

# STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

## AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

16 APRIL 2024

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Counter Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy</b>			
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	To present the Audit and Standards Committee an updated Counter Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy for approval and adoption.			
<b>Decision(s)</b>	<b>The Committee RESOLVES to:</b> <b>(a) Approve and adopt the Policy attached to this report and;</b> <b>(b) Authorises the Strategic Director of Resources to approve future minor amendments to the Policy in consultation with the Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit and One Legal.</b>			
<b>Consultation and Feedback</b>	Any Policies drafted or revised by the Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit have been reviewed by One Legal and have been issued to the relevant Senior Officers, Management and Governance Officers for comment.			
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<b>Options</b>	The service is a specialist criminal enforcement service working with the Gloucestershire Local Authorities, West Oxfordshire District Council and the Policies are introduced across the Partnership.			
<b>Background Papers</b>	None.			
<b>Appendices</b>	Appendix 1 - Counter Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy.			
<b>Implications (further details at the end of report)</b>	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

### 1. INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

- 1.1. Stroud District Council has joined the Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit Partnership and as such a number of Policies and Strategies will be introduced.
- 1.2. The Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit is tasked with reviewing the Council's Counter Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy. It is recommended good practice that the Policy is updated and reviewed at least every three years or more frequently in line with any legislative changes.
- 1.3. In administering its responsibilities, the Council has a duty to prevent fraud and corruption, whether it is attempted by someone outside or within the Council such as another organisation, a resident, an employee or Councillor.
- 1.4. The Council is committed to an effective counter fraud and corruption culture, by promoting high ethical standards and encouraging the prevention and detection of fraudulent activities, thus supporting corporate and community plans.

### 2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1. The Policy, attached at Appendix 1, was updated in 2022, in accordance with the Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit Partnership review period.
- 2.2. The Policy was originally developed to reflect (i) latest legislation and (ii) the changes from the creation of the Single Fraud Investigation Services (operated by the Department for Work and Pensions) which subsumed the Council's responsibilities for investigating Housing Benefit Fraud.
- 2.3. The Policy was previously reviewed following the changes brought about by data protection legislation / regulations.
- 2.4. The Policy highlights the key legislation and roles and responsibilities of Councillors, Officers and other parties.
- 2.5. In 2022, a section was inserted relating to Money Laundering and Proceeds of Crime and relating to Modern Slavery, detailing the Council's responsibilities.
- 2.6. The Policy was also refreshed to reflect the growth of the Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit work streams and responsibilities relating to risk.
- 2.7. As part of the consultation process, the Policy has been reviewed by One Legal, the Strategic Director of Resources and the Monitoring Officer.
- 2.8. Awareness will be raised with all staff following the approval of the Policy and refresher training in relation to counter fraud will be introduced following approval of the Policy.

### **3. CONCLUSION**

- 3.1 The Policy has been reviewed to ensure the content reflects current legislation and the Council's Policies and Procedures. The Policy will replace the existing Counter Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy.

### **4. IMPLICATIONS**

#### **4.1 Financial Implications**

- 4.1.1 There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report.
- 4.1.2 The support of the Counter Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy will help to support the prevention and detection of misuse of public funds and fraud therefore reducing potential financial loss to the Council.

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#### **4.2 Legal Implications**

- 4.2.1 In general terms, the existence and application of an effective fraud risk management regime assists the Council in effective financial governance which is less susceptible to legal challenge.

- 4.2.2 The legislation utilised by the Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit and other service areas within the Council is identified within the Policy and the Council must comply with all legislative requirements.
- 4.2.3 The Council has a statutory obligation for enforcing a wide range of legislation, where it is necessary and proportionate to do so. Human rights implications are a consideration of this type of activity and this is included within any Policy and decision making.

One Legal

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### **4.3 Equality Implications**

- 4.3.1 The promotion of effective counter fraud controls and a zero tolerance approach to internal misconduct promotes a positive work environment.

### **4.4 Environmental Implications**

- 4.4.1 There are no significant implications within this category.