

**Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee**  
**29 July 2020**  
**Appendix A - Progress Update**

**Results**

As there has not been a committee meeting since January 2020 I have included all of the figures since that date. Between 01 April 2020 and the 15 July 2020, the corporate fraud team has achieved the following results:

**Directly Attributable Savings**

Type	Fraud Loss Avoidance*	Income Generated	Comment
Council Tax Reduction Scheme	£2,665.78	£2,530.86	Loss avoidance is based on the Oxford model of 104 weeks future entitlement
Council Tax Single Person Discount / Other exemptions	£3,648.10	£2,914.70	Achieved through reactive investigation casework

**Indirectly Attributable Savings**

Type	Fraud Loss Avoidance*	Income Generated	Comment
Housing Benefit	£10,235.68	£13,710.13	Although no longer tasked with investigating Housing Benefit, these values are the by-product of Council Tax Reduction scheme and tenancy fraud investigations

**Totals**

	<b>£16,549.56</b>	<b>£19,155.69</b>	
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\*Future savings are calculated based on a nationally accepted model, devised by the former Audit Commission and updated by the Oxford Investigation Service. The rationale behind the calculations show that, without intervention from the Counter-Fraud Team, a fraudulent or irregular payment would have continued for a period of time before being detected in another way. For Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction, this period has been determined as an average of 104 weeks.

## **Grant Schemes**

With the advent of Covid-19 CDC, along with all other Councils were asked to administer a grants scheme to small businesses, which sought to make payments to the local businesses from a total allocation of £26.7m. Currently the Council has provided support to over 2,000 businesses having allocated just over £26m of the funding allocated. A team approach has been deployed including staff from CSN Resources Limited, Finance, Growth and Economy and the County Council Finance and Audit teams. The work of the audit team has prevented the Council making inappropriate payments of approximately £350k and has also seen a number of fraud referrals.

The OIS Fraud Team have assisted the Audit team who have identified 10 applications that may be fraudulent. These applications range from companies that were not trading at the time of the process opening, have made duplicate applications or do not appear to have ever occupied a business premises. As there was a robust application process adopted this has prevented fraudulent payments being made. Applications that have been questioned by the process team have then been passed to the Fraud Team to investigate. There are a number of options open to the Fraud Team to manage these cases. To prove any criminal intent the offenders will have to be interviewed under Caution, which due to the Covid 19 crisis has proved to be problematic. Measures have now been put in place to address this so that interviews can take place. There are a number of cases that could potentially lead to prosecutions but at the present time the Fraud Team is still gathering evidence before interviews are conducted.

## **COUNTER FRAUD TRAINING AND INFORMATION**

During the Counter Fraud Week the Executive Director of Finance and the Director of Finance at Oxfordshire County Council highlighted the importance of fraud prevention and awareness with a combined video across both Councils via their intranet and communications processes. The importance looking to the future of highlighting the need to prevent and avoid fraud in ways that engage staff across the Council in a creative manner.