

9. FRAUD AND IRREGULARITY 2021/22

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Audit, Risk and Counter Fraud Manager informing of the Audit Scotland report 'Fraud and Irregularity 2021/22'.

The report included details of a pension fraud relating to people receiving payments from a pension fund to which they were not entitled and it was queried if this related to the Lothian Pension Fund. Although this information was not available at the time the Audit, Risk and Counter Fraud Manager undertook to establish whether that was the case and update members accordingly.

Officers were asked if they recognised any of the examples, or types of examples, detailed within the report as having happened within West Lothian. In response, the Audit, Risk and Counter Fraud Manager advised he did not recognise any specific examples and referred members to the Audit Committee's June 2022 meeting where the annual counter fraud report for last year had been presented and summarised the cases encountered. This had included a relatively small number of COVID business related grant frauds and of the nine cases referred to the internal fraud team two were established as fraud. The Head of Finance and Property Services then informed members that, while being mindful of getting the COVID support out to businesses and families quickly, staff had been briefed with regards to the potential for fraud. Close liaison with the internal fraud team had enabled suspicious cases to be referred and payments intercepted where appropriate.

It was recommended that the committee consider the themes and messages in the report.

Decision

1. To note the contents of the report; and
2. To note that officers undertook to identify if Lothian Pension Fund was the pension fund in which 'Case Study 1: Pension fraud' occurred and update members accordingly.