

AUDIT COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM No. 8
24 JULY 2023	PUBLIC REPORT

Report of:	Cecilie Booth, Executive Director of Corporate Services and s.151 Officer
Cabinet Member responsible:	Councillor Andy Coles, Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Governance
Contact Officer(s):	Steve Crabtree, Chief Internal Auditor

FRAUD AND INVESTIGATIONS 2022 / 2023

RECOMMENDATIONS	
FROM: Executive Director of Corporate Services and s.151 Officer	Deadline date: 24 July 2023
Committee is asked to:	
1. Review and endorse the annual report on the investigation of fraud within the Investigations Team during 2022 / 2023 included at Appendix A	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

1.1 This report is submitted to Audit Committee following referral from the Executive Director of Corporate Services and s151 Officer as part of the Audit Committee annual work programme.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

2.1 The Terms of Reference for the Audit Committee (agreed at Full Council) set out the key roles of the Committee including the following:

- 2.2.1.16: To monitor council policies on “raising concern at work” and the anti-fraud and anti-corruption strategy and the Councils complaints process.

2.2 This report is to present the work carried out during the past year to minimise the risk of fraud, bribery and corruption occurring in the Council.

3. TIMESCALE

Is this a Major Policy Item / Statutory Plan?	NO	If Yes, date for relevant Cabinet Meeting	–
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4. BACKGROUND

4.1 The public is entitled to expect the Council to conduct its affairs with integrity, honesty and openness and demand the highest standards of conduct from those working for it. In addressing this expectation, the Council has shown its commitment with an Investigations

team which is tasked with reviewing and investigating allegations of fraud and impropriety, breaches by staff of the Codes of conduct and high level corporate complaints. (NB: Complaints were realigned across the Council in February 2023 away from Investigations Team in line with Audit Committee improvements).

4.2 Audit Committee in March 2022 received an update on the strategic approach adopted by the Council in relation to tackling fraud, together with a review of a number of the policies. The policies adopted have been regularly refreshed.

4.3 Throughout the year, works have been undertaken to tackle frauds on Peterborough City Council. These have covered such areas as:

- National Fraud Initiative;
- Council Tax single person discounts;
- Council Tax support;
- Joint working with Department for Works and Pensions;
- Blue badge misuse;
- Staffing related issues

4.4 Many activities have been undertaken during the year to tackle frauds on Peterborough City Council. **Appendix A** provides an overview of the work undertaken during the year and provides an insight into how the Council will continue to operate, including the latest developments in relation to the National Fraud Initiative.

5. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

5.1 Protection of the public purse is key to ensuring that the Council is able to deliver on its corporate priorities.

6. CONSULTATION

6.1 This report has been issued to the Executive Director of Resources and s.151 Officer for consideration. No adverse comments have been made.

7. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT

7.1 That the Audit Committee is informed of the measures taken across the organisation to tackle and prevent fraudulent activity. Furthermore, this will assist in the development of future policies and procedures and allow the Committee to support this important function.

8. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 To enable the Audit Committee to continue to monitor the Council's approach to the investigation of fraud within the Investigations team

9 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 The option is not to present a report into fraud activities. This is not seen as best practice and does not demonstrate to the public that the Council has a zero tolerance in relation to fraud.

10. IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Financial

The Council will become more fraud aware and will continue to consider the risks and consequences. Fraud is unacceptable and requires a well thought through approach. The presumption must be about preventing fraud by designing systems to stop it happening in the first place but where it occurs, there should be an equal presumption that its perpetrators will face tough action. This can only serve to increase the standards of conduct across the Council.

10.2 Legal

There are no legal implications in respect of what is proposed.

11. **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985)

11.1 None

12. **APPENDICES**

12.1 Appendix A: Annual Fraud Report 2022 / 2023

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