

Southend-on-Sea City Council

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Appendix 1 – Counter Fraud Work Plan 2023/24

KEY:

Denotes proactive activities
Denotes prevention/protection activities
Denotes development activities

Area	Activity	Target date	Current status	Resource requirement (officers)	Responsible officer	Completed date
Counter fraud	Maintain business as usual through management of the caseload, timely investigation of referrals towards a prompt, efficient and fair resolution, proactive fraud detection initiatives and the provision of advice and training to the wider council.	Ongoing	Business as usual is being maintained, the team is at its full complement, albeit with a backlog of cases which is at a manageable level.	5	Shaun DUTTON	ONGOING
Council wide	Internal publicity campaign to highlight the work and reporting mechanisms of the fraud team.	Ongoing	Avenues to increase the team's profile across the Council are being explored.	1	Shaun DUTTON	ONGOING
		Ongoing	Continue to publish the monthly fraud newsletter to staff and residents.	1	Shaun DUTTON	ONGOING
		May 2023	Host the weekly Corporate Leadership Meeting. This has been agreed. This did not take	1	Shaun DUTTON	NOT ACHIEVED

Area	Activity	Target date	Current status	Resource requirement (officers)	Responsible officer	Completed date
		November 2023	place due to administrative complications. Publicity campaign to highlight International Fraud Awareness Week.	1	Shaun DUTTON	06/11/2023
Housing	Pro-active fraud detection and deterrence exercises on social tenancies.	July 2023	To be targeted in areas at high risk of subletting.	6	Paul BROADBENT	28/07/2023
		September 2023	Appropriate areas of activity will be determined during the planning stage.	6	James COUSEN	Postponed
		March 2024		6	Caroline MERCIECA	
Council wide	Fraud risk and process analysis of areas of the Council's business at high risk of fraud through participation in internal audits.	Ongoing	This work will be performed alongside Internal Audit's programme of work with risk assessment findings incorporated into their reports. This has the effects of adding more weight to any recommendations made and contributing to a closer working relationship between the two teams. CFIT continue to issue specific post-investigation reports recommending process/policy improvements that would provide a greater protection from fraud where appropriate.	2-5	Shaun DUTTON	ONGOING

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Blue Badge	Proactive fraud detection and deterrence exercise on Blue Badges	August 2023	Plain clothes enforcement exercise. Areas of activity to be determined at the planning stage but targeted at areas of reported high incidence of blue badge fraud. The October activity was cancelled due to the Team's workload and existing portfolio of blue badge investigations.	6	Shaun DUTTON	01/09/2023
		October 2023		6	Shaun DUTTON	CANCELLED
Business Rates / Council Tax	Proactive review of second homes rented out as a business to evade Council Tax liability by claiming SBRR. (Rolled over from 2022/23)	November 2023	Currently conducting research with other local authorities who have claimed success with this activity. Enquiries confirmed that this loophole has since been closed by the Government.	2	Shaun DUTTON	31/10/2023
Council wide	Investigate the use of technology and data matching to identify and target the risks of fraud against the Council. Develop targeted proactive exercises to act on the results. (Rolled over from 2022/23)	March 2024	This is aspirational and dependent upon a variety of factors such as information sharing agreements, the availability, cost and complexity of tools required to do this, staff training etc. Enquiries into the feasibility of this will be conducted as and when workload commitments allow. The Council's Insights Team have been engaged to investigate how we can make best use of the data the Council holds.	2-4	Shaun DUTTON	

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Council Tax	Undertake a Single Person Discount fraud drive that reduces fraudulent discounts, increases council tax revenue, and increases the council tax base. (Rolled over from 2022/23)	March 2024	Research currently being undertaken to identify third party data analysis providers, and best practice from other local authorities who have experience with this.	1	TBA	
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 Provision of a Financial Investigation service to other SBC teams and possibly other local authorities. 	TBD	This is aspirational at this time and development will be dependent upon how the team progresses over the coming 12 months. This cannot be explored at the expense of our ongoing workload commitments or pro-active and prevention activities.	TBD	Shaun DUTTON	