



Stevenage Borough Council

Audit Committee

Anti-Fraud Plan 2026/27

Purpose

- 1 This report provides members with an introduction to the Councils Anti-Fraud Plan for the next 12 months

Recommendations

- 2 **The Committee is RECOMMENDED to:**
 - I. **Review and approve the Anti-Fraud Plan 2026/27.**

Background

- 3 The Cabinet Office, Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), National Audit Office (NAO), Chartered Institute for Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) have issued advice, and best practice, to support local councils in the fight to reduce the risk of fraud and prevent loss to the public purse. This advice includes the need for vigilance in recognising fraud risks and the investment of sufficient resources in counter fraud activities.

Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally a Strategy for the 2020's. The strategy focuses on the governance and 'ownership' of anti-fraud and corruption arrangements. The Strategy also identifies areas of best practice and includes a 'Checklist' to compare against actions taken by the Council to deter/prevent/investigate fraud. The checklist is maintained and reviewed by SAFS and officers.

The impact of Fraud and Error on Public Funds 2023-24 (National Audit Office). "Fraud and error cost the taxpayer billions of pounds each year – but most of the potential loss goes undetected. Based on the Public Sector Fraud Authority's (PSFA) methodology, we estimate that fraud and error cost the taxpayer £55 billion to £81 billion in 2023-24. Only a fraction of this is detected and known about".

CIFAS Annual Fraudscape Report 2025- Fraud is as prevalent as ever. It accounts for almost 40% of all crime reported in England and Wales and is estimated to cost the UK economy £219 billion each year, money that is stolen and used to fund other forms of crime. Losses to the public sector are estimated to be as much as £81 billion. This is money that could otherwise be used to fund our public services.

Lost Homes, Lost Hope. This paper, published by the Fraud Advisory Panel & Tenancy Fraud Forum in April 2023 uses previous research and current data to estimate the volume and cost of fraud in the social housing sector and the impact of this on local government.

4. It is essential that the Council has in place a robust framework to prevent and deter fraud, including effective strategies and policies, as well as plans to deal with the investigation and prosecution of identified fraud.
5. Members of this committee have received reports about how SAFS works closely with the Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS) dealing with all aspects of fraud from prevention and deterrence to investigation and prosecution, working with services and Council staff at all levels.

Report

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6. The reports and papers mentioned at section 3 above and guidance from the NAO, CIPFA, MHCLG and the Local Government Association (LGA) recommend that organisations have effective and robust counter fraud and corruption measures. These measures require the acknowledgement of fraud as a tangible risk, policies, and procedures to deter and prevent fraud occurring and the provision of sufficient resources to investigate and recover losses caused by fraud. Above all an organisation should have a plan to protect itself against fraud.
7. Council officers and SAFS management develop and agree an **Anti-Fraud Plan** each year and the proposed plan for 2026/27 is presented at **Appendix A**

The Plan and Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally

8. The Anti-Fraud Plan has been developed over several years to meet the recommendations of the [Fighting Fraud Corruption Locally Strategy 2020s | Cifas](#) (FFCL) adopting the 'pillars' of Protect, Govern, Acknowledge, Prevent and Pursue.
9. The Plan identifies officers/members who will have a role in delivering it, and SAFS will work with all concerned to ensure they understand their role both in delivering the Plan and supporting the FFCL strategy.
10. Members will note that this Committee has a role in ensuring key elements in the Plan are implemented and in continual monitoring the Councils anti-fraud work.

Counter Fraud 2026/27

11. The proposed Anti-Fraud Plan can be found at **Appendix A**.
12. The Plan includes reference to the SAFS KPIs and Standards of Service. All SAFS staff are appropriately trained and accredited and the service has access to the resources of the Public Sector Fraud Authority and Government Counter Fraud Profession.
13. SAFS will maintain its relationship with specialist third party providers and national networks to keep the Council informed of new and emerging fraud threats or changes to best practice that assist in deterring/preventing fraud and corruption.

- 14 SAFS will continue to work closely with Council officers working in those services mentioned in the Plan.
- 15 SAFS has engaged with the Senior Leadership of the Council to ensure compliance with current best practice in line with the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023.
- 16 Regular reports will be provided to senior management and this Committee on progress delivering the Plan for 2026/27.

Appendices

Appendix A - Stevenage Borough Council - Anti-Fraud Plan 2026/27.

List of Background Papers - Local Government Act 1972, Section 100D

- (a) ***Councillors Workbook on Bribery & Fraud Prevention (LGA 2017)***
- (b) ***Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally- A Strategy for the 2020's (CIPFA/CIFAS/LGA 2020)***
- (c) ***Tackling Fraud in the Public Sector (CIPFA 2020)***
- (d) ***NAFN Local Authority Counter Fraud Survey- (National Report 2025)***
- (e) ***Lost Homes Lost Hope- (Fraud Advisory Panel 2023)***