

Council/Committee:	Audit and Risk Assurance Committee
Report Title	Counter Fraud Update
Date of Meeting	16 February 2026
Report Author	Oliver Knight Counter Fraud Lead Peter Farrow Head of Audit
Lead Officer	Alex Thompson Executive Director of Finance and Transformation
Wards Affected	All (All Wards);
Appendices (if any)	1. Counter Fraud Update

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report updates the Committee on the work of the Council's Counter Fraud team up to January 2026.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is recommended to:-
- note and comment on the latest Counter Fraud Update.

3. Proposals – Reasons for the recommendations

- 3.1 To inform the Committee of the work of the Council's Counter Fraud team up to January 2026.

4 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 The purpose of the report is to inform the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee of the latest work of the Council's Counter Fraud team. As such, there is no alternative option.

5 Context and Key Issues

- 5.1 The Counter Fraud Report contains details of the recent areas of counter-fraud activity undertaken by the Council's Counter Fraud team.
- 5.2 It includes the initial results of the latest tranche of data received from the Cabinet Office as part of its National Fraud Initiative (NFI) exercise, sets out the key themes from the recent National Anti-Fraud Network (NAFN) Local Authority Counter Fraud Report 2025, provides details of the outcomes of recent successful cases and highlights potential areas at risk of fraud.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are no financial or resource implications directly arising as a result of this report.

7. Legal and Governance Implications

- 7.1 The Counter Fraud Unit operates within the following legal framework:

- The Fraud Act 2006
- POSHFA (Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013)
- PACE (Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984)
- General Data Protection Regulations
- CPIA (Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996)
- RIPA (Regulatory Investigation Powers Act 2000)
- HRA (Human Rights Act 1998)
- Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2013

The Counter Fraud Unit investigators are required to investigate in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972. The following sections from this Act are relevant:

- Section 151 – Duty to protect public funds: Every Local Authority shall make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs and shall secure that one of the officers has responsibility for the administration of those affairs.
- Section 222 – Right to prosecute: Where a local authority consider it expedient for the promotion or protection of the interests of the inhabitants of their area they may prosecute, defend or appear in any legal proceedings and, in the case of any civil proceedings, may institute them in their own name.
- Section 223 – Right to appear in court: Any member or officer of a local authority who is authorised by that authority to prosecute or defend on their behalf or to appear on their behalf in proceedings before magistrates' court shall be entitled to prosecute or appear in any such proceedings and to conduct any such proceedings.
- Section 111 – Right to act: Without prejudice to any powers exercisable apart from this section but subject to the provisions of this Act and any other enactment passed before or after this Act, a local authority shall have power to do any thing (whether or not involving the expenditure, borrowing or lending of money or the acquisition or disposal of any

property or rights) which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to the discharge of any of their functions.

- The right to question suspects and witnesses – Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1998 - PACE (Code C)

8. Risks

- 8.1 The actions detailed in the Counter Fraud Report, are designed to mitigate the risk of fraud.

9. Equality and Diversity Implications (including the public sector equality duty)

- 9.1 It was not necessary to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment

10. Background Documents

- 10.1 None.

11. How does this deliver the objectives of the Strategic Themes?

- 11.1 This report will support the delivery of the following Strategic Themes:-

- One Council One Team Approach.

Internal Audit and the Counter Fraud Unit operate across the Council and helps it accomplish its vision by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to reducing the risk of fraud and helping to safeguard the Council's assets.