



Report to: Full Council

Date of Meeting: 28 September 2006
Report from: Revenues & Benefits Manager

Title of Report: Additional Code of Conduct for Fraud Investigators, Intervention Officers and Internal Auditors

Agenda Item Number: **17**

1. PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to secure the approval of an additional Code of Conduct for Fraud Investigators, Intervention Officers and Auditors. The Code of Conduct will address the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate recommendation to update our current Code of Conduct to reflect current legislation and regulations as well as meeting a key enabler within the Housing and Council Tax Benefit Performance Standards. The code of conduct has also been extended to included internal auditors.

2. CONSULTATION

2.1 All Corporate Management Team and Service Team Managers have been consulted on this.

3. CORPORATE PLAN AND PRIORITIES

3.1 The additional Code of Conduct for Fraud Investigators, Intervention Officers and Auditors will address part of the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate recommendations, which is part of the Improvement and Recovery plan phase 2. There are 228 recommendations from the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate and so far 214 have been completed equating to 93%

4. IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Financial

There following are financial implications associated with this report

Risk	Consequence
There are risks to the employee if the code of conduct is not clear and concise	Breach of this Code of Conduct will be treated as misconduct and dealt with under the current disciplinary procedures
There are financial risks to the Council if	Employee may take legal action against

the code of conduct is not clear and concise	the Council
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4.2 Legal

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

4.3 Personnel

There are no personnel implications associated with this report.

4.4 Other Services

There are no implications for other Services

4.5 Diversity

Chester-le-Street District Council is committed to promoting equality and valuing diversity in both service delivery and employment. Care has been taken in drafting this policy and the underpinning procedures to ensure that the Council does not unjustifiably discriminate against any minority group. A diversity impact assessment has been carried out on the code of conduct.

4.6 Risk

If the Code of Conduct is not approved the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate recommendations and the new Performance Standards will not be achieved, which leaves the Council open to further scrutiny and future inspections

5. BACKGROUND, POSITION STATEMENT AND OPTION APPRAISAL

5.1 On the 14 December 1998 the Council approved a Housing and Council Tax Benefit Anti-Fraud Policy, which included a code of conduct for investigators. Since then legislation has regularly changed and new regulations have been introduced, which have a direct impact on fraud and intervention activities.

5.2 The Benefit Fraud Inspectorate carried out a comprehensive inspection of the Benefit Service in June 2004, one of their recommendations for the Service was that the Code of Conduct for Fraud and Intervention Officers was updated to reflect current legislation.

5.3 Updating the code of conduct will :-

- ensure that current legislation and regulations are adhered to
- achieve one of recommendations outlined in the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate report
- meet the required standard in the Housing and Council Tax Benefit Performance Standards set by the Department for Work and Pensions.
- ensure compliance with the CIPFA Code of Practice for Internal Audit, specifically Standard 8 – Due Professional Care.

- 5.4 The Code of Conduct outlines clear behavioural expectations for employees involved in Fraud Investigations, Intervention visits and Internal Audit. It is applicable to all employees who work on the Fraud and Intervention team or on the internal Audit team whether, permanent, temporary or on a secondment opportunity. It also protects employees from allegations of impropriety.
- 5.4 The Code of Conduct forms part of the Council's commitment within the Corporate Improvement and Recovery Plan.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 It is recommended that the Council adopts the additional code of conduct for fraud Investigators, Intervention officers and Internal Auditors

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS / DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO

- 7.1 Additional Code of Conduct for Fraud Investigators, Intervention Officers and Auditors

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