

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Accounts and Audit Committee
Date: 23 November 2016
Report for: Information
Report of: Audit and Assurance Manager

Report Title

Fraud reporting: Awareness-raising

Summary

The purpose of the report is to update the Accounts and Audit Committee on recent developments in respect of the use of the Council website to report fraud and plans to raise awareness of this.

Recommendation

The Accounts and Audit Committee notes the report.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

Name: Mark Foster – Audit and Assurance Manager
Extension: 1323

Background Papers: None

Fraud Reporting – Raising Awareness

1. Introduction

Following the transfer of the Benefit Fraud investigation team to the DWP and the establishment of a new Counter Fraud and Enforcement team in the Council, the Council's website was updated to ensure the revised arrangements are reflected and ensuring there is a clear route for the public to report instances of suspected fraud.

In addition to contact details for reporting fraud, the website now includes online fraud reporting forms.

Actions are planned to raise awareness of the new fraud reporting arrangements which this report covers.

2. Fraud Reporting

Details of how to report suspected fraud are found under the "Report It" section on the Council website.

<http://www.trafford.gov.uk/residents/benefits-and-council-tax/benefits/reporting-fraud.aspx>

Details are shown of examples of fraud and contact details for reporting fraud including those both at the Council and also the DWP in respect of Housing Benefit Fraud.

In addition to the address, telephone and email contact details, there is an option to complete an online fraud report form. Using this option, forms are available for different types of fraud with headings shown as:

- Council Tax Support Fraud
- Council Tax fraud
- Business Rates fraud
- Social Care fraud
- Blue Badge fraud
- Council employee, councillor or contractor fraud.

Any details submitted will be sent to the Counter Fraud and Enforcement team to follow up in liaison with other services as required.

3. Awareness-raising

In order to promote awareness of the fraud report process the following is planned:

Council Website

A press release to support the new reporting arrangements is issued with draft details shown in appendix 2. This can be shared both through the website and the Council's use of social media.

It is also proposed that in addition to details currently shown within the "Report it" section re fraud on the website, on the home page there is a clear reference to reporting Fraud under the "Report it" heading to ensure details are readily accessible.

In addition, consideration could be given to temporarily having the banner area at the top of the website home page to make reference to fraud reporting (An example of what could be shown is in Appendix 1).

Intranet

Staff can be made aware of the updated fraud reporting details via intranet updates. Details to be included as part of the weekly update and also to be referenced through the 6 boxes are shown in appendix 3. The main details are similar to that shown for the website but tailored for staff e.g. in the third paragraph it states “Staying alert to fraud is everyone’s business. As public sector employees we all work hard to protect our organisation’s resources.”

4. Ongoing / Future Actions

Any successful prosecutions publicised in the press will publicise the above fraud reporting arrangements. CLT and the Accounts and Audit Committee will be updated in terms of future fraud investigation work, including any impact of the revised reporting arrangements.

Existing anti-fraud related policies and guidance documents will be updated to reflect the updated fraud reporting contact details.

In addition, as previously planned, there will be a more detailed review of the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy and supporting policies and guidance to be completed with any updated strategy, policy and guidance to be agreed with CLT and the Accounts and Audit Committee by March 2017. This can include further awareness raising including ensuring induction processes incorporate any updated details.

5. Next Steps

The Audit and Assurance Service will liaise further with the Counter Fraud and Enforcement team and Marketing & Communications to commence the above actions through November/December 2016.



If you wish to report somebody you believe is defrauding the Council, you can do so by contacting us in a number of different ways. Find out how here <http://www.trafford.gov.uk/residents/benefits-and-council-tax/benefits/reporting-fraud.aspx>



Fraud – Spot it, Stop it

Fraud attacks against local government cost over £2bn each year.

To help prevent fraud in Trafford Council and underline our zero tolerance attitude to fraud, we investigate all allegations of fraud that it is believed may be being committed against the authority.

The estimated £2bn that local government loses to fraud each year could be paying for vital frontline services. Instead, it is being used by criminals to fund their lifestyles and it may also result in it funding other illegal activities. Working together we can spot fraud and stop it.

If you suspect an incident of fraud then please report it. We have introduced a new online reporting form to make fraud reporting easier.

What counts as fraud?

We want to hear from you about any activity being committed against the Council that you believe to be fraudulent. Examples include:

Council Tax fraud and Council Tax Support Fraud

Business Rates Fraud

Social Care Fraud

Blue Badge Fraud

Fraud, Bribery, Corruption or Theft involving employees, councillors, contractors and council partners.

How to report a fraud

If you wish to report somebody you believe is defrauding the Council, you can do so by contacting us in a number of different ways:

Complete our [online fraud report form](#)

Email: counterfraud@trafford.gov.uk

Telephone: 0161 912 2166/1839/2771

Or write to:

Counter Fraud & Enforcement Team
2nd Floor Sale
Waterside
Sale
M33 7ZF

When you've reported fraud

We will take your allegation seriously, and we will investigate if we have enough information. Anything you tell us will be treated in the strictest confidence. However we cannot tell you about the progress of our investigations. When we catch fraudsters we may:

- Stop them getting the council service they've been fraudulently obtaining, for example their Blue Badge
- Recover money fraudulently claimed
- Prosecute them in the courts
- Publicise our successful cases in the local press
- Ensure that correct council tax and/or business rates liability is charged

Housing Benefit fraud

Housing Benefit fraud is now investigated by the Department for Work and Pensions. If you wish to report somebody who you believe is falsely claiming Housing Benefit please report it to:

**The DWP National Benefit Fraud helpline
PO Box 224,
Preston
PR1 1GP,**

Tel: 0800 08540440 (textphone 0800 320 0512)

or via www.gov.uk/report-benefit-fraud 



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