

COUNCIL POLICY



Policy name	Fraud and Corruption Prevention
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Abstract

This policy aims to educate and inform Staff and Councillors about their responsibilities and obligations in preventing and reporting instances of fraud and corruption within Council, create awareness about what constitutes unethical conduct and reduce and prevent the risk of internal and external fraud and corruption.

Dates	Policy or amendment approved	18 Nov 2020
	Policy or amendment takes effect	01 Dec 2020
	Policy is due for review (up to 4 years)	01 Dec 2024
Endorsed by	Executive Manager, Business Systems & Governance Council's Executive Management Team	
Approved by	Gunnedah Shire Council, at its Ordinary Meeting of Council held 18 Nov 2020 Resolution number: 5.11/20	
Policy Custodian	General Manager	
Relevant to	Councillors and Mayor, General Manager, all employees volunteers and members of public interacting with Council	
Superseded Policies	Nil	
Related documents	Fraud & Corruption Control Plan Code of Conduct Disclosure of Interests Policy Public Interest Disclosures Act Internal Reporting Policy Policy Framework Anti-Corruption Gifts and Benefits Policy Risk Management Policy Statement of Business Ethics Complaints Policy Related Party Disclosures Policy	
Related legislation	Local Government Act 1993 Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988 Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994 (PID) Crimes Act 1900	

Contents

1. Purpose
2. Scope
3. Definitions
4. Principals
5. Policy Statement
6. Accountability, roles and responsibilities
7. Acknowledgements
8. Version control and change history

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This policy outlines the expected standards of ethical behaviour at Council and is aimed at ensuring appropriate mechanisms and processes are in place to prevent, detect and respond to fraud and corruption.

2. Scope

- 2.1 The Fraud and Corruption Prevention Policy is to apply to Gunnedah Shire Council employees, Councillors and external parties, including contactors, volunteers, community representatives and consultants.

3. Definitions

- 3.1 **Fraud:** The NSW Audit Office defines fraud as 'a deliberate and premeditated turn of events which involves the use of deception to gain advantage from a position of trust and authority. The type of events include: acts of omission, theft, the making of false statements, evasion, manipulation of information and numerous other acts of deception'

Fraud and corruption can be committed solely by one person or in collusion with others. Such persons may be:

- An employee or employees of Council;
- Councillors;
- Volunteers;
- External individuals or companies; or
- External contractors or service providers.

- 3.2 **Corruption:** The Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988 provides a definition of corruption which includes but is not limited to:

- a) any conduct of any person (whether or not a public official) that adversely affects, or could adversely affect, either directly or indirectly, the honest or impartial exercise of official functions by any public official, any group or body of public officials or any public authority, or
- b) any conduct of a public official that constitutes or involves the dishonest or partial exercise of any of his or her official functions, or
- c) any conduct of a public official or former public official that constitutes or involves a breach of public trust, or

- d) any conduct of a public official or former public official that involves the misuse of information or material that he or she has acquired in the course of his or her official functions, whether or not for his or her benefit or for the benefit of any other person.

Corrupt conduct is also any conduct of any person (whether or not a public official) that adversely affects, or could adversely affect, either directly or indirectly, the exercise of official functions by any public official, any group or body of public officials or any public authority which could include:

- Official misconduct (including breach of trust, fraud, oppression, extortion or imposition)
- Bribery
- Blackmail
- Obtaining secret commissions
- Fraud
- Election bribery, election funding offences and election fraud.

4. Policy principles

4.1 The Fraud and Corruption Prevention Policy assists in building a corruption resistant culture at Council by promoting ethical behaviour and encouraging accountability and transparency in Council processes and dealings with external parties.

4.2. Gunnedah Shire Council is committed to preventing fraud and corruption across the organisation as such activities have an adverse impact on Council resources and reputation. Senior Council employees and Councillors have a key ongoing role in the prevention of fraud and corruption and the fostering of an ethical and accountable environment at Council.

4.3 Gunnedah Shire Council will not tolerate corrupt conduct by employees, Councillors, volunteers or external parties. Gunnedah Shire Council is committed to:

- Minimising the opportunities for corrupt conduct by employees, members of the public, Councillors, volunteers, contractors and clients.
- Detecting, investigating and disciplining/prosecuting corrupt conduct.
- Reporting corrupt conduct to appropriate external authorities.
- Developing and implementing a fraud and corruption control plan to assist in the identification and management of corruption risks across Council.

4.4 This policy aims to educate and inform Staff and Councillors about their responsibilities and obligations in preventing and reporting instances of fraud and corruption within Council, create awareness about what constitutes unethical conduct and reduce and prevent the risk of internal and external fraud and corruption.

5. Policy statement

5.1 Elements

5.1.1 This policy is based on the 10 element best practice control model, which is consistent with national and international best practice. The elements are:

- organisation wide fraud and corruption policy
- risk assessment and risk management framework
- internal controls
- internal reporting
- external reporting
- public interest disclosures
- investigations
- code of conduct
- staff education and awareness
- client and community awareness

5.2 Policy Implementation

5.2.1 In implementing this policy, Council has undertaken a strategic assessment of fraud and corruption and will undertake an operational risk assessment across the organisation, with a particular focus on fraud and corruption risks. This risk assessment will assist in identifying areas of high risk of fraud and corruption within Council and in turn, assist in the development of management strategies in response to such risks.

5.2.2 In accordance with the risk assessment and Council's risk management framework, Council will implement the strategies and mitigation measures identified in the assessment.

5.3 Internal reporting of fraud and corruption

5.3.1 Council will provide support to persons who report instances of fraud, corruption and wrongdoing in accordance with the Gunnedah Shire Council's Public Interest Disclosures Act Internal Reporting Policy. The Code of Conduct also establishes responsibility for staff to report breaches. For more information regarding procedures for reporting fraud and corruption, please refer to Council's Public Interest Disclosures Act Internal Reporting Policy, Model Code of Conduct and Model Code of Conduct - Procedures for the Administration of the Model Code of Conduct.

5.3.2 The Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994 affords persons who have reported suspected or actual wrongdoing in good faith with protection. A separate Council policy details the provisions and procedures covered by the Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994.

5.4 External reporting of fraud and corruption

5.4.1 Council has an internal reporting system which is outlined in its Public Interest Disclosures Act Internal Reporting Policy. This policy also outlines the different external authorities which are the most appropriate agency to report instances of fraud and corruption. These include:

- 5.4.2 Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) - ICAC is responsible for investigating allegations and complaints of corrupt conduct involving or affecting public authorities or public officials and exposing instances of corrupt conduct in public authorities and public officials. ICAC also has an advisory function and provides recommendations to prevent corruption in public authorities and actively educating public authorities, public officials and members of the public about corruption.
- 5.4.3 NSW Ombudsman - The NSW Ombudsman is an independent complaint handling body for public authorities including local councils. The NSW Ombudsman also investigates the administrative practices of a local council and the conduct of councillors and council employees with a view to ensuring council processes are fair and just. The Ombudsman also has oversight responsibility for the Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994.
- 5.4.4 The Office of Local Government is the central regulatory agency for local government and provides best practice advice to local councils. It is responsible for investigating and reviewing allegations of serious and substantial waste of public funds.
- 5.4.5 Office of the Information Commissioner - The NSW Information Commissioner is an independent agency established to promote public awareness and understanding of the new right to information law, and provide information, support, advice, assistance and training to agencies and the general public. The OIC also has the power to review decisions made by government agencies and to deal with complaints. The Information Commissioner also monitors agencies' functions and may report to the Minister for the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 about proposals for legislative or administrative change.

6. Accountability, roles and responsibilities

6.1 Councillors

Councillors are elected representatives and comprise the governing body of Council. This governing body has the role of directing and controlling the affairs of the Council in accordance with the Local Government Act.

As councillors are members of the Council's governing body, they are required to perform civic duties and fulfil a leadership role for the community.

This includes an obligation to:

- Report possible fraud and corruption related activities to the General Manager, Mayor, Disclosures Officer or relevant external agencies;
- Promote Council's commitment to the prevention of fraud and corruption throughout the community and among Council employees and;
- Comply with the Gunnedah Shire Council Code of Conduct by acting in an ethical manner.

6.2 Policy Custodian – General Manager

The General Manager is responsible for the efficient and effective operation of Council as an organisation. The General Manager is to play a prominent role by taking a proactive stance on preventing fraud and corruption within Council by acting to, and through the promotion of, the high standard of ethical behaviour which is expected across Council. In this way, as part of this leadership role, the General Manager is responsible for ensuring that Council's Code of Conduct and associated policies are extended to all Council employees and Councillors and promoting Gunnedah Shire Council's commitment to preventing fraud and corruption to the local community.

The General Manager also has the responsibility to fully investigate allegations of wrongdoing and to report to relevant external agencies of any allegations of fraudulent or corrupt conduct that have been identified at Council. In the same way, the General Manager has a duty under s11 ICAC Act to report to ICAC any matter that is suspected to concern or may concern corrupt conduct.

Specific responsibilities relating to the implementation of this policy:

- Culture
- Policy and Strategy
- Business Risk
- Corporate Governance
- Compliance (legislative, regulatory, community)
- Stakeholder value
- Image

6.3 Directors and Managers

Directors and Managers are to actively promote Council's Fraud and Corruption Prevention Policy and lead by example by demonstrating ethical decision making and act with honesty and integrity in dealings with others. Managers and Team Leaders are to promptly report instances of suspected or actual fraud. Directors and Managers are to play a supervisory role in the implementation of the Fraud and Corruption Prevention Policy. This includes ensuring that employees within their area of responsibility receive fraud and corruption awareness training, regularly endorse Gunnedah Shire Council's position of zero-tolerance of corrupt behaviour and reinforce the expectations of the Gunnedah Shire Council Code of Conduct and Public Interest Disclosures Act Internal Reporting Policy.

Specific responsibilities relating to the implementation of this policy:

- Develop and implement fraud and corruption prevention strategies for Directorates
- Identify and mitigate actual potential corruption risks in the workplace
- Monitor and review the effectiveness of mechanisms implemented to minimise and detect corruption
- Demonstrate ethical conduct in all business dealings
- Monitor and review fraud and corruption prevention mechanisms in place
- Promote awareness of fraud and corruption prevention and ethical conduct in the workplace

- Lead by example

6.4 Supervisors and Team Leaders

Supervisors and Team Leaders are responsible for the proactive promotion and dissemination of this policy and the standards of ethical behaviour expected of employees as outlined in the Gunnedah Shire Council Code of Conduct to employees in their area. Similarly, supervisors and team leaders are to regularly reinforce to employees their role in preventing and detecting fraud and corruption within the organisation and promote an environment of compliance with this policy and other Council policies. Supervisors and team leaders also have an important role in ensuring that the policy is operating effectively and contributing to fraud and corruption risk assessments.

Specific responsibilities relating to the implementation of this policy:

- Promote awareness of ethical conduct and mechanisms to prevent corruption
- Provide input to policies, procedures and instructions that relate to areas of risk
- Drive the fraud and corruption prevention risk assessment and mitigation process
- Monitor the integrity of the risk assessment process within the operating parameters of Council's risk management framework.

6.5 Employees

All Council employees are reminded of the obligation to comply with the Council Code of Conduct and conduct themselves in an ethical manner including concerning the use of Council assets and resources. Under the Code of Conduct, Council employees must not participate in wrongdoing including fraudulent and corrupt activities. Council employees are required to report any activity which may comprise fraudulent and corrupt conduct in accordance with the Council's Public Interest Disclosures Act Internal Reporting Policy.

Specific responsibilities relating to the implementation of this policy:

- Ethical behaviour
- Report suspected incidents of fraud and corruption
- Compliance with fraud and corruption prevention controls including the Fraud and Corruption Prevention Policy

6.6 Audit Committee

Council's Audit Committee plays a pivotal role in the governance framework. It provides Council with independent oversight in the areas of risk, control, compliance and financial reporting. The Audit Committee consists of one Councillor and two independent members of the public.

7. Acknowledgements

7.1 Ashfield Council – Fraud and Corruption Prevention Policy

8. Version control and change history

Date	Version	Approved by & resolution no.	Amendment
17 Dec 2014	1	Council Resolution 7.12/14	
21 Oct 2020	2	Audit Committee	
18 Nov 2020	2	Council Resolution 5.11/20	