

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Finance & Resources Service

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Counter Fraud & Investigation Team

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Appendix 1 – Counter Fraud Work Plan 2019/20

Risk area	Tasks	Target date	Current status	Responsible officer	Completed date
Council wide	Establish a 'business as usual' functioning of the Counter Fraud Team as per the tasks detailed in the Development Plan up to the 3 months checkpoint.	January 2020	On target with all vital tasks either completed or in progress. Those tasks that are outstanding relate to non-vital requirements. This has been disrupted due to the loss of staff and now pandemic restrictions.	Shaun Dutton	In progress
Council wide	Revised policies for Counter Fraud, Bribery & Corruption and Money Laundering to be produced. Counter Fraud internal publicity campaign to be launched to coincide with the publication of the above.	January 2020	The revised policies were initially by the predecessor team, as part of the joint service arrangement, and have subsequently been updated to reflect the change in arrangements. Posters for display in common staff areas have been prepared and an all-staff email is being drafted in preparation for the publication of the new policies.	Shaun Dutton	Completed Completed
Business Rates	Pro-active audit of empty commercial premises.	January 2020	Awaiting authorisation from BR dept to begin planning. This initiative has been postponed due to resource shortage.	Shaun Dutton	POSTPONED



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Risk area	Tasks	Target date	Current status	Responsible officer	Completed date
Council tax	Joint working agreement with DWP for cases involving the Council Tax Reduction scheme.	January 2020	Meeting with the DWP held in early January 2020. Discussions are ongoing; we are currently waiting for certain responses from the DWP.	Shaun Dutton, Caroline Mercieca	In progress
Council wide	Internal Council-wide counter fraud awareness / publicity campaign to include posters in prominent common areas and information emails.	January 2020	Fraud awareness posters are now in place throughout the Civic Centre. An all-staff information email has been distributed. Monthly Fraud Awareness updates are being provided to Staff Communications for dissemination.	Shaun Dutton	Ongoing
Council wide	Fraud awareness training to be offered to staff, consideration to be made for material to be tailored to specific business areas, fraud awareness training to be included in new staff induction sessions.	February 2020	Planning for this was in progress, but this has been postponed due to the current resource shortage.	Shaun Dutton	POSTPONED
Housing	Pro-active audit of SBC tenancies.	March 2020	Planning for this was in progress, but this has been postponed due to the current resource shortage.	Shaun Dutton	POSTPONED
Housing	Postal information campaign to targeted tenancy areas to encourage reporting of concerns about fraud.	April 2020	Planning for this is in progress.	Shaun Dutton	In progress
Housing	Review of SBC tenancy terms and conditions to strengthen the counter fraud message and encourage cooperation with the counter fraud team.	April 2020	Planning for this is in progress. The tenancy T&Cs are being reviewed in April and South Essex Homes are have agreed that we can contribute to this process.	Shaun Dutton	In progress

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Risk area	Tasks	Target date	Current status	Responsible officer	Completed date
Proactive fraud drives	<p>Introduce initiatives to engage public support to counter fraud against the council focussing initially on social housing fraud and council tax fraud.</p> <p>These activities are part of the 3-6 months Development Plan.</p>	April 2020	<p>High level planning and consideration of appropriate tactics has started.</p> <p>Tactics include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of social media • Making reporting fraud easy, <i>the Council public facing website has been reviewed and updated.</i> • Targeted mail drops to high risk areas • Including counter fraud information with other SBC publicity initiatives <i>this has been delayed due to resource issues.</i> • Targeted proactive operations • Joint working with other SBC departments and partner agencies, <i>meetings have been arranged with trading standards to discuss joint working, discussions are in hand with the DWP.</i> 	Shaun Dutton	In progress.

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Council wide	<p>Raise the fraud awareness of all staff through engagement with key stakeholders and a training programme for all new starters and employees in high risk areas.</p> <p>These activities are part of the 3-6 months Development Plan.</p>	April 2020	<p>Planning for this is in progress.</p> <p>Key stakeholders have been identified and a dialogue has been established, most notably:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Essex Homes has a Counter Fraud presence on their floor weekly and are receiving monthly progress reports • The Council Tax department are receiving monthly progress reports and a 'fast track' for dealing with CT fraud has been developed (not yet implemented) • Monthly fraud awareness updates are being provided to Staff Communications to disseminate to all staff. 	Shaun Dutton	In progress
Counter fraud	Develop a Financial Investigator capability.	To start by April 2020	<p>One of the team members is already on the pathway to becoming an accredited Financial Investigator.</p> <p>Enquiries are in progress for her to undergo the next stage of training with the NCA. We are currently awaiting course dates. <i>This has been deferred due to the officer in question being unable to commence a period of training due to personal circumstances.</i></p>	Shaun Dutton	In progress

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Blue Badge	Updated training to be delivered to CEOs with updated supporting materials. Information sharing agreement with Essex Police. Joint pro-active operation with ACPOA and Essex Police Community Policing Team to target Blue Badge abuse.	June/July 2020	Planning for this is in progress.	Shaun Dutton	In progress
Council wide	Complete the Development Plan up to the 9 months checkpoint	July 2020	Awaiting implementation.	Shaun Dutton	In progress
Counter fraud	Develop 'income generation' opportunities through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counter fraud training initiatives for SBC partners and service providers • An investigation and prosecution service to local Housing Associations 	July 2020	This is aspirational at this time and development will be dependent upon how the team progresses over the coming 6 months. Some initial discussions have been had with Estuary Housing to explore what interest there may be for such a service. This has been well received.	Shaun Dutton	In progress