

# **Guildford Borough Council**

Report to: Corporate Governance & Standards Committee

Date: 11 April 2024

Ward(s) affected: All

Report of Director: Section 151 Officer

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Report Status: Open

## **Guildford Borough Council Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy**

### **1. Executive Summary**

1.1 Guildford Borough Council encourages staff and others to report any cases of suspected wrongdoing or misconduct, illegal acts, or failure to act within the Council, as part of its commitment to act with integrity and openness in the best interest of its residents and communities. To govern any such disclosures, the Council has an Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy. That Policy has been reviewed and updated.

### **2. Recommendation to Committee**

The Committee is recommended:

2.1. To consider the proposed revised Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy at Appendix 1 to this report, together with the accompanying annexes:

Annex 1 – Anti Bribery Policy

Annex 2 – Counter Fraud Policy

Annex 3 – Fraud Prosecution Policy

Annex 4 – Anti Money Laundering Policy

- 2.2. To provide any consultation feedback to the Executive for it to consider when considering the adoption of the revised Policy.

### **3. Reasons for Recommendation:**

- 3.1. Guildford Borough Council operates a ‘zero tolerance’ approach towards fraud and corruption and we will use the full range of sanctions available against any individual or organisation found to be committing fraud. Every pound taken by theft or fraud reduces our ability to provide services to the people who need them the most.
- 3.2. It is right and proper to uphold the principle of transparency to encourage individuals to make any disclosures and raise any concerns where they suspect wrongdoing.
- 3.3. It is important that the Council has a Policy in place to govern and investigate issues related to fraud and corruption and that such Policy is kept under regular review.
- 3.4. Whilst the adoption of the Policy is within the remit of the Executive, as this Committee has a role in monitoring the operation of the Policy, there is merit in the Committee having the opportunity to consider any proposed revisions to the Policy and being able to provide feedback by way of consultation to the Executive.

### **4. Exemption from publication**

- 4.1. This report does not contain exempt information under Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

## **5. Purpose of Report**

- 5.1. The purpose of the report is for the Committee to have the opportunity to consider the proposed revisions to the Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy and to provide feedback to the Executive before it considers whether to adopt the revised Policy.

## **6. Strategic Priorities**

- 6.1. One of the Council's values is to ensure that its councillors and staff uphold the highest standards of conduct.
- 6.2. The Council's mission is to be a trusted, efficient, innovative and transparent Council that listens and responds quickly to the needs of our community.

## **7. Background**

- 7.1. The aim of the Anti-Fraud Policy is to prevent any form of fraud from happening in the Authority as well as to encourage employees and others who have serious concerns about any fraudulent activities to come forwards and voice those concerns.
- 7.2. The Council's Anti-Fraud Policy intends to:
  - take appropriate measures to prevent and deter fraud,
  - encourage employees to report any suspicions of fraud,
  - take appropriate disciplinary, civil, or criminal proceedings,
  - report suspected fraud to the police and all relevant organisations,
  - reassure staff that they should be able to raise genuine concerns without fear of reprisals, victimisation, subsequent discrimination, disadvantage or dismissal, even if they turn out to be mistaken, provided the disclosure is made in the public interest.

- 7.3 The Council is committed to conducting business with honesty and integrity and expects all staff to maintain high standards of conduct. However, all organisations face the risk of things going wrong from time to time, or of unknowingly harbouring illegal or unethical conduct and activities. A culture of openness and accountability is essential in order to prevent such situations occurring or to address them when they do occur.
- 7.4 Having an Anti-Fraud and Corruption policy is viewed by the Council as a policy that can prevent the occurrence of fraudulent activities and make a valuable contribution to the Council's efficiency and long-term success. The Council is committed to achieving the highest possible standards of service and the highest possible ethical standards in public life and in all aspects of its practices.
- 7.5 The Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy should be regularly reviewed at least every two years, or more frequently where there is change to legislation or statutory guidance, or learning from its operation that should be taken into account.
- 7.7 It is proposed that Guildford Borough Council and Waverley Borough Council attempt to align their Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policies as far as it is appropriate to do so, whilst accepting there may be local differences. This is with a view to supporting the collaboration and transformation programme.

## **8. Consultations**

- 8.1. The purpose of this report is to consult with the Council's Corporate Governance & Standards Committee.

## **9. Key Risks**

- 9.1. There is a risk of not having an Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy in place, or that fraudulent activities are not detected.
- 9.2. There is a risk that disclosures are not made, or not made in a transparent way, or dealt with in accordance with process. There is a greater risk of fraudulent activities and wrongdoing going unchecked within the Council.

## **10. Financial Implications**

10.1. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

## **11. Legal Implications**

11.1. This Committee's terms of reference provide that the Committee is responsible for considering an annual report on the operation of the Anti-Fraud and Corruption policy, including incidents reported.

11.2. The Constitution provides that the Executive is responsible for making decisions on all executive matters within the policy framework which are not the responsibility of any other part of the Council.

## **12. Human Resource Implications**

12.1 There are no Human Resource implications arising from this report.

## **13. Equality and Diversity Implications**

13.1 There are no Equality & Diversity implications arising from this report.

## **14. Climate Change/Sustainability Implications**

14.1. There are no Climate Change/Sustainability implications arising from this report.

## **15. Background Papers**

None.

## **16. Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy & Strategy, incorporating:

- Annex 1: Anti Bribery Policy
- Annex 2: Counter Fraud Policy
- Annex 3: Fraud Prosecution Policy
- Annex 4: Anti Money Laundering Policy