



Breckland Council

Counter Fraud, Corruption and Bribery Policy

February 2019

Document Control and History

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Introduction

FRAUD is a deception which is deliberate and intended to provide a direct or indirect personal gain. The term "fraud" can include criminal deception, forgery, blackmail, corruption, theft, conspiracy or the covering up of material facts and collusion. By using deception a fraudster can obtain an advantage, avoid an obligation or cause loss to another party. The Fraud Act 2006 identifies three criminal offences:

- false representation
- failure to disclose information
- abuse of position

CORRUPTION is the deliberate misuse of your position for direct or indirect personal gain.

"Corruption" includes offering, giving, requesting or accepting a bribe or reward, which influences your actions or the actions of someone else.

THEFT is where someone steals cash or other property. A person is guilty of "theft" if he or she dishonestly takes property belonging to someone else and has no intention of returning it.

We are committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity, honesty, integrity and accountability. We expect all staff, councillors and partners to apply these standards which are included in our codes of conduct.

We will seek to deter and prevent fraud, corruption and theft to ensure that all risks in these areas are reduced to the lowest level possible. Where we suspect or detect fraud, corruption or theft we will thoroughly investigate and deal with any proven fraud in a consistent and balanced way. We will apply appropriate sanctions against those committing fraud and will attempt to recover all losses.

Scope – Policy Aim

The key objectives of this policy are to:

- Increase staff and member awareness of the corporate counter fraud culture which the Council actively supports and to encourage individuals to promptly report suspicions of fraudulent or corrupt behaviour
- Communicate to partners, suppliers, contractors, council owned/part owned companies and other organisations that interact with the Council that it expects them to maintain standards aimed at minimising fraud and corruption in their dealings with the Council
- Demonstrate the arrangements that the Council has in place to counter fraud and corruption
- Minimise the likelihood and extent of losses through fraud and corruption

This policy applies to:

- Breckland Council Councillors
- All Breckland Council staff (including Capita Symonds, shared managers and officers providing services to and on behalf of the Council)
- Council partners, contractors, suppliers, council owned/part owned companies and consultants
- Any member of the public

Executive Summary

Breckland Council is wholly opposed to all forms of fraud, corruption, theft or bribery. We will take action against anyone who attempts to defraud the Council, whether they are our own employees or Councillors, external organisations or members of the public. Personal data will be used within lawful purposes, as detailed within the Council's Privacy Policy and Finance's Privacy Notice on our website. Failure by any

employee to comply with the procedures set out in this Policy may lead to disciplinary action being taken against them. Any disciplinary action will be dealt with in accordance with Breckland Council's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

To deliver the aims of this policy we will:

- Accurately identify the risk of fraud
- Create and maintain a strong counter fraud culture
- Take action to deter, prevent and detect fraud, investigate and apply sanctions and seek redress where fraud is proven
- Record and report our outcomes to either Anglia Revenues Partnership Joint committee or Governance and Audit Committee if applicable

Policy Consultation and Consideration

The Council's Executive Management Team and Governance and Audit Committee

Policy Statement

1. The Policy

The Council is committed to preventing and detecting all forms of fraud, corruption, theft and bribery. We will take action against anyone who attempts to defraud the Council, whether they are our own employees or Councillors, external organisations or members of the public. The Council's Vision is *A Place where People and Business can Thrive*. We recognise our duty to provide value for money quality services to the community and expect all our Councillors and staff to lead by example, working to the highest standards and safeguarding the public resources they are responsible for. We will adopt a risk based approach to eradicating fraud, corruption, theft and bribery and promote zero tolerance, and use tools identified in the Local Government Fraud Strategy, Fighting Fraud Locally.

2. What we mean by Fraud, Corruption and Bribery

This policy outlines our approach to eradicating fraud, corruption, theft and bribery. Throughout this policy, these terms are defined as:

- Deliberately falsifying substituting or destroying records for personal gain
- Falsifying time sheets, flex time or mileage claims
- Failure to declare an interest
- Intentional breaches of financial regulations and procedures
- The offer, giving or acceptance of inducements to influence action or decisions by the Council
- Selling Council equipment inappropriately
- Abuse of position as an employee to benefit friends, family or others
- Use of deception with the intention of obtaining an advantage, avoiding an obligation or causing loss to another party
- Theft of funds, services or assets from the Council or its partners
- Evading liability for payment
- Working whilst on sick leave
- The act of attempted fraud will be treated as seriously as actual fraud.

The Bribery Act 2010 makes it possible for senior officers to be convicted where they are deemed to have given their consent or tacit approval in giving or receiving a bribe. It also created the corporate offence of "Failing to prevent bribery on behalf of a commercial organisation." To protect itself against the corporate offence the Act

also requires organisations to have “adequate procedures in place to prevent bribery.” This policy statement, the codes of conduct and the Whistleblowing Policy are designed to meet that requirement.

Responsibilities

<i>Stakeholder</i>	<i>Specific Responsibilities</i>
Chief Executive	Accountable for the Council's overall governance arrangements including the procedures and effectiveness of the Council's arrangements for countering fraud and corruption
Monitoring Officer	Advise Councillors and Officers on ethical issues, standards and powers to ensure that the Council operates within the law and statutory Codes of Practice. To promote, monitor and enforce probity and high ethical standards within the District Council and Town and Parish Councils within the district of Breckland
Section 151 Officer	To ensure that effective procedures are in place to investigate promptly any fraud or irregularity. To evaluate the adequacy and effectiveness of internal controls designed to secure assets and data and to assist management in preventing and deterring fraud and abuse and to examine the whole system of internal controls and not just the financial controls
Governance and Audit Committee	To monitor the Council's policies and consider the effectiveness of the arrangements for Countering Fraud and Whistleblowing
Councillors	To support and promote the development of a strong counter fraud culture
Executive Directors	The Executive Directors are responsible for the Council's arrangements to manage risk. To champion and promote the development of a strong counter fraud culture
External Audit	Statutory duty to ensure that the Council has in place adequate arrangements for the prevention and detection of fraud, corruption and theft
Internal Audit	Provide resources to implement the Council's counter fraud policy and for the prompt investigation of suspected fraud and irregularities. To ensure that action is taken to improve controls and reduce the risk of fraud
Managers	Identify the risks to which systems, operation and procedures are exposed; developing and maintaining effective controls to prevent and detect fraud; ensuring controls are complied with. Notify the Section 151 Officer immediately of any suspected fraud, irregularity, improper use or misappropriation of the Council's property or resources. Pending investigation and reporting, taking all necessary steps to prevent further loss and to secure records and documentation against removal or alteration
Staff	To comply with Council policies and procedures, to be aware of the possibility of fraud, corruption and theft, and to report any concerns immediately to their manager or the Section 151 Officer
ARP Fraud Team	To provide an effective and efficient fraud service for the Council
Public, Partners, Suppliers and Contractors	To be aware of the possibility of fraud and corruption against the Council and report any concerns or suspicions

3. Our Approach

We will fulfil our responsibility to reduce fraud and protect our resources by a strategic approach consistent with that outlined in the Local Government Fraud Strategy - Fighting Fraud Locally. The three key themes are **Acknowledge – Prevent – Pursue**:

ACKNOWLEDGE	
Committing Support	The Council will have commitment to tackling the fraud threat. We have robust whistle blowing procedures which support those who come forward to report suspected fraud. All reports will be treated seriously and acted upon. We will not, however, tolerate malicious allegations.
Assessing and Understanding Risks	We will continuously assess those areas most vulnerable to the risk of fraud in conjunction with our Risk Management arrangements and risk based Internal Audit reviews. Through these assessments we can understand how fraud affects the Council and what we can do about it.
Robust Response	We will strengthen measures to prevent fraud – the Audit and Investigation Teams will work with managers and policy makers to ensure new and existing systems and policy initiatives are adequately fraud proofed.

PREVENT	
Better Use of Information & Technology Working with Others	We will make greater use of data and analytical software to prevent and detect fraudulent activity. We will look for opportunities to share data and fraud intelligence to increase our capability to uncover potential and actual fraud.
Anti-Fraud Culture	We will promote and develop a strong counter fraud culture, raise awareness and provide information on all aspects of our counter fraud work. This will include publicising the results of all proactive work, fraud investigations, successful sanctions and any recovery of losses due to fraud.

PURSUE	
Fraud Recovery	A crucial element of our response to tackling fraud is recovering any monies lost through fraud – this is an important part of our strategy and will be rigorously pursued, where possible.
Punishing Fraudsters	We will apply realistic and effective sanctions for individuals or organisations where an investigation reveals fraudulent activity. This may include legal action, criminal and/or disciplinary action, where appropriate.
Enforcement	Appropriately trained investigators will investigate any fraud detected through the planned proactive work, cases of suspected fraud referred from internal or external stakeholders or received via the whistle blowing arrangements.

Implementation

Service Managers are responsible for making sure that all staff are familiar with the content of this policy. Under its terms of reference it is the role of the Governance

and Audit Committee to review the Council procedures, incidences and actions for handling allegations from whistle blowers, and Counter fraud corruption and bribery policy. The Section 151 Officer is responsible for making sure that the Council has control systems and measures in place and is accountable for the implementation of this policy. There is a source of support for Fraud under the Council's Internal Audit Contract. Communication plans and training are very important in highlighting awareness and Management Team and Service Managers have a key role to play in making sure this happens.

Reporting concerns of Fraud, Corruption and Bribery

Anyone who has a concern that a potential incident of fraud, corruption or bribery has arisen should always attempt to raise these concerns at the earliest opportunity. The Council acknowledges that this can be difficult and challenging to do in some cases and the Whistleblowing Policy has been established in order to provide those raising concerns with a safe avenue with which to do so. It also offers sources of advice and guidance that they may turn to. The Whistleblowing Policy can be found on the Council's intranet and internet sites. In addition, Appendix 1 to this policy provides details of the Council's Whistleblowing contacts.

Management Control and Organisation

See Implementation and Monitoring sections.

Monitoring

This policy is to be reviewed at least every 3 years (or more frequently if required by changes to statutory legislation). Prior to any approval, the following parties shall be consulted:

- The Council's Executive Management Team
- The Governance and Audit Committee

On an annual basis, the policy shall be reviewed by the Internal Audit Consortium Manager and Section 151 Officer to ensure that details remain relevant and up-to-date. This review will not require re-endorsement of the policy.

The policy will be also monitored in the following ways:

MONITORING ACTIVITY	PERSON RESPONSIBLE
Incidence of fraud	Section 151 Officer and either Anglia Revenues Partnership Joint Committee or Governance and Audit Committee
Annual Governance Statement	Executive Management Team and Governance Audit Committee
Annual returns	Section 151 Officer

Related Policies and Strategies

- Whistle blowing – Confidential Reporting Code
- Anti-money Laundering Policy
- Members' Code of Conduct
- ICT Security Policy
- Financial Regulations
- ARP Fraud Policies
- Officers' Code of Conduct

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Contacts for Whistle blowing

Contacts for Whistle Blowing

Raising concerns internally

<u>Chief Executive</u>	<u>Anna Graves</u> Chief.executive@breckland-sholland.gov.uk 01362 656870
<u>Executive Director Commercialisation (Statutory S151 Officer)</u>	<u>Christine Marshall</u> christine.marshall@breckland-sholland.gov.uk 01362 656870
<u>Executive Director Strategy & Governance (Monitoring Officer)</u>	<u>Maxine O'Mahony</u> Maxine.omahony@breckland-sholland.gov.uk 01362 656870
<u>Executive Director Place</u>	<u>Rob Walker</u> Rob.Walker@breckland-sholland.gov.uk 01362 656870
<u>Head of Internal Audit</u>	<u>Emma Hodds</u> ehodds@s-norfolk.gov.uk 01508 533791
<u>Human Resources Manager</u>	<u>Susie Richardson</u> susie.richardson@breckland.gov.uk 01362 656870
<u>The Fraud Officer</u> For raising suspicions concerning Council Tax and Housing Benefits Fraud	<u>The Fraud Team</u> reportingfraud@angliarevenues.gov.uk 01842 756516