

# Waverley Borough Council

Report to: Audit & Risk Committee

Date: 17 June 2024

Ward(s) affected: All

Report of Director: Ian Doyle, Transformation & Governance

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Report Status: Open

## Fraud Investigation Summary for Qtr 1 in 2024-2025

### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Audit and Risk Committee is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the adequacy of the Council's anti-fraud arrangements and this is a key aspect of the Council's risk management, control and governance framework.
- 1.2 This report provides the Audit and Risk Committee with an overview of Waverley's fraud investigation activity completed in quarter 1 of 2024-25 (1<sup>st</sup> April to 06 June 2024).

- 1.3 This work has resulted in the recovery of one property, the cancellation of one Right to Buy and the cancellation of two Housing Applications.

## **2. Recommendation to Audit & Risk Committee**

- 2.1 That Audit & Risk Committee notes the results of the anti-fraud activity and investigation as set out in Appendix 1.

## **3. Reason(s) for Recommendation:**

- 3.1. To enable the Audit & Risk Committee to be aware of the results of the housing fraud investigation activity for the period covering 01 April 2024 to 06 June 2024.

## **4. Exemption from publication**

- 4.1. N/A

## **5. Purpose of Report**

- 5.1 The report provides an update to the Committee on the work being completed in investigating fraud, primarily focusing on Housing Tenancy fraud

## **6. Strategic Priorities**

- 6.1. A financially sound Waverley, with infrastructure and services fit for the future.

## **7. Background**

- 7.1 This report provides the Audit & Risk Committee with an update on the activity relating to fraud investigations. The work completed has been supported by the Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013

where the maximum penalty for the offence of acting dishonestly in the subletting/parting with possession of a property is up to 2 years' imprisonment or a fine (or both).

- 7.2 In the period 01 April 2024 to 06 June 2024 outcomes include one property being made available for new tenants to occupy. The tenancy was recovered as the tenant was not utilising the property as their main or principal home in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Tenancy Agreement. This tenant had also submitted a Right To Buy application and the outcome of the investigation resulted in the application being cancelled.

## **8. Consultations**

- 8.1 No consultations were completed re the content of this report as the results would not have been affected by a consultation as they are a report of facts.

## **9. Key Risks**

- 9.1 If the authority did not carry out this investigation work it would enable fraudsters to perpetrate housing fraud against the council and obtain services or financial benefit including housing to which they are not entitled. This investigative work therefore assists in protecting council assets and the council reputation on how it deals with fraud.

## **10. Financial Implications**

- 10.1. Without the work of the Housing Tenancy Fraud investigator the achievement of the recovery of one property, the cancellation of one Right to Buy and the cancellation of two Housing Applications in the first quarter of 2024 could not be realised. This work supports the council's zero tolerance to fraud whilst providing indicative saving of £206, 398 based on the National Fraud Initiative's notional values. Additionally, the cost for Waverley to build a new home is on average

£300K; therefore these outcomes represent significant savings to the council.

## **11. Legal Implications**

11.1 The Local Government Transparency Code requires the Council to publish data regarding its anti-fraud arrangements. The information contained within the Appendix consists of part of that. Consistent with the Code, this information will also be published on the Council's website in due course.

11.2 The responsibilities of public sector entities in relation to the prevention and detection of fraud and error are set out in statute, standards and other guidance. Local authorities also have a statutory duty to make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs.

## **12. Human Resource Implications**

12.1. N/A

## **13. Equality and Diversity Implications**

13.1 There are no direct equality, diversity, or inclusion implications in this report. Equality impact assessments are carried out, when necessary, across the council to ensure service delivery meets the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010.

## **14. Climate Change/Sustainability Implications**

14.1. There are no direct implications in the report.

## **15. Conclusion**

15.1 The contents of the report inform the Audit Committee of the recovery of properties from those not using them in accordance with the

tenancy agreement and the financial and reputational value of completing this work to safeguard the councils' assets.

## **16. Background Papers**

16.1 There are no background papers, as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972).

## **17. Appendices**

17.1 Appendix 1 – Fraud investigation results for the first quarter (01 April 2024 to 06 June 2024) of the 2023 -2024 financial year.

## **18. Governance Journey**

18.1 The minutes of the meeting will be included on the next Council agenda.

Please ensure the following service areas have signed off your report.  
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<b>Service</b>	<b>Sign off date</b>
Finance / S.151 Officer (Mavis Amouzou-Akue)	
Legal / Governance Mark Watkins	
HR (Jon Formby)	
Equalities	
Strategic Director (Ian Doyle)	
Lead Councillor	N/A
CMB	N/A
Executive Briefing/Liaison	N/A
Committee Services	