

# WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

## Report by the Executive Director of Corporate Services

Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee: 20 June 2012

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### Subject: Housing and Council Tax Benefit Fraud Strategy

#### 1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for our amended Housing and Council Tax Benefit Fraud Strategy for West Dunbartonshire Council (Appendix 1).

#### 2. Background

- 2.1 West Dunbartonshire Council has a duty to administer claims for housing and council tax benefit, including a responsibility to detect and prevent fraud. The Council also has a duty to ensure that there is maximum uptake of benefit and that the correct amount of benefit is paid to those who are entitled to it.

#### 3. Main Issues

- 3.1 This strategy fully supports the Council's aim to provide best value services which are free from fraud and corruption.
- 3.2 The Council has in place a network of systems and procedures to assist in detecting and dealing with fraud when it occurs. It is committed to ensuring that these systems keep pace with any future developments in techniques to both prevent and detect fraudulent activity in housing and council tax benefit.
- 3.3 The Council will maintain a continuous review of all these systems and procedures through the Housing and Council Tax Benefit Investigation Team and the strategy will be regularly reviewed.
- 3.4 The strategy has been amended to include reference to Loss of Benefit Provisions, increase in the guidance levels for consideration of sanctions and updated to reflect recent title changes for posts and sections referred to in the strategy.

#### 4. People Implications

- 4.1 None.

#### 5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 Local Authorities receive an annual amount of funding paid on a monthly basis to cover housing benefit/council tax benefit administration. This subsidy is part of the funding for the benefits investigation benefit service.

## **6. Risk Analysis**

**6.1** There was no requirement to carry out a risk analysis.

## **7. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)**

**7.1** No significant issues were identified in a screening for potential equality impact of this report

## **8. Strategic Assessment**

**8.1** The Council has identified four main strategic priorities, namely Social & Economic Regeneration, Financial Strategy, Asset Management Strategy; and Fit for Purpose Services.

**8.2** The Housing and Council Tax benefit Strategy forms part of the Financial Strategy of the Council and also feeds into the Health and Wellbeing strategy by seeking to protect vulnerable groups.

## **9. Conclusion and Recommendations**

**9.1** The team is focused on an intelligence led approach to investigations with a view to conducting them to prosecution standard.

**9.2** The Committee is asked to approve the housing and council tax benefit fraud strategy for West Dunbartonshire Council.

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**Angela Wilson**  
**Executive Director of Corporate Services**  
**Date: 7 June 2012**

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**Appendix:** Housing and Council Tax Benefit Fraud Strategy

**Background Papers:** Social Security Administration (Fraud) Act 1997

**Wards Affected:** All