

Crawley Borough Council

Report to Audit Committee

9th July 2024

Update on Counter-Fraud

Report of the Head of Corporate Finance - Report no. **FIN/663**

1. Purpose

- 1.1. This report describes the activity of the Corporate Fraud & Investigation Team for the period 8 November 2023 to 30 June 2024. All outcome figures are taken from closed cases.
- 1.2. It has also been decided by Head of Service that the frequency of the Fraud report will stay at the quarterly intervals as previously used.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. That the Committee note the report.

3. Reasons for the Recommendation

- 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. The Fraud Team are currently investigating the following case types: (Non fraud cases are not included in this report)

<u>Case Type</u>	<u>Number of current open cases</u>	<u>Previous reporting period</u>
Council Tax Support	16	16
Housing Cases	18	13
Fly Tip	1	2
Right to buy	18	12
Total	53	43

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:

	In period	2024/25 (YTD)
Properties recovered	8 (£218,400)	2 (£54,600)
Right to buy prevented	4 (£409,600)	1 (£102,400)
Prevented Allocations	3 (£81,900)	1 (27,300)
Notional value of savings	£709,900	£184,300

Using CBC's own figures from homelessness we estimate the average cost of Temporary Accommodation which currently stands at £75 per night. Annually this equates to £27,300.

4.3. Single Person Discount

The Council Tax Inspectors have now completed their annual review exercise of Single Person Discounts.

The inspectors went through a large data match exercise where properties which have a 25% were matched against properties that have more than one person registered with our election team.

A total of 192 properties were matched in this process. Out of these, 124 properties were discovered to have the discount incorrectly.

This has resulted in a further £86629.72 of council tax liability being billed.

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	2024/25	In period	2024/25
New billable CT or Rates	£279,856.26	£55,358.79	£4,868,000	£3,234,000

5. **Significant Cases**

- 5.1 A referral was received from a member of CBC staff informing us that a tenant was not using their CBC property as it should be and may have possibly sublet this out to others.

Background checks were made on the tenant and a new address was found out of area.

A home visit was made to the CBC property where somebody other than the tenant was home. They informed the investigator that the tenant was out but that she lived there.

Further checks were made and the tenant made contact with the investigator who informed her of his findings at that time. The investigator informed the tenant that they had an ongoing criminal investigation and that this will continue whilst she is not using her home as it should be used.

The tenant then made contact on the following Monday and voluntarily gave the property back to the council as she was living out of area.

6. Implications

6.1. There are no implications from the report.

7. Background Papers

7.1. None

Report author and contact officer:

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