



ANTI FRAUD AND CORRUPTION STRATEGY

Aims

The aims of the Anti Fraud & Corruption Strategy are:

- To develop and continually improve an anti fraud culture amongst Members and staff,
- To design and operate policies and systems which minimise the risk and impact of fraud,
- To create an environment which supports work against fraud,
- To promote anti fraud practices and arrangements with our contractors, partners and the wider community.

Statement of Intention

The London Borough of Redbridge is committed to the proper accountability of public funds. The Authority condemns fraud and corruption in public life, and requires holders of public office and its employees to comply with all relevant codes, particularly relating to governance and standards of conduct.

The public is entitled to expect the Authority to conduct its affairs with integrity, honesty and openness, and demand the highest standards of conduct from those working for it and with it. Our Principles (see attached) reflect these expectations.

We also encourage and expect those organisations with whom we work in partnership or contract with to adopt similar principles.

Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of all managers within the Authority to establish and maintain effective systems of internal control and to ensure that the Authority's resources are properly applied. This includes the responsibility for regularly assessing the risks and impact of fraud and corruption and taking action to prevent it occurring supported by effective means of detection.

Response to Fraud & Corruption

We have well defined procedures as set out in our Fraud Response Plan to deal with financial irregularity and corruption - whether perpetrated by employees or Members, or by members of the public or contractors in their business dealings with the Council. We recognise the importance of taking the strongest possible action against offenders in deterring against any fraudulent activity within the organisation and services provided to the public, and to this end we will seek prosecution wherever appropriate. Our Financial Regulations set out the roles and process for instigating criminal proceedings. The decision whether to prosecute will be based upon the circumstances of each case and, in particular, needs to meet two tests / criteria:

- (i) the evidential test
- (ii) the public interest test,

The evidential test means that there needs to be sufficient evidence to provide a “realistic” prospect of a conviction

The Public Interest test, will depend on the seriousness of the offence and / or the circumstances of the offender, which may increase the likelihood of prosecution or suggest alternatives, for example, Civil Actions, would be preferable.

We will also take appropriate disciplinary action against any employee or Member of the Authority who commits fraud or other irregularity.

In all cases of proven fraud we will make every effort to recover our losses and costs wherever possible.

Working in Partnership

We are unequivocal in our support of the Police and other external bodies, such as the Benefits Agency, in fighting fraud and corruption within the public sector. We actively participate in data matching exercises conducted through the Audit Commission, Benefits Agency and other bodies in order to detect potential fraud and irregularity. We will continue to foster relationships with external organisations for the purpose of examining new initiatives that help to combat fraud. At all times we will work within the provisions of Data Protection, Human Rights and other relevant legislation and codes of best practice.

Raising Concerns

We encourage, and indeed require, individuals to report concerns regarding fraud and corruption through the promotion of the Whistleblowing arrangements (separate literature is available), and reports can be made via an employee’s manager or Chief Officer, or alternatively the matter can be raised with the Chief Auditor, if the issue is financial, or the Chief Personnel Officer for other issues.

All allegations are treated as confidential, will be thoroughly investigated, reported and appropriate actions taken.

Publicity

We will take every opportunity to publicise our commitment to tackling fraud and serve warning to those who would defraud the Authority. Our Benefits hot-line and whistleblowing arrangements are examples of our determination to tackle fraud and to constantly remind our staff and the public of the need for their vigilance in assisting us to counter fraudsters.

In appropriate cases we will, to help deter would be fraudsters, publicise the outcome of successful prosecutions or other actions

London Borough of Redbridge

Anti Fraud and Corruption Strategy

Principles

The Authority requires holders of public office and its employees to:

- take decisions solely in pursuance of the Council's statutory functions and in the public interest to the exclusion of private and personal interest.
- not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence or be perceived to influence them in the performance of their duties.
- in carrying out public duties, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for awards or benefits, to make choices on merit in accordance with defined guidelines.
- to be accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.
- to be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take; to give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.
- to operate in accordance with existing codes of conduct for Members and officers and to declare any personal or prejudicial interest which is relevant to their public duties
- to take positive steps to resolve any conflicts of interest in a way that first protects the public interest and maintains public confidence; and to take advice from senior officers in any case of doubt.
- to promote and support these principles by leadership and example both within the Authority and with external partners and contractors.