

A meeting of the **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ECONOMIC WELL-BEING)** will be held in **CIVIC SUITE 0.1A, PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON PE29 3TN** on **THURSDAY, 10 JANUARY 2013 at 7:00 PM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

**Contact  
(01480)**

## **APOLOGIES**

### **1. MINUTES (Pages 1 - 6)**

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2012.

**Mrs C Bulman  
388234**

### **2. MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

To receive from Members declarations as to disclosable pecuniary, non-disclosable pecuniary or non pecuniary interests in relation to any Agenda item. See Notes below.

### **3. NOTICE OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS (Pages 7 - 10)**

A copy of the current Notice of Executive Decisions is attached. Members are invited to comment as appropriate on any items contained therein.

**Mrs H Taylor  
388008**

### **4. BUDGET & MTP**

The Chairman to invite the Liberal Democrats and UKIP to present their views on next year's Budget & MTP.

### **5. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

To RESOLVE:-

that the public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted relates to the financial or business affairs of a particular person (including the authority holding that information) and/or to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority and office holders.

### **6. BUSINESS PLAN ONE LEISURE (Pages 11 - 56)**

To consider a report by the General Manager, One Leisure.

**S Bell  
388049**

*(Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) have*

*been invited to attend for the discussion on this item).*

**7. RE-ADMITTANCE OF THE PUBLIC**

To RESOLVE:

that the public be re-admitted to the meeting.

**8. FRAUD INVESTIGATION (Pages 57 - 62)**

To consider a report by the Head of Customer Services summarising the activity of the Council's Fraud Team, the current threat of fraud and a proposal to provide responses to threats following the introduction of a Single Fraud Investigation Service.

**N Jennings  
388480  
D Harwood  
388115**

**9. PRIVATE SECTOR RENT LEVELS (Pages 63 - 66)**

To receive a six monthly update on rent levels within Huntingdonshire.

**J Barber  
388105**

**10. CUSTOMER SERVICES MONITORING REPORT (Pages 67 - 82)**

To receive a report by the Head of Customer Services on the performance of customer services during the period July to December 2012.

**J Barber  
388105**

**11. WORKPLAN STUDIES (Pages 83 - 88)**

To consider with the aid of a report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, the programme of studies.

**Mrs C Bulman  
388234**

**12. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL (ECONOMIC WELL-BEING) - PROGRESS (Pages 89 - 94)**

To consider a report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services.

**Mrs C Bulman  
388234**

**13. SCRUTINY (Pages 95 - 102)**

To scrutinise decisions taken since the last meeting as set out in the Decision Digest and to raise any other matters for scrutiny that fall within the remit of the Panel.

Dated this 2 day of January 2013



Head of Paid Service

**Notes**

**A. Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

- (1) *Members are required to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests and unless you have obtained dispensation, cannot discuss or vote on the matter at the meeting and must also leave the room whilst the matter is being debated or voted on.*

(2) A Member has a disclosable pecuniary interest if it

(a) relates to you, or

(b) is an interest of -

(i) your spouse or civil partner; or

(ii) a person with whom you are living as husband and wife; or

(iii) a person with whom you are living as if you were civil partners

and you are aware that the other person has the interest.

(3) Disclosable pecuniary interests includes -

(a) any employment or profession carried out for profit or gain;

(b) any financial benefit received by the Member in respect of expenses incurred carrying out his or her duties as a Member (except from the Council);

(c) any current contracts with the Council;

(d) any beneficial interest in land/property within the Council's area;

(e) any licence for a month or longer to occupy land in the Council's area;

(f) any tenancy where the Council is landlord and the Member (or person in (2)(b) above) has a beneficial interest; or

(g) a beneficial interest (above the specified level) in the shares of any body which has a place of business or land in the Council's area.

#### **B. Other Interests**

(4) If a Member has a non-disclosable pecuniary interest or a non-pecuniary interest then you are required to declare that interest, but may remain to discuss and vote.

(5) A Member has a non-disclosable pecuniary interest or a non-pecuniary interest where -

(a) a decision in relation to the business being considered might reasonably be regarded as affecting the well-being or financial standing of you or a member of your family or a person with whom you have a close association to a greater extent than it would affect the majority of the council tax payers, rate payers or inhabitants of the ward or electoral area for which you have been elected or otherwise of the authority's administrative area, or

(b) it relates to or is likely to affect any of the descriptions referred to above, but in respect of a member of your family (other than specified in (2)(b) above) or a person with whom you have a close association

and that interest is not a disclosable pecuniary interest.

**Please contact Mrs Claire Bulman, Democratic Services Officer, Tel 01480 388234 / email [Claire.Bulman@huntingdonshire.gov.uk](mailto:Claire.Bulman@huntingdonshire.gov.uk) if you have a general query on any Agenda Item, wish to tender your apologies for absence from the meeting, or would like information on any decision taken by the Committee/Panel.**

**Specific enquiries with regard to items on the Agenda should be directed towards the Contact Officer.**

**Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting as observers except during consideration of confidential or exempt items of business.**

Agenda and enclosures can be viewed on the District Council's website –  
[www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk](http://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk) (under Councils and Democracy).

**If you would like a translation of Agenda/Minutes/Reports**

or would like a large text version or an audio version please contact the Democratic Services Manager and we will try to accommodate your needs.

***Emergency Procedure***

*In the event of the fire alarm being sounded and on the instruction of the Meeting Administrator, all attendees are requested to vacate the building via the closest emergency exit.*

# Agenda Item 1

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ECONOMIC WELL-BEING) held in Civic Suite 0.1A, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN on Thursday, 6 December 2012.

PRESENT: Councillor T V Rogers – Chairman.

Councillors G J Bull, Mrs L A Duffy,  
S Greenall, R Harrison, R B Howe,  
P G Mitchell, M F Shellens and A H Williams.

Messrs R Eacott and R Hall.

APOLOGY: An Apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor E R Butler.

### **63. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chairman welcomed Mr Russell Eacott, newly appointed co-opted Member, to his first meeting of the Panel.

### **64. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2012, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **65. MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

No declarations were received.

### **66. NOTICE OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS**

The Panel considered and noted the current Notice of Executive Decisions (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book). Members noted that the Business Plan for One Leisure would be presented to their next meeting.

With regard to the item on National Non Domestic Rates Approval and in light of the current situation, the Panel noted that the full Council would be asked to delegate approval to the Managing Director (Resources) to calculate and certify the completion of the NNDR1 form which provided an estimate of the Council's business rate income for the forthcoming financial year. Members were content with this approach.

### **67. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

RESOLVED

that the public be excluded from the meeting because the

business to be transacted relates to the financial or business affairs of a particular person (including the authority holding that information).

**68. DISPOSAL OF LAND, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON**

*(Councillor J A Gray, Executive Councillor for Resources, was in attendance for this item).*

With the assistance of a report by the Head of Environmental Management (a copy of which is appended in the Annex to the Minute Book) the Panel considered details of an offer for Council owned land fronting St Mary's Street, Huntingdon. The Executive Councillor for Resources outlined the factors that would need to be taken into consideration when deciding whether to accept an offer for the property and his own view of the current offer.

In considering the offer which had been made, the Panel discussed the value placed on the land in the Asset Register and in the Council's Accounts, the valuation of the site and the alternatives to accepting the present offer. A suggestion was made that the Council might reduce its homelessness costs by building its own accommodation on site and in this regard Members were acquainted with the initiatives that were already planned to reduce the Authority's reliance on bed and breakfast accommodation.

Given that a significant upturn in the commercial property market was unlikely in the short term, the Panel was of the opinion that the offer should be accepted, albeit at a level above that outlined in the report now submitted and that the Council should seek to secure a lease back of part of the new premises to accommodate individuals who were homeless during the negotiations.

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be recommended to authorise the Managing Director (Communities, Partnerships and Projects), after consultation with the Executive Councillor, to accept an offer from the prospective purchaser on the terms proposed by the Panel.

**69. RE-ADMITTANCE OF THE PUBLIC**

RESOLVED

that the public be re-admitted to the meeting.

**70. UPDATE 2013 / 14 BUDGET & MTP**

*(Councillor J A Gray, Executive Councillor for Resources, was in attendance for this item).*

With the assistance of a report by the Head of Financial Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Panel considered an update on the 2013/14 Budget and MTP. By way of introduction the Chairman reported that he had presented the conclusions reached by the Panel at the recent informal meeting to the Executive

Leaders Strategy Group on 3<sup>rd</sup> December. As a consequence, he had received an assurance that the presentation of financial information would be discussed with the Panel at the conclusion of the current budget cycle. In terms of the priority areas for potential savings, Members were advised that the Cabinet was developing its own range of options for savings, many of which were similar to those which had been identified by the Panel. In this regard, the Executive Leader and the Executive Councillor for Resources would be meeting shortly to establish a package of potential savings measures for further consideration.

The Head of Financial Services provided a detailed presentation on the contents of the report, which included information on service budgets, Council Tax subsidy, retention of business rates, the New Homes Bonus, the Council tax level, inflation and interest rates and the key risks associated with the current budgetary situation. Having been reminded that the Council had agreed to support in principle the pooling of business rates, the Panel discussed the consequences of not adopting this approach. Members were advised that further work would be undertaken before a decision was taken for next year and they were reminded of the principles upon which the pooling arrangement would operate. It was dependent upon all Cambridgeshire authorities agreeing to enter into the pool. If it was decided not to proceed in the forthcoming financial year, it would still be possible to do so in future years.

In terms of the predictions that had been made for future housing completions, Members enquired whether the data took into account the potential for a slow down in house building over the course of the next few years. The Head of Financial Services explained that a paper on future projections had recently been received from the Planning section and, once this had been worked through in more detail, further information could be brought to a future meeting. Having emphasised the need to exercise caution in this respect, Members were advised that a risk provision for slower completion of new homes had been included in the current report.

With regard to Council Tax levels for future years, a Member enquired whether the Council would ever be in a position where it would not rise. In response, the Head of Financial Services explained that there would always be pressure on the Council's finances from inflation, which meant this was unlikely. The Executive Councillor for Resources also commented that in previous years the rise in Council Tax had not been greater than any rise in benefits or pensions and that he would try to ensure that any future increases were not at a greater rate than any rises in these areas. Members were informed that the Executive Leader had recently met with the Department for Communities and Local Government to discuss a proposal that any limitation on Council tax increases should be based on the average for that class of authority so as not to disadvantage those councils like Huntingdonshire who had historically low levels of Council Tax.

Turning to the assumptions which had been made for inflation and interest rates, a Member enquired what contracts were currently in place for electricity and gas and whether there was any scope to secure economies of scale by negotiating contracts jointly with other Councils. In response, it was explained that consultants were used to

review the contracts at renewal time. The Head of Financial Services undertook to establish what work had been undertaken with regards to bulk purchasing. Another Member then expressed the view that no provision should be made for performance related pay within the Council's Budget and that additional pay should only be awarded for better than expected performance against the budget. The Executive Councillor for Resources, however, indicated that there should be a performance related element in employees' pay.

In terms of the borrowing trends, a Member enquired at what point the projected increase in borrowing was expected to even out. The Panel's attention was drawn to the fact that borrowing was largely required to fund Disabled Facilities Grants. Following a further question, Members were informed of the increase in income as a result of the rise in the population level of the District.

Discussion then ensued on the impact of the risk proposals on the use of the Council's reserves and unidentified savings. The Chairman invited comments on whether the Council should be identifying savings at an earlier stage or reducing the level of the Council's reserves. Overall Members were of the opinion that the Council should seek to effect what savings it could rather than run down reserves. In this regard, Members enquired what efforts had been made to identify savings thus far and they were advised that all Heads of Services had a budgetary target and were required to make continuous improvements. In response to a question about efficiencies which had been achieved from energy performance initiatives, attention was drawn to the energy efficiency proposals which had been identified within the Head of Environmental Management's Service budget. In order to establish a complete picture, Members requested information on the savings that had been achieved to date and ongoing monitoring data against savings targets. The Executive Councillor reiterated that he would be meeting with the Executive Leader shortly to develop a range of options for savings, which would be submitted to the Panel for consideration.

#### RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be recommended to:

- (a) note the contents of the report; and
- (b) examine what additional savings can be made so as to reduce the rundown of the Council's reserves whilst maintaining those services that impact on the community.

#### **71. TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE: 6 MONTHLY REVIEW**

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Financial Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) containing details of the Council's investments for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2012. Members' attention was drawn to the treasury management activity, the performance summary and the performance against budget in 2012/13. Having been advised that a current indicator for interest rate exposures did not differentiate between long and short



and borrowing and investing, it was

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be requested to recommend the Council

- a) to approve the revised table and targets in paragraph 6.2 of the report now submitted; and
- b) to note the contents of the report by the Head of Financial Services on Treasury Management – Review of Performance.

## **72. WORKPLAN STUDIES**

The Panel received and noted a report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) containing details of studies that were being undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels for Social and Environmental Well-Being.

## **73. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL (ECONOMIC WELL-BEING) - PROGRESS**

The Panel received and noted a report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) reviewing progress on matters that had been previously discussed. In so doing, the Chairman reported that a first draft of the conclusions arising from the review of the Council's Document Centre had now been prepared. Members then discussed when it would be appropriate for the Council to receive a presentation on the A14 improvements.

In view of the success of their previous meeting on budgetary savings, it was agreed that a similar meeting should be held in late January to discuss the Council's capital budget.

## **74. SCRUTINY**

The Panel considered and noted the latest edition of the Council's Decision Digest (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book).

Chairman

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St Mary's Street  
Huntingdon PE29 3TN.

- Notes:- (i) Additions changes from the previous Forward Plan are annotated \*\*\*  
(ii) Part II confidential items which will be considered in private are annotated ## and shown in italic.

Subject/Matter for Decision	Decision/ recommendation to be made by	Date decision to be taken	Documents Available	How relevant Officer can be contacted	Reasons for the report to be considered in private.	Relevant Executive Councillor	Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Cambridgeshire Pooling Designation***	Cabinet	14 Jan 2013		Steve Couper, Head of Financial Services Tel No. 01480 388103 or email Steve.Couper@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		J A Gray	Economic Well-Being
Update on Housing Benefit Changes and Potential Impact on Huntingdonshire***	Cabinet	24 Jan 2013	None	Julia Barber, Head of Customer Services Tel No. 01480 388105 or email Julia.Barber@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		B S Chapman	Social Well-Being
Business Plan One Leisure - Quarterly Performance Reports##	Cabinet	24 Jan 2013	None	Simon Bell, General Manager, One Leisure Tel No. 01480 388049 or email Simon.Bell@huntingdonshire.gov.uk	Exempt under paragraph 4.	T D Sanderson	Economic Well-Being
Huntingdon Gym##	Cabinet	24 Jan 2013		Colin Meadowcroft, Head of Legal and Democratic Services Tel No. 01480 388021 or email Colin.Meadowcroft@huntingdonshire.gov.uk	Exempt under paragraph 3	J A Gray	Social Well-Being

Subject/Matter for Decision	Decision/ recommendation to be made by	Date decision to be taken	Documents Available	How relevant Officer can be contacted	Reasons for the report to be considered in private	Relevant Executive Councillor	Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Revision of the Wind Power Supplementary Planning Document	Cabinet	24 Jan 2013		Paul Bland, Planning Service Manager (Policy) Tel No. 01480 388430 or email Paul.Bland@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		N J Guyatt	Environmental Well-Being
The Green Deal in Hunts***	Cabinet	14 Feb 2013		Chris Jablonski, Environment Team Leader Tel No. 01480 388368 or email Chris.Jablonski@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		D M Tysoe	Environmental Well-Being
Land for Sale at Earith##	Cabinet	14 Feb 2013		Chris Allen, Project and Assets Manager Tel No. 01480 388380 or email Chris.Allen@huntingdonshire.gov.uk	Exempt under paragraph 3	J A Gray	Economic Well-Being
∞							
Budget and MTP	Cabinet	14 Feb 2013	Draft MTP - previous year's budget report - various annexes	Steve Couper, Head of Financial Services Tel No. 01480 388103 or e-mail Steve.Couper@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		J A Gray	Economic Well-Being
Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Indicators	Cabinet	14 Feb 2013	Previous year's Strategy	Steve Couper, Head of Financial Services Tel No. 01480 388103 or e-mail Steve.Couper@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		J A Gray	Economic Well-Being
Local Plan	Cabinet	21 Mar 2013	None	Paul Bland, Planning Service Manager (Policy) Tel No. 01480 388430 or email Paul.Bland@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		N J Guyatt	Environmental Well-Being

Subject/Matter for Decision	Decision/ recommendation to be made by	Date decision to be taken	Documents Available	How relevant Officer can be contacted	Reasons for the report to be considered in private	Relevant Executive Councillor	Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Home Improvement Agency Shared Service - Annual Operating Service***	Cabinet	18 Apr 2013		Trish Reed, Housing Strategy Manager Tel No. 01480 388203 or email Trish.Reed@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		N J Guyatt	Social Well-Being

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# Agenda Item 6

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**CORPORATE GOVERNANCE PANEL**  
**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY**  
**(ECONOMIC WELL-BEING) PANEL**

**12 DECEMBER 2012**

**10 JANUARY 2013**

**FRAUD INVESTIGATION**  
**(Report by the Head of Customer Services)**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 This report provides a summary of the historic activity of the Councils fraud team, the current threat of fraud and a proposal to provide a response to these threats following the introduction of a Single Fraud investigation Service (SFIS).

1.2 The fraud team was originally created to deal with the recognised threat of fraud within the Housing Benefit (HB) and Council Tax Benefit (CTB) schemes administered by the Council as an agent of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The Team works closely with the DWP's investigators who investigate national benefits such as Job Seekers Allowance and Employment Support Allowance.

1.3 Over the last five years areas reviewed by the fraud team have increased. Investigations into other areas of fraud which affect the authority, such as council tax exemptions, housing and staff fraud are now also undertaken. These investigations are subsidiary to the main work of the fraud team, but are funded entirely through the central government grant (Benefits Admin Grant) and the recovery of sums defrauded.

1.4 In 2010 the Government announced that it would be launching a major review of the existing welfare system. One element of that review was to be the creation of the SFIS to investigate all types of welfare fraud.

The SFIS, under the control of the DWP, will combine the skills, experience and resources that exist within local authorities, DWP and Revenue & Customs to investigate all welfare benefits and credits. Information from the DWP suggests that the SFIS will become operational sometime between 2013 and 2015.

1.5 The effect of this announcement is twofold.

The Benefit Admin Grant, on which the fraud team relies for funding, will be reduced as the welfare investigation role moves from the Council to SFIS.

The creation of SFIS is likely to result in members of the fraud team moving to the DWP during 2015/16.

1.6 In June, the Panel received a report that summarised the key messages contained in the National Fraud Authority "Fighting Fraud Locally" report. The Panel agreed to establish a Working Group (consisting of Cllrs Butler, Churchill & Mitchell) to consider the current risks and implications from the introduction of SFIS and how fraud investigations may be undertaken across the Council from 2015.

## 2. FINDINGS

2.1 The Working Group has met on three occasions. Whilst the Panel did not set the Group formal terms of reference it considered the following areas.

- What was the real threat of fraud and its cost?
- How could this be evaluated and corroborated?
- How could this be reduced by having a fraud 'presence'?
- What was the cost of that 'presence' in absence of DWP funding?

2.2 Reports to Panel over the last few years have detailed actual fraud identified over a number of areas, both welfare and non-welfare. In addition, reports from a number of government agencies and private sector companies contain estimates of the likely cost of fraud.

Both of these sources have been used to establish the potential fraud risk across a variety of Council services, which the figures below show, may fall between £2.7m & £3.2m.

Source	Fraud Type	Potential loss £'k	
		Min	Max
Cabinet Office	Procurement Fraud	390	650
	Council Tax Fraud (Discounts & Exemptions)	330	560
	Staff Fraud	40	70
DWP/DCLG	Council Tax Support Fraud	210	
Audit Commission/ DCLG	Tenancy Fraud	1800	
HDC records NFA est of fraud: 5%	Rental Deposit	8	
	Housing Waiting List	250 false applications	

2.3 In addition to financial savings, the Working Group also felt that fraud investigations had a number of hidden benefits. These included:

- the deterrent effect of publicising fraud activity which delivers unquantifiable levels of savings.
- Indirect savings from investigations with partners or agencies who work for or with the Council.
- The moral issues of taking a zero tolerance attitude to fraud, linked with the Councils fiduciary duties to protect the public purse.

2.4 The Working Group looked at the current performance of the fraud team based on reported output for 2010/11 and 2011/12, Excluding welfare fraud, as the table below shows, actual recovery across the two years exceeded £450k.

Source	Fraud Type	2010/11	2011/12
		Actual recovery £'k	
Local Data-matching & NFI	} Council Tax Fraud (Discounts	139	0 <sup>a</sup>
Linked to other welfare fraud		5	11
Social Housing: £18k per Property recovered	10/11 = 6 11/12 = 11	108	198
Whistleblowing	10/11 = 5 11/12 = 12	Savings not separately recorded.	
<b>Actual savings identified</b>		<b>252</b>	<b>209</b>

<sup>a</sup>. No local data matching work undertaken as no resource available.

- 2.5 In 2011/2012 the cost of the fraud team to the Council was £341k (This includes salaries of 7 staff, on-costs and all other expenditure). In the same period, income to the Council from the DWP, through the Benefit Admin Grant and subsidy, amounted to £385k. A further £50k was recovered from costs and fines awarded by the Courts. Grants and other income exceed the cost of the service.

The total amount of fraud identified in the period (both welfare and non-welfare) was £703k.

- 2.6 During 2011/2012, staff resources were allocated 80%/20% to welfare/non-welfare fraud, resulting in fraud recovery across these two area of £494k/£209k.

### 3. POTENTIAL TO DEAL WITH FUTURE FRAUD RISK

- 3.1. Up until 2015, the Benefit Admin Grant will continue to fund the work of the fraud team. During this period, investigations into welfare fraud will continue, as at present, to be directed and controlled by the DWP. Resources within the fraud team do not need to be solely used to investigate welfare fraud. The two year period of grace, prior to funding being reduced, allows the fraud team to investigate and establish the level of fraud in non-welfare areas.

- 3.2. The chart below estimates the potential loss in non-welfare areas, compared with known outcomes.

The figures within the '100% resourcing target' column are best estimates (based on known outcomes and the figures provided within the documents referred to in para 2.2) if resources were concentrated in these areas.

The target column includes both direct and indirect savings to the Council and other agencies (e.g. the Council only retains around 8% of Council Tax collected, with the major beneficiary being the County Council).

Source	Potential loss		Already Identified	100% resourcing target
	Min	Max		
			£ '000	
Procurement Fraud	390	650	---	50
Council Tax Fraud (Discounts/Exemptions)	330	560	11	100
Staff Fraud	40	70	---	25
Council Tax Support Fraud		210	100	100
Tenancy Fraud		1800	198	300
Rental Deposit		8	---	4
Housing Waiting List		250 false applications	---	20 false applications
<b>Fraud losses – actual &amp; potential</b>			<b>309</b>	<b>579</b>

- 3.3. The estimated cost of the fraud team as at 2015 has been calculated and is shown below. The figures have taken into account the likely reduction in fraud team resources through the introduction of SFIS, inflationary increases, the savings noted above and income from other sources/funding streams including partners (who currently receive the benefits from the work of the fraud team but make no contribution towards its costs). It has also been assumed that all resources will be concentrated on investigating non-welfare fraud.

2015/16	£ '000
<b>Expenditure</b>	
Fraud team: Salary, on-costs etc, 5 employees	255
<b>Grants &amp; Other Income</b>	
Revenue raised from direct savings	( 50)
Council Tax support scheme	(100)
Cost awards and fines awarded by the Courts	(25)
Partner funding.	(100)
Anticipated surplus	<b>20</b>

The figures above do not include any external funding that the DCLG, National Fraud Authority or the European Union have made available, and for which submissions are in the process of being prepared.

#### 4. NEW AREAS OF WORK

- 4.1. In April this year the National Fraud Authority approached HDC to create a 'Fraud Hub' for Cambridgeshire. This was followed a month later by the Chartered Institute of Housing and DCLG approaching the Council to create a 'Tenancy Fraud Forum' for Cambridgeshire. Both approaches were made due to the innovative approach that the Council takes to combat fraud.

- 4.2. The Fraud Hub and the Tenancy Fraud Forum will require a great deal of work across the County, much of which has already started, and will provide even greater savings across Cambridgeshire as well as HDC.
- 4.3. The fraud team are currently in negotiation with both LGA and the EU Funding Office in Strasbourg to secure funding to create a fraud forum/hub for Cambridgeshire in which HDC will take the lead for a number of partner agencies.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

- 5.1 The Working Group have established that the risk of fraud across the Council's service areas is real.
- 5.2 Having in place a corporate counter-fraud resource will provide both effective deterrence and prevention as well as an investigative function. Evidence from past years shows that such activity will certainly provide savings (both direct and in-direct) to the Council and others, but these are difficult to accurately quantify and evaluate.
- 5.3 The Council has the opportunity to take advantage of the current funding arrangements to develop non-welfare fraud areas over the next two years. Using the information gained in that period to assess the fraud service required from April 2015 onwards.

## **6 RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that:

- 6.1 The Panel acknowledge the work of the fraud team in combating all areas of fraud across Council services.
- 6.2 A proportion of welfare fraud work be re-directed to the DWP from April 2013. The resources freed by this change to be used to develop and investigate non-welfare fraud until March 2015.
- 6.3 A report be presented to the Panel in December 2014 that outlines the actual fraud identified in non-welfare work and proposals for the fraud service from April 2015 onwards.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The Financial Cost of Fraud: PKF Forensic Services, 2012  
 Fighting Fraud Locally: Home Office, 2012  
 Tackling Fraud and Error in Government: HM Government, 2011.  
 Protecting the Public Purse: Audit Commission, 2011.  
 Eliminating Public Sector Fraud: Cabinet Office, 2011.  
 Navigating Your Way Through Stormy Waters: PWC, 2011

### **Contact Officers:**

**Nick Jennings, Corporate Fraud Manager. ☎ 01480 388480**  
**David Harwood, Internal Audit & Risk Manager. ☎ 01480 388115**

### **GLOSSARY OF TERMS.**

AC            Audit Commission  
 CIH         Chartered Institute for Housing

CIFAS	Credit Industry Fraud Avoidance Service.
CTB	Council Tax Benefit (pre-2013)
CTS	Council Tax Support (post- 2013)
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
DCLG	Department for Communities & Local Government
HB	Housing Benefit
MBUS	Making Best Use of Stock Team (Agency of CIH)
NFA-	National Fraud Authority
PWC	PriceWaterhouseCooper (Big 4 accountancy firm)
PKF-	PKF (UK) LLP (Accountancy firm. Lead partner with the Centre for Counter Fraud Studies at University of Portsmouth).
SFIS	Single Fraud Investigation Service
'Welfare'	Benefits paid by DWP under the Social Security Admin Act 1992



COMT

17 DECEMBER 2012

**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL  
(ECONOMIC WELL-BEING)**

10 JANUARY 2013

**PRIVATE SECTOR RENT LEVELS  
(Report by the Head of Customer Services)**

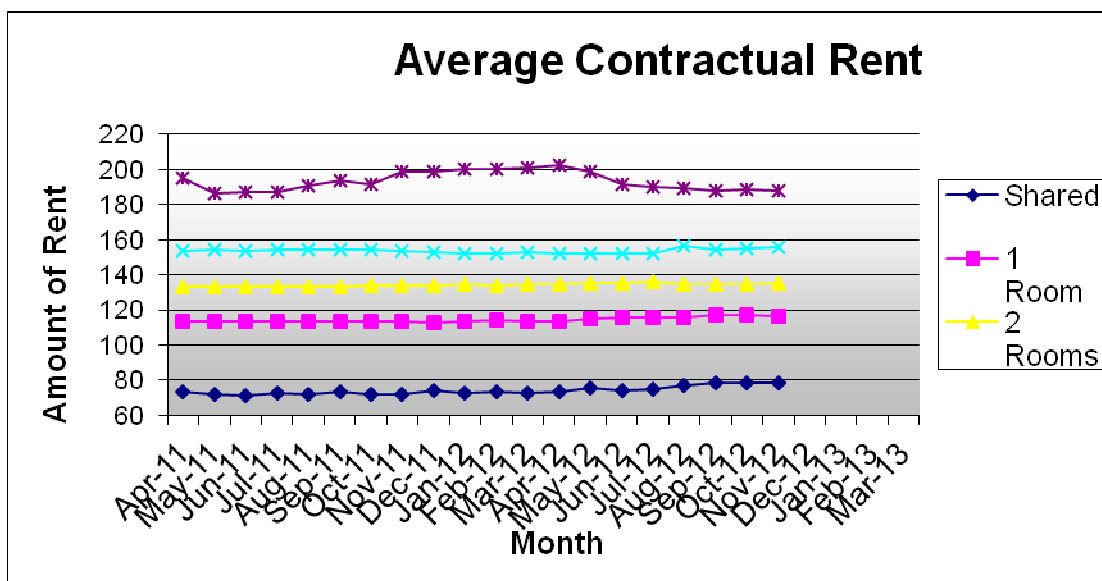
**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Government's policy on the welfare reforms relating to the Housing Benefit system is partly based on the belief that Housing Benefit has driven private sector rent increases in recent years.
- 1.2 The Economic Well-Being Panel requested 6 monthly updates on rent levels within Huntingdonshire, in particular whether the rent levels charged by landlords are reducing in light of the changes within the Housing Benefit system.

**2. RENT LEVELS FOR HOUSING BENEFIT CLAIMANTS**

- 2.1 The welfare reforms relating to Housing Benefit offered a period of 'transitional protection' for existing claimants. This means that although changes were introduced to private sector Housing Benefit claimants in April 2011 most existing claimants did not experience a reduction in their entitlement until nine months after the review date of their claim (which in reality means these took effect sometime between January and December 2012).
- 2.2 Anecdotal evidence on the rent levels that landlords are charging on properties coming to the market suggests that there has been little movement in market rent levels on re-lets, and in some cases rent levels are still increasing.
- 2.3 The table below and accompanying graph shows the average rent levels charged for Housing Benefit claimants, by size of property, since April 2011. These show that for each property size the rent levels charged have increased slightly, since the Government introduced the reforms, apart from with 4 bedroom properties where a slight reduction has been seen.
- 2.4 The average rent levels for all property sizes in November 2012, apart from those for 4 bed properties, exceeded the maximum amount of Housing Benefit payable under the Local Housing Allowance rates.

Average Contractual Rent in Benefit Calculation					
	Shared	1 Room	2 Rooms	3 Rooms	4 Rooms
Apr-11	73.36	113.16	133.09	153.72	194.85
May-11	72.00	113.40	133.37	154.49	186.10
Jun-11	71.58	113.34	133.05	153.75	187.38
Jul-11	73.04	113.63	133.13	154.25	187.38
Aug-11	72.19	113.17	133.08	154.25	190.97
Sep-11	73.12	113.24	132.93	154.28	193.87
Oct-11	72.15	113.65	133.66	153.90	191.24
Nov-11	72.02	113.15	133.87	153.68	198.49
Dec-11	73.88	112.92	134.12	153.07	198.44
Jan-12	72.51	113.76	134.46	152.00	200.09
Feb-12	73.59	114.05	134.09	151.75	200.18
Mar-12	72.83	113.65	134.59	152.57	200.84
Apr-12	73.37	113.67	134.42	151.91	202.28
May-12	75.46	115.20	135.40	151.98	198.89
Jun-12	74.46	115.54	135.52	152.35	191.11
Jul-12	74.95	115.38	135.75	151.98	189.96
Aug-12	77.35	115.74	134.53	156.48	189.52
Sep-12	78.27	116.94	134.52	154.50	187.86
Oct-12	78.57	116.82	134.64	155.11	188.39
Nov-12	78.76	116.36	135.34	155.95	188.07



### 3. CONCLUSION

4.1 For existing private sector tenants, and for properties that are becoming available to let, there is no evidence to suggest that landlords are adjusting their rents downwards as a result of the changes to the Housing Benefit system. This has reduced the number of households the council has been able to work proactively with to prevent homelessness by assisting them into a private sector tenancy

through the Rent Deposit scheme. This in turn has contributed to an increased use in temporary accommodation and the number of households that have to be assisted into social rented housing as a result of the council's duties under the homelessness legislation.

#### **4. RECOMMENDATION**

4.1 The Panel is asked to note the contents of this report.

**Contact  
Officer:**

**Julia Barber**

 **01480 388105**

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## **CUSTOMER SERVICES MONITORING REPORT**

### **REPORT BY HEAD OF CUSTOMER SERVICES**

#### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 This is the monitoring report for the Customer Services team for July 2012 to December 2012. The latest quarterly report is at Appendix A.

#### **2 Significant highlights and issues since last report**

- 2.1 Michelle Greet is currently on maternity leave and Kathryn Sexton (from IMD) is covering her role until September 2013.
- 2.2 The Call Centre service level was not met each month between April and September 2012. There are a few reasons for this, but the main one is the sickness levels the Call Centre has experienced since April this year. 297 days have been lost to sickness between April and November (inclusive) with 4 staff members having long term sickness absences. For comparison, during the whole financial year 2011/12, there were 134 days lost to sickness, and in the year 2010/11, there were 161 days lost.
- 2.3 South Cambs and Cambs City Councils have been recruiting for staff in the last six months with starting salaries between £17-19K. We know at least 3 members of staff attended interviews and two very strong members of staff from the Call Centre were recruited by South Cambs. Another very strong member of the Customer Service Centre team has recently resigned stating the salary as the reason for leaving on her resignation letter. Losing strong members of the team has a major impact in customer services as advisors provide such a wide range of services. It takes 6 months to fully train new members of staff.
- 2.4 Due to the length of time it takes to train new staff, forecasting and planning future workload is essential to Customer Services. We do this well - using historical data as well as intelligence from elsewhere in the organisation. Customer Services will always need to have some ability to deal with peaks that cannot be predicted. Peaks in customer numbers have been caused recently by the November elections, flooding and frozen bins. It is important to have enough staff to deal with these peaks

but due to the complexity of the job, it is not possible to have zero hour contract staff on standby that we can call in to help cover busy periods.

- 2.5 The CRM project has slipped due to two unforeseen circumstances (system now due to go live on the 1<sup>st</sup> March 2013).
- a) The first is that there is an ongoing issue with the Call Centre moving onto CPSN and the HDC network, as infrastructure issues and the CPSN project have delayed this, which directly impacts the installation and implementation of the new CRM system.
  - b) The second is that CCC has asked the Call Centre to vacate Speke House so that it can be put to use by the Cambridgeshire Education IT department. It has been proposed that we move to Amundsen House (which is on the same business park) and we are currently working out the specifics so that this can happen in the New Year.

We are working with IMD to try to coordinate this move with the move to the HDC network, hopefully in time to go live with the new CRM system before the bin round changes in February 2013. The original plan was to have the new CRM in place at the Call Centre and at the Operations Division well in advance of the Route Optimisation project go live due to the projected increase in demand for our service at this time.

- 2.6 The Call Centre manager and others have been working closely with IMD to improve and streamline processes that will be available within the new CRM system for advisors to use. 40 processes have been rationalised to 11 and the system should be much more user-friendly, intuitive and offer a lot more functionality and scope for improving the service we provide to customers and enable us to be more proactive with our dealings with them.
- 2.7 The Customer Service Centre Manager manages the payments processes for HDC and as a result, we are involved in every project that involves a change to a payment or a new charge. Recent examples include CILs, BID, car parking etc. We are currently also working on a project to replace our payments system as it is soon to become unsupported by the supplier.
- 2.8 30% of all payments received by the Council are now being taken by the Automated Telephone Payment system. ATP has successfully reduced the amount of payment calls we receive in the call centre, but there have been months where call volumes have reached pre-ATP volumes. For example, May-July were especially busy months as the Operations division enforced recycling rules due to high volumes of contaminated waste. The Call Centre experienced a high volume of calls and as customers were particularly irate, call lengths were increased. There are also, on average, 133 voicemails left each month from customers that have experienced problems with ATP and need to be called back by an

advisor, which the statistics don't account for. £14k of budget savings in light of the introduction of ATP in March has been achieved.

- 2.9 Customer Service Strategy has been developed and is currently in draft form. This is going to be continued to be worked on over the next few months to include more content about channel migration, reducing avoidable contact and offering more proactive customer service across the whole council.

### **3 Forthcoming issues and risks**

- 3.1 Benefit reforms in April 2013 will have a significant impact on customer services from Jan 2013 onwards. This is due to training of staff on the new regulations and criteria, all HomeLink customers being asked to reapply to the housing register from January and then the further changes that will be communicated to customers via letters. The planned benefits reforms and council tax support scheme will collectively affect many of our customers from April 2013, which will lead to an increase in footfall at our CSC's and more calls to the Call Centre. It is likely that the extra customers utilising our services at this time will be unhappy with the changes, which will impact our staff dealing with them and also the length of call/ visit. Two temporary members of staff have been recruited – one to help the Call Centre and one to help the CSC during this time.
- 3.2 The route optimisation project for bin rounds will impact on the service level at the Call Centre due to the high call volumes that are expected. Ideally, the new CRM system will be in place before this happens as Operations will also be using the new system, which will simplify the processes and help us deal with the higher volume of calls expected.
- 3.3 The outcome from the pay review project may impact on staff recruitment, retention and morale.
- 3.4 The delay to the Call Centre going on to the HDC network means that the CRM project may slip further.

### **4 Statistics**

- 4.1 Customer numbers for April 2012 to September 2012

The Call Centre was offered 70,833 calls and 7,491 emails.  
The Customer Service Centres processed 31,405 enquiries.

- 4.2 Customer satisfaction levels

Call Centre Customer Satisfaction was 96.2%.  
Customer Service Centre satisfaction was 99%.

4.3 The average length of call/ visit:

Call centre has increased from 130 seconds in 2010 to 158 seconds in 2012 so far.

Customer Service Centre has increased from 10.4 minutes in 2010 to 12.44 minutes in 2012 so far.

4.4 The Call Centre received 24% more Operations calls in May and June this year compared to the same months in 2011.

4.5 On average, 33% of all calls received at the Call Centre in 2012 so far have been considered 'avoidable' compared to 25% in 2011.

**Recommendation**

The Panel is asked to note the contents of this report

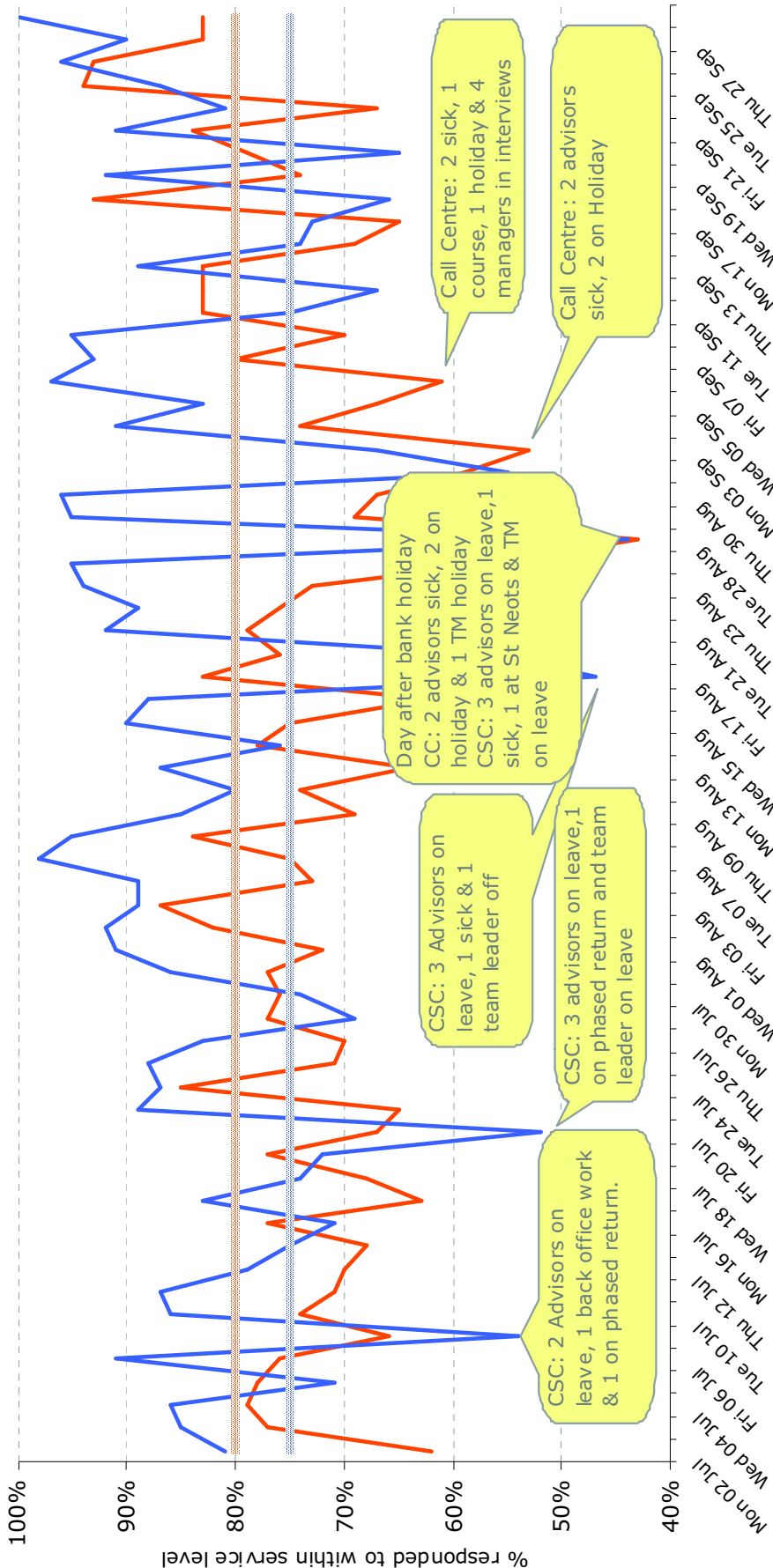
Contact officer – Julia Barber, Head of Customer Services. 01480 388105



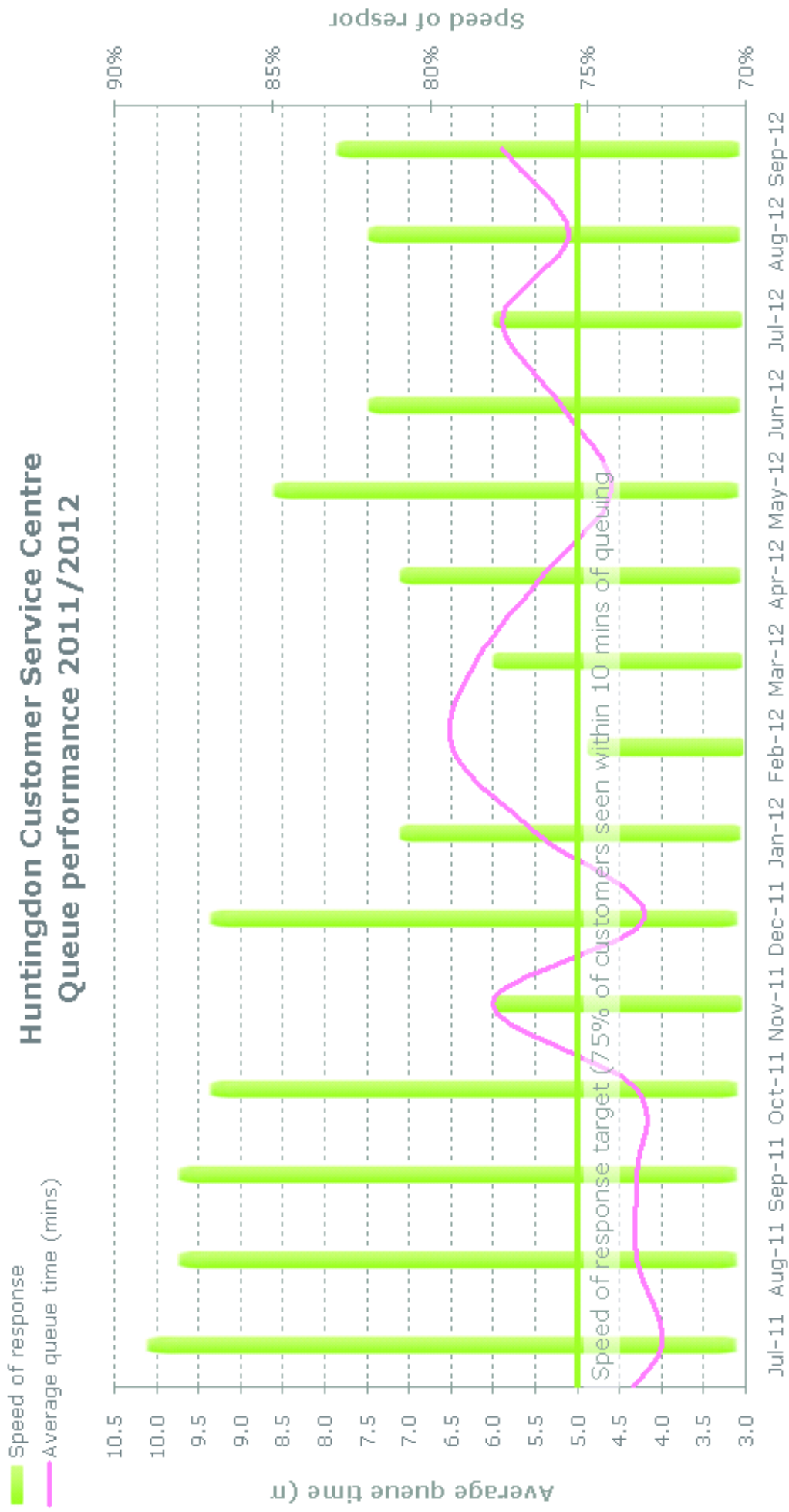
# Daily speed of response

## July to September 2012

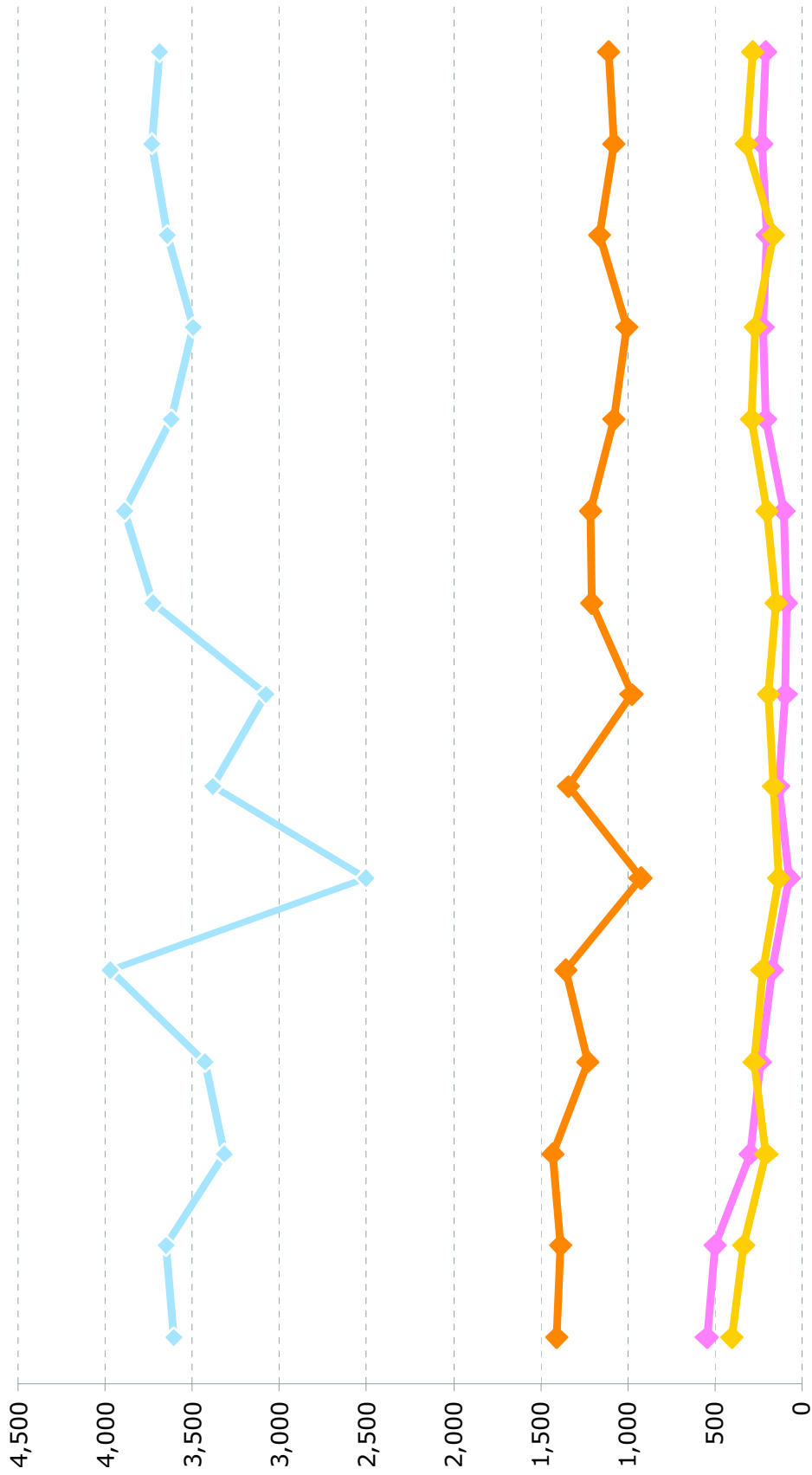
- Call Centre (CC)
- Huntingdon CSC (HCSC)
- - - CC target
- - - HCSC target



## Huntingdon Customer Service Centre Queue performance 2011/2012



## Customer Service Centres' enquiries per month

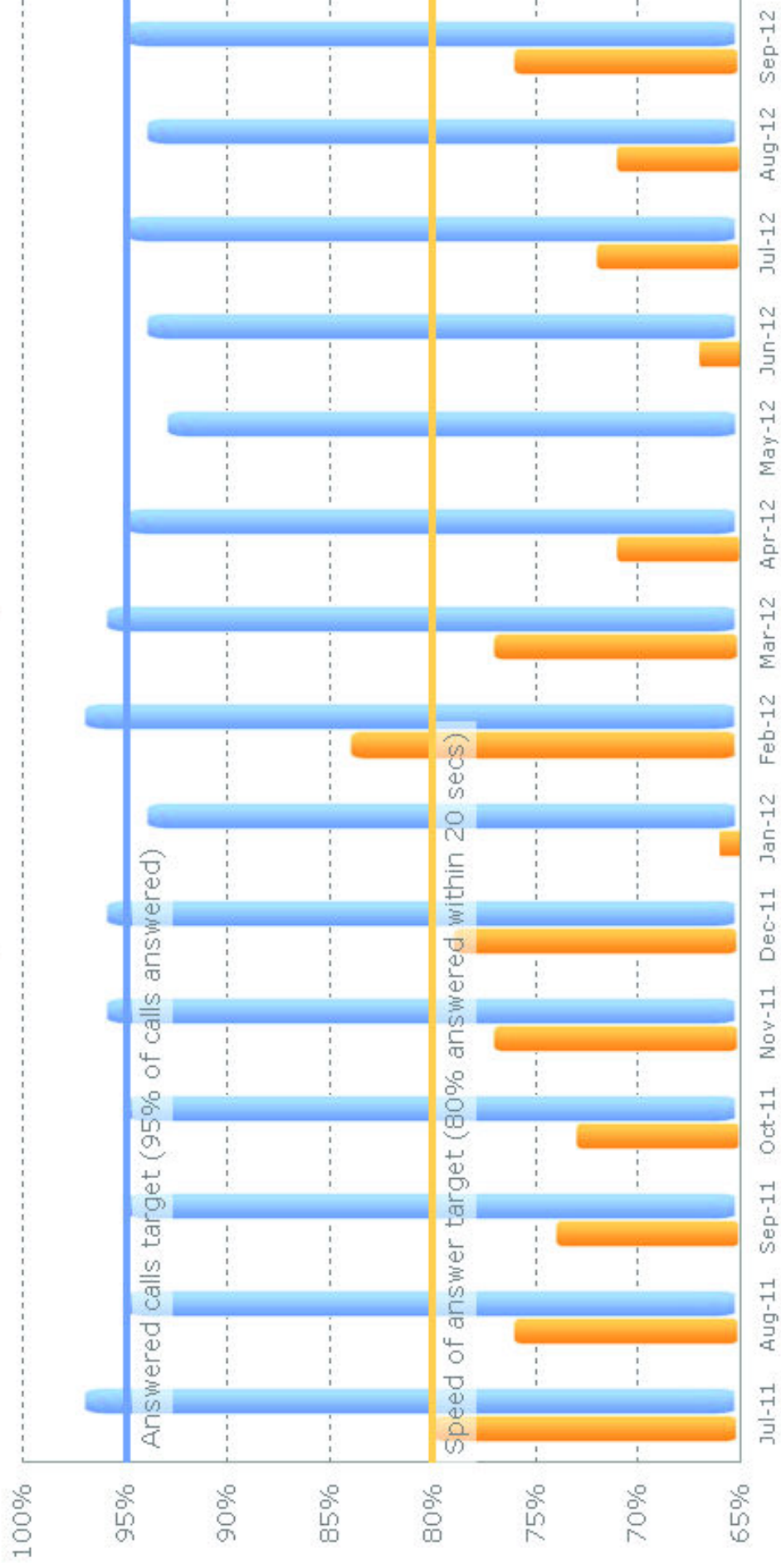


## Customer Service Centre Enquiries

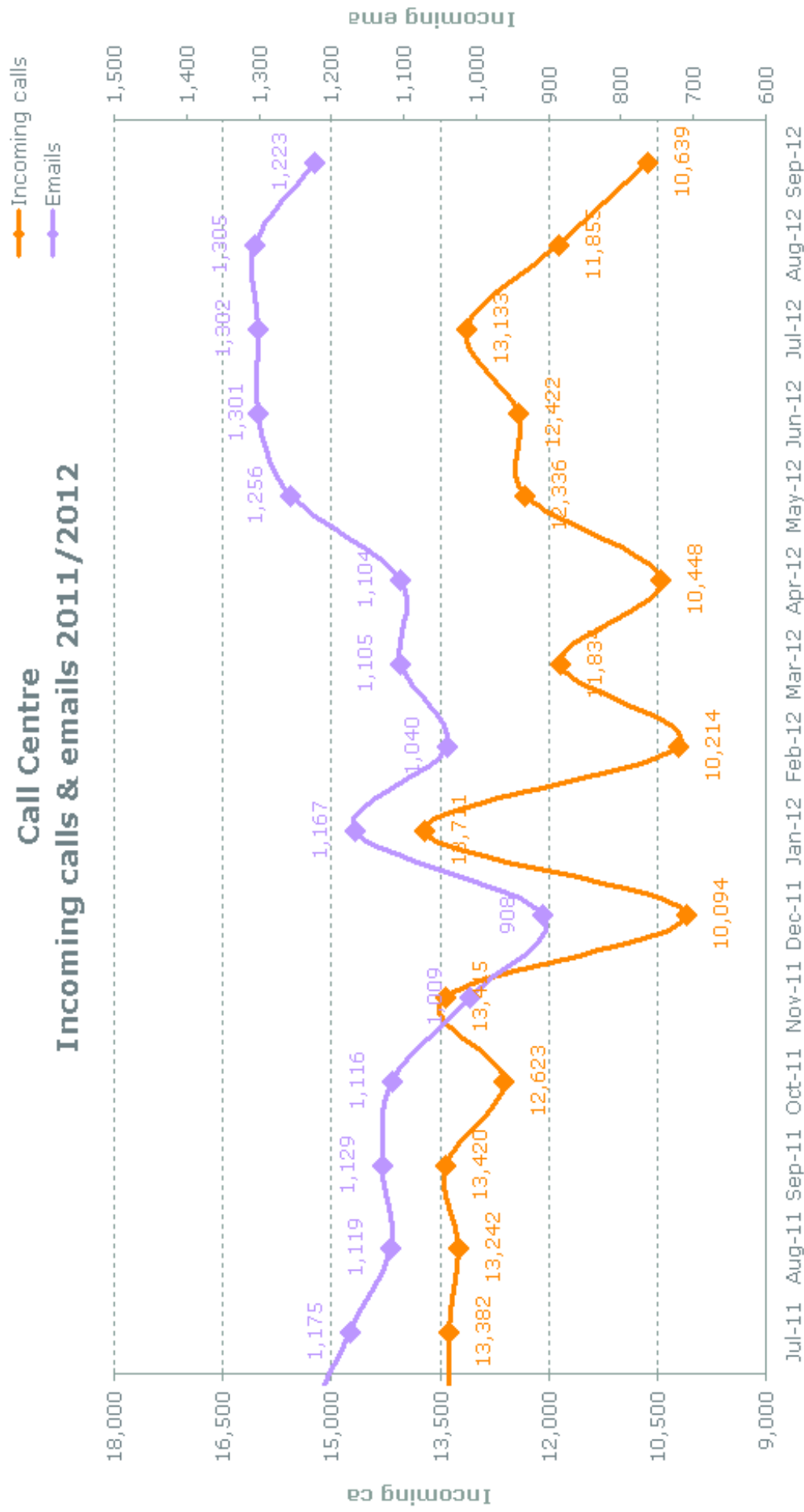
Service	Enquiry type	Jun-11	Jul-11	Aug-11	Sep-11	Oct-11	Nov-11	Dec-11	Jan-12	Feb-12	Mar-12	Apr-12	May-12	Jun-12	Jul-12	Aug-12	Sep-12
Benefits	Casual caller	24	4	4	2	6	4	4	10	11	13	9	7	7	1	1	9
	Customer handled	2,309	2,191	2,384	2,218	2,082	2,267	1,590	2,262	2,195	2,707	2,211	2,143	1,855	2,093	2,241	1,930
	Unspecified																
Payment Debt	Casual caller	17	4	6	3	4	7	7	7	6	2	3	5	6	7	5	11
	Customer handled	1,101	1,004	863	909	1,004	1,085	726	767	375	358	1,108	1,032	1,016	956	969	1,045
	Unspecified																
Housing	Casual caller	79	33	44	27	22	4	5	5	9	10	4	7	4	5	5	7
	Customer handled	987	897	881	820	785	826	519	917	808	817	734	828	743	807	832	777
	Unspecified																
Other Enquiry	Casual caller	29	11	12	1	5	6	6	7	3	2	14	44	11	3	19	12
	Customer handled	490	431	373	269	290	356	264	217	245	376	446	324	423	335	345	586
	Unspecified																
Council Tax	Casual caller	1	2	4	0	1	2	0	0	1	5	5	4	1	5	1	12
	Customer handled	287	264	277	291	283	446	179	342	203	274	283	209	206	260	190	264
	Unspecified																
Equipment use	Casual caller	480	214	98	44	34	37	28	19	24	16	20	19	1	2	2	1
	Customer handled	146	137	148	80	112	107	31	54	58	92	116	76	179	127	216	184
	Unspecified																
Partner External	Casual caller	214	52	40	18	14	76	39	27	49	87	19	100	58	68	81	72
	Customer handled	98	76	72	62	70	69	20	55	47	55	74	59	91	105	98	110
	Unspecified																
Planning	Casual caller								1				1				
	Customer handled	190	219	263	220	213	173	94	128	145	149	138	173	126	182	132	97
	Unspecified																
Public transport	Casual caller	31	9	25	12	6	4	1	6	4	10	14	21	7	9	14	6
	Customer handled	167	160	157	100	85	111	50	99	67	110	110	70	140	125	100	71
	Unspecified																
Vehicle	Casual caller			2	4	1	1	1	1				1				2
	Customer handled	59	79	53	74	73	60	44	37	39	38	55	35	40	43	53	44
	Unspecified																
Streetscene	Casual caller	7	4	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Customer handled	77	43	36	48	20	27	11	21	22	22	21	18	40	21	36	34
	Unspecified																
Employment	Casual caller	40	17	13	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	13	7	17	3	15	8
	Customer handled	72	47	51	19	10	17	6	5	6	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
	Unspecified																
Older Person	Casual caller																
	Customer handled	35	17	7	3	6	16	6	7	5	3	3	0	4	2	2	4
	Unspecified																
Tourism	Casual caller	13	6	5		3	3	1	6	1	1	1	1				1
	Customer handled	51	23	31	2	23	20	7	16	10	5	8	4	5	1	3	1
	Unspecified																
Younger Person	Casual caller				1	2											
	Customer handled	24	10	12	4	5	2	4	1	2	4				2		1
	Unspecified																
Leisure	Casual caller				1	2											
	Customer handled	15	6	5	8	6	3	1	1							1	
	Unspecified																
<b>Grand Total</b>	Casual caller	935	356	255	117	98	139	87	84	116	147	90	209	96	100	129	131
	Customer handled	6,108	5,604	5,613	5,135	5,067	5,585	3,552	4,929	4,227	5,017	5,320	4,986	4,893	5,062	5,233	5,156
	Unspecified																
HCSC Back Office F		7,094	6,452	6,605	6,647	6,902	6,819	5,123	6,977	4,402	4,780	5,894	7,023	5,520	6,259	6,023	5,804

## Call Centre Call performance 2011/2012

■ Speed of answer  
■ Answered calls



## Call Centre Incoming calls & emails 2011/2012



## Call Centre Enquiries

Complaints	Apr-11	May-11	Jun-11	Jul-11	Aug-11	Sep-11	Oct-11	Nov-11	Dec-11	Jan-12	Feb-12	Mar-12	Apr-12	May-12	Jun-12	Jul-12	Aug-12	Sep-12	Last 12 mths
Streetscene	23	25	21	20	19	19	19	19	18	14	26	27	20	37	27	22	23	25	277
Other Enquiry	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Formal Complaint	3	1	2	5	2	5	4	4	2	0	2	3	5	8	7	14	4	6	59
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>336</b>

Information requests	Apr-11	May-11	Jun-11	Jul-11	Aug-11	Sep-11	Oct-11	Nov-11	Dec-11	Jan-12	Feb-12	Mar-12	Apr-12	May-12	Jun-12	Jul-12	Aug-12	Sep-12	Last 12 mths
Other Enquiry	944	976	913	938	952	1,009	952	998	648	1,080	989	1,061	958	1,084	994	1,224	1,126	1,228	12,342
Streetscene	857	688	711	567	488	527	541	624	844	701	555	542	609	895	886	712	673	532	8,114
Benefits	101	118	138	174	158	165	226	168	109	221	136	216	213	167	143	157	216	160	2,132
Planning	186	242	210	169	189	255	223	216	104	201	198	219	203	210	178	187	174	216	2,329
Housing	451	467	503	444	444	410	429	395	224	519	453	414	401	456	391	367	463	465	4,977
Council Tax	270	399	323	457	267	379	348	329	173	428	272	269	164	168	134	215	184	255	2,939
Environmental health	87	142	193	195	181	95	83	61	38	30	34	43	37	98	74	53	78	89	718
Electoral registration	351	198	52	34	169	155	209	228	63	98	73	138	227	121	221	200	117	145	1,840
Payment Debt	79	85	66	67	67	81	80	66	55	47	20	22	15	30	20	29	45	21	450
Tourism	21	33	25	14	22	26	20	3	2	2	4	4	2	1	2	1	2	2	45
Energy efficiency	12	10	32	14	12	17	21	7	6	12	20	11	1	8	6	6	6	15	119
Public transport	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Change of details	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Formal Complaint	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,359</b>	<b>3,358</b>	<b>3,166</b>	<b>3,073</b>	<b>2,949</b>	<b>3,119</b>	<b>3,132</b>	<b>3,095</b>	<b>2,266</b>	<b>3,339</b>	<b>2,754</b>	<b>2,939</b>	<b>2,830</b>	<b>3,238</b>	<b>3,049</b>	<b>3,151</b>	<b>3,084</b>	<b>3,128</b>	<b>36,005</b>

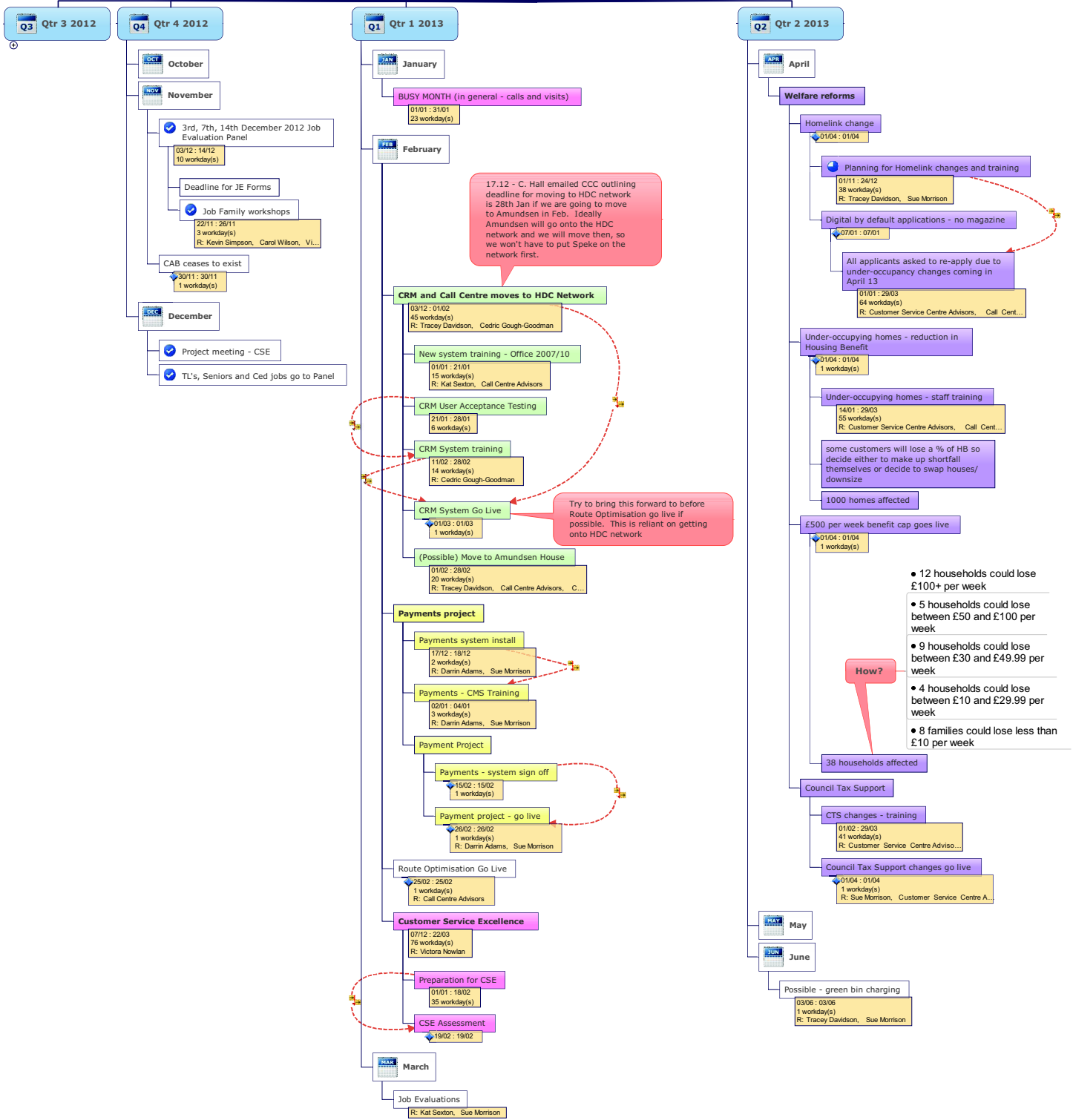
Service requests	Apr-11	May-11	Jun-11	Jul-11	Aug-11	Sep-11	Oct-11	Nov-11	Dec-11	Jan-12	Feb-12	Mar-12	Apr-12	May-12	Jun-12	Jul-12	Aug-12	Sep-12	Last 12 mths
Payment Debt	1,708	2,196	1,947	2,217	1,920	2,264	1,961	2,152	1,803	2,293	461	355	448	569	454	375	338	393	11,602
Streetscene	1,020	1,130	1,204	1,190	1,265	1,161	1,061	1,017	947	1,212	1,062	1,176	1,066	1,475	1,453	1,534	1,374	1,121	14,498
Environmental health	45	54	165	215	163	64	54	42	36	21	19	31	35	81	34	56	69	84	562
Change of details	267	334	348	336	385	375	372	345	266	301	271	259	261	309	308	354	354	311	3,711
Housing	96	121	121	121	90	104	92	98	60	162	131	103	96	93	76	123	96	89	1,219
Electoral registration	80	28	17	8	74	38	25	137	17	19	10	89	66	29	76	38	27	31	564
Tourism	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other Enquiry	7	6	6	15	7	6	2	0	1	6	4	9	6	13	16	14	15	11	97
Planning	19	20	24	40	42	41	38	26	15	33	23	26	21	28	34	42	29	32	347
Formal Complaint	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Benefits	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Council Tax	88	133	68	109	56	82	56	75	51	82	38	45	73	72	43	65	60	63	723
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,330</b>	<b>4,022</b>	<b>3,900</b>	<b>4,251</b>	<b>4,002</b>	<b>4,135</b>	<b>3,661</b>	<b>3,892</b>	<b>3,196</b>	<b>4,129</b>	<b>2,019</b>	<b>2,093</b>	<b>2,072</b>	<b>2,669</b>	<b>2,494</b>	<b>2,601</b>	<b>2,362</b>	<b>2,135</b>	<b>33,323</b>
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>6,715</b>	<b>7,406</b>	<b>7,089</b>	<b>7,349</b>	<b>6,973</b>	<b>7,278</b>	<b>6,816</b>	<b>7,010</b>	<b>5,482</b>	<b>7,482</b>	<b>4,801</b>	<b>5,062</b>	<b>4,927</b>	<b>5,952</b>	<b>5,577</b>	<b>5,788</b>	<b>5,473</b>	<b>5,294</b>	<b>69,664</b>

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Tips

### Customer Service Project Timeline 12-13



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Task	Start	Due	Progre...	Resources	2013							
					Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	
<input type="checkbox"/> 3rd, 7th, 14th December 2012 Job Evaluation Panel	03/12/2012	14/12/2012	100 %									
Job Family workshops	22/11/2012	26/11/2012	100 %	Kevin Simpson, ...								
CAB ceases to exist	30/11/2012	30/11/2012	0 %									
BUSY MONTH (in general - calls and visits)	01/01/2013	31/01/2013	0 %									
CRM and Call Centre moves to HDC Network	03/12/2012	01/02/2013	0 %	Tracey Davidso...								
New system training - Office 2007/10	01/01/2013	21/01/2013	0 %	Kat Sexton, Call...								
CRM User Acceptance Testing	21/01/2013	28/01/2013	0 %									
CRM System training	11/02/2013	28/02/2013	0 %	Cedric Gough-...								
CRM System Go Live	01/03/2013	01/03/2013	0 %									
(Possible) Move to Amundsen House	01/02/2013	28/02/2013	0 %	Tracey Davidso...								
Payments system install	17/12/2012	18/12/2012	0 %	Darrin Adams, ...								
Payments - CMS Training	02/01/2013	04/01/2013	0 %	Darrin Adams, ...								
Payments - system sign off	15/02/2013	15/02/2013	0 %									
Payment project - go live	26/02/2013	26/02/2013	0 %	Darrin Adams, ...								
Route Optimisation Go Live	25/02/2013	25/02/2013	0 %	Call Centre Adv...								
Customer Service Excellence	07/12/2012	22/03/2013	0 %	Victoria Nowlan								
Preparation for CSE	01/01/2013	18/02/2013	0 %									
CSE Assessment	19/02/2013	19/02/2013	0 %									
Homelink change	01/04/2013	01/04/2013	0 %									
Planning for Homelink changes and training	01/11/2012	24/12/2012	75 %	Tracey Davidso...								
<input type="checkbox"/> Digital by default applications - no magazine	07/01/2013	07/01/2013	0 %									
All applicants asked to re-apply due to under-occupancy changes ...	01/01/2013	29/03/2013	0 %	Customer Servi...								
Under-occupying homes - reduction in Housing Benefit	01/04/2013	01/04/2013	0 %									
Under-occupying homes - staff training	14/01/2013	29/03/2013	0 %	Customer Servi...								
£500 per week benefit cap goes live	01/04/2013	01/04/2013	0 %									
CTS changes - training	01/02/2013	29/03/2013	0 %	Customer Servi...								
Council Tax Support changes go live	01/04/2013	01/04/2013	0 %	Sue Morrison, ...								
Possible - green bin charging	03/06/2013	03/06/2013	0 %	Tracey Davidso...								

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**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANELS**  
**(SOCIAL WELL-BEING)**  
**(ECONOMIC WELL-BEING)**  
**(ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING)**

**8 JANUARY 2013**  
**10 JANUARY 2013**  
**15 JANUARY 2013**

**WORK PLAN STUDIES**  
**(Report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services)**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of studies being undertaken by the other Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

**2. STUDIES**

- 2.1 The Council has a duty to improve the social, environmental and economic well-being of the District. This gives the Overview and Scrutiny Panels a wide remit to examine any issues that affect the District by conducting in-depth studies.
- 2.2 Studies are allocated according to the Overview and Scrutiny remits. Details of ongoing studies being undertaken by the two other Panels are set out in the attached Appendix.
- 2.3 Members are reminded that if they have a specific interest in any study area which is not being considered by their Panel there are opportunities for involvement in all the studies being undertaken.

**3. RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 The Panel is requested to note the progress of the studies selected.

**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Minutes and Reports from previous meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

**Contact Officers: Miss H Ali, Democratic Services Officer**  
**01480 388006**

**Mrs C Bulman, Democratic Services Officer**  
**01480 388234**

## ONGOING STUDIES

STUDY	OBJECTIVES	PANEL	STATUS	TYPE
Leisure Centre Financial Performance and Employment Structure	To consider the future business model for "One Leisure" and the development of a methodology for the quantification of Social Value.	Economic Well-Being and Social Well-Being	Working Group met on 28 <sup>th</sup> February 2012. Agreed to split into two sub groups to investigate each area.  Sub-Group looking at the Social Methodology will focus on three key areas; namely social, health and financial benefits of the Council's activities.	Joint Working Group
CCTV Provision within the District	To review the impact of the Council's proposal to cease the CCTV service with effect from April 2012.	Social Well-Being	A report on changes to the CCTV service in 2012/13 will be submitted to the Panel in February 2013.	Whole Panel Study.
Consultation Processes	To assist the Corporate Team with its review of the Council's Consultation and Engagement Strategy.	Social Well-Being	Strategy and Guidance being updated by the Corporate Office to incorporate comments suggested by the Working Group. Draft to be considered by Working Group at their meeting on 23rd January 2013.	Working Group.

Tree Strategy	To form a strategy in conjunction with the Tree Officers for the retention and planting of trees.	Environmental Well-Being	Work is yet to commence on the Draft Tree Strategy. Owing to resource constraints within the Planning Department alternative ways of finalising the Tree Strategy are being considered.	Working Group.
Land Use for Agricultural Purposes in the Context of Planning Policies and its Contribution to the Local Economy.	To review the lack of promotion and protection of land for this purpose.	Environmental Well-Being	The final report of the Working Group was considered at the Panel's November meeting. The report's recommendations have been endorsed by the Cabinet.	Working Group.
Rural Transport	To review the provision of transportation in rural areas.	Environmental Well-Being	Transport for Cambridgeshire report received in July 2011. Comments conveyed to Cabinet. Final report expected in due course.	To be determined.
Review of Neighbourhood Forums in Huntingdonshire	To undertake a review of the Neighbourhood Forums in Huntingdonshire.	Social Well-Being	Cabinet agreed to hold a pilot in the Norman Cross County Division. Panel requested to undertake a review of the pilot during its 12 months of operation. Pilot meeting held on 7th November 2012. Further informal meeting to be held in January 2013.	Working Group

Maintenance of Water Courses	To receive a presentation on the maintenance arrangements in place for Water Courses within the District.	Environmental Well-Being	<p>Following consideration of the St Neots Surface Water Management Plan and discussions on widespread drainage problems within the District, a working group was convened to engage with Anglian Water in order to establish their general powers, responsibilities and the limitations on its ability to prevent flooding.</p> <p>Meetings have been held with representatives from Anglian Water and the Environment Agency. The Working Group has produced a report on its findings but is awaiting the outcome of negotiations between Anglian Water and the County Council on drainage in Yaxley.</p>	Working Group
Design Principles for Future Developments	To examine issues that have arisen at Loves Farm, St Neots and to make recommendations to inform future developments.	Environmental Well-Being	The Working Group has produced a report detailing its findings to date. The Working Group will now focus on detailed aspects of the design guide with the Council's Urban Design, Trees and Landscape Team Leader. This is expected to be available in early February 2013.	Working Group.



Equality Framework for Local Government	To review the action plan arising from the Equality Framework for Local Government peer assessment.	Social Well-Being	Action Plan has been revised since the Working Group last met. Will be subject to review by the Working Group at their meeting on 23rd January 2013.	Working Group
Corporate Plan	To assist the Corporate Office with the development of a new Corporate Plan.	All O&S Panels	Executive Leader's Strategy Group to consider the Delivery Plan on 14th January 2013 with a view to taking responsibility for the actions contained therein. A programme of bi-monthly meetings of the Working Group will be arranged over the course of the next year with a view to holding Executive Members to account.	Working Group
Delivery of Advisory Services Across the District	To consider the social implications of the announcement made by the Huntingdonshire CAB to go into voluntary liquidisation.	Social Well-Being	Executive Leader provided an update to the Panel in October, November and December 2012. A report on interim arrangements for Jan-Mar 2013 and grant aid awards for 2013/14 will be submitted to the Panel at its January 2013 meeting.	Whole Panel Study.

Waste Collection	To identify options for improving the Council's waste collection and recycling arrangements and for enhancing public satisfaction with the service.	Environmental Well-Being	<p>The Working Group has decided to focus on how best to engage with residents as to what should be placed in which bin. The Group may go on to study waste collection procedures in more detail, this is dependent on the work of RECAP.</p> <p>The Panel expressed its support for the use of wheelie bin stickers to convey messages with community benefits, such as speed restrictions. Cllr I C Bates will make contact with Hilton Parish Council to determine the outcome of the Speedwatch pilot initiative undertaken in the village.</p>	Working Group
Green Waste and Energy Generation	To consider what opportunities the Council might have in terms of generating energy from green waste.	Environmental Well-Being	Scoping report on green waste and energy generation requested for submission to a future meeting. Request submitted to the Head of Environmental Management.	To be determined.

## Progress Report

<b>13/05/09</b>	<p><b><u>Customer Services</u></b></p> <p>Quarterly performance reports to be circulated informally to the Panel twice per year and formally twice per year.</p>	<p>Latest report considered in July 2012.</p>	<p>This item appears elsewhere on the Agenda.</p>	<b>10/01/13</b>
<b>16/05/12</b>	<p><b><u>Corporate Plan</u></b></p> <p>Councillors T V Rogers and G J Bull have been appointed to the Corporate Plan Working Group.</p>		<p>The Executive Strategy Leaders Group will consider the Delivery Plan at their meeting on 14 January 2013 with a view to taking responsibility for the actions contained therein. A programme of bi-monthly meetings of the Corporate Plan Working Group will be arranged over the course of the next year with a view to holding Executive Members to account.</p>	<b>TBC</b>
<b>02/11/11</b>	<p><b><u>Scrutiny of Partnerships</u></b></p> <p>Following a review of the Strategic Partnership, the Overview &amp; Scrutiny Chairmen and Vice Chairman agreed that responsibilities should be divided as follows:-</p> <p>Social Well Being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Community Safety</li> <li>❖ Children &amp; Young People</li> <li>❖ Health &amp; Well-Being</li> </ul> <p>Environmental Well Being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Growth &amp; Infrastructure</li> </ul> <p>Economic Well Being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Local Enterprise Partnership</li> </ul>		<p>The Panel has already received two presentations on the Local Enterprise Partnership. A presentation on the Local Enterprise Zone was given to the Panel's November meeting.</p> <p>Work is ongoing to develop a LEP wide approach to scrutiny.</p>	

<b>05/01/12</b>	<p><b><u>Leisure Centres</u></b> Working Group's report approved for submission to the Cabinet meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2012.</p>	<p>Endorsed by the Cabinet at their meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2012. Working Group to continue its investigations into the future business model and a methodology for the quantification of social value.</p>	<p>Working Group met on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2012. Agreed to divide their work between two sub-groups. Members of the Overview &amp; Scrutiny Panel (Social Well Being) are investigating the development of a methodology for the quantification of social value.</p> <p>The Panel has noted that the review of the Business Model has come to a standstill. Following his discussions with the Executive Leader, the Chairman has agreed that the review of the business model would not continue until the Business Plan had been completed and considered by the Panel. The Item appears elsewhere on the Agenda.</p>	<b>10/01/12</b>
<b>07/07/11</b>	<p><b><u>District Council Support Services</u></b> Agreed to establish a Working Group to review the Document Centre and its costs to form a view on its efficiency and cost effectiveness.</p> <p>Councillors Bull, Greenall, Howe, Mackender-Lawrence, Rogers and Williams volunteered for the Group.</p>		<p>Working Group has formed two sub groups to consider:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) the financial cost of the service; and</li> <li>b) the operation of the service.</li> </ul> <p>Working Group met on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2012 and a summary of their findings has been compiled.</p>	

## Progress Report

<p><b>07/07/11</b></p> <p><b>02/02/11</b></p>	<p><b><u>A14 Improvements</u></b>          Agreed that a representative of the Highways Agency should be invited to a future meeting to discuss their plans in the event of an interruption to traffic flow.</p> <p>Agreed to receive further updates on progress by email.</p> <p>In view of the difficulties in obtaining a representative from the Highways Agency to attend a future meeting, agreed that a presentation on A14 developments should be given to the whole Council, when this is appropriate.</p>	<p>Invitation sent to Highways Agency.</p>	<p>The Secretary of State for Transport has recently announced plans to improve the A14 between Milton and Huntingdon as part of a major drive on infrastructure investment</p> <p>The full Council will receive an update at the meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2012.</p>	
<p><b>06/10/11</b></p>	<p><b><u>Cambridgeshire Public Sector Asset Management Strategy</u></b>          Requested a report outlining the progress made on the Huntingdonshire projects in six months time.</p>	<p>Progress report submitted to June 2012 meeting.</p>	<p>Managing Director (CPP) to report back at a future meeting on the development of the business case methodology.</p>	
<p><b>14/06/12</b></p>	<p><b><u>Economic Development</u></b>          Agreed that the update of the Council's Economic Strategy should be submitted to a future meeting</p>		<p>The findings from the local economic assessment were presented to the Panel's November meeting. The Economic Development Manager will present the Strategy to the Panel in the Spring.</p>	<p><b>07/03/12</b></p>

## Progress Report

<b><u>Community Infrastructure Levy</u></b>				
<b>03/11/11</b>	Informal Discussion held at the conclusion of the meeting. Agreed that Managing Director (CPP) would report back when it was appropriate.		Report on future governance and spending arrangements to be submitted to a future meeting. Members of the Social and Environmental Well-Being Panels will be invited to attend.	<b>04/10/12</b>
<b>08/03/12</b>	Councillor M F Shellens suggested that the Panel should discuss		Added to the Work Programme for the forthcoming year. Managing Director (Communities, Partnerships & Projects) to discuss the issue with Councillor M F Shellens directly.	
<b>05/04/12</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ the priorities for CIL funding at a future meeting.</li> <li>❖ the implications of planning social housing requirements on Community Infrastructure Levy Income and the housing waiting list.</li> </ul>			
<b><u>Housing Benefit Changes</u></b>				
<b>05/01/12</b>	Agreed to receive a further report drawing together the wider housing policy implications for the Council arising from the Government's Welfare Reform Bill be submitted to a future meeting of the Panel.		Report considered by the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) at their meeting on 12 <sup>th</sup> June 2012. Further reports to be submitted on a quarterly basis and Members of the Panel will be invited to attend.	<b>08/01/12</b>
<b>12/07/12</b>	Requested that a report on rental rates and rent costs be submitted to the Panel on a quarterly basis.	First quarterly report submitted to July meeting.	Agreed that future reports should be presented every six months. Item appears elsewhere on the Agenda.	<b>10/01/13</b>

## Progress Report

<b>14/06/12</b>	<p><b><u>Fraud Prevention</u></b></p> <p>Agreed that this should be added to the work programme for the forthcoming year.</p>	<p>Corporate Governance Panel have agreed to establish a working group to consider fraud risks, current and future approach and single fraud issues. Councillors Mitchell, Butler and Churchill have been appointed to this group</p>	<p>Report appears elsewhere on the Agenda.</p>	<b>10/01/13</b>
<b>12/07/12</b>	<p><b><u>Use of Consultants</u></b></p> <p>Received a report outlining the progress which had been made on agreeing, modifying and implementing the Panel's previous recommendations.</p>	<p>Agreed that further reports detailing expenditure on consultants, hired and temporary staff should be submitted to the Panel on an annual basis. This report should include a breakdown of revenue and capital.</p>	<p>Next report due July 2013.</p>	<b>07/13</b>
<b>06/09/12</b>	<p><b><u>Borrowing</u></b></p> <p>In considering the Financial Forecast, agreed to establish a Working Group to develop an understanding of the District Council's approach to borrowing and to identify the terms of a Panel debate.</p>	<p>Working Group to comprise Councillors L Duffy, P G Mitchell, M F Shellens and A H Williams.</p>	<p>Working Group met on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2012. The Group discussed various aspects of general approaches to borrowing and have asked for a report on a number of matters relating to the Council's borrowing. A further meeting was held on 19<sup>th</sup> December and a report on which will be produced for the Informal Meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2013.</p>	

	<u>Savings</u>			
<b>08/11/12</b>	Agreed to hold an Informal Meeting of the Panel to discuss possible suggestions for Council savings.		Meeting held on 29 <sup>th</sup> November 2012, a number of resulting issues were then presented to the Executive Leaders Strategy Group.	
<b>06/12/12</b>	Agreed to hold a further meeting in January 2012 to discuss the Capital Budget.		Meeting to be held on Wednesday 30 <sup>th</sup> January 2013 at 7pm.	



## Decision Digest

Edition 130

**Monthly summary of the decisions taken at meetings of the Council, Cabinet, Overview & Scrutiny and other Panels for the period 26th November to 21st December 2012.**

### **REVIEW OF EMPLOYEE CONSULTATION INFORMATION ARRANGEMENTS**

Following a review of arrangements for consulting and informing staff on employment and service matters and for making employment related decisions the Employment Panel has expressed its support for proposals which will streamline the way in which these matters are currently dealt with.

The new arrangements will enable the Council to:-

- ◆ reflect best practice in governance arrangements and in setting Senior Management salaries;
- ◆ avoid the unnecessary duplication of business between Forums;
- ◆ clarify the responsibilities of Managers and clearly establish how they are to be held accountable;
- ◆ enhance the role of the staff counsel.

It has also been suggested that employment related matters be delegated at some stage to the Head of the Paid Service to enable these decisions to be consulted on and ratified locally and more expediently.

The Panel has been assured that the intention to establish an Employment Scrutiny Panel will not diminish the role of Members and will

offer an opportunity both to scrutinise the way in which decisions are reached and enable policy matters to be considered in more detail. The terms and conditions of Senior Officers will continue to be the responsibility of the Senior Officers' Panel whose terms of reference will be widened to consider the salaries for starting posts at Head of Service level and above.

As it is the role of the Corporate Governance Panel to consider proposed changes to the Constitution, the Panel also has had the opportunity to consider these proposals. Whilst indicating their support for them, in principle, and raising no objection to the suggested changes to ELAG and the Senior Officers' Panel, the Panel expressed concern at the extent of the authority to be delegated to the Head of Paid Service for employment issues and was of the view that to avoid confusion with the mechanisms for scrutiny that there was no sound reason to change the name of the Employment Panel. With this in mind, the Panel deferred the proposals to their next meeting to enable the terms of reference of the new Panel to be clarified and the precise parameters of the authority to be delegated to the Head of Paid Service to be better defined.

### **EMPLOYMENT REPORT**

The Employment Panel has received a quarterly report on the Human Resource matters impacting on the

performance of the organisation. The report included the latest position and trends relating to:-

- ◆ employee numbers;
- ◆ salary costs;
- ◆ employee turnover;
- ◆ retention of new starters;
- ◆ sickness absence reporting; and
- ◆ the Human Resources caseload.

In terms of tackling sickness absence, the Panel has noted that a consistent use of return to work interviews and self-certification for all periods of absence will be introduced with effect from 1st January 2013.

A review of the Sickness Absence Policy and Procedures will be presented to the Panel's next meeting in February.

#### **QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR HR, PAYROLL AND ORGANISATIONAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SERVICES**

The Employment Panel has considered the performance of LGSS Human Resources, Payroll and Organisational Workforce Development Services across the key service measures put in place at the start of the contract.

LGSS performance will be measured in three areas, namely:-

- ◆ HR Strategic and Advisory;
- ◆ Recruitment and Payroll;
- ◆ Organisational Workforce Development.

It is the intention to agree specific targets after the first full year of operation.

Having noted that performance standards had been achieved to-date and the priorities identified for the next quarter, the Panel were pleased to note

that, overall, the transition to LGSS had largely been a success and had provided benefits that had not originally been foreseen in terms of access to wider projects and expertise within their organisation. Further reports will be provided on a quarterly basis.

#### **SAFEGUARDING**

In order to comply with recent changes in legislation, both the Cabinet and Employment Panel have endorsed the a new policy and procedures for safeguarding vulnerable people, including children from abuse.

The Policy will apply to all District Council employees and is intended to promote the safety of those using Council services whilst at the same time protect employees and Councillors from false allegations.

As further changes will be required shortly and on a regular basis, the Panel has authorised the Chief Officers' Management Team and the Lead Safeguarding Officer to make the necessary adjustments to the Policy during the period until it is next reviewed in June 2014.

The Panel has also recommended that an implementation timetable and monitoring system should be developed to indicate the progress which has been made.

#### **PAY REVIEW PROJECT**

The Panel has received an update on the progress being made by the Council's Pay Review Project. Phase 2 of the Job Evaluation work stream has now begun and 57 posts (which equates to 208 staff) within the organisation have been evaluated. Phase 3 is expected to commence in December and be completed by the end of March 2013.

As part of the Job Evaluation process, work is also being undertaken to establish 'Job Families' for business support staff. A number of staff focus groups have been arranged for this purpose and it was anticipated that the criteria for these would be approved by the Pay Review Project Board and Employment Panel in February.

The outcome of Phase 2 of the job evaluation work stream will enable work to start on the modelling of the new District Council pay structure early in the New Year, for implementation in October 2013.

### **NHS CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH: FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE REPORT**

A representative of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group attended the Overview and Scrutiny Panel's (Social Well-Being) meeting to discuss concerns relating to the financial and operational performance of Hinchingbrooke Hospital. Areas of current concern include the recent norovirus outbreak and its impact upon the availability of bed space without resulting in delays in waiting times within the Accident and Emergency Department, performance against targets for treating cancer patients and the financial deficit expected at the end of the 2012/13 financial year.

Regular reports will continue to be provided on the Hospital. Councillors S J Criswell, P Kadewere, M Oliver and R J West, together with Mr R Coxhead, were appointed to a Joint Working Group with representatives of the County Council's Cambridgeshire Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee to pursue these investigations further.

### **HUNTINGDONSHIRE CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU (CAB)**

An update was delivered to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) on recent developments relating to the CAB and the provision of advisory services in the District.

Rural Cambs CAB were announced as the successful bidders. A four day service in Huntingdon and a three day service in St Neots will be provided together with debt advisory services at both locations one day each week. Three hour outreach sessions will also be made available in Yaxley, St Neots and St Ives on a rotation basis with email, telephone and web advisory services also being provided alongside front line services.

Whilst there was concern over the process adopted to determine applications received under the new voluntary sector funding arrangements, assurances were delivered that due process was followed.

The Voluntary Sector Working Group, previously established by the Panel, will take part in regular review meetings with the successful bidder and the Executive Councillor for Healthy and Active Communities to monitor the performance of the service.

### **COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT FROM 1ST APRIL 2013**

Both the Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well Being) have considered a proposal to adopt a new local Council Tax Support scheme for the District to supersede the current national Council Tax Benefit scheme on 1st April 2013.

The impact of the scheme upon Town and Parish precepts is dependent upon a Government announcement expected on 13th December. Town and Parishes

have been advised to defer setting their precepts until this announcement is made. A report outlining the impact of this process on Town and Parish Councils will be made available to Members in February 2013.

Other matters discussed include the group's who will no longer be affected by the new scheme and the recommendation contained within the Equality Impact Assessment.

Having been reminded that the scheme was subject to consultation over the summer, the Cabinet has recommended its approval to Council.

### **POTENTIAL MERGER BETWEEN CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND SUFFOLK FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES**

Further to their last meeting, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) has endorsed the content of a response to the current consultation being undertaken on proposals for further collaboration up to a full merger between Cambridgeshire and Suffolk Fire and Rescue Services.

### **DISPOSAL OF LAND, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON**

The Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) has considered the details of an offer for the land fronting St Mary's Street in Huntingdon and whether this should be accepted by the Council.

Given that a significant upturn in the commercial property market is unlikely in the near term (planning permission for residential development has elapsed) the Panel is of the view that the Managing Director (Communities, Partnerships and Projects), after consultation with the Executive Member, should be authorised to accept an offer from the interested party. The Panel has made a

recommendation on the terms that should be negotiated and which would be acceptable.

Subsequently, the sale has been considered by the Cabinet and in noting the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel, Executive Councillors have authorised the Managing Director (Communities, Partnerships and Projects), to approve the terms for the sale of the land.

### **TREASURY MANAGEMENT – REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE: 6 MONTHLY REVIEW**

In order to fulfil its role of overseeing the management of the Council's financial investments and borrowing, the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) has reviewed the performance of the Council's Investments for the period 1st April to 30th September 2012. The Panel is of the view that the Cabinet should recommend the Council to note the contents of the report and approve the revised targets for interest rates exposure.

Subsequently the Cabinet has approved the contents of the report and the merging of the indicators.

### **UPDATE 2013/14 BUDGET & MTP**

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) has considered an update on the 2013/14 Budget and MTP. The Panel has previously held informal discussions on the Council's financial position. The Chairman has informed Members that he has advised the Cabinet of the options considered and recommendations that have been made. The Panel is reassured that the Cabinet is developing its own range of options for savings, many of which are similar to those identified by the Panel. The Panel looks forward to reviewing the Cabinet's plans in due course and

to discussing the way information is presented.

The Panel has discussed the report by the Head of Financial Services in detail. Members are generally of the view that the Council should seek to effect what savings it can make rather than run down reserves. In order to establish a complete picture, information on the savings that have been achieved to date has been requested. It is further felt that Members should be provided with ongoing monitoring data on progress against savings targets. At the same time, it is stressed that there is a need to protect services to customers.

The Panel has discussed the consequences of not pooling business rates. Further work is to be undertaken before a decision is taken for next year. If it is decided not to proceed, it will be possible to pool business rates in future years.

Members have discussed predictions for future housing completions, the procurement of energy and projected borrowing trends. A Working Group currently is looking at the Council's policies and approach to the latter. Particular emphasis has been placed on the assumptions made for the pay award and performance pay. While the view has been expressed that performance pay should only be awarded for better than expected performance and that no provision should be made for it in the budget, the Executive Councillor for Resources has indicated that there should be a performance related element in employees' pay. Attention has also been drawn to the increase in income as a result of the rise in the population level of the District.

At the conclusion of its deliberations the Panel has resolved to ask the Cabinet to examine what additional savings can be made bearing in mind the need to

maintain those services that impact on the community whilst preserving if possible the Council's reserves.

### **CHARGING FOR A SECOND GREEN BIN – CALL IN**

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) has called in the Cabinet's decision on charging for a second green bin on the grounds that their decision is "ambiguous" and "unclear" and that a formal assessment should be made of the environmental impacts of the proposals.

It was explained that the scheme will only proceed if savings cannot be identified from elsewhere within the Council. The Cabinet is currently reviewing a package of other savings measures, which will be decided upon no later than April 2013. It is for this reason that the Panel feel that the "in principle" decision to introduce charging is premature. The Panel has therefore referred the matter back to the Cabinet for further consideration, requesting the Executive to note the report and to consider the proposal to charge for collecting second green bins during its deliberations on all the Council's options for improving its financial position.

Subsequently, the Cabinet has considered the comments of the Panel and has reiterated that the proposal will be considered with all the Council's options for saving measures as part of the Medium Term Plan.

### **ROUND RESCHEDULING**

An update on round rescheduling for refuse, recycling and garden waste collection services was reported to Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being). The review intends to provide a more effective and efficient service, whilst taking into account property growth



levels within the District and providing an opportunity for the Council to reiterate some of its key waste and recycling messages to its residents. Members have welcomed the Communications Plan developed to publicise the changes which will go live on 25th February 2013.

### **CARBON MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE**

The Council's progress towards the implementation of the Carbon Management Plan was noted by the both the Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being). The Council is on target to achieve a 30% reduction in CO2 emission from the Council's estate by 2013/14. To date, a 20% reduction has been achieved. A saving of £300,000 has been realised and a further saving of £700,000 is expected to be made by 2013/14. Members have congratulated the Head of Environmental Management and his staff for the valuable contributions they have made in achieving the carbon reduction.

### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE ACT 1988 – PUBLICATION OF RURAL SETTLEMENT LIST**

A rural settlement list for Huntingdonshire, which identifies the boundary of any settlement with no more than 3,000 residents has been approved by the Cabinet. The list is used to grant rural rate relief for local services such as post offices, village shops, public houses and petrol filling stations.

### **REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S LETTINGS POLICY**

A new Lettings Policy has been endorsed by the Cabinet. The Policy is a requirement of the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Localism Act 2011 and sets out how the Council, in partnership

with Registered Providers will allocate their properties through the "Home Link Choice Based Lettings Scheme".

### **THE TECHNICAL REFORM OF COUNCIL TAX**

The Cabinet has received an update on the Government's proposals to reform Council Tax from 1st April 2013 which will enable the Council to use certain discretionary powers.

Executive Councillors have reviewed proposals for a number of changes to Council Tax discounts and exemptions, which will generate extra income for the Council and will be used to reduce the impact on the Council of forthcoming changes to Council Tax Support. Having authorised the Head of Customer Services to calculate and award discounts under the Scheme, the Cabinet has agreed to the following changes to the Council Tax Policy:-

- unoccupied and unfurnished (Class C) properties be granted 100% discount for 1 month and then 0% thereafter;
- second home discount be reduced to 0%;
- uninhabitable properties (Class A) be granted 100% discount for a maximum of 12 months;
- empty homes premium be levied after two years at 50% in addition to the 100% charge currently made;
- monthly instalments continue to be due on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of each month but Managers be permitted to include an additional late instalment

date purely as an incentive for those opting to pay by direct debit.

### RISK MANAGEMENT

The Cabinet has approved the actions proposed to deal with an emerging risk relating to affordable housing and homelessness.

The Corporate Governance Panel has undertaken its annual review of the Risk Management Strategy and has concluded that the authority has robust risk management policies in place to support the Council's annual governance and statutory reporting processes. The Panel is also satisfied that there should be no change to the Council's risk appetite either in general terms or in respect of health & safety.

### CORPORATE BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLANNING – ANNUAL REPORT 2012

The Corporate Governance Panel has considered progress made towards the preparation of a new Business Continuity Plan and Business Continuity Management System and has been assured that the arrangements now in place are sufficiently robust to enable the Council to respond to 'notable' incidents should they occur. More importantly there is now sufficient momentum in the process to ensure that the Plan continues to evolve and improve over time. The Panel will continue to monitor the arrangements and will receive the next report on progress in 12 months time.

### FRAUD INVESTIGATION

A report on the activities of the Fraud Team, the potential for fraud across the Council's service and the planned response to risk particularly following the introduction of a Single Fraud

Investigation Service (SFIS) in 2015 has been considered by the Corporate Governance Panel. Given the potential income which could be derived, the Panel has agreed with a suggestion that new work streams should be developed to uncover fraudulent activity and non welfare fraud areas further investigated. This additional workload will be managed by transferring a proportion of the welfare fraud tasks to the Department of Work & Pensions from 2013 and allow the Team to take advantage of Government funding which is available at the moment to develop a new Fraud Service. Given the importance of this work, the Panel has asked that their Fraud Working Group should continue to meet and report regularly to the Panel.

### REVIEW OF HOUSING BENEFIT FRAUD INVESTIGATION ACTIVITY & THE COUNCIL'S WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Having conducted its annual review of the Whistleblowing Policy, the Corporate Governance Panel has concluded that no changes are required to either the policy or guidance. However, the Panel considered it essential to continue to publicise, cost effectively, the opportunity that existed to report, without fear, any potential fraud or act which might endanger health and safety or mistreatment or abuse of customers. Having also received a report on the work undertaken by the Benefits Fraud Investigation Team in 2011/12, the Panel thought that the subject would be of interest to all Members and therefore requested that arrangements be made for a Seminar on the subject in the new year.

### FINAL AUDITORS REPORTS ON THE 2011/12 ACCOUNTS AND ANNUAL AUDIT LETTERS 2010/11 AND 2011/12

The report of the Auditor on the 2011/12 statement of accounts and the content of an Action Plan dealing with recommendations arising there from has been approved by the Corporate Governance Panel. Most of the actions required are routine but the two particular items drawn to the Panel's attention relating to the valuation of inventories and provision for bad debt should not prevent closure of the 2012/13 accounts to the required timescale. The Panel also received the Annual Audit letters from the Council's external auditors for the 2010/11 and 2011/12 audits.

### **PROVIDING ASSURANCE FOR THE ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT**

The Corporate Governance Panel has indicated its support for the introduction of an assurance mapping process which will act as a framework against which the Panel can check whether internal controls are operating effectively and objectives set are being achieved. The assurance map will plan for and receive assurance on key areas over the year. The Annual Governance Statement will also be simplified to try and make it a more meaningful document for both Members and the public.

### **INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE AND PLANNING**

The content of both the internal audit computer plan for the period to March 2014 and amendments to the general audit plan (relating to the 2010/11 final accounts process, redevelopment of One Leisure, St Ives and investigations involving employees) have been noted by the Corporate Governance Panel prior to their approval by the Managing Director (Resources).

### **TRAINING FOR CORPORATE GOVERNANCE PANEL**

In their review of the programme of their activities in 2013, the Corporate Governance Panel has expressed concern that there is insufficient meeting time to be able to give the necessary attention to the workload envisaged. The Panel requested that two extra dates be included in the 2013/14 calendar of meetings for this purpose but with the proviso that these may be cancelled should it transpire that the meetings are not required.

### **LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY TO WIND TURBINE DEVELOPMENT – DRAFT REVISION TO WIND POWER SPD 2006**

As part of the consultation process, the Development Management Panel has had the opportunity to consider the draft revision to the Wind Power SPD which was first adopted in February 2006. Given the various views held by Panel Members, all were encouraged to make individual representations to respond to the consultation. Notwithstanding, the Panel indicated their support for the issue of the draft SPD for consultation, accepted that it required updating and indicated their intention to work with the new SPD when it emerged.

At the same meeting, the Panel indicated that they would have been minded to refuse an application for the erection of three wind turbines and associated development on land north west of Church Farm, Rectory Lane, Southoe. The final decision on this application will be made by an Inspector following an appeal against non determination by the applicant.

Fifteen applications were approved and three refused by the Panel at the same meeting.