

COUNTER FRAUD & COMPLIANCE TEAM REPORT 2016/17

Audit Committee - 13 June 2017

Report of Chief Finance Officer

Status: For Consideration

Key Decision: No

This report supports the Key Aim of Effective Delivery of the Corporate Plan

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Scholey

Contact Officer(s) Adrian Rowbotham, Ext.7153, Glen Moore Ext. 7471.

Recommendation to Audit Committee: That Members note the work of the Counter Fraud & Compliance Team carried out during the year ended 31 March 2017.

Reason for recommendation: The Audit Committee is required to review the work of the Counter Fraud & Compliance Team.

Introduction and Background

- 1 Local authority fraud investigation has seen radical changes over the last few years. Under the Welfare Reform Act 2012 the Government proposed the creation of a new single integrated fraud investigation service with statutory powers to investigate all welfare benefit related offences, including Housing Benefit.
- 2 The Department for Work and Pensions' Single Fraud Investigation Service (S-FIS) commenced in October 2014 followed by a national roll-out. Sevenoaks District Council's jurisdiction over the investigation of Housing Benefit fraud passed to the Department for Work and Pensions in February 2016. S-FIS did not take up responsibility for the investigation of Council Tax fraud, Council Tax Reduction fraud or local housing related fraud issues. Sevenoaks District Council has seized this opportunity to re-model it's fraud investigation resources to protect funds which go to support vital local services.
- 3 On 1st February 2016 a new local authority fraud team was created, The Counter Fraud & Compliance Team, based within the Revenues & Benefits Service at Argyle Road. This report details the work of the new team during it's first full year of operation including the new policies/strategies created to protect the public purse.

Summary of Key Issues in the Report

- 4 An introduction to the new counter fraud & compliance procedures which have been introduced to protect both the Council Tax and Business Rates income bases within the Revenues & Benefits Department.
- 5 A breakdown of the successes achieved by the new Counter Fraud & Compliance Team during the period April 2016 to March 2017.
- 6 An explanation of how the authority continues to fulfil it's duties in relation to highlighting Housing Benefit fraud and supporting the Single Fraud Investigation Service in the investigation and prosecution of benefit fraud offences.
- 7 A summary of plans for 2017-18.

Key Implications

Financial

- 8 Not applicable.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

- 9 The Council is required to have effective anti-fraud arrangements in place in order to safeguard public funds and prevent the pursuance of crime. The new Counter Fraud & Compliance Team will contribute towards the council's fraud prevention initiatives.

Equality Assessment

- 10 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users

Conclusions

- 11 This report sets out the work conducted by the new Counter Fraud & Compliance Team during 2016/17. Members are requested to note the report and the plans for the future.

Appendices

Appendix A - Counter Fraud & Compliance Team
End of Year Report 2016/17.

Background Papers:

None.

Adrian Rowbotham
Chief Finance Officer