

# Forest Heath District Council

**PERFORMANCE AND  
AUDIT SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE**

**29 MAY 2014**

**PAS14/034**

(This report is a key decision. This report has been subject to appropriate notice of publication under the Council's Access to Information Rules)

## **Report of the Cabinet Member for Resources, Governance and Performance**

### **WEST SUFFOLK ANTI-FRAUD AND ANTI-CORRUPTION POLICY**

#### **1. Summary and reasons for recommendation**

- 1.1 Forest Heath District Council has a duty to protect the public funds under its control against fraud, theft, corruption and bribery both from outside and within the council. The Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy is part of the council's commitment to protect public funds.
- 1.2 The council's current Strategy was last revised in 2011. It is good practice to review arrangements from time to time and as such a review of the Strategy has been undertaken to ensure it continues to reflect best practice, legislation and shared services arrangements. The revised West Suffolk Policy is set out in **Appendix A** to this report.

#### **2. Recommendation**

- 2.1 Subject to the approval of Cabinet and Full Council, the West Suffolk Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy, as contained in **Appendix A** to **Report PAS14/034**, be adopted.

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### **3. How will the recommendations help us meet our strategic priorities?**

- 3.1 The recommendation made in this report is intended to support and enhance the council's ability to deliver its priorities.

### **4. Key issues**

- 4.1 Forest Heath District Council is committed to fighting fraud and corruption whether it is committed from outside or within the council, and will not tolerate fraud, corruption, bribery or other wrongdoing in the provision of its services. The council will take appropriate and decisive action against those committing or attempting to commit fraudulent or corrupt acts.
- 4.2 The council's current Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Strategy was last reviewed in 2011. It is good practice to review arrangements from time to time, and as such, a review of the Strategy has been undertaken to ensure it continues to reflect best practice, legislation and shared services arrangements.
- 4.3 The main change to the Strategy has been to include a section on Social Housing Fraud, including reference to the Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013. Social housing provides security and stability to millions of people nationally in housing need, with social housing fraud a significant problem arising when individuals:
- are allocated a social housing property (a property owned by a registered housing provider or local authority) when they are not entitled to it by lying about their circumstances;
  - obtain housing benefit when they are not entitled to it; or
  - unlawfully sub-let their social housing property.

Those who commit social housing fraud are depriving people who are genuinely in need from accessing social housing. It also undermines confidence in the council's housing allocation system, while preventing and detecting fraud stops public money being wasted.

- 4.4 Minor adjustments have also been made to the document to reflect it is now a joint West Suffolk Policy between Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council. The Strategy has also now been re-named as a Policy.

### **5. Other options considered**

- 5.1 N/A

### **6. Community impact**

- 6.1 **Crime and disorder impact** *(including Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998)*

- 6.1.1 None arising directly from this report.

- 6.2 **Diversity and equality impact** *(including the findings of the Equality Impact Assessment)*

- 6.2.1 None arising directly from this report.

6.3 **Sustainability impact** *(including completing a Sustainability Impact Assessment)*

6.3.1 None arising directly from this report.

6.4 **Other impact** *(any other impacts affecting this report)*

6.4.1 None arising directly from this report.

7. **Consultation** *(what consultation has been undertaken, and what were the outcomes?)*

7.1 Joint Leadership Team was provided with a draft copy of the Policy for comment.

8. **Financial and resource implications** *(including asset management implications)*

8.1 The council has a duty to protect public funds. This Policy is designed to strengthen the guardianship of the council assets, both property and financial, in order to meet with its obligations.

9. **Risk/opportunity assessment** *(potential hazards or opportunities affecting corporate, service or project objectives)*

Risk area	Inherent level of risk (before controls)	Controls	Residual risk (after controls)
If the council does not have effective counter fraud and corruption controls then it could put at risk its assets and reputation.	Medium	Corporate Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy.  Constitution (Financial and Contract Procedure Rules and Delegated Powers) provide an overall framework for controls. These are supplemented by individual service area procedures and guides.  Internal and External Audit monitoring of systems.  Codes of Conduct.  Selection and training of staff.	Low

10. **Legal and policy implications**

10.1 It is important to have in place a Policy which ensures compliance with legislative requirements.

11. **Ward(s) affected**

11.1 All

12. **Background papers**

12.1 N/A

13. **Documents attached**

Appendix A – West Suffolk Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy