

**Report for:                    GOVERNANCE, AUDIT,  
RISK MANAGEMENT &  
STANDARDS  
COMMITTEE**

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<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	15 July 2024
<b>Subject:</b>	INFORMATION REPORT – Corporate Anti-Fraud Team Year-End Report 2023/24
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Sharon Daniels – Strategic Director of Finance
<b>Exempt:</b>	No
<b>Wards affected:</b>	All
<b>Enclosures:</b>	Appendix 1: Corporate Anti-Fraud Team Year-End Report 2023/24

## **Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations**

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This report sets out the performance of the Corporate Anti-Fraud Team in 2023/24.

**Recommendations:**

The Committee is requested to consider the report and appendix and note its contents.

## **Section 2 – Report**

### **Background**

- 2.1 Throughout the year the GARMS Committee considers performance reports and a year end report from the Corporate Anti-Fraud Team covering progress against the agreed annual plans to help fulfil it's purpose in accordance with the Committees Terms of Reference.

### **Corporate Anti-Fraud Team Year-End Report (Appendix 1)**

- 2.2 Of the 13 work streams contained within the plan, 11 (85%) were achieved, 1 (8%) was achieved and ongoing and 1 (8%) was not achieved and carried over to 2024-25.
- 2.3 In terms of the team's key performance indicators; 4 of the 5 were achieved.
- 2.4 The plan is delivered by an in house Corporate Anti-Fraud Team of 5 FTE's including the Service Manager. All officers in the team are Accredited Counter Fraud Officers and the Service Manager is a qualified Accredited Counter Fraud Manager.

### **The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 use (RIPA)**

- 2.5 The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) sets out the ways in which the council can lawfully carry out investigations when we want to use surveillance techniques. There are 3 types of surveillance techniques available to local authorities:
- the acquisition and disclosure of communications data (such as telephone billing information or subscriber details);
  - directed surveillance (covert surveillance of individuals in public places); and
  - covert human intelligence sources (CHIS) (such as the deployment of undercover officers)
- 2.6 Local authorities may use covert techniques where they are responsible for enforcing the law in respect of: environmental crime; consumer scams; loan sharks; taxi cab regulation; underage sale of knives, alcohol and tobacco; and the employment of minors. CHIS and directed surveillance techniques are used in test purchase operations to investigate the sale of tobacco, alcohol and other age-restricted products.
- 2.7 Local authorities may only use covert surveillance for the prevention and detection of crime, and only in those cases where the offence under investigation is subject to a term of imprisonment of 6 months or more. In addition, since the Protection of Freedom Act 2012 came into force, all local authorities must get approval from a magistrate before they undertake any form of covert surveillance.
- 2.8 Harrow's use of its surveillance powers is kept under review by the Chief Surveillance Commissioner, the Council is required to submit an annual return which it has done every year. Regular inspection visits are made the last one being in 2019. These powers have not been used since 2017; the Council has found other ways to obtain the information required. The Commissioner has asked that councillors are kept informed of any use of the RIPA legislation.

## **Legal Implications**

Set out above

## **Financial Implications**

The functions of the Corporate Anti-Fraud Team are delivered within the budget available.

## **Risk Management Implications**

None

## **Equalities implications/Public Sector Equality Duty**

Was an Equality Impact Assessment carried out? No (N/A)

## **Council Priorities**

The Corporate Anti-Fraud Team contributes to all the corporate priorities by enhancing the robustness of the control environment and governance mechanisms that directly or indirectly support the priorities.

## **Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance**

As this is an information only report Legal / Finance / Corporate Director clearances are not necessary.

## **Mandatory Checks**

Ward Councillors notified: No, as it impacts on all Wards

## **Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers**

**Contact:** Justin Phillips, Corporate Anti-Fraud Manager, 02084241609

**Background Papers:** None

If appropriate, does the report include the following considerations?

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|-----------------|-----|
| 1. Consultation | NO  |
| 2. Priorities   | YES |