



National Fraud Initiative – Additional Exercise in 2009/10

Strategy for Matching of
Council Tax Data
to
Electoral Register

INDEX

	<u>Page</u>
1. Background Information	2
2. Investigation of Matched Datasets	3
3. Reporting Timetable	4

1. Background Information

- 1.1** An additional National Fraud Initiative (“NFI”) exercise is to take place involving the matching of Council Tax data to Electoral Register data with the principal objective being to identify instances where the Council Tax single person’s discount has been incorrectly awarded.
- 1.2** The NFI process is designed to help participating bodies identify possible cases of fraud or error and detect and correct any consequential under or overpayments from the public purse.
- 1.3** It should be noted that the contents of this strategy document do not refer in any way to the arrangements which Argyll & Bute Council and East Dunbartonshire Council may choose to make for this national NFI exercise with Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board.
- 1.4** The key contact for this NFI exercise is:

West Dunbartonshire Council (“WDC”)

Colin McDougall, Section Head – Internal Audit

Tel: 01389-737436

Email: colin.mcdougall@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

- 1.5** Data extracts are scheduled to take place as follows:
- Council Tax: week commencing 12 October 2009, to be submitted by 19 October 2009.
 - Electoral Register: In December 2009, as soon as the new Electoral Register becomes available (planned for 1 December 2009), to be submitted by 31 December 2009.
- 1.6** It is for West Dunbartonshire Council to initiate the process to obtain the Electoral Register data and to provide it for the purpose of this exercise. Therefore, arrangements should be made for the Council’s Section 95 Officer, i.e. the Executive Director of Corporate Services formally to request the required information from David Thomson, Electoral Registration Officer, and explain that it is required for audit purposes, following a request from Audit Scotland under section 100 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.
- 1.7** Fair processing notification has already been put in place at WDC, i.e. an appropriate wording appears on Council Tax documents, e.g. Demand Notices, Reminders, Final Notices, Summary Warrants etc.
- 1.8** Audit Scotland have advised that as the Electoral Register is a publicly available document Section 35 (1) of the Data Protection Act provides grounds for dispensing with disclosure / fair processing notification requirements. Section 35 (1) allows the disclosure requirements to be

dispensed with when information is required to be provided by law (in this case under section 100 of the LG(S)A 1973).

- 1.9** Processing and matching of data extracts will be carried out by Synetics Solutions, contractors engaged by the Audit Commission and it is anticipated that, in March 2010, matched datasets will be made available to all participating bodies via a secure website.
- 1.10** The NFI Coordinators at the Audit Commission and also Audit Scotland and other appointed External Auditors are able to access the data of each participating body, i.e. they are super users. Therefore, they will know the level of work undertaken by all participating bodies and, for example, if particular reports have not been accessed or have not been investigated to any great extent. There is an expectation that organisations who are participating in the process will allocate appropriate resources so that matched datasets will be properly investigated.

2. Investigation of Matched Datasets

- 2.1** It is anticipated matched datasets will be made available to participating bodies in March 2010.
- 2.2** It is not yet known at this stage how many separate matched dataset reports that there will be.
- 2.3** If the category of reports is similar to the NFI 2008/09 exercise, then the reports are likely to be categorised as follows:
 - 1. High priority reports
 - 2. Medium priority reports
 - 3. Low priority reports
 - 4. Info reports

Filtering facilities within the database will allow the number of cases to be reduced according to a pre-determined set of criteria, i.e. this will identify “recommended filter” matches.

- 2.4** It is not expected that every match reported should be looked at in detail, especially if there is a high volume of data to examine. However, there should be an initial review of all matched data provided and then further work should then be based on the nature and value of matches reported.
- 2.5** It is understood that Audit Scotland are not planning to hold any training events in connection with this exercise.
- 2.6** The appropriate level of resources to be allocated to the investigation of datasets within each Council is the responsibility of the designated

Key Contact or other Officer who has overall responsibility for the exercise.

3. Reporting Timetable

3.1 Progress returns will be required on:

Dates still to be announced

3.2 An electronic version of returns will be posted on to the NFI website prior to the first deadline date, together with information on how to use this feature.

Formal reporting arrangements not yet announced

3.3 It is envisaged that software within the web based application will automatically lift data keyed from individual cases into the form.

3.4 The initial objective is to have covered a significant amount of investigation data matches prior to the initial report deadline of

Date still to be announced

3.5 It should be noted that the external auditors of participating bodies are likely to make comment on the NFI in terms of the extent of the commitment made and the follow up of matches.