should also declare private work (paid or unpaid) etc., which if permitted must be carried out during hours when not employed on Council work, and should not be conducted from Council premises or use any Council equipment/assets.
- 5.1.6 The above matters are brought to the attention of staff via induction training and subsequently by internal communications.
- 5.1.7 Management at all levels are responsible for ensuring that staff are aware of the Authority's Financial Procedure Rules and Contract Procedure Rules, and that the requirements of each are being met. They are also responsible for ensuring that appropriate procedures are in place to safeguard the resources for which they are responsible, which include accounting control procedures, working manuals and operating procedures. Management must ensure that all staff have access to these rules and regulations and that staff receive suitable training.
- 5.1.8 Managers should strive to create an environment in which staff feel able to approach them with concerns they may have about suspected irregularities. If Managers and staff are unsure of the appropriate action they should consult with the Internal Audit Section.

5.2 Members

- 5.2.1 Members are required to operate within: -
- Sections 49 - 52 of the Local Government Act 2000,
 - Local Authorities (Members' Interest) Regulations 1992 (S.I. 618)

- The National Code of Local Government Conduct
- Any local code or amendments agreed and
- The Council's Contract Procedure Rules and Financial Procedure Rules.

5.2.2 These matters are specifically brought to the attention of elected Members at their induction and subsequent training. Members are required to provide the Governance Manager and Monitoring Officer with specific information concerning their disclosable pecuniary interests and to keep that information up to date, as required by sections 29-34 of the Localism Act 2011. The Members Interests Register is held by the Governance Manager (Monitoring Officer).

5.3 Systems

5.3.1 The Council's Constitution, Codes of Conduct, Scheme of Delegation, Contract Procedure Rules and Financial Procedure Rules place a duty on all Members and staff to act in accordance with best practice when dealing with the affairs of the Council.

5.3.2 The Assistant Director – Finance & Commissioning has a statutory responsibility under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 to ensure proper administration of financial affairs. Various Codes of Practice outlining systems, procedures and responsibilities are widely distributed to staff.

5.3.3 The Internal Audit Section assesses regularly the level of risk within the Council with a view to preventing fraud and corruption. Such assessments are discussed with Assistant Directors and Service Managers and, where appropriate, incorporated into work plans.

5.3.4 Significant emphasis has been placed on thorough documentation of financial systems, and every effort is made to continually review and develop these systems in line with best practice to ensure efficient and effective internal controls and to include adequate separation of duties. The adequacy and appropriateness of the Council's financial systems are independently monitored by both the Internal Audit Section and External Audit. Any weaknesses identified in internal control will be reported to management whose duty it will be to ensure that corrective action is taken. The Section 151 Officer will use his statutory power to enforce the required changes if necessary.

5.3.5 Assistant Directors and Service Managers will ensure that internal controls, including those in a computerised environment, are effectively maintained and documented and will investigate any potential weaknesses.

5.3.6 Assistant Directors and Service Managers must ensure that proportionate counter fraud measures are applied to new systems/procedures.

5.3.7 It is evident across the country that an increasingly wide variety of frauds are being perpetrated. The larger frauds may involve the creation of multiple

identities and false addresses, and involve different agencies. Staff are therefore encouraged to liaise with those other agencies, exchanging information (subject to GDPR) where possible and appropriate to help prevent and detect such fraud. It is important that arrangements exist, and are developed, to encourage the exchange of information with other agencies including:-

- other local and statutory authorities,
- Chief Financial Officer Group,
- local, regional and national Auditor networks,
- government departments,
- police forces,
- the External Auditors,
- Staffordshire Counter Fraud Partnership,
- the National Anti-Fraud Network, and
- any other Fraud Networks/Forums.

5.3.8 The Council has established formal procedures to respond to complaints received about any aspect of service delivery. Issues relating to fraud and corruption will be passed directly to the Audit Manager (Shared Service) . Specific guidance has also been issued to all staff in relation to Proceeds of Crime and Money Laundering. The Assistant Director – Finance & Commissioning as the Council’s Money Laundering Reporting Officer.

5.3.9 The Council will involve the police to prosecute offenders where fraudulent or corrupt acts are discovered. This will be a matter for the Assistant Director – Finance & Commissioning (Section 151), Governance Manager (Monitoring Officer) and the Chief Executive to decide.

6.0 Detection and Investigation

6.1 The Council’s preventative systems, particularly internal control systems, provide indicators of fraudulent activity and are designed to deter any fraudulent activity.

6.2 It is often the alertness of elected Members, council staff, and the general public to the possibility of fraud and corruption, that enables detection to occur and appropriate action to take place.

6.3 Many frauds are discovered by chance, ‘tip-off’ or general audit work and arrangements are in place to enable such information to be properly dealt with.

6.4 Members of the Leadership Team and Service Managers are required by Financial Procedure Rules to report all suspected instances of fraud and corruption to the Audit Manager (Shared Service). Early reporting is essential to the success of this strategy, and;

- ensures the consistent treatment of information regarding fraud and corruption,

- facilitates a thorough investigation of any allegation received by an independent unit (Internal Audit), and
 - ensures maximum protection of the Council's interests.
- 6.5 Suspicions that any transaction or dealing may involve the proceeds of crime should be reported to the Assistant Director – Finance & Commissioning (Section 151), who will ensure such suspicions are reported to the appropriate authorities as required by the relevant Act.
- 6.6 The investigating officer will be appointed by the Assistant Director – Finance & Commissioning (Section 151). The investigating officer will usually be an Internal Audit Officer. The investigating officer will;-
- inform the Section 151 Officer (Assistant Director – Finance & Commissioning (Section 151) and Chief Executive, as necessary;
 - deal promptly and confidentially with the matter;
 - have unhindered access to employees, information and other resources as required for investigation purposes;
 - record all evidence received;
 - ensure that evidence is sound and adequately supported;
 - ensure security of all evidence collected;
 - liaise as necessary and appropriate with the relevant Director;
 - liaise as necessary with external agencies e.g. Police;
 - notify the Council's Insurance Officer, if appropriate; and,
 - implement Council Disciplinary Policy & Procedure where appropriate.
- 6.7 The Council can be expected to deal swiftly and thoroughly with any employee who attempts to defraud the Council or who is corrupt. The Council will deal positively with fraud and corruption or suspicions thereof.
- 6.8 There is a need to ensure that any investigation process is not misused and, therefore, any abuse such as raising unfounded malicious allegations may be dealt with as a disciplinary matter.
- 6.9 When it is found that fraud or corruption has occurred due to a break down in the Council's systems or procedures, the Council will ensure that appropriate improvements in systems of control are promptly implemented in order to prevent a reoccurrence.
- 6.10 Depending on the nature and anticipated extent of the allegations, the Internal Audit section will normally work closely with management and other agencies such as the police to ensure that all allegations and evidence is properly investigated and reported upon.
- 6.11 Procedures for dealing with the investigation of fraud and corruption are included in the Fraud Manual of the Audit Section.

- 6.12 The Council's disciplinary process will be used where the outcome of the Audit Investigation indicates improper behaviour.
- 6.13 The Council will normally wish the police to independently prosecute offenders where financial impropriety is discovered.
- 6.14 All investigations into suspected instances of fraud and corruption undertaken by the Council shall comply with the requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998, Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000, Criminal Procedures and Investigation Act 1996 and have regard to the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984
- 6.16 Any Councillor who is the subject of allegations of wrong doing can be referred to the Governance Manager (Monitoring Officer) to the authority (details on the website), who will determine what action should be taken.
- 6.17 All contractors, consultants and organisations receiving funding from the Council who are accused of wrong doing will be the subject of an investigation and where appropriate an independent decision may be taken to terminate the agreement/grant.
- 6.18 The Council's External Auditor has a responsibility to review the Council's arrangements for the prevention, detection and investigation of fraud and corruption and report accordingly.

7.0 Recovery, Sanctions & Redress

- 7.1 Where the Council identifies fraud then it will:

Recover, prosecute or apply other sanctions to perpetrators, where appropriate.

- 7.2 Where fraud or corruption by staff is indicated, then action will be taken in accordance with the Council's Disciplinary Policy & Procedure. This may be in addition to any civil recovery action or sanctions.
- 7.3 The Council aims to be effective in recovering any losses incurred to fraud using, as appropriate, criminal and/or civil law. Success rates will be monitored routinely as an indicator and part of the quality process.
- 7.4 Wherever possible, redress should be applied. This ensures that the Council is seen as recovering money lost to fraud.

8.0 Training & Awareness

- 8.1 The Council recognises the importance of training in the delivery of high quality services. The Council supports the concept of fraud awareness training for Managers and for Staff involved in internal control systems to ensure that their responsibilities and duties in this respect are regularly highlighted and reinforced. Staff who ignore such training and guidance may face the possibility of disciplinary action.

- 8.2 Specifically, awareness is raised by a combination of face-to-face awareness sessions, e-learning and publications about general and specific fraud issues.
- 8.3 Investigation of fraud and corruption centres around the Council's Internal Audit section. Staff engaged in this section, for the detection and prevention of fraud, are properly and regularly trained in all aspects of it. The training plans of the sections will reflect this requirement.
- 8.4 Regular training seminars will be provided for Members on a wide range of topics including declarations of interest and the Code of Conduct as detailed in the Constitution.
- 8.5 The Council will maintain an up to date awareness of the types of fraud that it may be exposed to, especially given the ongoing financial situation and the resourcefulness of potential fraudsters. It will review national developments and strengthen systems and procedures accordingly using the following key sources of information:

National Fraud Reports

National Anti-Fraud Network

Midlands Fraud Forum

Local Networking through Staffordshire and the Midlands (Staffordshire Counter Fraud Partnership)

Any other sources of fraud awareness/updates etc.

9.0 Sharing Information

- 9.1 The Council is committed to working with other agencies in the detection and prevention of fraud.
- 9.2 There are a variety of arrangements in place, which facilitate the regular exchange of information between the District Council and other local authorities and agencies, for the purpose of preventing and detecting fraud. These involve national, regional and local networks of investigators.
- 9.3 The District Council is a member of the National Anti-Fraud Network (NAFN). NAFN provides access to information relating to fraud within the public sector. Fraud intelligence is collated and circulated to members, and information services to assist in the more effective investigation of fraud are available. We make use of these services.
- 9.4 As technologies develop, there is an ever increasing need to take advantage of the processing and analysis of data stored across the Authority and beyond. This enables information and intelligence to be generated, which is a recognised means of preventing fraud and corruption.

- 9.5 The Cabinet Office has a Code of Data Matching Practice for its National Fraud Initiative (NFI), which is recognised by the Information Commissioner as complying with Data Protection legislation.
- 9.6 The ways in which the Internal Audit Team can be contacted to report concerns of fraud and corruption, all of which are outlined in Appendix 4.
- 9.7 Any action taken under this policy in respect of information must be GDPR compliant.

10.0 Implementing the Strategy

- 10.1 Internal Audit will undertake an annual assessment of the effectiveness of existing counter-fraud and corruption arrangements against:

Relevant Standards

Other best practice/statutory guidance as required

The roles and responsibilities as set out in Appendix 2 of this strategy.

- 10.2 Internal Audit will report its findings to the Audit & Member Standards Committee who will consider the effectiveness of the counter-fraud risk management arrangements.

11.0 Conclusions

- 11.1 The Council's systems, procedures, instructions and guidelines are designed to limit, as far as is practicable, acts of fraud and corruption. All such measures will be kept under constant review to ensure that they keep pace with developments in prevention and detection techniques regarding fraudulent or corrupt activity.
- 11.2 The Council will maintain a continuous review of all its systems and procedures through the Assistant Director – Finance & Commissioning (Section 151) and Internal Audit, in consultation with the Governance Manager (Monitoring Officer) where required.

COUNTER FRAUD AND CORRUPTION GUIDANCE NOTES

1.0 Why Do We Need a Counter Fraud And Corruption Strategy?

1.1 Even though the vast majority of people working for the Council are honest and diligent, the Council cannot be complacent. Fraudulent or corrupt acts may include:

System issues	ie where a process/system exists which can be abused by either staff or members of the public (eg expense claims)
Financial issues	ie where individuals or companies have fraudulently obtained money from the Council (eg invalid invoices/work not done)
Equipment issues	ie where Council equipment is used for personal use (eg personal use of council IT equipment)
Resource issues	ie where there is misuse of resources (eg theft of building materials/cash)
Other issues	ie activities undertaken by officers of the Council which may be: unlawful; fall below established standards or practices; or amount to improper conduct (eg receiving unapproved hospitality)

(This is not an exhaustive list.)

1.2 The prevention of fraud, and the protection of the public purse is **EVERYONE'S BUSINESS**. It is important that all staff know:

- how to recognise a fraud,
- how to prevent it, and
- what to do if they suspect that they have come upon a fraud.

1.3 This guidance has been drawn up to provide information to staff at all levels. The strategy and guidance attempt to assist staff and others with suspicions of any malpractice. The overriding concern is that it is in the public interest for the malpractice to be corrected and, if appropriate, sanctions and redress applied.

1.4 It is important that staff should be able to use any mechanism without fear of victimisation, and fully know that their concerns will be addressed seriously, quickly and discreetly.

1.5 It is important that the whole Council works together to reduce Benefit Fraud. All Staff are therefore required to transfer relevant information gathered in their normal day to day activities about possible Benefit irregularities to the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP). So, for example, if during a routine visit/interview you become aware that a customer is working and

“signing on” which they may be entitled to do so but you must tell the DWP this information. You are not expected to and must not delve any further.

- 1.6 The Council has determined that it should have a culture of honesty and openness in all its dealings, with opposition to fraud and corruption. The Council’s Whistleblowing Policy does this by :-
- making it clear that vigilance is part of the job. Knowingly not raising concerns may be a serious disciplinary offence,
 - recognising that early action may well prevent more worry or more serious loss/damage,
 - making it safe and simple to convey critical information ensuring that any concern in this area is seen as a concern and not a grievance,
 - encouraging information exchange, remembering that there are two sides to every story,
 - providing a way in which concerns can be raised in confidence and not necessarily via the nominated line manager or supervisor,
 - recognising the need for discretion,
 - ensuring the anonymity of the individual, where possible, should this be preferred by the employee, and by protecting employers from reprisals.
- 1.7 Under the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013, any disclosure made using the Whistleblowing Policy, within reasonable belief of the worker making the disclosure will only be protected if it is made in the public interest. More detail is found in the Whistleblowing Policy.
- 1.8 There is a need to ensure that any investigation process is not misused and, therefore, any abuse such as raising unfounded malicious allegations may be dealt with as a disciplinary matter.
- 2.0 Why Do We Need This Advice?**
- 2.1 It is important that you follow the advice given and do not try to handle the problem yourself, without expert advice and assistance. A badly managed investigation may do more harm than good. There are a number of internal and external processes which have to be followed to yield a satisfactory conclusion.
- 3.0 How To Recognise A Fraud**
- 3.1 Each employee must be aware of fraud and the areas within their responsibility where fraud may occur.
- 3.2 Fraud can happen wherever staff or independent contractors complete official processes and can take financial advantage of the Council. The risk of fraud is enhanced where staff or contractors are in positions of trust or responsibility and are not checked or subjected to effective monitoring or validation. Consequently the following areas are susceptible to fraud:-

- claims for work done by independent contractors,
- travel and expense claims,
- cash receipts/ petty cash,
- payroll,
- ordering, and
- stocks and assets.

3.3 Fraud involves the falsification of records, failing to disclose information or abuse of position. Managers need to be aware of the possibility of fraud when presented with claims/forms/documentation etc. Issues which may give rise to suspicions are:-

- systems / documents (including online forms) that have been amended or tampered with,
- claims that cannot be checked, particularly if prior authorisation was not given,
- strange trends (use comparisons and reasonableness),
- confused, illegible text and missing details,
- delays in documentation, completion or submission, and
- no evidence e.g. vouchers or receipts to support claims.

3.4 There are a number of indications of an employee being in a situation whereby they could be acting fraudulently. Common indicators could be:-

- living beyond their means,
- under financial pressure,
- not taking annual leave, and
- solely responsible for a “risk” area and/or possibly refusing to allow another officer to be involved in their duties and/or have minimal supervision.

4.0 How To Prevent It

4.1 By establishing an adverse culture to fraud and corruption the Council can help to prevent its occurrence.

4.2 Managers need to :-

- Minimise the opportunity for fraud – this can be achieved by putting in place robust systems of internal controls and checks.
- Reduce the “Pay – Off” – this is achieved by increasing the chances of detection and increasing the penalty for the perpetrator so risks outweigh the benefits of getting “away with it”

- 4.3 There are 8 basic control types which management should concern themselves with: -

Supervision

Supervisory checks should be completed and recorded by the line manager on the work completed by his/her team.

Organisation

Within each system, there should be policies/procedures setting out how functions should be carried out. There should be clear structures/rules which staff should work within.

Authorisation

Within a system there should be authorisation controls e.g. controls to authorise a payment (electronic/physical signature), and the correct level of authority is used in decision making.

Personnel

There should be clear roles and responsibilities and appropriate level of delegation. The right person should be doing the right job.

Segregation of Duties

Seek to avoid the sole ownership for the processing and control functions of any activity, by one employee.

Physical

This relates to physical controls e.g. access to monies, documents, security of premises etc should be appropriate and restricted where necessary. Where restricted access is necessary, access to keys/door numbers etc should be retained by the person granted access rights. They should not be left on the premises. Inventory checks ensure that assets are controlled.

Arithmetical Accuracy

Checks completed by another person to confirm the accuracy of data input/independent reconciliations of cash floats etc.

Management Functions

Within the system there should be controls for monitoring and reporting upon activity e.g the production of audit trail reports from systems etc. Monitoring to highlight exceptions/irregularity/non-compliance with rules and procedures and reporting – being accountable for actions.

- 4.4. Staff need to be aware of the possibility of fraud when presented with claims/forms/ documentation, etc. They should also have an awareness of internal rules and procedures; i.e. financial and contract procedure rules, declarations of outside work, hospitality etc.
- 4.5 Deterrence and prevention is the primary aim and if managers implement and control areas as mentioned in 4.3, any deviation from the set procedure should be highlighted in a timely manner.

5.0 What To Do On Suspecting A Fraud

5.1 Action By Staff

- 5.1.1 The Council is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. Any employee who believes such standards are being breached should report their suspicions. This should be done via this Policy, by contacting the Audit Manager (Shared Service).
- 5.1.2 You should report the matter immediately, make a note of your suspicions and provide as much factual information to support your concerns. Concerns are better raised in writing.
- 5.1.3 The background and the history of the concern, giving names, dates and places where possible, should be set out and the reason why the individual is particularly concerned about the situation. Those who do not feel able to put their concern in writing can telephone or meet the appropriate officer. The earlier the concern is expressed, the easier it is to take action. Individuals may invite their trade union or professional association to raise a matter on their behalf.
- 5.1.4 Do not try to carry out an investigation yourself. This may damage any investigation carried out by the Internal Audit section. Help the official investigators by providing information as and when requested and by giving a written statement when required.

5.2 Action By Managers

- 5.2.1 If managers become suspicious of any action by an employee or supplier or such suspicions are reported to them they should follow these simple rules.
- if possible establish if the irregularity (potential fraud, corruption or error) is a genuine error or possible fraud.
 - contact the Audit Manager (Shared Service) or in their absence a member of the Internal Audit section.
 - do nothing else, except remain vigilant and await further instructions from the investigating team.

5.2.2 The Council is required to report any cases in which it is suspected that transactions involve the proceeds of crime. If staff or managers have any such suspicion, this should be reported immediately to the Assistant Director of Finance & Commissioning (Section 151 Officer), who shall advise on the necessary action and ensure the matter is reported to the appropriate authorities.

5.2.3 Details of the relevant contacts can be found in Appendix 4.

6.0 What Happens To The Allegation

6.1 Internal Audit will normally carry out a full enquiry even where there is clear evidence of an offence following the Fraud Response Plan (Appendix 3). A full report will be copied and sent to:-

- the relevant Chief Officer, and
- the Chief Executive to consider if there needs to be any police involvement.

6.2 It is essential that the Internal Audit investigation be a complete one and the investigating officer to whom it is delegated is entitled to expect the fullest co-operation from all staff.

6.3 A full detailed report on any system control failures and recommended actions to address the failures will be issued to the relevant manager in the format of an internal audit report.

The Seven Principles of Public Life (Nolan Committee)

Selflessness

Holders of public office take decisions in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.

Integrity

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Objectivity

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Openness

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

Honesty

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

Statement of Expected Responsibilities

Stakeholder	Expected Responsibilities
Chief Executive	Ultimately accountable as Head of Paid Service for the effectiveness of the Council's arrangements for countering fraud and corruption as well as corporate governance.
Assistant Director – Finance & Commissioning (Section 151 Officer)	<p>The Assistant Director – Finance & Commissioning (Section 151) has a statutory duty, under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972, Sections 114 and 116 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and Accounts and Audit Regulations 2011 to ensure the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs.</p> <p>The operation of the Council's Money Laundering Policy.</p>
Governance Manager (Monitoring Officer)	<p>To advise Members and officers on ethical issues, standards and powers to ensure that the Council operates within the Law and Statutory Codes of Practice.</p> <p>Maintain a Register of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.</p> <p>To put in place a corporate recruitment and selection policy and monitor compliance against it.</p> <p>The operation of the Council's Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) 2000 Policies and Procedures.</p>
Assistant Directors	To ensure that fraud and corruption risks are considered as part of the Council's corporate risk management arrangements. To ensure that actions to mitigate risks in this area are effective. To notify the Audit Manager (Shared Service) of any fraud arising in a timely manner.

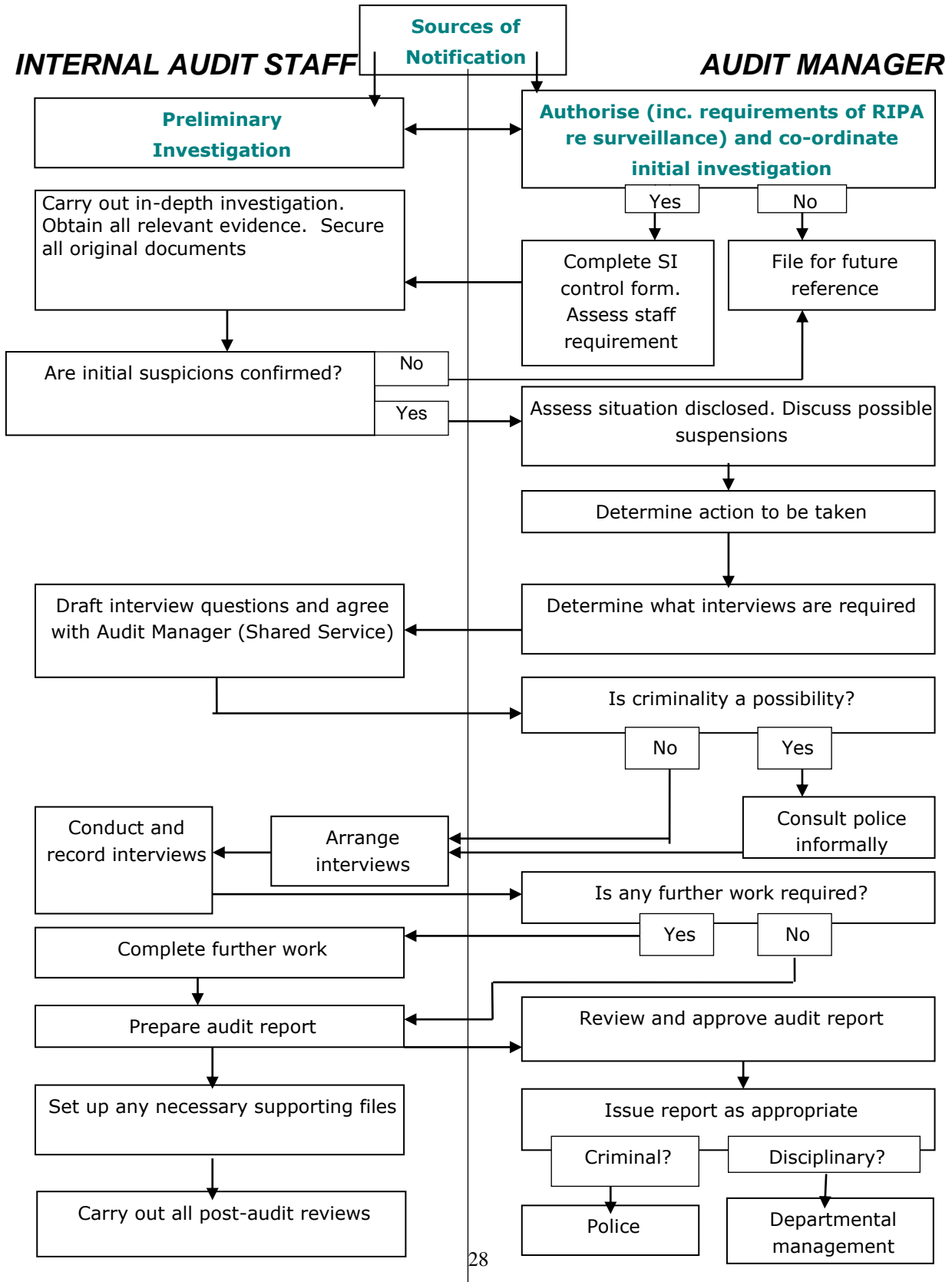
Leadership Team	Challenge new policies and strategies to ensure that fraud and corruption risks have been taken into account. Review the corporate framework designed to promote an over-riding counter-fraud culture on a regular basis. This will include monitoring and evaluating arrangements to ensure effectiveness and compliance with best practice.
Audit & Member Standards Committee	To monitor the Council's policies and consider the effectiveness of the arrangements for Counter Fraud and Whistleblowing.
Cabinet Member for Finance & Commissioning	To champion the Council's Counter Fraud & Corruption arrangements and promote them at every opportunity.
Elected Members	To support and promote the development of a strong counter fraud culture.
External Audit	Statutory duty to ensure that the Council has in place adequate arrangements for the prevention and detection of fraud, corruption and theft.
Internal Audit	Responsible for developing and implementing the Counter Fraud and Corruption Policy Statement, Strategy and Guidance Notes and investigating any issues reported under this policy. Reporting on the effectiveness of controls to the Audit & Member Standards Committee. To ensure that all suspected or reported irregularities are dealt with promptly and in accordance with this Strategy and that action is identified to improve controls and reduce the risk of recurrence.
Senior Managers	To promote employee awareness and ensure that all suspected or reported irregularities are immediately referred to the Audit Manager (Shared Service). To ensure that there are mechanisms in place within their service areas to assess the risk of fraud, corruption and theft and to reduce these risks by implementing robust internal controls.
Staff	To comply with Council policies and procedures, to be aware of the possibility of fraud, corruption and theft, and to report any genuine concerns to the Audit

	Manager (Shared Service).
Public, Partners, Suppliers, Contractors and Consultants	To be aware of the possibility of fraud and corruption against the Council and report any genuine concerns or suspicions. To ensure that effective controls are in place to mitigate risks to the Council.

Lichfield District Council

Fraud Response Plan

OPERATIONAL CONTROL



HOW TO REPORT ANY SUSPECTED FRAUDS, CORRUPTION, OTHER IRREGULARITIES OR CONCERNS

To contact Internal Audit Services

- Contact can be made with Lichfield Internal Audit Section in a number of ways. These are:

For all general issues:

- Call the Audit Manager (Shared Service) on 01543 308030
 - Email the Audit Manager (Shared Service) on andrew.wood@lichfielddc.gov.uk
 - Write to Lichfield Internal Audit, District Council House, Frog Lane, Lichfield, WS13 6ZB.
 - Use the Council's Internet 'Report It' function.
- If in doubt, then **PROTECT** will give free and totally independent advice on how to proceed. More information can be found in the **Whistleblowing Policy**.

To contact the Council's external auditor

Write to:

Azets – Accountants and Business Advisors
Ventura Park Road Tamworth B78 3HL
Tel: 01827 302070

**National Audit Office – Comptroller and Auditor General Whistleblowing
hotline: 020 7798 7999**

For Housing Benefit Fraud (including local council tax support and single person discount), contact:

- Telephone the national benefit fraud hotline on 0800 854 440 or
- Text phone number 0800 320 0512 or
- Via their website at <https://www.gov.uk/report-benefit-fraud>
- Write to NBFH, PO Box No. 224, Preston, PR1 1GP

Frauds and cyber-crime can also be reported via:

<https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/reporting-fraud-and-cyber-crime>

CREATING AN ANTI-FRAUD CULTURE		
OBJECTIVE	RISK	PROGRESS
<p>To build an anti-fraud culture through the adoption of various measures to promote counter fraud awareness by:</p> <p>Continued use of e-learning of fraud awareness</p> <p>Provide drop in sessions (if required) to staff and members.</p> <p>Continue to make available counter fraud strategies/policies on the intranet</p>	<p>Failure to make staff, members and the public that their suspicions will be treated confidentially, objectively and professionally.</p>	<p>On-going</p>
<p>To complete an annual assessment of whether the level of resource invested to counter fraud and corruption is proportionate for the level of risk.</p>	<p>Failure to make available enough resources for counter fraud work</p>	<p>Annually as part of the audit planning process</p>

DETECTING FRAUD

OBJECTIVE	RISK	PROGRESS
Review communications so that the most effective ways of communication with staff are utilised	A lack of robust strategic approach to deterring fraud can undermine actions to build an anti-fraud culture.	Conduct an of annual anti-fraud campaign
Deter fraud attempts by publishing the organisations counter fraud and corruption stance and the actions it takes against fraudsters.	A lack of understanding as to the stance the authority takes against fraud.	Publish strategy on the intranet and raise staff awareness annually

PREVENTING FRAUD

OBJECTIVE	RISK	PROGRESS
Review the existing Counter Fraud Policy Statement, Strategy & Guidance Notes and update and amend as appropriate.	Out of date policies and procedures which do not cover relevant legislation	Four yearly review (unless legislation / best practice changes). Minor amendments (i.e. role changes) delegated to the Audit Manager (Shared Service) to undertake
Review and update the fraud risk register in line with potential system weaknesses identified during audits or investigations.	Potential risks not identified	Completed annually
Implement effective Whistleblowing arrangements	Out of date policies and procedures which do not cover relevant legislation.	Four yearly review (unless legislation / best practice changes). Minor amendments (i.e. role changes) delegated to the Audit Manager (Shared Service) to undertake

DETECTING FRAUD

OBJECTIVE	RISK	PROGRESS
Undertake enquiries as a result of the outcome of the National Fraud Initiative	If not undertaken, there is a risk that the opportunity to abuse a system weakness may be heightened as the risk of being caught maybe deemed negligible by the perpetrator.	On-going
Undertake local proactive exercises through data & intelligence analysis at the Authority in line with the audit plan	If not undertaken, there is a risk that the opportunity to abuse a system weakness may be heightened as the risk of being caught maybe deemed negligible by the perpetrator.	As required
Review and evaluated the potential for the use of computer aided and other innovative techniques for the detection of fraud.	If not undertaken, there is a risk that fraud could go undetected	As required

INVESTIGATIONS

OBJECTIVE	RISK	PROGRESS
All referrals will be investigated in accordance with the Counter Fraud and Corruption Policy Statement & Strategy.	The risk of not investigating is that fraud goes unpunished and there is no resulting deterrent effect thus increasing the prevalence of fraud further	On-going

SANCTIONS

OBJECTIVE	RISK	PROGRESS
Ensure that the sanctions are applied correctly and consistently (including internal disciplinary, regulatory & criminal).	If sanctions are not imposed there is no deterrence of fraud.	On-going

REDRESS

OBJECTIVE	RISK	PROGRESS
<p>Maintain comprehensive records of time spent on each investigation so that this can be included in any compensation claim.</p> <p>Identify and maintain a record of the actual proven amount of loss so that appropriate recovery procedures can be actioned.</p>	<p>Fraudsters may not realise that any and all measures will be taken to recover any money lost to fraud.</p>	<p>On-going</p>

MANDATORY COUNTER FRAUD ARRANGEMENTS (STRATEGIC WORK)

OBJECTIVE	RISK	PROGRESS
Attendance at relevant fraud forums/meetings to ensure that professional knowledge and skills are maintained.	Failure to ensure the completion of mandatory strategic work may mean that the professional knowledge and skills are not maintained to a high standard.	On-going
Completion and agreement of work plan		On-going
Regular meetings with the Assistant Director – Finance & Commissioning (Section 151)		On-going
Regular report of counter fraud work		On-going
Attendance at relevant training as required.		On-going



Confidential Reporting (Whistleblowing) Policy

November 2023

Document Location

This document is held by Lichfield District Council, and the document owner is the Chief Executive.

Printed documents may be obsolete. An electronic copy is available on Lichfield District Council's Intranet. Please check for current version before using.

Revision History

Revision Date	Version Control	Summary of changes
November 2020		Refresh
October 2021		Refresh
November 2022		Refresh
November 2023		Scheduled Review

Approvals

Name	Title	Approved
Audit & Member Standards Committee	Committee Approval	Yes
Leadership Team	Leadership Approval	Yes
Chief Executive Approval	Policy Owner Approval	Yes

Document Review Plans

This document is subject to a scheduled review every 4 years in accordance with the election cycles. Updates shall be made in accordance with business requirements and changes and will be with agreement with the document owner.

Distribution

The document will be available on the Intranet and the website.

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LICHFIELD DISTRICT COUNCIL

CONFIDENTIAL REPORTING (WHISTLEBLOWING) POLICY

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 Those working for the Council are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within the Council. However, they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or to the Council. They may also fear harassment or victimisation. In these circumstances it may be easier to ignore the concern rather than report what may just be a suspicion of malpractice.
- 1.2 The Council is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with that commitment it expects its workers and employees, and others that it deals with, who have serious concerns about any aspect of the Council's work to come forward and voice those concerns. It is recognised that most cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis.
- 1.3 This policy document makes it clear that you can do so without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage. This Whistleblowing Policy is intended to encourage and enable anyone to raise concerns in the public interest, within the Council rather than overlooking a problem or 'blowing the whistle' outside.

2 Introduction

- 2.1 The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 became law in July, 1999. This Act, introduced the protection of whistleblowers and removes the limits of financial liability to which an organisation is exposed should a whistleblower receive unfair treatment. This policy document sets out the Council's response to the requirements of the Act.
- 2.2 Under the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013, any disclosure made using the Whistleblowing Policy, within reasonable belief of the worker making the disclosure will only be protected if it is made in the public interest. It must also show one or more of the following:
 - (a) that a criminal offence has been committed, is being committed or is likely to be committed,
 - (b) that a person has failed, is failing or is likely to fail to comply with any legal obligation to which they are subject,
 - (c) that a miscarriage of justice has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur,

(d) that the health or safety of any individual has been, is being or is likely to be endangered,

(e) that the environment has been, is being or is likely to be damaged, or

(f) that information tending to show any matter falling within any one of the preceding paragraphs has been, is being or is likely to be deliberately concealed.

2.3 This policy is designed for workers. Workers include:

- employees;
- agency workers;
- people that are training with an employer but not employed; and
- self-employed workers, if supervised or working off-site.

2.4 Local Government employees have an individual and collective responsibility regarding their conduct and practices, which are always subject to scrutiny. As individuals, employees are required to work within the Code of Conduct for Lichfield District Council Employees and the relevant codes of conduct including the standards appropriate to their professional organisations or associations. The Council's regulatory framework also includes Financial Procedure Rules and Contract Procedure Rules that must be met.

2.5 All employees have a duty to bring to the attention of management any deficiency in the provision of service and any impropriety or breach of procedure, in accordance with Financial Procedure Rules."

2.6 These procedures are in addition to the Council's complaints procedures including the Grievance Policy & Procedure and Prevention of Bullying and Harassment at work policy and other statutory reporting procedures applying to some Services.

3 Aims and Scope of this Policy

3.1 This policy aims to:

- encourage you to feel confident in raising concerns that are in the public interest
- provide avenues for you to raise those concerns and receive feedback on any action taken
- ensure that you receive a response to your concerns and that you are aware of how to pursue them if you are not satisfied
- re-assure you that you will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation if you have a reasonable belief that you have made any disclosure in the public interest.

3.2 There are existing procedures in place to enable you to disclose particular concerns. These are:

- The Authority's Grievance Policy & Procedure which enables you to lodge a grievance relating to your own employment;
- The Authority's Counter Fraud and Corruption Policy Statement, Strategy & Guidance Notes, which outlines how you can disclose potential fraud, bribery, corruption and theft;
- The Authority's Prevention of Bullying and Harassment at Work Policy & Procedure, which enables you to disclose cases of potential harassment and bullying;
- The Authority's Safeguarding Children & Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy (which has its own Whistleblowing Procedures in place), for disclosures regarding suspected mistreatment of children and vulnerable adults.
- The Authority's Prevention of the Facilitation of Tax Evasion Policy for disclosures relating to the prevention of the facilitation of tax evasion by the Council's staff, agents and contractual associates under Part 3 of the Criminal Finances Act 2017.

3.3 This policy does **not** replace the corporate complaints procedure or other existing policies for raising issues regarding your employment.

3.4 This policy is subject to four yearly review, unless legislative changes or best practice changes occur. Minor amendments to this policy such as job title changes will be made by the Audit Manager (Shared Service) / Principal Auditor.

4 Safeguards

4.1 The Council is committed to good practice and high standards and shall be supportive of employees.

4.2 The Council recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. If what you are saying is within reasonable belief, you should have nothing to fear because you will be doing your duty to your employer and those for whom you are providing a service.

4.3 The Council will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect you when you raise a concern in the public interest.

5 Confidentiality

5.1 All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal your identity if you so wish. At the appropriate time, however, you may need to come forward as a witness, but this will be discussed with you, as to whether and how the matter can be proceeded with.

6 Anonymous Allegations

- 6.1 This policy encourages you to put your name to your allegation whenever possible.
- 6.2 Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful but will be considered at the discretion of the Council.
- 6.3 In exercising this discretion the factors to be taken into account would include:
- the seriousness of the issues raised;
 - the credibility of the concern; and
 - the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

7 Untrue Allegations

- 7.1 If you make an allegation in the public interest, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you. If, however, you make an allegation frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against you.

8 How to Raise a Concern

- 8.1 You should raise your concern with the Audit Manager (Shared Service), or in their absence, a member of the Internal Audit Team. Where staff feel unable to raise concerns with the Audit Manager (Shared Service), they can raise their concern with their line manager, who must immediately inform the Assistant Director – Finance & Commissioning (Section 151). Under no circumstances should any investigation be undertaken by management.
- 8.2 You may wish to consider discussing your concern with a colleague first and you may find it easier to raise the matter if there are two (or more) of you who have had the same experience or concerns.
- 8.3 If the concern raised relates to fraud or corruption, then the matter will be reviewed and investigated by Internal Audit. If however, the concern relates to a management issue, then the matter will be recorded and forwarded onto the appropriate officer to deal with it.
- 8.4 Concerns are best raised in writing. You are invited to set out the background and history of the concern, giving names, dates and places where possible, and the reason why you are particularly concerned about the situation. If you do not feel able to put your particular concern in writing, you can telephone or meet the appropriate officer. The Officer notified of an individuals concern must record those concerns taking a statement where they feel it appropriate.
- 8.5 In addition, a confidential **email** reporting has been set up for staff and members of the public to report any concerns. Anyone using this facility should provide as much information as possible to ensure the concern can be properly investigated, including leaving your name and contact number, if

possible.

- 8.6 The earlier you express the concern, the easier it is to take action, and although you will not be expected to prove the truth of the allegation, you will need to be able to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are sufficient grounds for your concern.
- 8.7 You may invite your trade union or professional association representative or a member of staff to be present during any meetings or interviews in connection with the concerns you have raised.
- 8.8 Advice and guidance on how matters of concern may be pursued can be obtained from the: -

Audit Manager (Shared Service) Tel: 308030

9 External contacts

- 9.1 While it is hoped that this policy gives you the reassurance you need to raise such matters internally and the Council strongly encourages you to pursue concerns through this process, it is recognised that there may be circumstances where you can properly report matters to outside bodies, such as prescribed regulators, some of which are outlined below, or the police, or if applicable your own union, who will be able to advise you on such an option and on the circumstances in which you may be able to contact an outside body safely.
- 9.2 Examples of relevant Prescribed Regulators are as follows:

Proper conduct of public business, value for money fraud and corruption relating to the provision of public services	Comptroller and Auditor General
Serious and complex fraud	Director of the Serious Fraud Office
Environmental issues	Environment Agency
Accounting, auditing and actuarial issues	Financial Reporting Council Limited
Health & safety issues	Health & Safety Executive
Social housing	Homes & Communities Agency
Data Protection & Freedom of Information	Information Commissioner
Corruption & Bribery	National Crime Agency

Child Welfare & Protection	Children's Commissioner NSPCC
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The full list of prescribed regulators can be found in The Public Interest Disclosure (Prescribed Persons) Order 2014.

- 9.3 **Protect 020 3117 2520 protect-advice.org.uk**, are a registered charity set up to give free independent advice to employees and workers who contact them with concerns. They have qualified legal staff.

10 How the Council Will Respond

- 10.1 The Council will always respond to your concerns. Do not forget that testing out your concerns is not the same as either accepting or rejecting them.

- 10.2 Where appropriate, the matters raised may:

- be investigated internally (the Disciplinary Procedure may be used);
- be referred to the police;
- be referred to the external auditor; or
- form the subject of an independent inquiry.

- 10.3 In order to protect individuals and those accused of misdeeds or possible malpractice, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. The overriding principle which the Council will have in mind is the public interest. Concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of specific procedures (for example, child protection or discrimination issues) will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.

- 10.4 Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. If urgent action is required this will be taken before any investigation is conducted.

- 10.5 Within ten working days of a concern being raised, the Audit Manager will write to you:

- acknowledging that the concern has been received;
- indicating how the Council propose to deal with the matter;
- giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response;
- telling you whether any initial enquiries have been made;
- supplying you with information on how the Council will support you if you think this is necessary, whilst the matter is under consideration; and
- telling you whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not.

- 10.6 The amount of contact between the officers considering the issues and you will depend on the nature of the matter raised, the potential difficulties

involved and the clarity of the information provided. If necessary, the Council will seek further information from you.

- 10.7 Where any meeting is arranged, you have the right, if you so wish, to be accompanied by a Union or professional association representative or a friend who is not involved in the area of work to which the concern relates.
- 10.8 The Council accepts that you need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Thus, subject to legal constraints, we will inform you of the outcome of any investigation.

11 The Responsible Officer

- 11.1 The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy. Internal Audit will maintain a record of concerns raised and the outcomes (but in a form which does not endanger your confidentiality) and will report as necessary to the Council.

12 How the Matter can be Taken Further

- 12.1 If you feel that the Council has not responded correctly at any stage, remember you can go to the other levels and bodies mentioned earlier. While it cannot be guaranteed that all matters will be addressed in the way that you might wish, it will always be the Council's intention to handle the matter fairly and properly. By using this policy, you will help achieve this.
- 12.2 If you do take the matter outside the Council, you should ensure that you do not disclose confidential or privileged information. Advice can be sought from the Governance Manager and Monitoring Officer.

Anti Money Laundering Policy

November 2023

Document Location

This document is held by Lichfield District Council, and the document owner is the Assistant Director – Finance & Commissioning (Section 151).

Printed documents may be obsolete. An electronic copy is available on Lichfield District Council's Intranet. Please check for current version before using.

Revision History

Revision Date	Version Control	Summary of changes
November 2020	1.0	Refreshed Policy
October 2021	1.1	Refresh
November 2022	1.2	Refresh
November 2023	1.3	Refresh

Approvals

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Audit & Member Standards Committee	Committee Approval	Yes
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LICHFIELD DISTRICT COUNCIL

ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING POLICY STATEMENT

1. Lichfield District Council fully recognises its responsibility in relation to the spending of public money (Protecting the Public Purse) and is committed to the fullest support for Councillors and Employees in upholding the reputation of the Council and maintaining public confidence in its integrity. It also recognises its responsibilities under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (as amended by the serious organised Crime and Police Act 2005), Money Laundering Terrorist Financing and Transfer of Funds (Information on the Payer) Regulations 2017 (*and as amended*) (MLR) and the Bribery Act 2010.
2. The Council acknowledges the threat of money laundering and the harm that it can cause. The Council is committed to maintaining an ethical culture which does not and will not tolerate any form of fraud and corruption. Any such issues will be thoroughly investigated and, if confirmed, dealt with rapidly in the strongest possible way. We will seek the strongest possible sanctions against those who seek to defraud the Council. This includes taking appropriate action against employees, Councillors, contractors, external individuals and organisations.
3. To deliver the Council's corporate priorities, aims and strategic objectives we need to maximise the financial resources available to us. In order to do this we must reduce the risk of fraud to an absolute minimum.
4. This document is intended to provide advice and information to Employees, **Agency Staff** and Councillors but suppliers, contractors and the general public are also encouraged to use this advice and guidance.

LICHFIELD DISTRICT COUNCIL ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING POLICY

1. Introduction

Although local authorities are not directly covered by the requirements of the Money Laundering Regulations (MLR), guidance from CIPFA indicates that they should comply with the underlying spirit of the legislation and regulations.

Lichfield District Council is committed to the highest possible standards of conduct and governance, therefore, it has put in place appropriate and proportionate anti-money laundering safeguards and reporting arrangements.

The Council must apply customer due diligence measures if the person carries out an occasional transaction that amounts to a transfer of funds exceeding £1,000. **To address and prevent money laundering and terrorist financing the Council has set a cash payment limit of £1,000.**

This is not designed to prevent customers making payments for Council services but to minimise the risk to the Council of high value cash transactions. Best practice is to be encouraged – seek payment electronically from a UK clearing bank.

2. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all employees, whether permanent or temporary/agency, and Members of the Council.

Its aim is to enable employees and Members to respond to a concern they have in the course of their dealings for the Council. Individuals who have a concern relating to a matter outside work should contact the Police.

3. Definition of Money Laundering

Money laundering is a general term for any method of disguising the origin of “dirty” or criminal money. This money may be the proceeds of any criminal activity including terrorism, drugs trafficking, corruption, tax evasion and theft. The purpose of money laundering is to hide the origin of the dirty money so that it appears to have come from a legitimate source. Unfortunately, no organisation is safe from the threat of money laundering, particularly where it is receiving funds from sources where the identity of the payer is unknown. It is, therefore, possible that the Council may be targeted by criminals wishing to launder the proceeds of crime.

In addition, it is possible that the proceeds of crime may be received from individuals or organisations who do not realise that they are committing an offence. It is no defence for the payer or the recipient to claim that they did not know that they were committing an offence if they should have been aware of the origin of the funds. All staff therefore dealing with the receipt of funds or having contact with third parties from whom funds may be received need to be aware of the possibility of money laundering taking place.

Money laundering describes offences involving the integration of the proceeds of crime or terrorist funds into the mainstream economy. Such offences are

defined under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (“the Act”); the following are ‘prohibited acts’:

- Concealing, disguising, converting, transferring or removing criminal property from the UK
- Becoming involved in an arrangement which an individual knows or suspects facilitates the acquisition, retention, use or control of criminal property by or on behalf of another person
- Acquiring, using or possessing criminal property
- Failure to disclose one of the offences listed above, where there are reasonable grounds for knowledge or suspicion
- Doing something that might prejudice an investigation e.g. falsifying a document
- Tipping off a person(s) who is or is suspected of being involved in money laundering in such a way as to reduce the likelihood of or prejudice an investigation

Provided the Council does not undertake activities regulated under the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000, the offences of failure to disclose and tipping off do not apply. However, the Council and its employees and Members remain subject to the remainder of the offences and the full provisions of the Terrorism Act 2000.

The Terrorism Act 2000 made it an offence of money laundering to become concerned in an arrangement relating to the retention or control of property likely to be used for the purposes of terrorism, or resulting from acts of terrorism.

Although the term ‘money laundering’ is generally used to describe the activities of organised crime, for most people it will involve a suspicion that someone they know, or know of, is benefiting financially from dishonest activities.

Potentially very heavy penalties (unlimited fines and imprisonment up to fourteen years) can be handed down to those who are convicted of one of the offences above.

It is important therefore that staff are aware of the rules and procedures that the Council has in place to ensure that they comply with the relevant legislation and approach taken by the Council as set out in this policy.

4. Requirements of the Money Laundering Legislation

The main requirements of the legislation are:

- To appoint a money laundering reporting officer.
- Conduct a money laundering and terrorist financing risk assessment.
- Implement systems, policies, controls and procedures to address money laundering and terrorist financing risks and meet the requirements under the regulations.
- Apply policies, procedures and adopt appropriate internal controls.
- Provide training for staff.
- Maintain customer due diligence, enhanced due diligence and simplified due diligence requirements in certain circumstances.
- Comply with requirements relating to politically exposed persons.

- Implement a procedure to enable the reporting of suspicions of money laundering, including record keeping and compliance with data protection systems.
- Maintain record keeping procedures

5. The Money Laundering Reporting Officer (MLRO)

The Council has designated the Assistant Director – Finance & Commissioning (Section 151) as the Money Laundering Reporting Officer (MLRO). They can be contacted on 01543 308012 or by email on anthony.thomas@lichfielddc.gov.uk.

In the absence of the MLRO or in instances where it is suspected that the MLRO could be involved in suspicious transactions, concerns should be raised with the Chief Executive. They can be contacted on 01543 308001 or by email on simon.fletcher@lichfielddc.gov.uk.

6. Possible Signs of Money Laundering

It is not possible to give a definitive list of ways in which to spot money laundering but facts which tend to suggest that something “odd” is happening may be sufficient for a reasonable suspicion of money laundering to arise.

The following are the types of risk factors which *may*, either alone or cumulatively with other factors, suggest the possibility of money laundering activity:

- A new customer with no previous history with the Council.
- A secretive customer: for example one who refuses to provide requested information without a reasonable explanation.
- Concerns about the honesty, integrity or identity of a customer.
- Illogical third party transactions: for example unnecessary routing or receipt of funds from third parties or through third party accounts.
- Involvement of an unconnected third party without logical reason or explanation.
- Payment of substantial sum in cash.
- Overpayments by a customer.
- Absence of an obvious legitimate source of the funds.
- Movement of funds to and from overseas, particularly to and from a higher risk country.
- Where, without reasonable explanation, the size, nature and frequency of transactions or instructions is out of line with normal expectations.
- Cancellation or reversal of an earlier transaction.

7. Due Diligence Procedures

The Money Laundering Regulations require us to carry out “Customer Due Diligence”. Staff should therefore be alert to where Lichfield District Council may be targeted by individuals trying to launder the proceeds of crime and/or finance terrorist activity.

Staff should avoid alerting anyone dealing with Lichfield District Council that there is a suspicion that they may be attempting to launder, or have laundered,

the proceeds of crime; and report any suspicions of money laundering to the Money Laundering Reporting Officer.

Training will be provided to all relevant staff regarding money laundering to assist them in their awareness of how money laundering could take place and the appropriate method of dealing with this. In effect, any areas where money changes hands could therefore be at risk of money laundering attempts, i.e. Application fees for taxi licences, planning applications etc.

The Council already has procedures in place to limit the amount of cash that it receives, with other payment methods being made available. To ensure however that the system is manageable, if a cash payment of less than £1,000 is received; no identification checks will be needed.

Where the £1,000 limit is exceeded, officers dealing with the matter will need to (1) establish the identity of the individual/company involved (2) seek advice from the MLRO (01543 308012) to ensure that the risk of receiving the proceeds of crime can be minimised.

For individuals, their passport or photo driving licence should be obtained, together with one of the following:

- Utility bills i.e. electricity, water etc. however mobile phone bills are not acceptable.
- Mortgage/building society/bank statements.
- Credit card statements.
- Official receipt of pension / benefit confirmation.

If a passport or photo driving licence is not available, then two of the other items listed above will need to be produced. These can be electronic verifiable format.

For companies, a Companies House search should be undertaken to confirm the existence of the company and identify who the directors are. Personal identification should then be obtained for the representatives of the company together with proof of their authority to act on behalf of the company. The name of the company, company number or other registration and address of the registered office and if different, principal place of business should be recorded. Care should be taken if it becomes clear that the individual has only recently become a director of the company or if there has been a recent change in the registered office.

For any other type of organisation, for example a sole trader or partnership, personal identification should be obtained for the individuals together with documents indicating their relationship to the organisation. Where applicable identify the beneficial owners of the individual and assess the purpose and intended nature of the transaction.

Enhanced due diligence checks should take place and/or must be applied, in any transaction or business relationship involving a person established in a 'high risk third country', any transaction or business relationship involving a 'politically exposed person' (PEP) or a family member or known associate of a PEP and any other situation that presents a higher risk of money laundering or terrorist financing.

Simplified due diligence is permitted where it is determined that the business relationship or transaction presents a low risk of money laundering or terrorist financing, taking into account the risk assessment.

Customer due diligence measures will differ from case to case but most reflect the assessment of the level of risk in each particular case.

Copies of any evidence provided in support of the identification of an individual or organisation should be kept on a central file so that it can be referred to later if necessary. Records should be kept for 6 years after the end of the transaction.

8. Land/Property Transactions

The Council has in place procedures to identify customers when Council land or property is being sold without the involvement of independent legal advice. The procedures will require the Council to:

- Identify customers and verify their identity on the basis of documents from a reliable and approved source;
- Identify where applicable the beneficial owner (see below) and take adequate measures on a risk sensitive basis to verify their identity;
- Maintain records of all checks.

“Beneficial owners” are the individuals who ultimately own, control or have a legal interest in the asset or the person on whose behalf a transaction or activity is being conducted.

If satisfactory evidence of a customer’s identity cannot be obtained at the outset then the business transaction CANNOT proceed any further.

All personal data collected will be kept in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations.

9. Procedure for Reporting Suspicious Transactions

Any suspicious transactions which staff may become aware of in the course of their work must be reported to the MLRO immediately using the Council’s Internal Disclosure Form (see Appendix 2). Failure to make the appropriate report immediately will be regarded as gross misconduct and may result in dismissal without notice or pay in lieu of notice.

The report must include as much detail as possible including:

- Full details of the people involved.
- Full details of the nature of their/your involvement.
- The types of money laundering activity involved.
- The date(s) of such activity/ies.
- Whether the transactions have happened, are ongoing or are imminent.
- Where they took place (if applicable).
- How they were undertaken (if applicable).
- The (likely) amount of money/assets involved.
- Why, exactly, there are suspicions.

This should be supported by any other available information to enable the MLRO to make a sound judgement as to whether there are reasonable grounds for knowledge or suspicion of money laundering and to enable them to prepare a report to the National Crime Agency (NCA), where appropriate. You should also enclose copies of any relevant supporting documentation.

It is imperative, if staff have a suspicion concerning an individual or organisation with which they are dealing, that they do not alert them to that suspicion i.e. that no “tipping off” is done. Staff must, therefore, **not** make them aware that an internal disclosure report may be made. Once the report is made, the cash/cheques/other form of payment from this source should not be banked until clearance has been received from the MLRO. Such clearance may take up to seven days from the time when the initial report to the MLRO is made.

If the funds are banked in this period without getting clearance from the MLRO that staff members runs the risk of a fine and/ or imprisonment for up to 14 years.

10. Additional Guidance

If you require any additional information or guidance in relation to the contents of this policy and your responsibilities please contact the MLRO. An Aide Memoir has been prepared – Appendix 3, which can be used as a brief reminder to staff of their responsibilities.

11. Consideration of the Disclosure by the Money Laundering Reporting Officer

Upon receipt of a report, the MLRO must note the date thereof and acknowledge receipt. They should also advise you of the timescale within which they expects to respond to you.

The MLRO will consider the report and any other available internal information they think relevant e.g.

- reviewing other transaction patterns and volumes;
- the length of any business relationship involved;
- the number of any one-off transactions and linked one-off transactions;
- any identification evidence held;

The MLRO will also undertake other such reasonable inquiries that are appropriate in order to ensure that all available information is taken into account in deciding whether a report to the NCA is required (such enquiries being made in such a way as to avoid any appearance of tipping off those involved). The MLRO may also need to discuss the report with you.

Once the MLRO has evaluated the report and any other relevant information, they must make a timely determination as to whether:

- there is actual or suspected money laundering taking place; or
- there are reasonable grounds to know or suspect that is the case; and
- there is a requirement to seek consent from the NCA for a particular transaction to proceed.

Where the MLRO does so conclude, then they must disclose the matter as soon as practicable to the NCA on their standard report form and in the prescribed manner, unless they has a reasonable excuse for non-disclosure to the NCA (for example, if you are a lawyer and you wish to claim legal professional privilege for not disclosing the information).

Where the MLRO suspects money laundering but has a reasonable excuse for non-disclosure, then they must note this accordingly; they can then immediately give their consent for any ongoing or imminent transactions to proceed.

In cases where legal professional privilege may apply, the MLRO must liaise with the Governance Manager (Monitoring Officer) to decide whether there is a reasonable excuse for not reporting the matter to the NCA.

Where consent is required from the NCA for a transaction to proceed, then the transaction(s) in question must not be undertaken or completed until the NCA has specifically given consent, or there is deemed consent through the expiration of the relevant time limits without objection from the NCA.

Where the MLRO concludes that there are no reasonable grounds to suspect money laundering then they shall note this accordingly and give consent for any ongoing or imminent transaction(s) to proceed.

All reports referred to the MLRO and reports made by them to the NCA must be retained by the MLRO in a confidential file kept for that purpose, for a minimum of six years.

The MLRO commits a criminal offence if they know or suspect, or have reasonable grounds to do so, through a disclosure being made to them, that another person is engaged in money laundering and they do not disclose this as soon as practicable to the NCA.

12. Training

Officers considered likely to be exposed to suspicious situations, will be made aware of these by their senior officer and provided with appropriate training. In effect, any areas where money changes hands could therefore be at risk of money laundering attempts i.e. application fees for taxi licences, planning applications, etc.

Additionally, all employees and Members will be familiarised with the legal and regulatory requirements relating to money laundering and how they affect both the Council and themselves.

Notwithstanding the paragraphs above, it is the duty of officers and Members to report all suspicious transactions whether they have received their training or not.

13. Conclusions

The Council has put into place a number of arrangements to protect itself from the risk of money laundering. However in the current climate of change there are issues that will increase this risk. Changes in structure, changes in systems and the turnover of staff all contribute to our exposure to the risk of money

laundering. To mitigate against this risk the Council will regularly review arrangements.

The Money Laundering Policy provides a framework for preventing and tackling money laundering acts against the Authority. The approval of the Policy by the Audit and Member Standards Committee and the Council, demonstrates the Council's commitment to protecting public funds. Having made this commitment, it is imperative that the MLRO puts in place arrangements for disseminating the Policy and promoting money laundering awareness, throughout the Council. The Council believes that this policy represents a proportionate response to the level of risk it faces from money laundering offences.

14. Review

This policy and associated procedure will be subject to a review every 4 years unless any changes or updates to any of the relevant legislation require that it is undertaken sooner.

Role of the Money Laundering Report Officer – “MLRO”

The duties of the Money Laundering Reporting Officer are:

- To ensure that the Council complies with the requirements of the Money Laundering Terrorist Financing and Transfer of Funds (Information on the Payer) Regulations 2017 (and as amended) and the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002.
- To ensure that all relevant staff are aware of and comply with the Council's Anti-Money Laundering Policy.
- To ensure that the Council properly identifies all third parties dealing with the Council where there is a higher risk of the Council receiving the proceeds of crime and to ensure that copies of any documents taken as proof of evidence are kept on a central file by the Council.
- To ensure that all relevant staff receive training on how to identify, deal with and prevent money laundering.
- To ensure that all necessary disclosures to the National Crime Agency (NCA) are made and that they are made as soon as practically possible after the suspicion has been raised.
- To decide whether a suspicious transaction report requires a disclosure to be made to NCA.
- To liaise with NCA regarding the outcome of the disclosure and update staff accordingly.



MONEY LAUNDERING – INTERNAL REPORTING FORM

Money laundering legislation requires all individuals within the Council to report any knowledge or suspicions that they might have of money laundering (as defined in the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002) to the Council's Money Laundering Reporting Officer. To assist individuals the following pro forma has been developed. Particular circumstances may require different information to be disclosed and this should be fully explained, if applicable.

Instructions for Completion

It is your legal duty and a requirement of your employment with Lichfield District Council that you report any suspicion concerning proceeds of crime to:

**Money Laundering Reporting Officer
Lichfield District Council
District Council House
Frog Lane
Lichfield
Staffordshire
WS13 6YY**

This should be marked **URGENT – **RESTRICTED** TO THE ADDRESSEE ONLY.**

You are also reminded that “**Tipping-Off**” is a criminal offence. You should therefore avoid discussing the content of this report with anyone other than the Money Laundering Reporting Officer.

Date of Report:		Date suspicion first aroused:	
Prepared by: Name & Dept:			
Disclosure Type:	(ie. Connections to crime/drugs/terrorism)		

Main Subject (Person)

Surname:		Forename(s):		Title:	

Date of Birth:		Gender:		
Occupation:		Employer:		
Address: (in full)		Postcode:	Home/Business /Registered	Current/Previous

Or

Main Subject (Company)

Company Name:			Company No:	
Type of Business:			VAT No:	
Country of Reg:				
Address: (in full)		Postcode:	Home/Business/ Registered	Current/Previous

Bank Account Details

Account Name:		Sort Code:	
Opened:		Account No:	
Closed:		Balance:	

Other Information

Any information/evidence held to confirm identification and/or address, i.e. Passport/driving licence etc.:

Connected Subject Person (if any)

Surname:		Forename(s):		Title:	
Date of Birth:		Gender:			
Occupation:		Employer:			
Address: (in full)		Postcode:	Home/Business /Registered	Current/Previous	

**Or
Connected Subject Company (if any)**

Company Name:		Company No:	
Type of Business:		VAT No:	
Country of Reg:			
Address: (in full)		Postcode:	Home/Business/ Registered
			Current/Previous

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Bank Account Details

Account Name:		Sort Code:	
Opened:		Account No:	
Closed:		Balance:	

Other Information

Any information/evidence held to confirm identification and/or address, ie. Passport/driving licence etc:

Reason for the Suspicion

Please tick any or all of the following which might apply

Drugs Personal Tax Fraud Vat Fraud

Crime Company Tax Fraud

Immigration Tobacco/Alcohol Excise Fraud

Following on from above, please set out the reason for the suspicion:

Please continue on separate sheet if required

Names of all other colleagues (principals and staff) who have been involved in the case

--

Declaration

The above is an accurate account of the facts that are available to me at the time of making the report. If I become aware of additional and/or changes in the information provided I will disclose these to the Money Laundering Reporting Officer in a timely manner. I am aware of the risks and penalties regarding “tipping-off” or frustrating in any way an investigation of the above or related matters by the authorities.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Name in Full: _____ Position: _____

For Completion by the MLRO

Date received	
Date acknowledged	
Unique case ref	
Are there reasonable grounds for suspecting money laundering activity?	
If yes, confirm date reported to NCA	
Is consent is required from the NCA to any on-going or imminent transactions which would otherwise be prohibited by the act? If yes, please confirm full details	
Date consent received from NCA	
Date consent given to employee for transaction to proceed	
If there are reasonable grounds to suspect money laundering, but you do not intend to report the matter to the NCA, please set out the reasons for non disclosure	
Date consent given by you to the employee for transaction to proceed. Signed and dated	
This report to be retained for at least 6 years	

APPENDIX 3

MONEY LAUNDERING AVOIDANCE AIDE MEMOIR

1. No member of staff must accept cash of more than £1,000 from any member of the public.
2. If you are offered cash of more than £1,000 you should advise the person offering it to you that it is not Council policy to accept large amounts of cash of more than £1,000 and that you need to obtain guidance from a senior member of staff. You should then contact the Money Laundering Reporting Officer to obtain authorisation to take cash, if appropriate.
3. Any large cash sums should not be banked in the first instance. The Money Laundering Reporting Officer should be contacted to seek guidance as to how to deal with the funds. Forms to report the matter are included in the policy document at Appendix 2.
4. Whilst it is not acceptable to be suspicious of all cash based businesses, anyone whom you know to be associated with such a business should be dealt with using a higher degree of scepticism. If you have any reason to suspect the source of their funds then you should contact the Money Laundering Reporting Officer to discuss your concerns, even if the payment is not received in cash.
5. If you receive a complaint from a member of the public in relation to possible criminal activity being carried out by someone who may be a customer of the Council (i.e. a Council Tax or Business Rates payer, rent payer, licensee etc.) you must pass this on to the Money Laundering Reporting Officer.
6. For Land and property transactions where Council land or property is sold without the involvement of independent legal advice, customers' identity must be verified on the basis of documents from a reliable and approved source; and the beneficial owner identified. Adequate measures must be taken on a risk sensitive basis to verify their identity. If satisfactory evidence of a customer's identity at the outset cannot be obtained, then the business transaction CANNOT proceed any further.



Prevention of the Facilitation of Tax Evasion

Document Status: **Final**

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1. Prevention of the Facilitation of Tax Evasion Policy Statement

This Statement sets out Lichfield District Council's (the Council's) policy in relation to tax evasion. It has the full support of both the Leadership Team and elected members through the Audit & Member Standards (A&MS) Committee.

Part 3 of the Criminal Finances Act 2017 created a corporate criminal offence where a corporate entity fails to prevent the facilitation of tax evasion by its employees, agents and contractual associates.

The Council has a zero tolerance approach to all forms of tax evasion, whether under UK law or under the law of any foreign country. Employees of the Council, its agents and contractual associates must not undertake any transactions which:

- (a) Cause the Council to commit a tax evasion offence; or
- (b) Facilitate a tax evasion offence by a third party.

The Council is committed to acting professionally, fairly and with integrity in all its dealings and relationships wherever we operate and implementing and enforcing effective systems to counter tax evasion facilitation. At all times, Council business should be conducted in a manner such that the opportunity for, and incidence of, tax evasion is prevented.

Governance and internal control procedures are already in place to meet the statutory requirements; and there is no suggestion that the Council tolerates tax evasion, or that employees engage in such behaviour. However, adopting an express corporate policy will help the Council defend any allegation that it has facilitated tax evasion.

This Policy Statement is intended to compliment the Council's suite of counter fraud related policies, notably the Counter Fraud and Corruption Policy Statement, Strategy & Guidance Notes which sets out what actions the Council proposes to take over the medium-term future to continue to develop its resilience to fraud, corruption and other financial irregularity and the key responsibilities with regard to fraud prevention, what to do if fraud or financial irregularity is suspected and the action that will be taken by management.

2. What is Tax Evasion?

Tax evasion is the illegal non-payment or under-payment of taxes, usually as the result of making a false declaration (or no declaration) of taxes due to the relevant tax authorities, which results in legal penalties if the perpetrator is caught.

Tax evasion involves all forms of tax, including income tax, corporation tax, VAT, national insurance, Business Rates and Council tax. This list is not exhaustive.

Tax avoidance, by contrast, is seeking to minimise the payment of taxes without deliberate deception. This is often legitimate but is sometimes contrary to the spirit of the law, e.g. involving the exploitation of loopholes.

Importantly the corporate criminal offence of facilitation only applies to tax evasion. The third party must be found guilty of tax evasion before the Council can be found to have facilitated it.

3. Examples of Tax Evasion

It is not possible to give examples covering every possible scenario, however, some 'red flag' indicators are detailed below to give a flavour of the scope of the legislation:

- *You become aware, in the course of your work, that a third party has made or intends to make a false statement relating to tax; has failed to disclose income or gains to, or to register with, HMRC; has delivered or intends to deliver a false document relating to tax; or has set up or intends to set up a structure to try to hide income, gains or assets from a tax authority.*
- *You become aware, in the course of your work that a third party has deliberately failed to register for VAT (or the equivalent tax in any relevant non-UK jurisdiction) or failed to account for VAT.*
- *A third party requests payment in cash and/or refuses to provide an invoice or receipt for a payment made.*
- *You become aware, in the course of your work that a third party working as an employee asks to be treated as a self-employed contractor, but without any material changes to their working conditions.*

4. The Criminal Finances Act 2017

Under the Criminal Finances Act 2017, a separate criminal offence is automatically committed by a corporate entity where the tax evasion is facilitated by a person acting in the capacity of an "associated person" to that body. For the offence to be prosecuted, the associated person must

deliberately and dishonestly take action to facilitate the tax evasion by the taxpayer. If the associated person accidentally, ignorantly, or negligently facilitates the tax evasion, then the corporate offence will not have been committed. The Council does not have to have deliberately or dishonestly facilitated the tax evasion itself; it is the fact that the associated person has done so, creates the liability for the Council.

Specifically, employees, workers, agents and associates must not knowingly do anything that helps someone else evade tax.

It is a defence to the corporate criminal offence of facilitating tax evasion if the Council can prove that it has in place such prevention procedures as it is reasonable to expect in the circumstances. Government guidance suggests an appropriate set of prevention measures which gives due recognition to the following:

- risk assessment;
- the proportionality of risk-based prevention procedures;
- top level commitment;
- due diligence;
- communication (including training);
- monitoring and review.

The Council must ensure a policy on prevention is brought to the attention of all workers. This policy is, therefore, published on the intranet.

5. Penalties

As an employer, if the Council fails to prevent its employees, workers, agents or service providers facilitating tax evasion, the Council can face both criminal sanctions including an unlimited fine, and associated reputational damage. The Council must therefore take its legal responsibilities seriously.

6. Policy Statement – Tax Evasion

Lichfield District Council has a zero tolerance approach to all forms of tax evasion, whether under UK law or under the law of any foreign country. Employees of the Council, its agents and contractual associates must not undertake any transactions which:

- Cause the Council to commit a tax evasion offence; or
- Facilitate a tax evasion offence by a third party.

7. Objective of this policy

This policy provides a coherent and consistent framework to enable the Council's employees (and other "associated persons") to understand and implement arrangements enabling compliance. In conjunction with related policies and key documents it will also enable employees to identify and effectively report a potential breach.

The Council requires that all relevant persons:

- Act honestly and with integrity at all times and to safeguard the Council's resources for which they are responsible
- Comply with the spirit, as well as the letter, of the laws and regulations of all jurisdictions in which the Council operates, in respect of the lawful and responsible conduct of activities

8. Scope of this policy

This policy applies to all of the Council's activities. For partners, joint ventures and suppliers, it will seek to promote the adoption of policies consistent with the principles set out in this policy.

Responsibility to control the risk of tax evasion occurring resides at all levels of the organisation. It does not rest solely within assurance functions, but in all service areas and corporate functions.

This policy covers all workers, including all levels and grades, those permanently employed, temporary agency / casual employees, contractors, non-executives, agents, Members, volunteers and consultants.

9. The Council's commitment to action

The Council commits to:

- Setting out a clear anti-tax evasion facilitation policy and keeping it up to date
- Making all workers aware of their responsibilities to adhere strictly to this policy at all times
- Raising awareness of the risks of tax evasion with workers so that they can recognise and avoid occurrences of potential tax evasion by themselves and others
- Undertaking a risk assessment to identify those areas of the Council's business where risk is considered to be highest

- Targeted training of individuals and service areas where the perceived risk is higher
- Promoting good ethical behaviour by employees in all of its forms
- Encouraging its workers to be vigilant and to report any suspicions of tax evasion, providing them with suitable channels of communication and ensuring sensitive information is treated appropriately
- Investigating instances of alleged tax evasion
- Referring investigations to the Police where it is appropriate to do so
- Taking firm and vigorous action against any individual(s) involved in tax evasion, or the facilitation of it
- Providing information to all employees on how to report breaches and suspected breaches of this policy
- Including appropriate clauses in contracts to prevent tax evasion.

The Council seeks to maintain relevant procedures, including top-level commitment to tackling tax evasion and effective communication, including training. Heads of Service have an additional responsibility (beyond that of the employees own) for ensuring this policy is communicated effectively to employees and frequently refreshed throughout their department along with other good practice regarding ethical behaviour.

10. Tax Evasion is not tolerated

It is unacceptable to:

- Engage in any form of facilitating tax evasion (including foreign tax evasion);
- Aid, abet, counsel or procure the commission of a tax evasion offence by another person;
- Fail to promptly report any request from any third party to facilitate the fraudulent evasion of tax by another person;
- Engage in any other activity that might lead to a breach of this policy;
- Threaten or retaliate against another individual who has refused to commit a tax evasion offence or who has raised concerns under this policy;

- Commit an offence under the law of any part of the UK consisting of being knowingly concerned in, or taking steps with a view to, the fraudulent evasion of tax.

11. Staff responsibilities

The prevention, detection and reporting of all forms of financial irregularity, including suspected tax evasion, are the responsibility of all those working for the organisation or under its control (“associated persons”). All workers are required to avoid activity that breaches this policy.

As individuals you must:

- Ensure that you read, understand and comply with this policy.
- Raise concerns as soon as possible if you believe or suspect that a conflict with this policy has occurred, or may occur in the future.

As well as the possibility of civil legal action and criminal prosecution, workers that breach this policy will face disciplinary action, which could result in dismissal for gross misconduct or other sanctions available based on their contract or appointment

12. Raising a concern

The Council is committed to ensuring that there is a safe, reliable, and confidential way of reporting any suspicious activity, and wants each and every worker to know how they can raise concerns.

All have a responsibility to help detect, prevent and report instances of tax evasion. If you have a concern regarding a suspected instance of tax evasion, please speak up – your information and assistance will help. The sooner it is brought to attention, the sooner it can be resolved.

There are multiple channels to help raise concerns. Please refer to the Council’s Whistleblowing Policy and determine the favoured course of action. Preferably the disclosure will be made and resolved internally (e.g. to a line manager or head of service). Secondly, where such disclosure would not be appropriate, concerns can be raised with the Shared Head of Audit. Raising concerns in these ways may be more likely to be considered reasonable than making disclosures publicly (e.g. to the media).

Concerns can be raised anonymously. In the event that an incident of suspected wrong doing is reported, the Council will act as soon as possible to evaluate the situation. It has clearly defined procedures for investigating fraud, misconduct and non-compliance issues and these will be followed in an

investigation of this kind. This is easier and quicker if concerns raised are not anonymous.

Workers who raise concerns or report wrongdoing could understandably be worried about the repercussions. The Council aims to encourage openness and will support anyone who raises a genuine concern in good faith under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken. The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA) protects individuals who make certain disclosures of information in the public interest. Our Whistleblowing Policy complies with PIDA. The Council is committed to ensuring nobody suffers detrimental treatment through the reporting of a concern in good faith.

13. Other relevant policies

Other relevant policies include:

- Counter Fraud and Corruption Policy Statement, Strategy & Guidance Notes.
- Whistleblowing Policy.
- **Anti- Money Laundering Policy.**

14. Useful links

- [Criminal Finances Act 2017, Part 3 – Corporate Offences of Failure to Prevent Facilitation of Tax Evasion](#)
- [HM Revenue & Customs](#)

15. Policy review

The Assistant Director – Finance & Commissioning (Section 151 Officer) and the Council's Audit & Member Standards Committee will ensure the continuous review and amendment of this policy document, to ensure that it remains compliant with good practice and legislative requirements.

Responsible Officer: Assistant Director – Finance & Commissioning
(Section 151)

Next Review date: November 2024