

24 November 2022		ITEM: 7
Standards & Audit Committee		
Counter Fraud & Investigation Quarterly Update (Q2)		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-key	
Report of: Michael Dineen, Assistant Director for Counter Fraud Investigation, Enforcement & Community Safety		
Accountable Assistant Director: Michael Dineen, Assistant Director for Counter Fraud Investigation, Enforcement & Community Safety		
Accountable Director: Julie Rogers, Director of Public Realm		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

The Counter Fraud & Investigation service is responsible for the prevention, detection and deterrence of all instances of alleged economic crime affecting the authority including: allegations of fraud, theft, corruption, bribery and money laundering.

This report outlines the performance of the CFI team over the last quarter (Q2) for Thurrock Council as well as the work the team have delivered nationally for other public bodies.

1. Recommendation

1.1 The Standards and Audit Committee comments on the performance of the Counter Fraud & Investigation Department.

2. Introduction & Background

2.1 The council's Counter Fraud team is responsible for delivering the corporate counter fraud programme which includes proactive work to enhance the council's controls as well as respond to intelligence from that proactive work and information from other sources.

3. Performance

3.1 CFI receives reports about suspected fraud from the public, government and law enforcement partners, internal referral mechanisms and proactive

operations. The figures show the performance of the department for Quarter 2 (Q2) of 2022/23.

- 25 reports of suspected fraud have been received
- 20 Investigations have been closed as 'no fraud'
- 3 sanctions have been delivered in cases of proven fraud
- 0 Social housing property has been recovered
- 123 active investigations are currently being conducted

3.2 The ring-fenced National Investigation Service (NATIS) function within the Counter Fraud & Investigation portfolio continues to support both central and local government bodies. This department will continue to assist the CFI where applicable and to the best use of resources.

4. Work Plan for 2022/23

4.1 CFI has a programme of proactive work to ensure the council's controls against fraud are robust and effective. That plan was presented and accepted by the Standards and Audit Committee in July 2022. **Appendix 1** sets out the progress made in delivering the Counter Fraud & Investigation Work Plan 2022/23.

4.2 The work programme is a working document and if during the year changes or additions to the plan are proposed between the CFI and the Section 151 Officer, these will be brought back to the Committee for approval.

4.3 The proactive work by the service continues with a focus on delivering training and knowledge across the council, from employees to members. The team will be engaging with high-risk areas, such as housing and social care, to ensure all that work within these high-risk areas are aware of the signs of fraud or unlawful behaviour. This is a significant part of the pro-active work plan.

4.4 Closer interaction with Housing and Environment is envisaged for the year to come with specific joint working to target the assets of those that prosper from their criminal activity against the council. This will utilise officers with the appropriate powers from the CFI and share the expertise with others in the council.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

5.1 This report provides a detailed update to the Committee on the counter-fraud measures for the Council and how it is reducing fraud under the council's counter-fraud strategy.

6. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

6.1 Not applicable.

7. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

7.1 Work undertaken by CFI to reduce fraud and enhance the Council's anti-fraud and corruption culture contributes to the delivery of all its aims and priorities supporting good corporate governance.

8. Implications

8.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Laura Last**
Senior Management Accountant, Finance

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

8.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Gina Clarke**
Corporate Governance Lawyer & Deputy Monitoring Officer

There are no legal implications within this report.

8.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
Community Engagement and Project Monitoring Officer - Adults, Housing & Health

There are no social or community issues surrounding this report. There are also no Diversity or Equality issues.

8.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health Inequalities, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder and Impact on Looked After Children

None.

9. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

Counter Fraud & Investigation Policy & Strategy – thurrock.gov.uk/fraud
Counter Money Laundering Policy & Strategy – thurrock.gov.uk/fraud
CroweClarkWhitehill Annual Fraud Indicator – crowe.co.uk

10. Appendices to the report

- Appendix 1 – Counter Fraud & Investigation Proactive Work Plan 2022/23

Report Author:

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