

Epping Forest District Council

Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy

(Including Anti-Money Laundering Policy)

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Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy

Section 1 – Purpose of the Strategy

Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) is committed to high legal, ethical, and moral standards, and the proper accountability of public funds.

The Council will not tolerate fraud and corruption in the administration of its responsibilities, whether from inside or outside the Council.

The Council's expectation of propriety and accountability is that Members and staff at all levels will lead by example in ensuring adherence to legal requirements, rules, procedures, and practices.

The Council also expects that individuals and organisations with which it comes into contact will act towards the Council with integrity.

The purpose of this Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy is to support the Council's 2018 -23 Corporate Plan by protecting the public purse as every pound lost through fraud cannot be spent on Council services. This strategy:

- Sets out the aims and long-term vision of the Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption framework
- Outlines the Council's approach to Anti-Fraud and Corruption
- Outlines the expected outcomes along with how the Council intends to achieve and monitor these

Section 2 – Key Objectives

The key objectives of the Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption framework are to:

- protect the Council's resources and assets, ensuring they are used as intended.
- maintain a culture where fraud or corruption is not tolerated; and
- ensure staff and Members demonstrate the highest standards of honesty and integrity at all times.

This Strategy also supports the national Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally Strategy 2020 which advocates turning strategy into action by councils considering their counter fraud response and performance against each of the six 'C' themes:

- **Culture** – creating a culture where countering fraud and abuse is an accepted part of the Authority's normal business model and where fraud and corruption are unacceptable in line with the Council's Values & Behaviours
- **Capability** - Assessing the full range of fraud risks and ensuring that the range of anti-fraud measures deployed is appropriate and proportionate to those risks.
- **Capacity** – deploying the correct level of resources to deal with the level of fraud risk including the maintaining of a Corporate Fraud Investigation Team staffed by fully accredited

investigators and ensuring that these resources are monitored by those charged with the Council's governance.

- **Competence** – having the right skills and standards throughout the Council's services which are commensurate with the full range of counter fraud and corruption activity
- **Communications** – raising awareness internally and externally, deterring fraudsters, sharing information, and celebrating successes
- **Collaboration** – working together across internal and external boundaries, with colleagues, with other local authorities, and with other agencies; sharing resources, skills and learning, good practice, innovation, and information.

Section 3 – Definitions

In law, fraud is deliberate deception to secure unfair or unlawful gain, or to deprive a victim of a legal right. The purpose of fraud may be monetary gain or other benefits, such as obtaining a home or a job with the Council by way of false statement

Corruption is a form of dishonest or unethical conduct by a person entrusted with a position of authority, often to acquire personal benefit. Corruption may include many activities including bribery which can be defined as the offering, giving, soliciting or acceptance of an inducement or reward which may influence the action of any person”.

Both can be encompassed by the term “economic crime”, which refers to a broad category of activity involving money, finance or assets, the purpose of which is to unlawfully obtain a profit or advantage for the perpetrator or cause loss to others.

Section 4 – Strategic Response

The principles of the Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy are focussed on the following four pillars of activity (as taken from the aforementioned 2020 Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally Strategy). These are:

- Govern
- Acknowledge
- Prevent
- Pursue
- These principles are supported by one overarching pillar which is Protect.

Govern	Acknowledge	Prevent	Pursue
Having a holistic approach to tackling fraud is part of good governance	Acknowledge and understanding fraud and corruption risks	Preventing and detecting more fraud and corruption	Being stronger in punishing fraud and corruption/recovering losses
Having robust arrangements and executive support to ensure anti-fraud,	Assessing and understanding fraud and corruption risks	Making better use of information and technology	Prioritising fraud recovery and the use of civil sanctions

<p>bribery and corruption measures are embedded throughout the organisation.</p>	<p>Committing the right support and resources to tackling fraud and corruption</p> <p>Maintaining and demonstrating a robust anti-fraud and corruption response</p> <p>Communicating the risks to those charged with governance</p>	<p>Enhancing fraud and corruption controls and processes</p> <p>Developing a more effective anti-fraud and corruption culture</p> <p>Communicating its activities and processes</p>	<p>Developing capability and capacity to punish corruption and fraudsters</p> <p>Collaborating with fellow practitioners across geographical and sectoral boundaries</p> <p>Learning lessons and closing the gaps</p>
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Govern	Acknowledge	Prevent	Pursue
Some specific examples for Epping Forest District Council			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate Fraud Team that reports into the Corporate Governance Group and the Audit and Governance Committee Counter Fraud activities and monitoring included in the Audit Committee's Terms of Reference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk management process Fraud /corruption proofing policy and processes Fraud and corruption awareness and training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whistleblowing policy Strong internal control culture Staff and supplier vetting Participation in the National Fraud Initiative and the Pan-Essex Council tax matching campaign Staff and Member Code of Conduct and Declarations of Interest Information security and IT policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fraud response plan Appropriate levels of powers, application of sanctions and prosecutions Collaboration and where practicable, joint investigations / prosecutions with other Authority fraud teams

Protect
<p>Recognising the harm that fraud and corruption can cause both in the Authority and the community. Protecting itself and its' residents from fraud.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protecting against serious and organised crime, protecting individuals from becoming victims of crime and protecting against the harm that fraud can do to the community. For Epping Forest District Council, this will also cover protecting public funds, protecting the Council from fraud and cybercrime and also protecting itself from future frauds.

Section 5 – Key Fraud and Corruption Risks

It is important that the Council recognises and manages the risks relating to fraud and corruption to prevent them from occurring. Furthermore, it is imperative that these risks are routinely considered as part of the Council's overall approach to risk management. To understand the nature of these risks, the following have been identified as key issues that are relevant to EFDC:

- Social Housing Tenancy Fraud – this includes risks such as fraudulent housing applications, mutual exchanges, illegal subletting etc.
- The Right to Buy scheme – fraudulent applications and suspected money laundering
- Money Laundering – Exposure to suspect transactions
- Council Tax – fraudulently claimed discounts (including Local Council Tax Support), refund scams
- Non-Domestic Rates – fraudulent applications for exemptions, unlisted properties
- Grants (including Disabled Facilities Grants) – false eligibility and applications, diverted funds, works not carried out.
- Insurance Fraud – suspected false claims particularly those relating to personal injury
- Planning Fraud – risk of manipulation, collusion, potential conflicts of interest, bribery etc.
- No recourse to public funds – fraudulent eligibility for Council services such as Social Housing
- Payroll Fraud – false and “ghost” employees, overtime and mileage claims, expenses.
- Internal Frauds – such as fund diversion, accepting bribes, stealing monies and / or Council property, social housing misallocations for personal gain, working elsewhere whilst off sick, abuse of position such as misuse of assets / resources.
- HR related fraud – such as false information on job applications, bogus qualifications / references, failing to declare previous convictions etc.
- New Responsibilities – Areas of work that have transferred to local authority responsibility such as business grants etc.
- Procurement Fraud – tendering issues, split contracts, double invoicing
- Cyber Crime / Fraud – frauds such as false applications for services, fund diversion.
- Commission of Services: including joint commissioning, joint ventures, commercial services, third sector partnerships – conflicts of interest, collusion etc.

It is important to note that the above represents the key fraud risk areas and examples of each. It is not intended to be an exhaustive list.

As with the culture, the concept of fraud prevention applies to the organisation from top to bottom.

The United Kingdom Economic Crime Plan (2) 2023-2026 in conjunction with the United Kingdom Fraud Strategy 2023 sets out a long-term framework for tackling corruption. For local government, including Epping Forest District Council, this sets out the following goals which have been considered as part of this strategy:

- **Greater procurement transparency, enabling better identification and mitigation of corruption risks.**
- **Strengthened awareness and capability within contracting authorities leading to a stronger awareness of corruption risks and more capability to detect and deter illegality. Under the new Economic Crim Plane, focus will be on the following themes:**
 - **Reduce money laundering and recover more criminal assets**
 - **Combat kleptocracy and drive down sanctions evasion – *kleptocracy is a society or system ruled by people who use their power to steal their country's resources:***
 - **Cut fraud**

Economic crime refers to a broad category of activity involving money, finance or assets, the purpose of which is to unlawfully obtain a profit or advantage for the perpetrator or cause loss to others.

Section 6 – The Council’s Approach to combatting Fraud & Corruption.

The prevention and detection of fraud and corruption and the protection of the public purse is everyone’s responsibility, and this should permeate throughout the authority at every level. The key components in achieving this are:

Being Proactive

- Actively strengthening the anti-fraud culture to increase resilience to fraud
- Preventing fraud through the implementation of appropriate and robust internal controls including robust procurement and cyber security measures
- Increasing fraud and corruption awareness of Council officers, Members, Contractors and residents
- Deterring fraud attempts by publicising the actions the Council takes against corruption and fraudsters

Reactive Responses

- Detecting fraud and corruption through data and intelligence analysis
- Implementing effective whistleblowing arrangements
- Robustly investigating fraud and corruption referrals
- Applying sanctions, both civil and criminal
- Seeking redress, including the recovery of assets and money utilising all methods available.

The Role of the Corporate Fraud Team

The Corporate Fraud Team role is in both the prevention and investigation of instances of suspected fraud against the Council. Fraud awareness training is given to officers within the Council to assist in ensuring that any cases referred to the team contain good quality information to assist with the investigation. All investigations are carried out in accordance with the respective legislation.

In cases where the offence is deliberate and serious enough to warrant prosecution, consideration will be given to the Council’s own policies as well as The Code for Crown Prosecutors. If deemed appropriate legal proceedings will be undertaken in conjunction with Legal Services and / or other bodies such as the Police. Utilising the provisions of Section 222 of The Local Government Act 1972, the Corporate Fraud Team in conjunction with Legal Services are appropriately authorised to undertake criminal prosecutions.

The table below lists the suggested approach and expected outcomes against each of the four pillars of the Council’s Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy, which will be supported by a rolling action plan and annual Corporate Fraud Team Strategy:

Principle	Approach	Expected Outcome
Govern by having a holistic approach to tackling fraud	Oversight and performance monitored through the regular Corporate Fraud Team updates, Corporate Governance Group and the Audit and Governance Committee meetings	Delivery of the Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption Plan that tackles both internal and external fraud
Acknowledging and understanding fraud and corruption risks	Using the risk management process to assess current and future fraud and corruption risks Continued cultural change and increase in fraud and corruption awareness both internally and outside of the Council Annual fraud report through central collection of fraud data Improved sharing of fraud and corruption threats, information, and intelligence both internally and externally	Increased reporting of cases Increased awareness of anti-fraud and corruption process and procedures throughout the Council Making service areas become more responsible for their own fraud risks
Preventing and detecting more fraud and corruption	Fraud and corruption proofing of policy and processes Better use of data and technology to prevent and detect fraud and corruption Assessment of the Council's internal controls framework to ensure it remains robust Supporting anti-fraud and corruption policies and procedures including whistleblowing and money laundering	Increased levels of anti-fraud and corruption awareness When fraud or corruption has occurred because of a breakdown in the Council's systems or procedures, the Section 151 Officer will ensure that the appropriate improvements in the control systems are implemented to prevent a recurrence. Any significant control issues are reported in the Annual Governance Statement along with actions taken to address the issue.
Be stronger in punishing fraud and corruption and recovering losses	Maintain and further develop capacity and capability to investigate and prosecute fraud and corruption Consistent and effective response for dealing with fraud and corruption cases	Successful use of sanctions and/or prosecution Reduce the losses because of fraud or corruption and to commit to the consideration of all available methods of loss recovery.

Section 7 – Responsibility for implementing this strategy

Responsibility	Role
Chief Executive	Ultimately responsible for preventing and detecting theft, fraud and corruption and promoting an anti-fraud and corruption culture.
Members	As elected representatives, all Members of the Council have a duty to the public to maintain the highest standards of conduct and ethics, and to ensure the Council is open and transparent in all the decisions it makes. Members are required to adhere to the Council's constitution, which incorporates a Member Code of Conduct.
Standards Committee	Monitoring the operation of the Code of Conduct and to take remedial action when required.
Audit and Governance Committee	To satisfy itself there are adequate arrangements in place to manage risk (including that relating to fraud and corruption) effectively. To monitor Council policies on Anti-Fraud and Corruption and to receive periodic reports on fraud and corruption.
Corporate Governance Group	Develop, review and maintain the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Framework.
Senior Management Team	Ensuring all Staff follow this Strategy and any related policies and procedures, supported by the Council's Internal Audit, Corporate Fraud and Human Resources functions.
Section 151 Officer	Has a statutory responsibility under the Local Government Act 1972 for the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs. Where irregularities, fraud or corruption are suspected the S151 Officer should be informed. On being informed of an alleged irregularity, fraud or corruption the S151 Officer will determine the arrangements for investigating the matter in line with the Council's Fraud Response Plan.
Monitoring Officer	Statutory responsibility to ensure that the council operates within the law. Overall responsibility for the Members Code of Conduct and the maintenance and operation of the Confidential Reporting Procedure for Employees (Whistleblowing Under the Local Government Act 1972 has the specific duty to ensure that the Council, its Officers, and its Elected Councillors, maintain the highest standards of conduct in all they do.
Managers (all levels)	Responsible for preventing and detecting fraud and corruption and ensuring they operate effective mechanisms in their area of control to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent theft, fraud and corruption thereby safeguarding the Council's assets and interests • Promote employee awareness and take ownership of the fraud risks specific to their area(s) • Assess the risk of fraud and corruption and take appropriate action • Take prompt action in line with the Fraud Response

Responsibility	Role
	Plan where they suspect or are alerted to possible theft, fraud, or corruption
All staff	All staff have a responsibility to prevent, detect and report on fraud and corruption or suspected cases.
Partners and Contractors	Required to comply with the Council's policies and procedures when undertaking work for and jointly with the Council
External Audit	Under the International Standard on Auditing 240, when conducting an audit External Audit are responsible for obtaining reasonable assurance that the financial statements taken as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error.
Internal Audit	<p>Providing assurance on the effectiveness of systems and procedures to prevent and detect fraud and corruption (by undertaking audits).</p> <p>Supporting managers in minimising fraud and corruption related risk and are alert in all their work to risks and exposures that could allow fraud and corruption to take place.</p>

Section 8 - Supporting Policies, Procedures and Processes

In addition to this document, the Council has a range of policies, procedures, and processes in place to formalise arrangements for the prevention, detection and investigation of fraud and corruption. These include:

- Fraud Response Plan (Appendix 1 of this document)
- Anti-Bribery Policy (Appendix 2 of this document)
- Anti-Money Laundering Policy (Appendix 3 of this document)
- Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure (located on the Council's Intranet)
- Employee and Member Codes of Conduct (located on the Council's Intranet, Public facing website and published as part of the Constitution)
- Financial Regulations (located on the Council's Intranet and published as part of the Constitution)
- Procurement Rules located on the Council's Intranet and published as part of the Constitution)
- CIPFA Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally Strategy 2020:
<https://www.cifas.org.uk/insight/public-affairs-policy/fighting-fraud-corruption-local-authorities/FFCL-Strategy-2020>
- **United Kingdom Economic Crime Plan (2) 2023**
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/642561b02fa8480013ec0f97/6.8300_HO_Economic_Crime_Plan_2_v6_Web.pdf
- **United Kingdom Fraud Strategy 2023**
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64539087faf4aa0012e132cb/Fraud_Strategy_2023.pdf

Section 9 - Policy Reporting, Review and Monitoring Performance

This Strategy can only be varied with the collective agreement of the Chief Executive, the Section 151 Officer, and the Monitoring Officer.

It will be the responsibility of the Senior Leadership Team, via the Corporate Governance Group, to ensure there are adequate resources to support the action plan.

The Audit and Governance Committee will receive regular fraud updates to assist in their oversight of the Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy and arrangements.

Appendix 1

Epping Forest District Council Fraud Response Plan

Introduction

The Fraud Response Plan defines the way in which the Council applies its various policies and procedures to suspected instances of theft, fraud corruption and bribery. It fits in with and is designed to be read in conjunction with the Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy, Anti-Bribery Policy, Anti Money Laundering Policy, and the Whistleblowing / Confidential Reporting Policy. The aim of this plan is to provide clear guidance for dealing with these issues, access to rapid relevant advice and a guide for managers on how to react and deal with suspicions of fraud, theft, corruption, and bribery.

Additionally, it seeks to give a brief outline on how investigations will be progressed (although no detail will be given regarding investigation techniques etc.).

The Fraud Response Plan is designed to ensure timely and effective action in the event of suspected fraud by:

- Seeking to minimise the extent of the fraud by taking prompt action
- Preventing further losses where fraud had occurred.
- Maximising the recovery (or the chances of recovering) any financial losses
- Ensuring the accuracy and integrity of evidence for successful criminal prosecution and / or disciplinary action
- The early identification of any system weaknesses and the lessons to be learnt for preventing them in the future
- Maximising positive publicity where frauds are discovered and dealt with.
- Deterring others from any illegal / inappropriate conduct they may be committing or contemplating.

The Manager's Role in dealing with suspected fraud

First Response

Where managers suspect a fraud or involvement in a fraud is taking place, the first course of action must be to contact the Section 151 Officer, Head of Internal Audit or the Corporate Fraud Manager who will ensure that the Section 151 Officer and the Chief Executive are informed.

Although, the Council no longer investigates Housing Benefit fraud, where a suspicion occurs of a staff member's involvement in a Housing Benefit (including Local Council Tax Support) fraud, the above steps should still be followed.

All other suspicions of benefit fraud (including Local Council Tax Support) must be reported to the Compliance Manager within the Revenue and Benefits Division. Suspicions can also be reported directly to The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) via their website (www.gov.uk/report-benefit-fraud) or by calling the National Benefit Fraud Hotline on 0800 854440 or by textphone on 0800 328 0512. It may be prudent to seek the advice of either The Corporate Fraud Manager or The

Compliance Manager before contacting the DWP as Local Council Tax Support cannot be investigated by the DWP.

In usual circumstances, the suspicion will be passed to the Corporate Fraud Team to assess and undertake an investigation if appropriate. The Corporate Fraud Manager / Head of Internal Audit will retain overall responsibility for the conduct of the investigation; however, it is probable that the matter will be allocated to a member of the Corporate Fraud Team to undertake any investigation. As part of the Internal Audit service, the Corporate Fraud Team will be independent of any service area under investigation and all the officers comprising the Corporate Fraud Team are fully trained and accredited investigators each holding the qualification of Accredited Counter Fraud Officer / Specialist whilst the Corporate Fraud Manager also holds the qualification of Accredited Counter Fraud Manager.

There may be circumstances where it is appropriate for managers to undertake some preliminary enquiries to ascertain the validity of an allegation or irregularity (for example, to establish whether on the face of it, there is a case to be investigated), however, before embarking on such action, advice should always be sought from a member of the Corporate Fraud Team as such action may alert the fraudster and could result in the concealing or destroying of vital evidence or compromise the investigation and the collection of further evidence.

The investigating officer will liaise and work with The People Team at the earliest available opportunity on disciplinary matters such as suspending the staff member to enable further investigation and protect vital evidence.

Initial Enquiries

As stated above, the manager may make discreet initial enquiries to:

- Determine any facts that gave rise to the suspicion
- Examine any factors to determine whether there has been a genuine mistake made or whether an irregularity has occurred

Any actions and findings should be clearly recorded and documented ensuring that access is restricted (for example, not held on an "open" area of the computer network or in the case of paper notes, making sure they are securely locked away).

It is important that the suspected perpetrator is not interviewed at this stage, nor any allegations / suspicions put to them. If in doubt at any point, the manager must seek the guidance of the Corporate Fraud Team or the Head of Internal Audit.

Formal Investigation

If a formal investigation is required, it will be conducted by a qualified Corporate Fraud Investigator unless determined otherwise by the Section 151 Officer or Chief Executive. The nature of the investigation, lines of enquiry followed, and evidence obtained will vary depending on the irregularity being investigated and will, for the most part be fluid and reactive. Generally, however, the investigating officer will be seeking to gather evidence by way of interviews, the taking of written witness statements and the obtaining of evidence be it physical, documentary etc.

The investigating officer will consult and take advice from The People Team particularly on matters regarding employment law, policies, and procedural matters. It is imperative however, that a clear distinction must be made in these circumstances between those advising the investigating officer and those advising the staff member.

Legal Services will be consulted as appropriate to advise or seek external advice in order to support any investigation.

Any investigation will be conducted with full compliance with The Criminal Procedures and Investigations Act 1996 which governs the conduct of a criminal investigation (such as obtaining and recording evidence etc.) as well as any other legislation that may apply such as The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE), The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA), The Human Rights Act 1998, The General Data Protection Regulation / Data Protection Act 2018 etc. (this list is meant as an example and is not exhaustive).

In general terms however, the following principles will apply to the investigation:

- Any investigation will be conducted promptly (subject to evidence gathering activities) with periodic updates given as appropriate to the Head of Internal Audit / the relevant Service Director or the Section 151 Officer
- All actions and evidence will be recorded either by written or electronic means and stored securely with access given purely on a “need to know” basis.
- Enquiries and evidence gathering activities will be undertaken as discreetly as possible with sensitivities observed where appropriate.
- Confidentiality will be maintained throughout with information only shared where circumstances and the law allows.

Where it is considered appropriate, the investigation may involve the input of other agencies such as local authorities as well as other law enforcement agencies such as the Police and HM Revenue & Customs. Liaison and / or joint working will be conducted in accordance with established guidelines and protocols.

The investigating officer must not and will not accept any offer of repayment of monies or resignation at any stage during the investigation, however, any such offers will be noted and recorded on the investigation file and reported to the Head of Internal Audit and responsible Service Director.

The Council has a right to suspend any employee involved pending the outcome of an investigation. Any such suspension, is, in the opinion of the Council, a neutral act and does not imply any guilt on behalf of the suspended employee. The suspension of an employee can, in some circumstances aid the speed in which an investigation can be conducted and serve to preserve vital evidence.

When suspects are not suspended, supervision of the employee will usually need to be increased and any manager should seek the advice of The People Team and ICT on how this can best be accomplished.

Actions following the completion of an investigation

Upon the completion of an investigation, the investigating officer will report their findings in the first instance to the Corporate Fraud Manager, Head of Internal Audit and S151 Officer, who will in turn make the findings known to The People Team, relevant Service Director, or the Chief Executive as appropriate.

In the case of any monetary losses, a report will be given to the Council’s Insurance Officer.

Should any control weaknesses be identified, the Service Director and relevant manager will be informed, and remedies be actioned immediately. The Head of Internal Audit / Internal Audit Service will be able to provide advice and support regarding effective control mechanisms.

Should there be disciplinary issues identified as part of the investigation, a full report will be made to The People Team who will work with the relevant Service Director and manager to decide what happens next. Should any course of action result in a disciplinary hearing, the investigating officer will (if required) make themselves available to give evidence at the hearing.

Although some organisations delay the bringing of any disciplinary action pending the outcome of any criminal prosecution, the Council will seek to deal with any disciplinary matters using the appropriate processes.

Should it be the case that criminal action presents itself as an option, this decision will be fully explored and subject to the Council's Fraud Prosecution Policy.

Should fraud be proven, the Council will make every effort to recover any monetary losses. The method of doing so may vary depending on the type of loss and relevant legislation, however all options will be explored including civil court proceedings and in the case of criminal prosecution, proceedings brought under The Proceeds of Crime Act 2002.

Anti-Bribery Policy

Objective of this policy

This policy provides a coherent and consistent framework to enable Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) Members and employees to understand and implement arrangements enabling compliance. In conjunction with related policies and key documents it will also enable Members and employees to identify and effectively report a potential breach.

We require that Members and all staff, including those permanently employed, temporary agency staff and contractors:

- act honestly and with integrity at all times and safeguard the organisation's resources for which they are responsible
- comply with the spirit, as well as the letter, of the laws and regulations of all jurisdictions in which the Council operates, in respect of the lawful and responsible conduct of activities.

Scope of this policy

This policy applies to all the Council's activities. For partners, joint ventures, agents, and suppliers, we will seek to promote the adoption of policies consistent with the principles set out in this policy.

Within the Council, the responsibility to control the risk of bribery occurring resides at all levels of the Council. It does not rest solely within assurance functions, but in all business units and corporate functions.

This policy covers all staff, including all levels and grades, those permanently employed, temporary agency staff, contractors, agents, elected Members, co-opted members of the public, volunteers and consultants.

The Council's commitment to action

The Council commits to:

- Setting out a clear anti-bribery policy and keeping it up to date
- Making all Members and employees aware of their responsibilities to always adhere strictly to this policy
- Raising awareness and where appropriate offer training so Members and employees can recognise and avoid the use of bribery by themselves and others
- Encouraging its Members and employees to be vigilant and to report any suspicions of bribery, providing them with suitable channels of communication and ensuring sensitive information is treated appropriately
- Rigorously investigating instances of alleged bribery and assisting police and other appropriate authorities in any resultant prosecution
- Taking firm and vigorous action against any individual(s) involved in bribery
- Provide information to Members and employees to report breaches and suspected breaches of this policy
- Include appropriate clauses in contracts to prevent bribery.

Facilitation payments

Facilitation payments are not tolerated and are illegal. Facilitation payments are unofficial payments made to public officials to secure or expedite actions.

Gifts and hospitality

This policy does not change the requirements of our gifts and hospitality policy. This makes it clear that:

Sample tokens of modest value (for example, pens, diaries, or calendars) whether given personally, or received in the post, may be retained unless they could be regarded as an inducement or reward.

You should refuse the offer or invitation (or return the gift) unless your Service Director has advised you that it may be accepted or retained. This agreement needs to be documented.

Public contracts and failure to prevent bribery

One of the main changes introduced by the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 is that a company will no longer face permanent debarment (referred to as an 'exclusion' in the 2015 Regulations) from bidding for public contracts following a corporate conviction for certain economic crimes. Instead, a company will face a period of debarment and will be able to recover eligibility to bid for public contracts if it has undergone a 'self-cleaning' process.

Member and Staff responsibilities

All Members and staff are required to avoid activity that breaches this policy. The prevention, detection and reporting of bribery and other forms of corruption are the responsibility of all those working for the Council or under its control.

Members and staff must:

- ensure that they read, understand, and comply with this policy
- raise concerns as soon as possible if they believe or suspect that a conflict with this policy has occurred or may occur in the future.

Staff

As well as the possibility of civil action and criminal prosecution, staff who breach this policy may face disciplinary action, which could result in summary dismissal for gross misconduct. Dismissal can still be an outcome with or without civil action or criminal prosecution.

Members

The Member Code of Conduct requires that where a Member acts as a representative of the Council he or she must not use or attempt to use their position as a Member improperly to confer on or secure for them self or any other person, an advantage or disadvantage.

Allegations against a Member for breach will be routed through the Standards complaints process administered by the Monitoring Officer.

Raising a concern

This Council is committed to ensuring that all of us have a safe, reliable, and confidential way of reporting any suspicious activity. We want Members and every member of staff to know how they can raise concerns.

We all have a responsibility to help detect, prevent, and report instances of bribery. If you have a concern regarding a suspected instance of bribery or corruption, please speak up – your information and assistance will help. The sooner you act, the sooner it can be resolved.

Preferably the disclosure will be made and resolved internally (e.g., to a Service Manager/Service Director or the Head of Internal Audit). Secondly, where internal disclosure proves inappropriate, concerns can be raised with the External Auditor or relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations.

Concerns can be reported anonymously. In the event that an incident of bribery is reported, we will act as soon as possible to evaluate the situation. We have a clearly defined Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy which sets out procedures for investigating fraud, misconduct, and non-compliance issues and these will be followed in any investigation of this kind.

Members and staff who refuse to accept a bribe, or those who raise concerns can understandably be worried about the repercussions. The Council aims to encourage openness and will support anyone who raises a genuine concern in good faith under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

The Council is committed to ensuring nobody suffers detrimental treatment through refusing to take part in bribery, or because of reporting a concern in good faith.

Appendix 3

Anti-Money Laundering Policy

Introduction

The Money Laundering, Terrorist Financing and Transfer of Funds (Information on the Payer) Regulations 2017 (MLR 2017) came into force on 26 June 2017. They implement the EU's 4th Directive on Money Laundering. In doing so, they replace the Money Laundering Regulations 2007 (MLR 2007) and the Transfer of Funds (Information on the Payer) Regulations 2007 which were previously in force.

A key difference is that relevant persons are obliged to adopt a more risk-based approach towards anti-money laundering, in particular in how they conduct due diligence. Determining the appropriate level of due diligence requires analysis of risk factors based on the EU Directive and which are set out in MLR 2017.

Whilst Local Authorities are not directly covered by the requirements of the Money Laundering Regulations 2017, guidance from finance and legal professions, including the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting (CIPFA), indicates that public service organisations should comply with the underlying spirit of the legislation and regulations and put in place appropriate and proportionate anti-money laundering safeguards and reporting arrangements. Epping Forest District Council is committed to the highest possible standards of conduct and has, therefore, put in place appropriate and proportionate anti-money laundering safeguards and reporting arrangements.

Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all employees and contractors, whether permanent or temporary, and Members of the Council.

Its aim is to enable employees and Members to respond to a concern they have in the course of their dealings for the Council. Individuals who have a concern relating to a matter outside work should contact the Police.

Definition of Money Laundering

The most common motive for crime is financial gain or to obtain valuable property. Whenever criminals do anything with that financial gain or criminal property, they 'launder' it. Money laundering offences are serious; they carry sentences of up to 14 years imprisonment, but criminals and their associates still commit them every day.

Money laundering is the process by which criminals try to hide the origin of the proceeds of their crimes, making it look as if those proceeds were acquired legitimately. In doing so, criminal property obtained unlawfully is turned into property or money that can be accessed via legitimate methods without arousing suspicion. In other words, 'laundering' is the process of turning 'dirty' money into 'clean' money.

Money laundering has three distinct phases. They are:

- Placement: the movement of criminally obtained money into the wider economy.
- Layering: undertaking transactions (perhaps bogus) to conceal the origin of the money; and
- Integration: making it look as if money has come from a legitimate source.

Two distinct offences affect employees, contractors, and Members of the Council

- Failure to disclose one of the offences listed above, where there are reasonable grounds for knowledge or suspicion.
- Tipping off a person(s) who is or is suspected of being involved in money laundering in such a way as to reduce the likelihood of or prejudice an investigation.

Although the term 'money laundering' is generally used to describe the activities of organised crime, for most people it will involve a suspicion that someone they know, or know of, is benefiting financially from dishonest activities.

Successful money laundering means criminals can enjoy the fruits of their criminality and fund further criminal activity. Stopping money laundering disrupts organised crime by removing the lifeblood of the 'business' and prevents low level criminals from moving up into major level crime.

Requirements of the Money Laundering Legislation

The main requirements of the legislation are:

- To appoint a money laundering reporting officer.
- Maintain client identification procedures known as know your customer (KYC) and know your business (KYB).
- Implement a procedure to enable the reporting of suspicions of money laundering.
- Maintain record keeping procedures.

The Money Laundering Reporting Officer (MLRO)

The Council must appoint an MLRO to act as the focal point within the organisation for money laundering matters. The MLRO is responsible for:

- receiving disclosures from other staff; and
- deciding whether disclosures should be passed on to National Crime Agency (NCA).

The MLRO must keep copies of all disclosures received by them, notes of action taken and copies of all correspondence with NCA and other agencies.

Identifying and disclosing suspicious transactions

Whilst the risk to the Council of contravening the legislation is low, it is extremely important that all are familiar with their legal responsibilities; serious criminal sanctions may be imposed for breaches of the legislation.

A key requirement is for every-one to promptly report any suspected money laundering activity to the Money Laundering Reporting officer (MLRO)

Possible Signs of Money Laundering

It is not possible to give a definitive list of ways in which to spot money laundering but facts which tend to suggest that something "odd" is happening may be sufficient for a reasonable suspicion of money laundering to arise. The following are the types of risk factors which may, either alone or cumulatively with other factors suggest the possibility of money laundering activity:

- A new customer with no previous history with the Council
- A secretive customer: for example, one who refuses to provide requested information without a reasonable explanation
- Concerns about the honesty, integrity, or identity of a customer
- Illogical third-party transactions: for example, unnecessary routing or receipt of funds from third parties or through third party accounts
- Involvement of an unconnected third party without logical reason or explanation
- Payment of a substantial sum in cash
- Overpayments by a customer
- Absence of an obvious legitimate source of the funds
- Movement of funds to and from overseas
- Where, without reasonable explanation, the size, nature and frequency of transactions or instructions is out of line with normal expectations
- Cancellation or reversal of an earlier transaction
- Cash transactions made that are significantly outside of normal expectations

Epping Forest District Council will consider the threats to Council being used by money launderers and put systems in place to guard against them. Policies and procedures should be laid out clearly so that all relevant staff understand and have access to them.

The officer nominated to receive disclosures about money laundering activity within the Council is the Section 151 Officer Andrew Small. He can be contacted as follows:

Andrew Small - Section 151 Officer / Strategic Director
 Civic Offices
 Epping
 Essex
 CM16 4BZ

Email: asmall@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

In the absence of the MLRO, Christopher Hartgrove the deputy MLRO (also the deputy Section 151 Officer) should be contacted in their absence on Extension 2532 or by email at: chartgrove@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

All suspicions should be reported directly to the MLRO or his deputy using the relevant documentation, which can be found at Appendix Four of this document.

Client Identification Procedures

The Council has developed formal client identification procedures which must be followed when Council land or property is being sold. These procedures require individuals and if appropriate, companies to provide proof of identity and current address (KYC).

All verification documents are capable of being forged and can be bought over the internet. For this reason, industry guidance usually recommends face-to-face meetings with new clients. Excuses for non-attendance and excuses for missing documents should be explored and treated with some scepticism.

The Council must identify its customers and verify that identity based on documents, data or information obtained from a reliable source. Where there is a beneficial owner who is not the customer then the Council must identify that person and verify the identity and where the beneficial owner is a trust or similar then the Council must understand the nature of the control structure of that trust. Finally, the Council must obtain information on the purpose and intended nature of the business relationship. The MLR 2017 introduces the need for the Council to consider both customer and geographical risk factors in deciding what due diligence is required.

If satisfactory evidence is not obtained at the outset of a matter, then the transaction must not be progressed, and a disclosure report must be submitted to the Money Laundering Reporting Officer.

The Council is also obliged to maintain ongoing monitoring of its business relationships which means it must scrutinise transactions throughout the course of the relationship to ensure that the transactions are consistent with the Council's knowledge of the customer and keep the information about the customer up to date.

Enhanced Customer Due Diligence and Ongoing Monitoring

In certain circumstances, it will be necessary to undertake what is known in the Regulations as Enhanced Customer Due Diligence. In summary, this will be necessary where:

- The customer has not been physically present for identification purposes; or
- In any other situation which by its nature can present a higher risk of money laundering or terrorist financing.

Where this applies, the Council will need to take adequate measures to compensate for the higher risk. For example, this will mean ensuring that the customer's identity is established by additional documents, data, or information.

Similarly, where the Council is in an ongoing business relationship with a customer, the Regulations impose a special obligation to carry out ongoing monitoring. This means that the Council must:

- scrutinise transactions undertaken throughout the course of the relationship to make sure that these transactions are consistent with the Council's knowledge of the customer and their business and risk profile
- keep documents, data or information obtained for the purpose of applying Customer Due Diligence measures up to date.

All personal data must be collected, kept, or destroyed in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation and The Data Protection Act 2018.

For the Council to be as effective at combatting this type of crime as possible, the following measures should be implemented wherever possible:

- No payment to the Council should automatically be accepted in cash (including notes, coins, or travellers' cheques in any currency) if it exceeds £10,000. This can be a single transaction, or a group of related transactions. However, it is important to be vigilant when receiving any cash payment over £1,000. This does not, however, mean that cash transactions below this value will be valid and legal and should not arise any suspicion. Professional scepticism should always remain.
- Staff who collect cash payments are asked to provide the details of any cash transaction over £10,000 to the MLRO so that precautionary checks can be performed. It is best practice to insist on payment by cheque or electronically from a UK clearing bank.
- The Council, in the normal operation of its services, accept payments from individuals and organisations. If an employee has no reason to suspect or know that money laundering activity is taking/has taken place and if the money offered is less than £10,000 in cash as payment or part payment for goods/services offered by the Authority, then there is no need to seek guidance from the MLRO. If a member of staff has reasonable grounds to suspect

money laundering activities or proceeds of crime, or is simply suspicious, the matter should still be reported to the MLRO. If the money offered is £10,000 or more in cash, then payment must not be accepted until guidance has been received from the MLRO even if this means the person must be asked to wait.

- Any officer involved in a transaction of this kind should ensure that the person provides satisfactory evidence of their identity personally, through passport/photo driving licence plus one other document providing evidence of current address in the form of a bank statement, credit card statement, mortgage or insurance details or a utility bill covering the previous 3-month period. Where the other party is a company, this can be done through company formation documents or business rate bill.

Reporting Procedure for Suspicions of Money Laundering

Where you know or suspect that money laundering activity is taking/has taken place or become concerned that your involvement in a matter may amount to a prohibited act under the Act, you must disclose this as soon as practicable to the MLRO. The disclosure should be within “hours” of the information coming to your attention, not weeks or months later.

Your disclosure should be made to the MLRO using the disclosure report; the report must include as much detail as possible including

- Full details of the people involved
- Full details of the nature of their/your involvement.
- The types of money laundering activity involved
- The dates of such activities
- Whether the transactions have happened, are ongoing or are imminent.
- Where they took place.
- How they were undertaken.
- The (likely) amount of money/assets involved.
- Why, exactly, you are suspicious.

Along with any other available information to enable the MLRO to make a sound judgment as to whether there are reasonable grounds for knowledge or suspicion of money laundering and to enable him to prepare his report to the National Crime Agency (NCA), where appropriate. You should also enclose copies of any relevant supporting documentation.

Once you have reported the matter to the MLRO you must follow any directions he may give you. You must NOT make any further enquiries into the matter yourself: any necessary investigation will be undertaken by the NCA. Simply report your suspicions to the MLRO who will refer the matter on to the NCA if appropriate. All members of staff will be required to co-operate with the MLRO and the authorities during any subsequent money laundering investigation.

Similarly, at no time and under no circumstances should you voice any suspicions to the person(s) whom you suspect of money laundering, even if the NCA has given consent to a particular transaction proceeding, without the specific consent of the MLRO; otherwise, you may commit a criminal offence of “tipping off”.

Do not, therefore, make any reference on a client file to a report having been made to the MLRO –

should the client exercise their right to see the file, then such a note will obviously tip them off to the report having been made and may render you liable to prosecution. The MLRO will keep the appropriate records in a confidential manner.

Consideration of the disclosure by the Money Laundering Reporting Officer

Upon receipt of a disclosure report, the MLRO must note the date of receipt on his section of the report and acknowledge receipt of it. They should also advise you of the timescale within which he expects to respond to you.

The MLRO will consider the report and any other available internal information they think relevant e.g.:

- reviewing other transaction patterns and volumes.
- the length of any business relationship involved.
- the number of any one-off transactions and linked one-off transactions.
- any identification evidence held.

And undertake such other reasonable inquiries they think appropriate to ensure that all available information is taken into account in deciding whether a report to the NCA is required (such enquiries being made in such a way as to avoid any appearance of tipping off those involved). The MLRO may also need to discuss the report with you.

Once the MLRO has evaluated the disclosure report and any other relevant information, he must make a timely determination as to whether:

- there is actual or suspected money laundering taking place; or
- there are reasonable grounds to know or suspect that is the case; and
- whether he needs to seek consent from the NCA for a particular transaction to proceed.

Where the MLRO does so conclude, then they must disclose the matter as soon as practicable to the NCA on their standard report form and in the prescribed manner, unless they have a reasonable excuse for non-disclosure to the NCA (for example, if you are a lawyer and you wish to claim legal professional privilege for not disclosing the information).

Where the MLRO suspects money laundering but has a reasonable excuse for non-disclosure, then they must note the report accordingly; they can then immediately give their consent for any ongoing or imminent transactions to proceed.

In cases where legal professional privilege may apply, the MLRO must seek independent legal advice or consult with an Accredited Financial Investigator to decide whether there is a reasonable excuse for not reporting the matter to the NCA.

All disclosure reports referred to the MLRO and reports made by him to the NCA must be retained by the MLRO in a confidential file kept for that purpose, for a minimum of five years.

The MLRO commits a criminal offence if they know or suspect, or has reasonable grounds to do so, through a disclosure being made to them, that another person is engaged in money laundering, and they do not disclose this as soon as practicable to the NCA.

Training

Officers considered likely to be exposed to suspicious situations, will be made aware of these by their senior officer and provided with appropriate training.

Additionally, all employees and Members will be familiarised with the legal and regulatory requirements relating to money laundering and how they affect both the Council and themselves.

Notwithstanding the paragraphs above, it is the duty of officers and Members to report all suspicious transactions whether they have received their training or not.

Additional Information can be obtained from:

- <https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/what-we-do/crime-threats/money-laundering-and-illicit-finance>

Appendix 4

Money Laundering Reporting Form

CONFIDENTIAL
Report to the Money Laundering Reporting Officer (MLRO)
Report of Suspected Money Laundering Activity

To: Money Laundering Reporting Officer (Epping Forest District Council)

From:

Name of Staff Member Reporting Suspicion	
Job Title	
Service Area	
Telephone Number (inc. any extension)	
Email address	

Details of Suspected Activity

Name and address of ALL persons involved If a company / public body, please include details of the nature of their business	
Nature, value, timing of activity involved Please include full details (what, when, where and how)	Continue on a separate sheet if necessary)
Please explain the nature of your suspicions regarding such activity in as much detail as possible.	Continue on a separate sheet if necessary
Has any form of investigation been undertaken? If, Yes, please explain what.	Continue on a separate sheet if necessary
Have you discussed your suspicions with any other person? If so, whom?	
Have you consulted any Regulatory / Supervisory Body (e.g., The Law Society)	

Please do not discuss the content of this report with anyone you believe to be involved in the suspected money laundering activity described above. To do so, may constitute the offence of “tipping off” which can carry, upon conviction a maximum penalty of 5 years imprisonment.

Signed..... Date.....

For Completion by MLRO (EFDC)

Date SAR Received	
Date SAR acknowledged	
Unique Case Reference Number	
Are there reasonable grounds to suspect money laundering activity?	
If Yes, confirm date of report made to NCA	
Is consent required from the NCA to any ongoing or imminent transactions which would otherwise be a prohibited act? If yes, please give full details.	
Date consent received from the NCA	
Date consent given to employee for the transaction to proceed.	

If there are reasonable grounds to suspect money laundering but you have not or do not intend to report the matter to the NCA, please set out the reasons for non-disclosure	
Date consent given by you to the employee for the transaction to proceed	

Signed..... Date.....

THIS REPORT TO BE RETAINED FOR A MINIMUM OF FIVE YEARS