

Crime and Disorder Select Committee
Review of Fraud Awareness (Personal)
Outline Scope

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Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?	
<p>The review will contribute to the following element of the Council Plan 2020-2023 vision:</p> <p><i>Making the Borough a place where people are healthy, safe and protected from harm</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People live in cohesive and safe communities • People are supported and protected from harm 	
What are the main issues and overall aim of this review?	
<p>A wrongful or criminal deception intended to result in financial or personal gain, fraud covers a variety of misdemeanours including cyber-crime, doorstep crime, and telephone and postal-enabled offences. However, unlike other crime types such as theft, burglary or assaults which are reported directly to Cleveland Police, fraud cases are instead reported to a National Recording Centre based in the City of London known as Action Fraud.</p> <p>Action Fraud collate any received information and, where appropriate, send investigation packages to the Force where the offender resides, notifying the Force covering the area where the victim resides. The vast majority of fraud offences are perpetrated from outside of the Cleveland area (and often from outside of the UK) though, making investigation and detection extremely difficult.</p> <p>The impact upon victims of fraud can be devastating, with people sometimes losing their life savings. The Victim Care and Advice Service (VCAS) (which offers free, independent and confidential support for individuals and their families throughout the Cleveland and Durham areas) receive between 150-170 such victims every month, though the current thinking is that about 5% of victims actually report an offence, meaning that the actual figure will be between 3,000 and 3,500 victims per month.</p> <p>The emergence of COVID-19 in 2020 has led to numerous reports of increasing fraudulent activity, with the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (ACFE) (badged as the world's largest anti-fraud organisation) stating that the pandemic is the perfect storm for fraud. Within such a context, this review will therefore aim to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the process for reporting (personal) fraud offences, including the role of key 	

<p>stakeholders in the handling of cases.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish how the public are made aware of the required reporting mechanisms and how this is reinforced by local organisations, including work around reducing the risk of becoming a victim of fraud. • Ascertain the ways in which local victims of fraud are identified and supported. • Identify any local COVID-19-related fraud concerns and whether any targeted awareness-raising / support may be required. 	
<p>The Committee will undertake the following key lines of enquiry:</p> <p>What is the role of Action Fraud and how does it operate?</p> <p>What is the current status / situation with Action Fraud from the perspective of the Council and its relevant partners?</p> <p>How are the public made aware of Action Fraud and the ways in which they can report this type of crime? How is this reinforced by the Council and its partners?</p> <p>How does the Council and its relevant partners highlight this issue and help in reducing the risk of people becoming a victim of fraud (e.g. anti-fraud campaigns / messages)?</p> <p>What support mechanisms are currently in place for victims of fraud (e.g. Local Authority, Cleveland Police, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC), VCAS)?</p> <p>Impact of COVID-19 on cases of fraud.</p>	
<p>Who will the Committee be trying to influence as part of its work?</p> <p>Cabinet, OPCC, Cleveland Police, VCAS, public.</p>	
<p>Expected duration of review and key milestones:</p> <p>4 months (reporting to Cabinet in May 2021)</p>	
<p>What information do we need?</p> <p>Existing information (background information, existing reports, legislation, central government documents, etc.):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fraud statistics (type, victim demographics) – Action Fraud / Cifas 	
<p>Who can provide us with further relevant evidence? (Cabinet Member, officer, service user, general public, expert witness, etc.)</p>	<p>What specific areas do we want them to cover when they give evidence?</p>
<p>Action Fraud</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Fraud statistics ➤ Role and reporting processes
<p>Cleveland Police</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Interface with Action Fraud ➤ Local picture in relation to fraud ➤ Public initiatives to highlight / reduce fraud
<p>OPCC / VCAS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Public initiatives to highlight / reduce fraud

Local Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Local support for victims ➤ Local picture in relation to fraud ➤ Public initiatives to highlight / reduce fraud
Citizens Advice / VCSE / Age UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Awareness of local issues / concerns
<p>How will this information be gathered? (eg. financial baselining and analysis, benchmarking, site visits, face-to-face questioning, telephone survey, survey)</p>	
<p>Committee meetings, reports, background research.</p>	
<p>How will key partners and the public be involved in the review?</p>	
<p>Committee meetings, information submissions.</p>	
<p>How will the review help the Council meet the Public Sector Equality Duty?</p>	
<p>The Public Sector Equality Duty requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. This review will be mindful of these factors.</p>	
<p>How will the review contribute towards the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, or the implementation of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy?</p>	
<p><u>Stockton Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA): Crime</u> (Crime and the fear of crime are key factors that affect people’s quality of life and sense of well-being).</p>	
<p><u>Stockton-on-Tees Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2023: All people in Stockton-on-Tees live in healthy places and sustainable communities</u> (Live safely and be protected from harm).</p>	
<p>Provide an initial view as to how this review could lead to efficiencies, improvements and/or transformation:</p>	
<p>This review will help to raise awareness of the prevalence of fraud, reinforce reporting mechanisms and highlight the avenues of support for victims. In a rapidly changing world due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, it may also be able to identify emerging threats and possible areas for future targeted awareness-raising and support.</p>	

Project Plan

Key Task	Details/Activities	Date	Responsibility
Scoping of Review	Information gathering	November 2020	Scrutiny Officer Link Officer
Tri-Partite Meeting	Meeting to discuss aims and objectives of review	23.11.20	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
Agree Project Plan	Scope and Project Plan agreed by Committee	03.12.20	Select Committee
Publicity of Review	Determine whether Communications Plan needed	TBC	Link Officer, Scrutiny Officer
Obtaining Evidence	Local Authority Citizens Advice Age UK Action Fraud Cleveland Police OPCC / VCAS	14.01.21 11.02.21	Select Committee
Members decide recommendations and findings	Review summary of findings and formulate draft recommendations	11.03.21	Select Committee
Circulate Draft Report to Stakeholders	Circulation of Report	March 2021	Scrutiny Officer
Tri-Partite Meeting	Meeting to discuss findings of review and draft recommendations	TBC	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
Final Agreement of Report	Approval of final report by Committee	15.04.21	Select Committee, Cabinet Member, Director
Consideration of Report by Executive Scrutiny Committee	Consideration of report	18.05.21	Executive Scrutiny Committee
Report to Cabinet/Approving Body	Presentation of final report with recommendations for approval to Cabinet	20.05.21	Cabinet / Approving Body