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| Report to: | Audit Committee |
| Date: | 13 February 2026 |
| By: | Chief Operating Officer |
| Title of report: | East Sussex County Council Counter Fraud and Corruption Strategy |
| Purpose of report: | To present the Council's recently updated Counter Fraud and Corruption Strategy |

RECOMMENDATION: Audit Committee is recommended to review and endorse the Council's Counter Fraud and Corruption Strategy and Framework.

1. Background Information

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide details of the proposed changes to the Council's Counter Fraud and Corruption Strategy and Framework (Appendix 1) for the Committee to consider ahead of its approval by Governance Committee.

2. Supporting Information

2.1 This Counter Fraud Strategy is aligned to '[Fighting Fraud & Corruption Locally](#)' (FFCL), the Local Government Counter Fraud and Corruption Strategy for the 2020s, which provides a blueprint for a tougher response to fraud and corruption perpetrated against local authorities.

2.2 The strategy outlines East Sussex County Council's (ESCC) commitment to the highest standards of corporate governance, ethical behaviour, and financial stewardship. The Council adopts a zero-tolerance approach to fraud, bribery, and corruption, recognising the harm these offences cause to individuals, communities and public resources.

2.3 The strategy is built on 5 core principles – Govern, Acknowledge, Prevent, Pursue, and Protect – which guide the Council's actions in embedding an anti-fraud culture, understanding and mitigating fraud risks, developing robust internal controls, and ensuring effective investigation and recovery processes.

2.4 The framework is supported by related policies such as Whistleblowing, Anti-Bribery, Anti-Money Laundering, and Sanctions, and emphasises the importance of transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement in fraud prevention.

2.5 Operationally, the strategy details procedures for reporting and investigating suspected fraud, including clear roles for the Money Laundering Reporting Officer and protocols for handling allegations. It stresses the need for ongoing staff training, due diligence in recruitment, and regular risk assessments to adapt to emerging threats.

2.6 The Council's approach to sanctions is proportionate and considers disciplinary, civil, and criminal proceedings, with a focus on recovering public funds and deterring future wrongdoing.

2.7 The document also highlights the 'seven principles of public life'—selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership—as the ethical foundation for all Council members and staff, ensuring public trust and safeguarding the Council's reputation.

2.8 The amendments made to the ESCC Strategy include the following:

- Update to contact details in the Anti Money Laundering Policy appended to the strategy at Annex 1.1 of Appendix 1;
- Refreshed links to external websites for related policies.

3. Conclusions and Reasons for Recommendation

3.1 The amendments set out above strengthen the Council's compliance with best practice and ensures the revised strategy reflects recent organisational changes.

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