

Crawley Borough Council

Report to Audit Committee

30 September 2019

Fraud and Investigation Team Report

Report of the Operational Benefits & Corporate Fraud Manager - Report no. FIN/480

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report describes the activity of the Corporate Fraud & Investigation Team for the period 2 July 2019 to 11 September 2019. All outcome figures are taken from closed cases. Year to date figures are also included in the report for 2019/20.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Committee note the report.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 3.1 The Committee has a responsibility to oversee the Council's anti fraud and corruption arrangements. A major part of those arrangements is the activity of the Corporate Fraud & Inspection Team in identifying, investigating and taking action against cases of fraud.

4. Information & Analysis

4.1 Active Caseload

The fraud team are currently investigating the following case types

Case Type	Number of Cases
Non domestic rates	3
Council Tax Reduction Scheme	11
Housing Investigations	30
Housing Right to buy	9
Fly Tipping	1
Council Tax Single person Discount	5
Taxi	1
Total	60

The above cases are all at various stages in the investigation lifecycle and will be reported on when the cases are closed.

4.2 Housing Fraud

During the reporting period the team have achieved the following:

	<u>In period</u>	<u>2019/20 (YTD)</u>
Properties recovered	3	3
Prevented allocation (inc homeless applications)	3	7
Stopped Right to Buy (actual discount value)	3 (£173,982)	5 (£337,682)
Notional value of savings	£361,700	£517,682

The previous Audit Commission through their 'Protecting the public purse' studies conservatively estimated, that for each property being misused and not available to the Local Authority it cost the Authority £18,000 per year per property. Housing vulnerable families in Bed & Breakfast on a temporary basis is very expensive and can cost in excess of £100 per night. The Audit Commission figure is therefore used for recovering properties and preventing false applications.

The Right to Buy figures are the actual discounts which would have awarded had the sale of the property gone through.

4.3 Single Person Discount

The investigators and inspectors throughout the year will routinely look into referrals received from the public or other means suggesting there are 2 adults resident and therefore not eligible to the discount.

	<u>In period</u>	<u>2019/20 YTD</u>
Discounts removed	8 (£3,974)	29 (£16,105)

4.4 Council Tax and Business Rates

The team continue to investigate and inspect Council Tax and Business rates.

New billable CT or Rates – Inspectors are constantly looking for properties or businesses that are not on the valuation list and therefore not being billed. Legislation does not require occupiers to report new properties.

	Council Tax		Non Domestic Rates	
	In period	2019/20	In period	2019/20
New billable CT or Rates	£381,502	£618,872	£987,600	£1,550,274

5. **Housing Amnesty**

- 5.1 At the previous meeting the committee requested CMT be asked if another Housing Amnesty should take place. I have been informed by CMT that the time is not right at the moment due to work ongoing around 5 year tenancies.

6 Implications

6.1 There are no implications from the report.

7 Background Papers

7.1 None

Report author and contact officer: Chris Corker, Operational Benefits & Corporate Fraud Manager (telephone 01293 438598)

ENDS