

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4

Minutes of a meeting of the Personnel and Corporate Services Committee held in the Council Chamber, The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely on Thursday 7 February 2013 at 4.30pm

PRESENT

Councillor David Ambrose Smith (as the Substitute Member for
Councillor James Palmer)

Councillor Sue Austen
Councillor Will Burton
Councillor Jeremy Friend-Smith
Councillor Richard Hobbs
Councillor Tom Hunt
Councillor John Palmer (part)
Councillor Charles Roberts (Chairman)
Councillor Joshua Schumann
Councillor Sue Willows
Councillor Pauline Wilson

APOLOGIES

Councillor James Palmer

IN ATTENDANCE

Kathy Batey – Head of HR & Facilities Management
Andrew Killington – Deputy Chief Executive
John Tanswell – Principal Environmental Health Officer
Melanie Sage – Democratic Services Officer
Annette Wade – Head of ICT and Customer Services (until end
of Minute No. 33.b)

29. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions received.

30. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of Interest were received.

31. MINUTES

It was resolved:

That the Minutes of the Personnel and Corporate Services Committee meeting held on 22 November 2012 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

32. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman made the following announcements:

- There had been a change to the membership of the Personnel and Corporate Services Committee. Cllr Hazel Williams MBE had replaced Cllr Gareth Wilson as a substitute Member on the Committee.
- The dates of future Personnel and Corporate Services Committee meetings had been amended as follows:
 - 11 April 2013 now 7 May 2013.
 - 4 July 2013 meeting cancelled.
 - 24 September 2013 now 12 September 2013.
 - 28 November 2013 now 5 December 2013.

33.a **SERVICE PRESENTATION: CUSTOMER SERVICES**

The Personnel and Corporate Services Committee received a Service Profile presentation on Customer Services from the Head of ICT and Customer Services. A summary of the presentation is as follows:

- Purpose of Customer Services, as detailed in the Service Plan, was to *'place the citizen at the heart of the Council's service provision and deliver services which are efficient, effective, equitable and empowering'*.
- Customer Services supports the Council's Corporate Objective 1 – *'to run an efficient and effective Council to deliver best value for its residents'*.
- An illustration of the Customer Services staffing structure was presented. Currently there were 4 full-time Customer Service Advisors, 4 part-time Customer Service Advisors and 2 Customer Service Advisor Apprentice positions, as well as a Team Leader Customer Services and a Customer Services Liaison Officer, both of whom reported to the Head of ICT and Customer Services.
- It was noted that when the Head of ICT and Customer Services became responsible for the service area that a number of Advisors were working a variety of hours which often resulted in a skeleton staff at the busiest times. Therefore when vacancies had occurred the Head of ICT and Customer Services had used the opportunity to restructure the hours to provide improved resilience at busy times and also to provide two apprentice opportunities within the team.
- The Team Leader Customer Services was responsible for the day to day operation of the service and line manager of the Customer Service Advisors.
- The Customer Services Liaison Officer provided cover in the absence of the Team Leader Customer Services, was the interface between the front and back office services and developed scripts

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that enabled the Customer Services staff to either resolve calls at the first point or take the information required so that when calls were passed on to a respective officer they had the information required to assist or resolve an issue more efficiently and quickly.

- Historically the service was only a switchboard and signposting service and Veolia provided a separate first point of contact for all telephone calls regarding waste and recycling.
- Subsequently there was a requirement by Government and capital funding made available to transform the service into a professional Customer Services function, underpinned by a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. In 2008 the function was extended to include Veolia related calls.
- Feedback from Veolia was that they had very few calls and service failures. However, the Council were receiving complaints that contradicted this. Once the CRM function was extended to include calls regarding waste and recycling the Council was then able to establish an audit trail. The Council continues to take in excess of 8,000 waste and recycling Veolia related calls year-on-year. In 2012, 4,500 calls related to missed collection and bags not left; 1,088 calls related to a request of a black box; 800 calls were new customer enquiries and 900 calls related to bulky collections.
- Customer Services:
 - Provides a front line service for all Council Services;
 - Provides a single point of contact for all enquiries (telephone, face-to-face and email);
 - With the use of scripting, resolves as many enquiries at the first point of contact;
 - Manages the interface between enquiries which are escalated to other departments and or partners for fulfilment;
 - Takes and processes telephone and face-to-face payments;
 - Promotes the use of self service and cost efficient channels such as the internet and on line services via the web;
 - Shares a front of house reception service with Sanctuary Housing and Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP), providing a 'one-stop shop' for Housing enquiries;
- Provides administrative support service for other functions e.g. Building Control, Waste and Recycling, Human Resource and Tell Us Once, distribution of Asbestos bags for Cambridgeshire County Council, notification of deaths - to ensure this information is disseminated to all relevant services to avoid future upset or unnecessary administration for those coping with their bereavement.
- The Customer Services budget for 2011/2012 and 2012/2013 was presented which was divided between employees; headsets, uniforms, sundry items; lease car contributions
- The Customer Services budget detailing the income received from Veolia for dealing with Customer service enquiries; Sanctuary Hereward Front of House and Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) for the contribution for shared Front of House was presented.

- The Customer Services key partners were all Council Members, departments and staff; Cambridgeshire County Council; ARP; Sanctuary Housing and Veolia.
- The key performance indicators for the service were:
 - To open a shared front of house providing a 'one-stop shop' for customers of the Council, ARP and Sanctuary Housing;
 - 96% of calls to 01353 665555 to be answered before being abandoned;
 - To increase year-on-year the number of enquiries resolved at the first point of contact;
 - To increase year-on-year, the number of enquiries resolved electronically i.e. on line or by other forms of self service.
- The new shared front of house providing a 'one-stop shop' for customers of the Council, ARP and Sanctuary Housing opened on 9 May 2012. The feedback from staff, partners and customers had generally been positive.
- During 2011/2012 the number of telephone calls handled by the Customer Service team was 78,204, the number of visitors to The Grange was 25,442 and the number of Self Service Cases Received was 3,433.
- In 2012 the total number of calls logged on the CRM System was 68,249. The Customer Service team resolved 33,830 (49.5%) calls at the first point of contact. 92.8 % of calls to 01353 665555 were answered before being abandoned and 3,725 calls/transactions logged by customers using the website/self service portal.
- It was noted that 49.5% did not provide a true picture in terms of how well the service performed, as a large number of calls could never be resolved at the first point of contact i.e. missed collections or Planning or Housing enquiries, as these tended to be for specialist advice.
- The actual target of calls to 01353 665555 to be answered before being abandoned was 96% and had not been achieved in 2012 which was mainly due to a particularly high level of staff sickness in 2012. Customer services are a front line service so staff were susceptible to illness as they came into contact with the public on a regular basis. The recent staff restructuring and inclusion of 2 full-time apprentices would provide additional resilience, and work with Human Resources and the staff was being undertaken to improve the situation.
- The Head of ICT and Customer Services was aware that more work was required to increase self service transactions.
- In 2012, 68,249 calls were logged in the CRM system and assigned as follows:
 - 27,706 (41%) – Customer Services
 - 11,834 (17.3%) – Waste and Recycling
 - 10,795 (16%) – Development Services
 - 5,654 (8.3%) – Housing
 - 4,277 (6.3%) – Environmental Health
 - 2,365 (3.5%) - Business, Communities , Sports and Leisure
 - 1,905 (2.8%) - Legal and Democratic Services

- 1,409 (2%) – Licensing
- 1,135 (1.7%) – Human Resources & ICT
- 764 (1.1%) - Facilities
- 261 (0.03%) – Finance
- 144 (0.02%) – Chief Exec and Press
- The risks to the Customer Services function were:
 - Lack of Customer Service Advisors due to unplanned leave/peaks in call volumes due to planned or unplanned service issues.
 - Electrical or System failure.
 - Verbal or physical abuse
 - Inaccurate information within the knowledge base/CRM scripting.
- In the short term, to reduce these risks, the Team Leader Customer Services and a Customer Services Liaison Officer offered additional assistance, or additional hours were offered to part-time staff. In the longer term, local agency staff were recruited. This had proved successful as agency staff were used to moving from job-to-job; were not phased by change and tended to pick things up quickly.
- Customer Services were connected to an un-interruptible power supply so could continue to work as normal in the event of a power cut.
- In the event of problems with the telephone system, Customer Services has 5 direct telephone lines that could be used. The telephone message was changed to publicise the new temporary numbers as well as publication of the number via the Council's website until normal service was resumed.
- A manual recording system was in place in the event of a CRM system outage.
- A system was in place to deal with verbal or physical abuse. With the redevelopment of the reception area staff were no longer in the reception by themselves and felt less vulnerable. All of the CRM staff had received training on how to deal with difficult customers. Notices were displayed in the reception advising that unacceptable behaviour would not be tolerated. If customers continued to behave inappropriately they are asked to leave. If they did not leave on their own accord, the Police were called to evict them from the premises. This was followed by a letter from either the Head of ICT and Customer Services or the Deputy Chief Executive advising that should another incidence of unacceptable behaviour occur it would result in the person being banned from the building.
- The role of the Customer Services Liaison Officer was to enforce the need for service areas to take ownership of their data contained within the scripts and the need for the scripts to be continuously maintained and developed as Customer Services were continually using this information to inform customers.
- The key areas of future work for the Customer Services team were listed, which included the introduction of Wheelie bins, Welfare reform and Localised Council Tax Support, Individual Electoral Registration, introduction of car parking charges (if approved).

Customer Services would be working with all of the services involved to develop scripts to enable the Customer Service Advisors to resolve as many calls at first point of contact.

Following the conclusion of the presentation, Members asked questions/made statements and a summary of the discussions and officer responses are as follows:

- Persons had been appointed to the 2 Apprentice Customer Advisor posts. One person was already in-post and references were awaited for the other post. The posts were for a 2 year period, during which time if a vacancy arose the Apprentice could apply to the position.
- Cllr Hobbs was appalled at the level of calls relating to waste and recycling and enquired of the process for logging missed collections. It was explained that when a call was received relating to a missed collection, Customer Services Advisors initially followed a script to ascertain certain information such as, was the refuse/recycling outside the premises for collection by a specified time, where incorrect items placed in the receptacle etc. If the questions were answered satisfactorily the missed collection was reported to Veolia who should collect the refuse/recycling by the end of the next working day. The Head of ICT and Customer Services provided Veolia with a report of waste/recycling related complaints each week.
- Pleased to note that the key performance indicators were either being achieved or were close to being achieved. The four computers in the reception area were self service kiosks where payments could be made. However, some people did not use them as they liked to have a receipt which was a facility that was not currently available with the self service kiosks.
- The Council had only recently employed agency staff due to a shortage of Customer Service Advisors. The decision to do this had been carefully considered as agency staff were more expensive and was also undertaken with some trepidation. However, agency staff had generally worked well as they were used to change. The Deputy Chief Executive noted that the use of agency staff had been possible as the budget was available from existing vacancies.
- The CRM system incorporated a call counter function that could log nuisance calls.
- The self service kiosks were used mainly for the planning portal and to view properties available via Homelink. More work was required to promote the self service kiosks.
- During times of staff shortage additional hours were sometimes offered to the part-time Customer Service Advisors. Payment was in the form of overtime or time off in lieu. However, time off in lieu could only be taken if it was convenient to both parties.

- In 2012, of the 68,249 calls logged on the CRM system, 8.3% related to housing. It was noted that this related to the Council's housing service and not Sanctuary Housing calls.
- Enquired of the action being taken to reduce the number of calls being abandoned to 01353 665555. It was explained that in addition to the staff sickness levels impacting on this, the CRM system was no longer fit for purpose. It took Customer Service Advisors a long time to record details and to close down screens in order to pass the case to the relevant officer. The system was also not efficient at allowing users to look at different screens.
- It was hoped that now there was an evidence trail of Veolia related calls that penalties could be imposed on them. Cllr Hobbs noted that this would be useful information for when reviewing future contracts.

It was resolved:

That Members note the content of the report and the presentation.

33.b CUSTOMER SERVICES REVIEW – CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Personnel and Corporate Services Committee received a report, (M241), for Members to consider the draft Customer Services Final report and Improvement Plan.

The Deputy Chief Executive explained that the purpose of the review was to implement a 'one-stop shop' front of house service with Sanctuary Housing and ARP which had since been opened. The review identified four key work areas for investigation: Strategy; Staffing; Performance and ICT system. The Deputy Chief Executive noted that some improvements would require business cases due to having budget implications and others would require dialogue between staff and partner agencies.

The Head of ICT and Customer Services provided a summary of the four key work areas identified via the Customer Services Review:

- Strategy - The implementation of a new shared front of house 'one-stop shop' for customers of the Council, ARP and Sanctuary Housing, was opened on 9 May 2012.
- Staffing – Stage 1 - Improvements to the management structure in order to better match the arrangements used within other departments as there was a tier missing between the Head of ICT and Customer Services post and Team Leader Customer Services post.
- Stage 2 - Currently the public might have to queue whilst waiting to speak to a Customer Service Advisor, ARP or Sanctuary Housing, and there might be no queue to speak to any of the other partner agencies, which was frustrating for the public. Therefore it was necessary to explore opportunities for merging the front of house

staffing structure into one organisation to improve performance, reduce management costs and bureaucracy.

- The working hours of the Customer Service Advisors and the full-time/part-time mix against customer interactions (phone/face-to-face) should be analysed to enable best fit between volume of customer activity and staffing resources.
- To explore opportunities with other departments to improve front-line face-to-face interactions.
- Promote self service channels to raise customer awareness of the online services that are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and the self serve facilities available in the new reception area.
- Performance - Stage 1 – To identify relevant customer service standards including from the set of National e-Service delivery standards and work with partner organisations and internal departments to agree a core set of standards and measures.
- Stage 2 – To implement these across the front of house (District Council, Sanctuary, ARP) as well as other internal departments.
- To develop an effective process of measuring customer satisfaction to enable an understanding of the issues or key drivers.
- To measure avoidable contact, where both public and businesses fail to get useful value from time spent contacting the Council. By identifying customer contact that is 'avoidable' the Council is better placed to resolve customer issues at first point of contact and to re-design how services and information are made more accessible to the customer.
- The existing Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software had been obtained free of charge. However, the software was not fit for purpose. The system required double entry of data as it could not be integrated with other software and it did not have the facility to easily provide essential performance and management information. The system could generate reports. However, this had to be done first thing in the morning before anyone accessed the system. Therefore the Review recommended that a replacement system for CRM was sought and that it be integrated with Council's core back office systems to avoid double entry and to generate capacity in the front and back office. This would then allow CRM Advisors to be more readily available to offer assistance in reception. It was noted that the replacement system for the current CRM system would be funded via the ICT capital programme which was funded by Improvement East.

Cllr P Wilson stated that it was frustrating when calling an organisation to have to explain your problem twice or more. Cllr Wilson enquired whether the public experienced this when calling the Council. The Head of ICT and Customer Services explained that the CRM software hopefully prevented this from happening as details of the call were logged onto the system and sent to the relevant officer if the call needed to be referred for resolution.

In response to a question, for the purposes of clarification, the Head of ICT and Customer Services explained that the front office function referred to CRM and the back office function referred to all other service areas.

Cllr Schumann noted that the number of calls abandoned before being answered could be positive as the caller may have abandoned the call as a result of listening to the recorded message which directed the caller to an online service via the Council's website. Cllr Schumann suggested that any new replacement system should have the facility to be able to monitor the abandoned calls.

In response to questions from Cllr Friend-Smith, the Head of ICT and Customer Services explained that the CRM system was bundled free of charge with the Council's e-forms software six years ago. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that the Council had now exhausted the system. The Head of ICT and Customer Services explained that currently it was difficult to produce reports from the CRM system and the new replacement system would need to be able to provide the facility for regular management performance reports.

Cllr Ambrose Smith enquired whether the new replacement CRM system could also be of benefit to Parish and Town Councils. The Head of ICT and Customer Services agreed that in the future it might be possible to provide notification to Parish and Town Councils and to District Councillors of issues relevant to their ward.

Cllr Hobbs suggested a further improvement be that the 'on-hold' and 'transfer' music used on the Council's call system be reviewed.

The Chairman thanked the Head of ICT and Customer Services, the Deputy Chief Executive and Cllr Willows for the review.

It was resolved:

That the Personnel and Corporate Services Committee agrees the draft improvement plan.

34. REVISED HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

The Personnel and Corporate Services Committee received a report, (M236), for Members to agree and adopt the Council's revised Health and Safety Policy.

The Head of HR & Facilities Management explained that any company with 5 or more staff was required to abide by the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The Council's Health and Safety Policy linked to the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and set out how the Council managed its health and safety arrangements in the workplace to eliminate or control health and safety risks.

The Health and Safety Policy had been reviewed by the Health and Safety Advisor and the Health and Safety Working Group and had been updated to include more detail on the reporting and investigation of accidents and incidents in the workplace and to reflect recent changes to health and safety legislation such as Reporting of Injuries, Disease and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) and Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012.

An audit of health and safety arrangements was conducted in July 2011 by the Internal Audit team to ensure that the Council was complying with its legal obligations regarding the health and safety of its employees. The audit identified and tested controls within a number of areas including a review of the Council's policies and procedures. The audit report found controls around health and safety to be operating satisfactorily and concluded that significant assurance could be given to the arrangements in place.

The Head of HR & Facilities Management explained that the proposed amendments to the revised Health and Safety Policy were highlighted throughout the document, with one exception. Within the policy document one of the areas of responsibility listed for the Health and Safety Working Group was to review the introduction of any new work processes, types of work, ways of working and equipment that might substantially affect health and safety of individuals at work. Unison had suggested that this should also be listed as a responsibility for the Health and Safety Advisor. The Head of HR & Facilities Management noted that this amendment had since been incorporated into the revised Health and Safety Policy.

Cllr Hunt enquired as to the extent that the Council were able to develop its own health and safety policies, whether there was an opportunity for Member debate on these or whether the policies were all statutory documents. The Head of HR & Facilities Management explained that the Council's Health and Safety Policy was the overarching document that took account of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. There were various other policies documents that, when revised, Members could offer input, for instance the Violence at Work Policy document that was due to be reviewed shortly.

In response to a question by Cllr Friend-Smith, it was explained that the Council's Driving for Work Policy and Driver Handbook provided advice and guidance on work-related road safety and information to staff who drive for work, to promote safe driving practices.

Cllr Burton stated that with all health and safety documents it was important for people to remember that they were personally responsible for their own safety.

Cllr Ambrose Smith suggested that an annexe to the Council's Health and Safety Policy would be useful which listed all of the Council's health and safety documents.

Cllr Hunt suggested that it would be useful to engage Members in a debate to gauge their views of health and safety, and to avoid giving the issue more importance than was necessary. The Deputy Chief Executive agreed that health and safety policy documents should not be created without a valid reason. However, with an increase in a compensation culture (as an example the Council had previously been sued when someone had fallen down some stairs) and to assist in the prevention of increased staff absentee levels due to sickness, it was necessary to develop certain health and safety policy documents, for instance, the manual handling policy.

Cllr Burton suggested that as there was a Driving for Work Policy and Driver Handbook there should also be a Cycling to/for Work Policy.

At 5.28pm, due to a lighting failure, the meeting was unexpectedly adjourned.

During the adjournment Cllr John Palmer left the Council Chamber and did not return to the meeting.

At 5.34pm the meeting was resumed.

Cllr Hobbs commended officers as the document was easy to understand and suggested that a further document was necessary to encompass using the stairs.

It was resolved:

That the Personnel and Corporate Services Committee adopts the Council's revised Health and Safety Policy, attached as Appendix 1 of the officer's report, with immediate effect following the end of the consultation period with the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC), including the amendment suggested by Unison that had subsequently been incorporated into the document, as advised at the meeting.

35. REPORT ON FREEDOM OF INFORMATION/ ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION REGULATION SCHEME AND REQUEST DATA: VOLUME/TIME TAKEN AND COMPLIANCE (& RELATED ISSUES)

In the absence of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services/Monitoring Officer, the Deputy Chief Executive presented an annual update report to the Personnel and Corporate Services Committee, (M237), to inform Members on the Freedom of Information (FOIA) 2000/Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR) request data: volume/ time taken/compliance and an update on related data access developments on landcharges and the Central Government Transparency Agenda.

During the monitoring period - 1 October 2011 to 31 December 2012 - officers answering requests had recorded 757 hours, in comparison to the previous sequential years of 440 hours, 324.40 hours and 145.16 hours. FOIA/EIR administration/coordination had recorded around 445 hours in comparison to the previous year of 356.25 hours.

The volume of FOIA and EIR requests were on the increase, as detailed in paragraph 3.6 of the officer's report, and as a result so was the resourcing and administrative burden to the authority.

Under the FOIA/EIR handling procedure, requests for information should be submitted to the administration team, logged and then allocated by the Head of Service. This allowed for the FOIA/EIR administration team to monitor and remind officers of the due date for response. This process continued to work well, and for the monitoring period 1 October 2011 to 31 December 2012 all but 2 of the 1069 requests were dealt with within the required 20 working days, representing a 99.81% compliance rate. The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) could name and shame those Councils that did not comply with the 20 day deadline. However, there were no complaints submitted to the ICO as a result of the 2 late responses.

The Local Authorities (Charges for Property Searches) Regulations 2008 came into force on the 23 December 2008, which meant that new search fees had to be set for access to property data on a time costed basis and most recently charged at £66.

Following on from the fee changes, several complaints were made to the ICO (against other Local Authorities); in respect of the charging regime for property data and claims from the private sector that this data should be freely available via EIR. Judicial Review proceedings were issued against York City Council by one of the search companies regarding a refusal to provide free access. Whilst the Judge in that case found that a local authority was not obliged to allow free open access to all of its unrefined property information, search companies continued to request free access under EIR.

In August 2010, the Government issued Rules revoking the fee for Personal Searches and since that date Personal Search requests have to be dealt with as EIR requests.

In early 2011, Solicitors issued proceedings against a number of Suffolk authorities and the Government for restitution of the personal search fees income (reclaiming monies paid since January 2005), on the basis that this was contrary to the European Directive on access to environmental information.

In July 2011, another firm of solicitors representing approximately 150 Personal Search companies, threatened and then issued proceedings against all the Local Authorities in England and Wales regarding alleged unlawful charges and damages for breach of the Competition Act 1998 - the cases are still ongoing.

If the final outcome is that all such information has to be provided under EIR, then there will clearly be an impact on time, administration and the Council's budget. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that in the last 4 years the Council had received £75,000 income from Personal Search fees

and that £35,000 had been retained separately whilst awaiting the outcome of court proceedings. A judgement was expected this year, which if contested could delay the decision by a further 12 months. The Deputy Chief Executive thought that the Council was no longer charging for Personal Searches.

The Land Registry was currently seeking to establish a Local Land Charge search service – with talk of a prototype being piloted this year. If this was successful, the Land Registry would seek the transfer of the service and information from local authorities (for free) from 2014-2017.

In response to a question the Deputy Chief Executive explained that the Local Government Association had advised the Council to cease charging for Personal Search fees, which the Council had complied with.

Cllr Wilson stated that the report was very comprehensive and requested a breakdown of the subject matter of the FOI/EIR requests. The Deputy Chief Executive suggested that this be incorporated into future annual update reports. The Chairman agreed, but also requested that this information be circulated to Members via email by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services/Monitoring Officer.

Cllr Burton enquired of the process for dealing with repeat requests for the same information. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that if the request was from the same person/company then the response directed them to the previous response. However, if the request was from a different person/organisation then the address details were amended and the information re-used. The Deputy Chief Executive noted that a significant number of FOIA/EIR requests were from companies for marketing purposes or to find out when contracts were due for renewal in order that they might tender.

It was enquired whether other authorities were no longer charging Personal Search fees, as the Council was now losing out on revenue. The Deputy Chief Executive would ask the Head of Legal and Democratic Services/Monitoring Officer to provide a response as to the position taken by other authorities. However, as the Local Government Association had advised the Council to cease charging for Personal Search fees, it was likely to be a significant concern that court proceedings against local authorities would be successful.

In response to a question, the Deputy Chief Executive explained that if court proceedings were successful the Council could potentially have to reimburse all Personal Search fees as well as compensation for damages for breach of competition.

It was resolved:

That the Personnel and Corporate Services Committee notes the contents of the report, and requests a further annual update on or around February 2014.

36. BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2012/2013

In the absence of the Head of Finance, the Deputy Chief Executive presented a report to the Personnel and Corporate Services Committee, (M238), to update Members on the Council's current financial position for 2012/13, based on the reporting period to the end of December 2012. The report covered both the Council's projected revenue and capital expenditure.

The Deputy Chief Executive commended his colleagues as the Heads of Service budget review had identified savings of £56,395 for this committee.

The Deputy Chief Executive referred Members to Appendix 1 of the officer's report regarding £143,400 listed within the 'Provisions' budget and he explained that this was an accounting correction that had been transferred from one reserve fund to another reserve fund. The Deputy Chief Executive had requested greater clarity in the future.

The Personnel and Corporate Services Committee were requested to note that since the last report, a projected under spend of £162,593 has been identified, giving an overall under spend across the Committee's services of £337,584 against the original budget to date.

Cllr Hunt stated that he did not fully understand the information contained within the budget report. The Chairman suggested that further notes to support the budget were required to provide more information. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that the Head of Finance had offered to repeat the information sessions that she had previously delivered to Members on the budget. The Personnel and Corporate Services Committee agreed that this was a good idea and requested that she deliver this session to the entire Committee.

Cllr Friend-Smith noted that the report was a public document which detailed a significant underspend in the budget, yet it was proposed to increase the Council Tax. It was therefore difficult for Members to justify this increase.

The Chairman noted that the Head of Finance was often relied upon and enquired whether there was sufficient resilience within the Finance team. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that the Head of Finance was supported by the Principal Accountant and that it was unusual for neither to be available to attend the meeting.

It was suggested that the format of the report might need to be amended as the same style of report was presented to each committee.

It was resolved:

- i. That the Personnel and Corporate Services Committee notes that since the last report, a projected under spend of £162,593 has

been identified, giving an overall under spend across the Committee's services of £337,584 against the original budget to date.

- ii. That the Head of Finance deliver an information session to the Personnel and Corporate Services Committee on 'Improving the Understanding of the Committee's Budget'.

37. ANGLIA REVENUES AND BENEFITS PARTNERSHIP JOINT COMMITTEE MINUTES

The Personnel and Corporate Services Committee received the minutes of the Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership (ARP) Joint Committee meeting held on 13 December 2012.

The Deputy Chief Executive explained that ARP was in the process of reviewing its service delivery model. Currently two business cases were being prepared for a model that would be owned by constituted partners of ARP and therefore avoid the need for a tendering process. The other model was a Managing Authority Model whereby one partner authority would employ all staff. The outcome of progress with the business cases would be presented to the next ARP Joint Committee meeting in March 2013.

It was resolved:

That the minutes of the Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership Joint Committee meeting held on 13 December 2012 be received and noted.

38. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS & PUBLIC

It was resolved:

That the press and public be excluded during the consideration of the remaining agenda item no. 12 - 15 because it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during the items there would be disclosure to them of exempt information of Categories 1 - 4 of Part I Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

39. HOME IMPROVEMENT AGENCY SERVICES

The Personnel and Corporate Services Committee received a report, (M239), for Members to note the update on the provision of Home Improvement Agency (HIA) Services.

It was explained that a review of the provision of HIA services for East Cambridgeshire District Council was triggered following notification from Care and Repair East Cambridgeshire Ltd that due to organisational and financial

pressures the viability of their independent HIA was coming to an end and the agency would be looking to cease its operation from March 2013.

The Development and Transport Committee agreed the terms of reference for the review which considered options available to the Council for the continuation of the Service. The Scrutiny Committee considered and agreed the draft implementation plan and Development and Transport Committee at its meeting on 20 November 2012 resolved to agree the draft implementation plan.

Member asked various questions on the future provision of HIA Service for the district, which was responded to by the Principal Environmental Health Officer.

It was resolved:

That the Personnel and Corporate Services Committee notes the update on the provision of Home Improvement Agency Services and the recommendation as contained within the exempt report. An update report would be presented to Development and Transport Committee and Personnel and Corporate Services Committee in December 2013.

40. HR, IIP AND EQUALITIES UPDATE

The Head of HR and Facilities Management presented a report to the Personnel and Corporate Services Committee, (M240), to provide Members with key management information for the period 1 November – 31 December 2012 relating to:

- Appointments, Transfers and Resignations;
- Exit Interview Responses
- Investors in People (IIP); and
- Equalities

The Head of HR and Facilities Management noted that this report was usually presented in open session. However, in the past it had not always been appropriate for Members to ask certain questions, nor for officers to respond to certain questions within open session. Therefore it had been decided to present the report in exempt session. The Personnel and Corporate Services Committee were asked to consider whether it was appropriate to continue to receive these reports in exempt session.

Appendix 1 of the officer's report detailed the employees that had commenced, transferred or terminated employment with the authority from 1 November – 31 December 2012. During this period there were 6 appointments, 8 leavers and 2 employees transferred to other posts across the Council.

4 members of staff who left the Council's employment resigned voluntarily, 1 applied for voluntary redundancy, 1 was dismissed on ill-health grounds and 2 left due to the end of a fixed term contract. This equated to 4.1% of the total workforce. The turnover for the same period during 2011/12 was 0.5% (1 member of staff).

Only 2 of the 8 members of staff who left the Council's employment completed an exit interview questionnaire.

The Council had successfully achieved IIP re-accreditation in December 2011 and a copy of the final assessment report was circulated to Members at a previous Personnel and Corporate Services Committee meeting. The report had since been compared to the results of the 2012 Staff Survey and would shortly be shared with the Council's IIP Group, who would devise an action plan to ensure that where agreed, appropriate action was taken to improve the Council's performance.

The Management Team had recently received the results of the 2012 Staff Survey. The participation rate was lower than expected and it was agreed that as a pilot, a Head of Service would discuss the key findings within their team. The feedback from this exercise proved positive and it was agreed that all Heads of Service would repeat this exercise at their respective team meetings in order to provide all staff with a further opportunity to comment. Each Head of Service had been asked to feedback comments to the Head of HR and Facilities Management to collate and present to the Council's IIP Working Group.

The Personnel and Corporate Services Committee unanimously agreed that all future HR, IIP and Equalities Update Reports should be presented in exempt session.

The Chairman requested that when the Council's IIP Working Group received the results of the Staff Survey that they be provided with the full comments made by staff.

Cllr Hobbs enquired whether members of staff were aware when completing an exit interview of how the information would be used. The Head of HR and Facilities Management confirmed that members of staff were notified that a copy of the exit interview responses would be submitted to their line manager and a summary presented to the Personnel and Corporate Services Committee. Staff could also request that their responses to the exit interview questionnaire remained confidential. The Head of HR and Facilities Management further noted that the comments from the exit interviews were presented to Management Team in the quarterly Management Team bulletin.

A response was provided to a question relating to responses to the exit questionnaire.

It was resolved:

That the content of the report be noted and that the report continue to be presented in exempt session.

41. EXEMPT MINUTES

It was resolved:

That the exempt Minutes of the meeting of the Personnel and Corporate Services Committee meeting held on 22 November 2012 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

42. EXEMPT JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE NOTES

The Sub-Committee received the notes of the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) meetings held on 29 November 2012 and 10 January 2013.

The Deputy Chief Executive provided an update on a matter that was discussed at the Joint Consultative Committee meeting on 10 January 2013.

It was resolved:

That the notes of the Joint Consultative Committee meetings held on 29 November 2012 and 10 January 2013 be noted.

The meeting concluded at 6.36pm.