

Guidance to reporting suspicions of fraud, bribery or corruption



Introduction

The Council is committed to preventing and detecting fraudulent and corrupt practices, and to pursuing the perpetrators to the full extent of the law.

Any suspicion of fraud, bribery or corruption must be reported to Internal Audit.

This document provides guidance on the actions you should take if you suspect fraud or if potential fraud is brought to your attention either formally or informally.

Responsibilities

Under the Council's Anti-Fraud, Bribery & Corruption Policy, all Employees and Members are responsible for reporting any suspected irregularity, to their Line Manager or Internal Audit, as appropriate.

Definitions

Fraud/theft may be perpetrated by Employees or by a third party i.e. service user, contractor or supplier engaged by the Council.

Fraud encompasses a range of acts and can include:

- criminal deception
- forgery
- blackmail / bribery
- theft including the obtaining of a pecuniary advantage for a third party i.e. financial gain or a reduction in a debt or liability
- the intentional distortion of financial statements or other records by persons inside or outside the Council which is carried out to conceal the theft of assets or otherwise for gain
- conspiracy and the concealment of material facts.

Theft can be regarded as the unauthorised removal of monies, goods etc. from the Council, or by Council staff / contractors from clients. The unauthorised use of paid time to carry out non-work activities can also be regarded as theft, it also includes theft of IT equipment and council data.

Bribery is "the receiving or offering of undue reward to persons in order to influence their behaviour contrary to ordinary standards of integrity and honesty".

Corruption is "The offering, giving, soliciting or acceptance of an inducement or reward which may influence the action of any person".

Whistleblowing

The reporting of any issues of fraud, bribery or corruption, may require consideration of the Council's Whistleblowing Policy. This is available on the Intranet and the Website.

Reporting

If you suspect, or are made aware of possible fraud, bribery or corruption, you should report the issue directly to your Executive Director or Director and Internal Audit without delay. Undue delay can result in loss of evidence or otherwise hamper any investigation.

If in doubt report it. In accordance with the Whistleblowing Policy, there will be no recrimination against anyone if the suspicions in good faith, regardless of the outcome.

Do not discuss your suspicions, or any allegations referred to you, with others outside of the reporting lines. Many fraudulent and corrupt practices require collusion to be successful. Therefore,

it is imperative that as few people as possible are involved at the initial stage. This also helps subsequent investigation and protects the individuals who are the subject of suspicion/allegation.

Do not attempt to investigate matters yourself unless this has been agreed following consultation with Internal Audit. In cases where this has been agreed, investigations must be undertaken in accordance with the Council's Disciplinary Procedures.

The method of investigation will be determined in consultation with Internal Audit and, where appropriate, other relevant parties e.g. HR, Police.

The Police report that they cannot prosecute over half of fraud, bribery and corruption cases because of inappropriate action taken before the case is referred to them. The action that you take when you first suspect fraudulent activity may be crucial.

Acting on your suspicions – the Dos and Don'ts

If you suspect fraud, bribery or corruption, there are a few simple guidelines that should be followed.

Do make an immediate note of your concerns.

Note all relevant details, such as what was said in a conversation, the date, time and name of any parties involved.

Do convey your suspicions to someone with appropriate authority and experience.

This is usually a line manager or Internal Audit. Alternatively, you might contact the Chief Financial Officer or the Director of Finance.

Do deal with the matter promptly, if you feel your concerns are warranted.

Any delay may cause the Council to suffer further financial loss.

Don't do nothing.

Don't be afraid of raising your concerns.

You will not suffer any recrimination from the Council as a result of voicing a reasonably held suspicion. The Council will treat any matter you raise sensitively and confidentially. The Council actively seeks to encourage people with concerns of potential fraud and corruption to inform the Council of their suspicions rather than overlooking a problem or 'blowing the whistle' outside. The Council will treat complaints of potential fraud, bribery and corruption positively, fairly and equitably, in accordance with the Whistleblowing Policy.

Don't approach or accuse any individuals directly.

Don't try to investigate the matter yourself.

There are special rules surrounding the gathering of evidence for use in criminal cases. Any attempt to gather evidence by people who are unfamiliar with these rules may destroy the case. Internal Audit are trained in handling investigations in the proper manner.

Don't convey your suspicions to anyone other than those with the proper authority.

Summary

Note all relevant details, but do not attempt to investigate the matter further yourself. Report all suspicions promptly to your manager or someone with the appropriate authority. If in doubt, report your suspicions anyway.

Advice and Assistance

If you need any further advice or assistance, or to report any suspicions, you can contact the following:

INTERNAL

Interim Director of Finance (CFO)	Noel O'Neill	01744 671776
Director of Legal & Governance (Monitoring Officer)	Jan Bakewell	01744 673209
Head of Audit & Risk	Richard Thomas	07895 314107

Internal Audit, Audit Manager	Nicola Colquitt	07514 951201
Fraud Hotline		0800 953 0217
EXTERNAL		
External Audit (Grant Thornton)		0151 2247200
Protect - Public Concern at Work		020 3117 2520
Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman		0300 061 0614