

## Report of the Head of Corporate Assurance

### AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE – 20<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2024

#### CORPORATE ANTI-FRAUD FRAMEWORK

##### 1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1 This report presents the proposed Corporate Anti-Fraud Framework for the Committee's consideration and comment.

##### 2. Recommendation

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee considers and comments on the proposed Corporate Anti-Fraud Framework to be assured that it will appropriately direct anti-fraud activity over the next 12 months, and to recommend to Cabinet for approval.**

##### 3. Background

- 3.1 The third Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally Strategy (FFCL), which is produced by 'local government for local government', was published in 2020. This is prepared through CIFAS, a non-for-profit organisation originally created in the 1980s as the Credit Industry Fraud Avoidance Service, but now exists to protect its members and wider society from fraud and fraud-related crime by sharing fraud intelligence and building close and productive partnerships across the private, public, the third sector and law enforcement.
- 3.2 This FFCL Strategy has been used to frame our anti-fraud strategy, adopting the structure across the recommended 5 pillars as included in the national strategy document which are Govern, Acknowledge, Prevent, Pursue and Protect.
- 3.3 Barnsley Council is committed to ensuring that the people of the Borough can have confidence that the affairs of the Council are conducted in accordance with the highest standards of probity and accountability.
- 3.4 In seeking to ensure this commitment is met, the Council has an Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy, Policy and framework which states that the Council has a zero-tolerance approach to fraud and illegal activity and also set out its overall approach to combating fraud, corruption and wrongdoing. It provides mechanisms which officers can use to raise concerns of wrongdoing or fraudulent activity.

3.5 Each policy is supported by procedural guidance which sets out the responsibilities and expectations for staff including the specific actions which they must follow to enable the Council to demonstrate good governance and comply with its legal obligations.

3.6 The Corporate Anti-Fraud Framework was presented to the Audit and Governance Committee in December 2019, and subsequently approved for adoption by Cabinet in January 2020. The framework has been updated to reflect the implementation of the Corporate Assurance Team from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024 and also changes to other relevant policies and legislation.

#### **4. Delivering the Corporate Anti-Fraud Framework**

4.1 A detailed operational plan has been prepared and incorporated into the Corporate Assurance plan for 2024/25, which will be presented to the Committee at this meeting.

4.2 Following the staff restructure from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024, there is now one full time Senior Corporate Assurance Officer dedicated to undertaking investigations, a Corporate Assurance Manager with Corporate Anti-Fraud within their portfolio and support from the Corporate Assurance Officers as and when required.

#### **5. Financial Implications**

5.1 None directly arising from this report.

#### **6. Risk Considerations**

6.1 A corporate anti-fraud framework sets a high-level commitment to ensuring that appropriate safeguards are in place for mitigating the risk of fraud and corruption within the Council.

#### **7. Legal**

7.1 Confidential reporting (or Whistleblowing) is recognised as being in the public interest; in refreshing the procedure, the requirements of the Public Interest Disclosure Act and Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act are acknowledged.

7.2 The Council must comply with The Money Laundering, Terrorist Financing and Transfer of Funds (Information on the Payer) Regulations 2017 and it is therefore important that proper Governance procedures are in place. The Council's anti-fraud framework and assurance reviews assist the Council in complying with anti-corruption law.

#### **8. Other**

8.1 The following sources of information were used for this report:

- The Whistleblowing Commission Code of Practice;
- Assessment Criteria for Whistleblowing Policies (National Audit Office, January 2014) ;
- Whistleblowing: Guidance for Employers and Code of Practice (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, March 2015);
- The Code for Crown Prosecutors (Crown Prosecution Service, January 2013)

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