

**Agenda item 8**

**AGS/27/22**

<b>Report title: Updated Counter Fraud and Corruption Strategy 2022</b>	
<b>Report to:</b> Audit, Governance and Standards Committee	
<b>Report author:</b> Paula Clowes, Head of Assurance	
<b>Date:</b> 31 October 2022	<b>For:</b> Approval
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<b>County Divisions affected:</b> All Essex	

**1. Everyone's Essex**

- 1.1 The Audit Governance and Standards Committee has a role to maintain oversight and to monitor the effectiveness of internal controls, governance and risk management arrangements as well as the work of the Counter Fraud team.
- 1.2 This strategy sets out the provisions that the Council has put in place to protect the public purse, Essex residents and ECC assets and ensure that fraud and corruption both within ECC and perpetrated against ECC are kept to an absolute minimum. In instances where fraud and corruption cannot be prevented, effective measures are taken to ensure that a consistent approach is taken to tackling fraud and error.

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Counter Fraud and Corruption Strategy be approved in the form appended to the report.

**3. Background**

- 3.1 The Council's current Counter Fraud and Corruption Strategy was approved by Audit Governance and Standards Committee in September 2020. It has now been reviewed and updated.
- 3.2 The refreshed Counter Fraud and Corruption Strategy 2022 is attached at appendix 1.
- 3.3 The following changes have been made as part of the review for 2022:
  - Page 3 – Foreward – updated statistics relating to:
    - Annual gross budget – amended from £1.8 billion to £2 billion
    - Employees – updated from 12,000 fte to 9,000 fte
    - Pension payments – updated from £44,682 to £45,000

- Page 7 – updated the link to ECC’S Whistleblowing Policy
- Page 7 – updated the reference and link to the external whistleblowing line, amended from Expolink to Ethics Point
- Page 13 – amended from annual review to biennial review of the Strategy
- Page 13 – updated the link to the Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally checklist
- Back page – added alternative e-mail contact address for the Counter Fraud Team – [cfteam@essex.gov.uk](mailto:cfteam@essex.gov.uk)

3.4 It is good practice to review the policy every two years. The next review is therefore due in 2024.

#### **4. Links to our Strategic Ambitions**

4.1 A strategic approach to counter-fraud activity is critical in ensuring that the Council successfully mitigates its fraud and corruption risks in all areas of work to ensure vital services continue to be delivered and available resources reach those most in need and the council remains resilient. This report links to the following aims in the Essex Vision.

- Enjoy life into old age
- Provide an equal foundation for every child
- Strengthen communities through participation
- Develop our County sustainably
- Connect us to each other and the world
- Share prosperity with everyone

4.2 This report links to the following strategic priorities in the Organisational Strategy ‘Everyone’s Essex’:

- A strong, inclusive and sustainable economy
- A high quality environment
- Health wellbeing and independence for all ages
- A good place for children and families to grow

#### **5. Financial implications**

5.1 There are no financial implications as the risk management activity will be met within existing resources.

## **6. Legal implications**

- 6.1 The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require the Council to have a sound system of internal control which includes a requirement to have adequate arrangements for the management of risk. The strategy sets out our arrangements and is thus a key way of complying with those regulations.

## **7. Equality and Diversity Considerations**

- 7.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:
- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc. on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful
  - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
  - (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- 7.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).
- 7.3 The equality impact assessment indicates that this strategy will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.

## **8 List of Appendices**

**Appendix A - Counter Fraud and Corruption Strategy 2022**

## **9 List of Background papers**

[Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally \(FFCL\) a strategy for the 2020s](#)