

2023/24 QUARTER 2 COUNTER FRAUD PROGRESS REPORT

Committee name	Audit Committee
Officer reporting	Alex Brown, Head of Counter Fraud
Papers with report	2023/24 Quarter 2 Counter Fraud Progress Report
Ward	All

HEADLINES

The attached report presents the Audit Committee with summary information on all Counter Fraud work covered in relation to 2023/24 Quarter 2 and assurance in this respect. It also provides an opportunity for the Head of Counter Fraud to highlight to the Audit Committee any significant Counter Fraud issues that have arisen which they need to be aware of. Further, the report enables the Audit Committee to hold the Head of Counter Fraud to account on delivery of the Counter Fraud Plan and facilitates in holding management to account for managing issues identified during the course of the Counter Fraud Team activity.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Audit Committee:

- 1. Notes the Counter Fraud Progress Report for 2023/24 Quarter 2; and**
- 2. Suggests any comments/ amendments.**

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The Counter Fraud Team supports the Council in meeting its statutory responsibility under section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 for the prevention and detection of fraud and corruption. The work of the team underpins the Council's commitment to a zero tolerance approach to fraud, bribery, corruption, and other irregularities, including any money laundering activity.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The Counter Fraud Team holds various background research documents in relation to the Counter Fraud Plan.

Counter Fraud

COUNTER FRAUD

Report to Audit Committee:

2023/24 Quarter 2

30th September 2023



HILLINGDON
LONDON

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Role of the Counter Fraud Team

- 1.1 The Counter Fraud Team (CFT) supports the Council in meeting its statutory responsibility under section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 for the prevention and detection of fraud and corruption. The work of the CFT underpins the Council's commitment to a zero-tolerance approach to fraud, bribery, corruption, and other irregularities, including any money laundering activity.
- 1.2 As well as counter fraud activity, there is also a range of preventative work that the team is responsible for carrying out. This includes fraud awareness training and ensuring the Council have up-to-date and appropriate investigation policies and procedures.

The Purpose of the Counter Fraud progress report

- 1.3 The Counter Fraud Progress Report provides the Council's Corporate Management Team (CMT) and Audit Committee with summary information on all counter fraud work carried out during Quarter 2(Q2) period (1st July to 30th September 2023). In addition, it provides an opportunity for the Head of Counter Fraud (HCF) to highlight any significant issues arising from the counter fraud work in Q2.
- 1.4 The progress report also highlights to CMT, the Audit Committee and other key stakeholders, the performance of the CFT in meeting its strategic and operational objectives (as set out in the Counter Fraud Strategy 2022 to 2025), which provides an opportunity for the HCF to be held to account in this respect.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 The CFT has continued to prioritise its activity in Q2 on a risk based approach, deploying resources into areas of high risk. This has led to the majority of the CFT's work taking place across Housing, Social Care and Revenues. The team's efforts across these risk areas have **delivered c£1.7m in savings, bringing the year total to c£3.5m.**
- 2.2 The area of Housing, in particular tenancy fraud has remained a focus for the CFT throughout Q2. The team are **currently investigating 125 cases for suspected tenancy fraud** including subletting, non-occupation and wrongful succession. During Q2 the CFT have **successfully recovered 21 Council properties** which have been returned to Housing Services for relet for those in genuine need. **In total 48 properties have been recovered in the year to date.**
- 2.3 Throughout Q2 the CFT has been visiting all those that have approached as homeless and received emergency accommodation. The purpose of these residency checks is to highlight any false homeless applications or non-occupation of the accommodation provided. This work during Q2 has led to **15 accommodation closures resulting in c£134,000 of savings.**
- 2.4 Early in Q2 the HCF nominated the Counter Fraud Team for a **Public Finance Award in the category for Outstanding Fraud prevention, detection & recovery.** The nomination was based on the team's multi-discipline approach that led to c£12.3m of savings in 2022/23. Entries were deliberated by a panel of experts and the **CFT have been shortlisted for the prestigious award** alongside 6 other fraud teams. The awards are due to be presented late November 2023.

- 2.5 Following the agreement in Q1 of a new structure, **In Q2 the CFT have conducted a recruitment drive to fill all outstanding roles.** All positions have been filled with the exception of the Counter Fraud Analyst role where an offer has been made to a candidate. The new substantive structure chart can be found in **Appendix D**. The management team will focus their efforts on training all new starters and embedding staff into their new roles during Q3. With the team now fully resourced the CFT has an improved operational capability to combat the risk of fraud against the Council.

3. COUNTER FRAUD ACTIVITY IN QUARTER 2

3.1 Housing Fraud

- 3.1.1 The CFT has sustained its performance from previous quarters, **recovering 21 social housing properties, with a notional saving of c£1.1m in Q2.** This brings the total number of properties recovered this financial year to 48, the highest figure that the CFT have reported at this stage of the financial year. These positive results stem from a variety of proactive projects and data matching exercises that the CFT have undertaken and shows that tenancy fraud is continuing to be of high risk to the Council.
- 3.1.2 The Key Performance Indicator (KPI) 4 (refer to **Table 5** in **Appendix A**) requires the CFT to recover 30% of properties associated with tenancy fraud referrals. Again, this financial year, in Q2 the CFT has achieved above this KPI with **36% of tenancy fraud referrals resulting in property recovery.** As per **Table 1** below, the case type of property recovery shows that non-occupation is still the highest area of tenancy fraud risk.

Table 1 ~ Housing Tenancy Fraud Cases

Case Type	Q1	Q2*	Total for 23/24*	£k/value**
Abandonment	0	0	0	£0
Deceased	7	7	14	£784k
NFI Fraud Hub	5	1	6	£336k
Non-Occupation	9	11	20	£1,120k
Other	2	0	2	£112k
Sub-Let	1	0	1	£56k
Wrongful Succession	3	2	5	£280k
Total Properties Recovered	27	21	48	£2,688k

* As at end of Q2 (30th September 2023).

** Tenancy Fraud Forum valuation.

- 3.1.3 The CFT currently have **125 investigations surrounding suspected cases of tenancy fraud** including non-occupation, subletting, wrongful succession, and false homeless applications. From these investigations **21 cases are currently with our legal team**, and 2 possession orders have been obtained following legal proceedings, which are awaiting enforcement action.
- 3.1.4 In Q1 the CFT reported the ongoing pressures in the current economic climate that are causing high demand for housing and the need for **Bed and Breakfast (B&B) emergency accommodation.** Since the cost of living crisis began there has been an increase in fraud within this area of housing. In Q2 the CFT coordinated a project which involved colleagues from Housing and the CFT residency checking accommodation units. Working collaboratively, the teams were able to visit 439 properties in 4 weeks, ensuring the services provided by the council were for those in genuine need.
- 3.1.5 The project has been successful, with a total of **15 emergency accommodation units being closed due to non-occupation, resulting in savings of c£134k.** A further **14 cases have been opened** highlighting concerns of suspected non-occupation.

- 3.1.6 This brings the total number of B&Bs closed this financial year to 20. Whilst the risk remains high in this area of housing, the CFT will be continuing its proactive project by visiting B&B accommodation on a rolling programme for the rest of 2023/24. To ensure the CFT has the resources to meet the current heightened risk, two Counter Fraud Officers have been hired on a 6 month secondment to undertake this work.
- 3.1.7 The CFT review various types of in-house data using the Council's internal systems, to highlight any fraud, loss or error across the services. In Q2 the CFT created a report from our council tax system to data match all council owned properties against an exemption whereby Council Tax have been notified of a death or a person living elsewhere to receive care. The purpose of this data match was to ensure that Housing were aware of unoccupied properties. From the report the CFT has recovered 3 properties in Q2 and have opened a further 6 cases due to non-occupation and deceased.
- 3.1.8 Verification checks on all Right to Buy (RTB) applications submitted to the Council have continued in Q2 and the CFT are currently investigating **5 cases for suspicion of sub-letting and non-occupation**, with 1 case referred to our Legal department to instigate criminal proceedings based on fraud act offences.
- 3.1.9 In Q2 the team have also continued with proactively identifying cases of unknown deceased tenants with the assistance of the **NFI Fraud Hub**. The details of this work can be found in subsection 3.6 of this report.
- 3.1.10 In Q2 the CFT completed **153** verification checks on applicants who have registered for social housing. Outlined in **Table 2** below, the team successfully **closed a further 7 housing register applications**, totalling 19 for this financial year. Applications are closed due to several factors including non-occupation, or they have been found to already be adequately housed. Without the CFT's enhanced verification checks, these applicants may have been successful in obtaining a council property that they were not entitled to.

Table 2 ~ Housing Tenancy Verification Cases

Housing Tenancy Verification Cases	Q1	Q2*	Total for 23/24*
Total number of cases reviewed	258	153	411
% Identified by CFT for rejection	25%	17%	24%
Total number of applications closed	12	7	19

* As at end of Q2 (30th September 2023).

- 3.1.11 KPI 2a (refer to **Table 5** in **Appendix A**) targets an outcome of **95%** of housing allocation verifications to be completed within the target date set by the Housing department. In Q2 the team has successfully achieved **100% of verifications** being completed within their target date.

3.2 Revenues Fraud & Inspections

- 3.2.1 In the area of Revenues, the CFT has continued to maintain a high level of performance and again exceeded their KPI target (refer to **Table 5** at **Appendix A**). In Q3, as detailed in **Table 3** below, the CFT has **conducted 1,855 inspections, with 1,804 (98%) visited within the 10-day KPI target**.

Table 3 ~ Revenues Inspections Performance 2023/24

Revenues Inspections	Q1	Q2*	Total for 23/24
Total number of inspections completed	1,792	1855	3647
Percentage within 10 day target	99%	98%	99%

*As at end of Q2 (30th September 2023).

- 3.2.2 During Q2 the CFT has identified a further **12 previously unlisted properties** made up of 'Beds in Sheds'. As a result, an additional **c£28k of loss prevention savings** has been identified following the issue of revised Council Tax bills to the liable parties.
- 3.2.3 During Q2 the CFT have continued the programme of internal Revenues Maximisation and carried out another day of action focusing resources on a high-risk area of the borough to identify unlisted buildings and changes to the use of land. This has **identified 16 business premises which have been altered and improved**. These properties have been submitted to the VOA for a decision and will be reported in Q3.
- 3.2.4 Two properties identified by the previous internal Revenues Maximisation day of action have been completed by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) creating **additional business rates billing of c£88k** with further results expected during Q3.
- 3.2.5 In addition to the internal work being carried out, the CFT continues its work with suppliers to maximise revenue. Contracts are now in place for external Revenues Maximisation work to continue with **bills in Q2 issued to businesses to the value of c£45k**.

3.3 Social Care

- 3.3.1 Due to the economic climate continuing to pose an increased risk of fraud within Social Care, the CFT have seen its **second most successful quarter, with c£115,000 of loss preventions savings identified for Q2**. The teams in depth understanding of key fraud risks within the financial assessment (FA) process has highlighted savings through the preventative controls in place that have been designed to mitigate this increased risk.
- 3.3.2 One way in which the CFT is limiting the opportunity for instances of fraud to take place is through the teams embedded financial assessment verification process. With the verification process designed to identify anomalies, such as hidden capital or assets prior to financial support being administered, **over 208 verification requests have been received in Q2, 26 of which are undergoing further checks**.
- 3.3.3 As a direct result of the team's proactive approach in this area, Q2 has seen the positive conclusion of an ongoing FA investigation which saw the fraud span across multiple fraud risks within Social Care, Housing, Council Tax and Benefits. Investigators uncovered a FA applicant who had failed to disclose to the Council that they were no longer occupying their Council property and continued to receive housing benefit payments and a reduction on their council tax. **This preventive measure resulted in combined savings of over c£74k**.
- 3.3.4 Section 17 of the Children's Act 1989 places a duty on the Council to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need. Section 17 support offers a range of services that includes providing accommodation and/or financial assistance to eligible applicants. The CFT undertake verification checks for all Section 17 applicants who approach Social Care. **Table 4** below, illustrates the outcomes derived from the preventive measures in place that ensure services provided are only accessed by those who meet the eligibility criteria.

Table 4 ~ Section 17 Verification Cases 2023/24

Section 17 Cases	Q1	Q2*	2023/24
Total number of cases reviewed	4	2	6
Total number verified as accurate	1	0	1
Total number of cases closed	0	0	0
Total number of cases under further checks	3	1	4
Loss Prevention Savings	0	0	0

* As at end of Q2 (30th September 2023).

3.3.5 Q2 marked the commencement of the team's proactive Section 17 project, with counter fraud officers deployed to detect the illegal sub-letting and non-occupation of Social Care accommodation. With placements provided both inside and outside of the borough, counter fraud officers have begun conducting unannounced visits to all 27 service users, with outcomes expected to be reported in Q3.

3.4 Blue Badge

3.4.1 With the team strategically placed to respond to and investigate allegations of Blue Badge misuse, Q2 saw the teams' investigative capabilities bring one offender before the courts and another issued with a Simple Caution. Following a referral from the Councils Public Protection and Enforcement Service a criminal investigation was commenced into the suspected misuse of a Blue Badge in Ruislip High Street. The badge was subsequently seized with further enquiries identifying that the badge had been reported as stolen. **The evidence of the case was heard at Uxbridge Magistrates Court on 11th July 2023 which resulted in the offender receiving a fine and ordered to pay full prosecution costs as well as a victim surcharge totalling £2,358.00.**

3.5 Onsite Immigration Official

3.5.1 During the course of Q2 the teams OSIO has continued to proactively undertake loss prevention activity in the area of Childrens Social Care. Working collaboratively with the Childrens Resources Finance Team, this proactive approach has resulted in **£28k in loss prevention savings**. In total, 2 cases were identified where a change in the service user's immigration status enabled the service users to be supported with making a claim for benefit. In return, these claims allowed for the cost of providing accommodation to each service users to be funded by the welfare system. A further 3 cases remain under review, with savings expected to be reported in Q3.

3.6 London Counter Fraud Hub

3.6.1 The CFT joined the London Counter Fraud Hub (LCFH) in the last financial year. The hub is designed to bring London Boroughs together, sharing data to identify fraud, loss or error. This innovative approach will also use the power of data to uncover cross borough frauds.

3.6.2 The unique capabilities of the LCFH are now embedded in the CFT and this is producing referrals automatically every two weeks identifying cases where the Council may not be aware of tenants passing away. This has maximised loss prevention by ensuring that cases are identified at an early stage. **One council property** has been recovered and returned to use as a result of information provided by the LCFH during Q2.

3.6.3 The CFT have continued to work jointly with other London Boroughs through The London Boroughs' Fraud Investigators' Group (LBFIG) in developing innovative bespoke data matching reports to identify cross border fraud in identified high risk areas. Significant progress has been made in the previously reported work towards a pan London data match regarding internal fraud with results now expected in Q3.

3.7 National Fraud Initiative

3.7.1 During Q2 matches for the main NFI exercise for 2022/2023 have continued to be reviewed by the CFT in conjunction with the service areas.

3.7.2 The council's pensions administrator has completed their investigation regarding 17 cases where the council were previously unaware that pensioners had passed away which has **identified £2,714.62 in pension overpayments**.

3.7.3 The CFT have allocated significant resource to reviewing and investigating matches, particularly in the areas of Council Tax Single Person Discount which has generated savings of **£69,599.09 in additional billing** during Q2 with a further **28 currently under review**. Further results from this match are expected throughout the year.

3.8 Other Counter Fraud Activities

3.8.1 During Q2 the CFT carried out cross department shadowing and training with CFT officers and lettings Officers from Housing. Each team took time out from their day to day work to learn what the other teams does to upskill officers and make improvements to the Housing verification processes.

3.8.2 As part of the CFT's commitment to supporting the wider organisation, the management team have trained over 90 Housing staff in Q2 in interview skills and techniques. This training has been a success with Housing Officers now adopting principles used by the CFT for investigative interviews into their day to day work. The management team plan to run further training sessions in Q4 on notetaking and witness statement writing to further support the upskilling of officers.

3.8.3 Following a successful trial the team have become one of the first local authorities to enter into an agreement with the private sector IT company behind the NFI gaining access to additional data from the private sector including insurance information to enhance fraud investigations.

3.8.4 The CFT have also commenced a trial agreement with an external provider for an industry leading software solution to improve the handling and effectiveness of electronic evidence received during investigations which will be evaluated during Q3.

3.8.5 Recruitment to the new team structure is now complete with a Counter Fraud Manager, Counter Fraud Investigator and Counter Fraud Officer being appointed and settling into their new roles. Demonstrating the CFT commitment to staff progression each of these appointments was made via promotion within the team and additional external appointments of a Counter Fraud Investigator apprentice and one Counter Fraud Analyst has also been completed with the latter expected to join the team during Q3. One Counter Fraud Investigator Apprentice role has been left vacant as no suitable candidate could be appointed before the commencement of the apprenticeship. This role still exists within the CFT structure; however it is currently being used to fund an in-year counter fraud trainee on a casual basis, who has been appointed following a successful work experience placement over the summer.

3.8.6 The CFT are working proactively with Trading Standards officers to identify and pursue criminal cases which have a Proceeds of Crime (POCA) element to them and require an Accredited Financial Investigator (AFI) to take them forward. Two members of the CFT are awaiting statutory training to allow the CFT to undertake its own Proceeds of Crime investigations.

4. COUNTER FRAUD PERFORMANCE IN Q2

4.1 Attached at **Appendix A** is **Table 5** which sets out the Q2 performance by the CFT against the nine KPIs. Also attached at **Appendix B** is **Table 6** which provides an overview of the financial performance of the team in Q2 within each of the main areas of counter fraud activity. The CFT's financial performance should be considered against a target of £5m for 2023/24.

- 4.2 The CFT has achieved a consistent level of performance across KPI's throughout the quarter. The details of this are that **9 out of 9 KPI's are above targeted performance**. The management team are pleased that all KPI's have been met and will be working closely with the team to ensure this level of performance is sustained.

5. FORWARD LOOK

- 5.1 In Q3 the CFT will undertake a proactive project in conjunction with Housing Officers to residency check tenants currently occupying short life temporary accommodation. The project will likely highlight instances of non-occupation or subletting for investigation. Outcomes will be reported in future progress reports.
- 5.2 As part of the CFT's transformation work to make improvements to the service, the management team will begin to explore opportunities to generate income back into the public purse from those that have committed fraud. This includes unlawful profit orders and penalty notices. This work stream will begin in Q3 along side Legal Services.
- 5.3 In recent months the CFT have noticed a slight increase in cases regarding commissioned care providers and direct payments. The management team in Q3 will start to review processes within the service areas to understand the control environment. Following this the HCF expects the CFT to take a proactive approach to these risks through data matching and subsequent investigative activity.
- 5.4 During Q3 LBFIG are holding their yearly AGM. A significant amount of fraud professionals from across London will be in attendance to network and receive industry updates. Two of the CFT's management team are leading and facilitating a breakout session to discuss Social Care fraud risk across London. The breakout session is aimed at understanding risks, themes, activity and provide a learning platform for all.
- 5.5 In November the CFT will embark on a week of fraud awareness internally and externally to promote International Fraud Awareness Week. The team will be carrying out fraud awareness sessions to services, delivering training and promoting the Council's fraud response across social media platforms.
- 5.6 The CFT would like to take this opportunity to formally record its thanks for the co-operation and support it has received from the management and staff of the Council during this quarter. There are no other counter fraud matters that the HCF needs to bring to the attention of CMT or the Audit Committee at this time.

Alex Brown APCIP
Head of Counter Fraud
30th September 2023

APPENDIX A: Table 5 - CFT KPIs and Actual Performance

CFT KPIs	Target	Q1	Q2*	23/24*	22/23
1. Percentage of fraud referrals risk assessed within 3 working days	95%	99%	100%	99%	99%
2. Verification work timescales for completion:					
a. Housing Allocations completion within the target date set by Housing	95%	99%	99%	99%	99%
b. Right to Buy case completion within 28 working days	95%	100%	100%	100%	100%
c. Financial Assessments completion within 7 working days	95%	100%	100%	100%	100%
d. Section 17 reviews completion within 7 working days	95%	100%	100%	100%	100%
3. Investigation plan completion within 5 working days of case allocation	95%	99%	100%	99%	99%
4. Tenancy fraud referrals received resulting in property recovery	30%	42%	36%	37%	40%
5. Investigations resulting in loss prevention/financial saving outcome	40%	42%	41%	41%	39%
6. Revenue inspections completed within 10 working days of referral date	95%	99%	98%	99%	99%

* As at end of Q2 (30th September 2023).

APPENDIX B: Table 6 - CFT Quarter 2 2023/24 Financial Performance

Work Area	Description	Quarter 1	Quarter 2*	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	2023/24*
Housing	Right to Buy discounts	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
	Property Recovery (notional savings)	£1,512,000	£1,176,000	£0	£0	£2,688,000
	Other savings/loss prevention	£38,283	£134,596	£0	£0	£168,245
Social Care	Section 17 and UASC**	£13,586.50	£0	£0	£0	£13,586.50
	Financial Assessments	£13,320.80	£115,511.40	£0	£0	£127,470.70
	SGO	£79,150.60	£0	£0	£0	£79,150.60
	Direct Payments	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Revenues	Single Person Discount	£14,148	£75,001.70	£0	£0	£89,149.70
	Council Tax Reduction & arrears	£12,070.60	£9,775.60	£0	£0	£21,846.10
	Unlisted Buildings	£18,740.77	£28,106.40	£0	£0	£46,847.13
	Housing Benefit Overpayments	£985.50	£24,511.50	£0	£0	£25,497.0
	NNDR	£44,661	£141,667.7	£0	£0	£186,328.60
Blue Badge	Simple Caution & Financial Penalty	£2,518	£1,742	£0	£0	£4,260
Immigration Officer	Housing Homelessness Applications**	£8,412.30	£0	£0	£0	£8,412.30
	Social Care Savings	£60,469	£28,477	£0	£0	£88,946.30
Totals	Loss Prevention Savings	£207,226.80	£278,584.60	£0	£0	£485,811.40
	Notional Savings	£1,550,947.30	£1,320,929	£0	£0	£2,871,876.30
	Cashable Savings	£56,292.50	£134,133.70	£0	£0	£190,426.30
	Costs awarded and penalties	£2,518	£1,742	£0	£0	£4,260
	Total	£1,816,985	£1,735,389	£0	£0	£3,552,374

* As at end of Q2 (30th September 2023).

** Average weekly cost against average length of support. This figure fluctuates but has been provided by the Council's Business Performance Team.

APPENDIX C - Glossary of Terms

Beds in Sheds: 'Beds in Sheds' is the term used to describe habitable outbuildings, or annexes to private properties being utilised without the awareness of the Council or the Valuation Office Agency (VOA).

Blue Badge: A Blue Badge provides parking concessions and helps people with **non-visible and visible disabilities or health conditions** park closer to their destination. The Blue Badge enables holders to park in designated disabled person's parking bays either on the public highway or privately owned car parks. In addition, badge holders can park on single or double yellow lines for up to 3 hours.

Direct Payments: The Council are responsible for administering direct payments to service users who have been assessed as needing care and support services. The payments are made to allow applicants to access care to meet their social care needs, such as support with living tasks and social activities.

Disabled Facility Grants: The council offers a range of financial support schemes for people with disabilities, such as the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). The DFG is a means tested scheme that allows eligible applicants to receive financial support to make adaptations to their home, if they, or someone living at the property is disabled.

Financial Assessments: The Council is under a financial and legal obligation to carry out this means tested assessment for each service user. The Financial Assessment (FA) identifies whether the applicant(s) is eligible to receive funding towards their care costs.

Fraud Hub: Utilising the existing Cabinet Office infrastructure and systems, most London based local authorities have agreed to upload internally held data sets for proactive data matching exercises. These regularly agreed upon exercises will lead to the identification of possible fraud, loss or error.

National Fraud Initiative: The National Fraud Initiative (NFI) is a data matching exercise co-ordinated by the Government Cabinet Office and conducted every 2 years. There is also an annual review of claimants in receipt of Single Persons discount data that is matched against the Electoral Roll data. The NFI matches data from over 1,200 organisations, including councils, the police, hospitals and almost 100 private companies to identify potential fraud and error.

New Homes Bonus: The New Homes Bonus (NHB) is a grant that is paid by central government to incentivise local housing growth.

Onsite Immigration Enforcement Official: The Onsite Immigration Enforcement Official (OSIO) provides enhanced access to Home Office data for the purpose of assessing cases involving immigration issues and for assisting in a range of counter fraud work.

Right to Buy: The Right to Buy (RTB) process is a statutory scheme whereby a tenant(s) can apply to purchase their property at a significant discount from its market value. There are strict conditions that must be met by the applicant(s) if they are to qualify for the discount.

Revenue Maximisation: The use of internally held data and the utilisation of external data partners to identify previously unlisted commercial and domestic properties, along with identifying commercial properties that have undertaken modifications or improvements that would result in the revaluation of its Rateable Value (RV). Commercial entities are under no obligation to inform Council Tax as to when they have started trading or if their RV needs to be recalculated. The Council will only retain 15% of the identified rates.

Section 17: The CFT provides assurance and mitigate the risk of fraud within Children's Social Care, in particular the allocation of emergency accommodation provided under Section 17 of the Children's Act 1989. The verification process seeks to validate a family's reason for approach as well as their financial circumstances, as applicants claim to be destitute and requiring accommodation and or financial support. The CFT conducts verification checks on all applicants approaching the Council.

Small business Rates Relief: The Small Business Rates Relief (SBRR) scheme is designed to reduce the amount of business rates payable by small businesses. This reduction is available to ratepayers who occupy a property with a rateable value of no more than £15,000.

Tenancy Fraud Forum Valuation: As of the 2022/23 financial year, the CFT will be using the new Tenancy Fraud Forum valuation for property recovery. Working in conjunction with the London Boroughs' Fraud Investigators' Group (LBFIG) a new formula has been created to determine how much tenancy fraud costs. The formula considers the annual average temporary accommodation cost per family, the average duration for tenancy fraud, as well as the average investigation, legal and void costs. The agreed calculation for tenancy fraud within the borough is now valued at £56k per property (Previously £18k). The new calculation allows Hillingdon Council to accurately calculate financial savings by factoring in local figures.

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children: Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) are children and young people who are seeking asylum in the UK but have been separated from their parents or carers. Whilst their asylum claim is processed, they are cared for by the Council and provided with accommodation and or financial support.

APPENDIX D – CFT Structure Chart

