

Northampton Borough Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 - Improvement, Performance and Finance



NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Please find enclosed the agenda and supporting papers for Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 - Improvement, Performance and Finance

Date: **Thursday, 13 May 2010**

Time: **6:00 pm**

Place: **Guildhall - Holding Room**

If you need any advice or information regarding this agenda please phone Tracy Tiff, Overview and Scrutiny Officer, telephone 01604 837408 email ttiff@northampton.gov.uk who will be able to assist with your enquiry. For Further information regarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 - Improvement, Performance and Finance please visit the website <http://www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny>.

Members of the Committee

Chair	Councillor Jamie Lane
Vice-Chair	Councillor David Garlick
Committee Members	Councillor Scott Collins Councillor Keith Davies Councillor Brendan Glynane Councillor Matthew Golby Councillor Tim Hadland Councillor Jane Hollis Councillor Marianne Taylor

Northampton Borough Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 - Improvement, Performance and Finance

Agenda

Item No	Title	Pages	Action required
1	Apologies		The Chair to note any apologies and substitutions
2	Minutes	4 - 25	Members to approve the minutes of the meeting of the Call In Hearing held on 13 January 2010 and the meeting held on 1 February 2010.
3	Deputations/Public Addresses		<p>The Chair to note public address requests.</p> <p>The public can speak on any agenda item for a maximum of three minutes per speaker per item. You are not required to register your intention to speak in advance but should arrive at the meeting a few minutes early, complete a Public Address Protocol and notify the Scrutiny Officer of your intention to speak.</p>
4	Declarations of Interest (Including Whipping)		Members to state any interests.
5	Proposals for Cliftonville House		The Committee to receive a briefing and provide comment.
6	Task and Finish Group Updates		
6 (a)	Pre-decision Scrutiny: Procurement (Market Testing) of Environmental Services		The Chair and the Director of Environment and Culture to provide the Committee with a progress report.
6 (b)	Reporting and Monitoring Working Group		The Chair of the Reporting and Monitoring Working Group to give the Committee a progress report
6 (c)	Cost of Consultants Task and Finish Group		The Committee to consider the final report of the Cost of Consultants Task and Finish Group report (copy to follow)
7	Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2010/2011	26 - 29	The Chair to provide the Committee with details of the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2010/2011
8	Performance Monitoring	30	The Chair and Vice Chair have been asked to examine the performance indicators and bring to the attention of the Committee those they wish to investigate further.
9	Forward Plan	31 - 40	Members to examine the Forward Plan and decide if there are any items for future pre-decision scrutiny

Northampton Borough Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 - Improvement, Performance and Finance

10	Urgent Items		This item is for business that by reasons of the special circumstances to be specified, the Chair is of the opinion is of sufficient urgency to consider. Members or officers that wish to raise urgent items are to inform the Chair in advance.
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NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3 - IMPROVEMENT, PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE

Tuesday, 5th January 2010

PRESENT

Committee: Councillor Jamie Lane (Chair); Councillors Scott Collins, Keith Davies, Brendan Glynane, Matthew Golby, Jane Hollis, Marianne Taylor and Pam Varnserry (substitute for Councillor David Garlick)

Call-in Authors

Councillors Tony Clarke and Jean Hawkins

Internal Witnesses

Councillor David Perkins	Portfolio Holder (Finance)
Councillor Brian Hoare	Leader of the Council
Isabell Procter	Director of Finance and Support
Simon Dougall	Asset Manager

Observing

Councillor Paul Varnserry Portfolio Holder – Community Engagement
Councillor Trini Crake Portfolio Holder - Environment
Councillor Dennis Meredith

Member of the public

Dr Tom Welsh Local History Research

Officers

Francis Fernandes	Borough Solicitor
Tracy Tiff	Scrutiny Officer

Public Addresses

Dr Tom Welsh, University of Northampton.

At this point Francis Fernandes, Borough Solicitor, advised that Executive Members present must declare a personal and prejudicial interest in the substantive agenda item – Call In of Cabinet Decision of 16 December 2009 – item 8 – Future of Archway Cottages, Abington Park. This is in accordance with the Model Code of Conduct. Cabinet Members can present evidence but must leave the room when the Committee has its deliberations and forms its conclusions and recommendations.

Councillor Jamie Lane, Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee, advised that the reasons for this Call In referred to the decision, which was made in April 2008. The decision made at the December 16th meeting of Cabinet had asked for reconfirmation of the earlier (April 2008) decision. The Chair commented that bearing this fact in mind, the Committee would need to make a decision whether this Call-In proceeds further.

Following the address from the Chair, Councillor Keith Davies commented that there was a need for the Committee to have background papers in relation to the decision of Cabinet of 7 April 2008 – i.e. the report and minute of that meeting. Francis Fernandes, Borough Solicitor, advised that the Call In is challenging the decision of Cabinet of 16 December 2009 and not that of 7 April 2008. The earlier decision of 7th April 2008 cannot be called-in, however, he acknowledged that the Call In is relevant to the earlier decision (7th April 2008).

Councillor Pam Varnsvery commented that there had been a period of twenty months for potential options to be put forward, therefore the originally decision cannot be looked at. She added that this Call In appears to be 'raised through the back door.' In response, Francis Fernandes confirmed that legally this Call In stands; it is for the Committee to decide, in governance terms, whether this should have been raised at the time or "whether it is being raised through the back door". This is not the only option.

At this point, Councillor Brendan Glynane confirmed that he was a Member of Cabinet when the original decision of 7 April 2008 was taken. Francis Fernandes advised that he should declare a personal and prejudicial interest and emphasised that Members have a responsibility to know their obligations under the Model Code of Conduct.

It was then proposed by Councillor Hollis and seconded by Councillor Pam Varnsvery that this meeting adjourn and convene at a later date, when the Committee has been furnished with the requested background papers and Councillor Brendan Glynane is able to provide the correct notification for a substitute for the reconvened meeting.

Upon a vote, it was resolved that: -

This meeting adjourn and convene at a later date, when the Committee has been furnished with the requested background papers and Councillor Brendan Glynane is able to provide the correct notification for a substitute for the reconvened meeting.

Francis Fernandes, Borough Solicitor, advised that by adjourning the Call In Hearing it was preventing the Executive to exercise its powers and Officers are unable to implement the decision. The Call In Hearing must in exceptional cases be held within 21 working days of receipt of the call in request, as required by the constitution.

At 6.30pm the Chair called a short adjournment following which he confirmed that the Call In Hearing would adjourn and would reconvene at 7.15pm on Wednesday, 13th January 2010. The same agenda would apply.

The meeting adjourned at 6.50pm to reconvene at 7.15pm on Wednesday 13th January 2010.

The meeting reconvened on Wednesday, 13th January 2010

PRESENT

Committee: Councillor Jamie Lane (Chair); Councillors Scott Collins, Keith Davies, Matthew Golby, Jane Hollis, Marianne Taylor, Dennis Meredith (substituting for Councillor Brendan Glynane) and Pam Varnsvery (substitute for Councillor David Garlick)

Call-in Authors

Councillors Tony Clarke and Jean Hawkins

Internal Evidence

Councillor David Perkins	Portfolio Holder (Finance)
Councillor Brian Hoare	Leader of the Council
Councillor Malcolm Mildren	Portfolio Holder (Finance) for the term 2007-2009
Isabell Procter	Director of Finance and Support
Simon Dougall	Asset Manager

Officers

Francis Fernandes	Borough Solicitor
Tracy Tiff	Scrutiny Officer

Observing

Councillor Paul Varnsvery
Councillor Brendan Glynane
Councillor John Yates

Public Addresses

Mr Stevens, Friends of Abington Park

Public Attendees (Observing)

Beverley Mennell
Martin de Rosario

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors David Garlick, Tim Hadland and Brendan Glynane.

2. DEPUTATIONS/PUBLIC ADDRESSES

Mr Stevens, representing Friends of Abington Park and Abington Conservation Society, addressed the Committee on agenda item –4 - Call-In of Cabinet decision of 16 December 2009 – Item 8 – Future of Archway Cottages, Abington Park.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING)

In accordance with the advice provided by Francis Fernandes, Borough Solicitor, Executive Members present, Councillors Brian Hoare and David Perkins, declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the substantive agenda item – Call In of Cabinet Decision of 16 December 2009 – item 8 – Future of Archway Cottages, Abington Park. They provide witness evidence but left the meeting when the Call In Hearing went in deliberation session, taking no part in the debate.

Councillors Malcolm Mildren declared a personal and prejudicial interest, as a member of the Cabinet when the decision of 7th April 2008, in the substantive agenda item, – Call In of Cabinet Decision of 16 December 2009 – item 8 – Future of Archway Cottages, Abington Park. He provided witness evidence but left the meeting when the Call In Hearing went in deliberation session.

Councillor Brendan Glynane declared a personal and prejudicial interest, as a member of the Cabinet when the decision of 7th April 2008 was taken in the substantive agenda item – Call In of Cabinet Decision of 16 December 2009 – item 8 – Future of Archway Cottages, Abington Park. He observed the meeting but left when the Call In Hearing went in deliberation session.

Councillor Jean Hawkins, Call-In Author, declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest, in her capacity as Heritage Champion, her Councillor link with English Heritage, a Trustee of Delapre Preservation Trust and a member of the Liberal Democrat Party, in the substantive agenda item – Call In of Cabinet Decision of 16 December 2009 – item 8 – Future of Archway Cottages, Abington Park.

4. CALL-IN OF CABINET DECISION OF CABINET DECISION OF 16 DECEMBER 2009 – ITEM 8 – FUTURE OF ARCHWAY COTTAGES, ABINGTON PARK

The Chair advised that upon the advice of the Borough Solicitor and Monitoring Officer, this Call-In request had been through the appropriate channels and it is confirmed that the correct procedure had been followed. The Chair, with advice from the Borough Solicitor, advised the Call-In Authors of the need to explain to the Committee their reasons for leaving it so late to call-in the decision.

The Chair then advised the Call-in Hearing of the procedure that would be followed.

The public addressee was invited to speak to the Committee.

Mr Stevens, representing Friends of Abington Park and Abington Conservation Society, addressed the Call-In Hearing commenting that he considered the decision made on 7th April 2008 to dispose Archway Cottages indicated a lack of thinking, as in his opinion, they could be converted for community use. Not enough information had been provided about the alternative options for the future of Archway Cottages. He went on to explain how he felt the Cottages could be restored. He added that the Council is responsible to all citizens of the town and this should not be purely a decision based on finance. The Cottages are beautiful and an asset to Abington Park. Mr Stevens concluded his address by commenting that Northampton was a lovely town with wonderful history and its assets should be preserved.

The Committee put questions to Mr Stevens and heard:

- Friends of Abington Park is a voluntary society made up of individuals, not professionals

- Friends of Abington Park could support and contribute to the upkeep of Archway Cottages by completing applications for funding from national bodies, acting on behalf of Northampton Borough Council. It was confirmed that the Friends of Abington Park did not have its own funds
- Mr Stevens was not aware that the Council had a Heritage Champion
- Regarding a query about disabled access, Mr Stevens commented that this was an engineering problem but he felt that it was not impossible

Mr Stevens was thanked for his address.

The Chair then invited the Call-In Authors to expand upon their reasons for concern, following which the Overview and Scrutiny Committee questioned the Call-In Authors. Councillor Jean Hawkins, Call-in Author, referred to the reasons for call-in: -

Alternative options were not developed by the Council, resulting in Cabinet Members being unable to make a proper informed decision

Councillor Hawkins advised that she was confused why the issue of the decision taken on 7th April 2008 had been raised. She went on to confirm that she had not, in her capacity as Heritage Champion, been formally consulted at any stage prior to the decision being made. However, she had submitted a Freedom of Information request for background information, which had made reference to Estates Officers having knowledge of her role as the Council's Heritage Champion.

Councillor Hawkins referred to the decision of Cabinet taken on 16th December 2009, commenting that the rules of Call-In permitted herself and Councillor Clarke to call-in this decision. She advised that she was unable to provide too much detail regarding the decision taken on 7th April 2008 as she had not been present at that meeting and had not been consulted. She thought it likely that she had been away, it being the Easter holiday time. If the decision had been taken by Cabinet earlier than 16th December 2009. Councillor Hawkins confirmed that she would have still called-in the decision.

Councillor Hawkins confirmed that she was Heritage Champion in April 2008 and was aware that this item was due to be on the agenda of the Cabinet meeting of 7th April 2008. She confirmed that at this time the majority of her energies, as Heritage Champion, were directed towards Delapre Abbey.

In the autumn 2008, Cllr Hawkins had evidence that Councillor Brian Hoare had made communication that it would be helpful if these properties were treated as planning and conservation assets rather than that of housing. Archway Cottages were dealt with as housing assets. She added that Archway Cottages were not in Councillor Brian Hoare's ward and that he was no longer the chair of Friends of Abington Park, however, she confirmed that members of the Friends of Abington Park, had assured her that both Councillor Brian Hoare and Councillor Irene Markham had discussed aspirations for planning of Archway Cottages and Abington Park. Cllr David Garlick is currently a committee member of Friends of Abington Park.

Councillor Hawkins went on to refer to the decision of 16th December 2009, emphasising that one of the decisions was to consider any objections, which were listed in paragraph 3.2 of the report. She confirmed that these issues also prompted her to call-in this decision. Councillor Hawkins had addressed Cabinet at its meeting of 16th December 2009, her comments had been largely in relation to the view that these Cottages were an essential part of historical landscape. Mr Stevens of Friends of Abington Park's address to Cabinet had prompted her to do something. The decision made at Cabinet on 16th December 2009 was

'in principle' and in Councillor Hawkins' opinion was therefore a strategy that should be explored. She added that there were two further reasons that had prompted this call-in. This is historic landscape, which involves looking at parkland as a whole. In the 16th Century it was a well-established medieval village that was turned into a 'lost' village by enclosure and the Cottages are the remains of this medieval village. Archway Cottages were built in the 19th Century on 17th Century foundations.

Based on the above, Councillor Hawkins felt that Archway Cottages should not be classed as housing stock but as a heritage asset. Abington Park has high heritage asset value. A quote from an English Partnership document 'English Heritage' was given to the Call-In Hearing - "*The Local Authority has responsibility to manage its heritage assets*". If these cottages were treated as heritage assets they would be looked at within the entire heritage of the town.

Councillor Hawkins reiterated that these properties have high heritage value and she would expect there to be close working with the community. Councillor Hawkins emphasised that she would not expect Friends of Abington Park to lead on the management of the future of Archway Cottages, but that they should be involved in the process. She suggested an organisation that should also be involved to provide advise and funding for such properties – *Archaeological Heritage Fund*.

Councillor Hawkins added that she should have shown more concern about the further of Archway Cottages but her attention was only alerted when she read that the Cottages were classed as housing stock and a risk to the Council was that there could be a loss of freehold and that they could be subject to right to buy legislation.

Councillor Hawkins concluded her address by commenting that the Council is in a good position now to apply a management strategy and options appraisal to its heritage assets, and felt that funding could be found for Archway Cottages. Archway Cottages belong to the whole landscape, in particular Abington Park. Inter-departmental links should be explored regarding the management of the Cottages.

The Committee put questions to Councillor Hawkins:

Question (Q) As Heritage Champion are you aware of how many properties in Delapre have been dealt with in this manner successfully?

Response: (R): I am aware of considerable difficulties when an estate is fragmented in this way. When you have piecemeal freehold loss there can be difficulties. This landscape is peppered by properties outside the management of the Council.

Q: Would you agree that to do nothing and let the Cottages deteriorate is acceptable?

R: I am not suggesting doing nothing; a full options appraisal for the future of the cottages and funding opportunities is required. There is a danger that if one part of Abington Park is sold, other parts could be sold too.

Q: Do you agree that Archway Cottages have always intended to be homes?

R: Yes, but I acknowledge the problem of these properties being modernised for housing, such as access. English Heritage is very aware of the difficulties. It would be difficult for a Developer to market the Cottages, without any reconfiguration of access. It is possible that if a Developer takes on the lease of the properties they may allow them to fall into neglect if the repair task becomes too complicated by Conservation regulations.

Q: The Cottages are run down with the windows secured. It would cost thousands to restore the Cottages and there are restraints on Local Government finance. Can you provide a suggestion how the Council could fund the regeneration of Archway Cottages?

R: It would cost around £290, 000 to restore the cottages, £5,000 has already been spent to board them up and make them secure. I am not able to make any suggestions at this present time but this would be part of the options appraisal that needs to be carried out. For example a Trust could be set up to safeguard the cottages. Councillor Hawkins referred to a report that is on the Forward Plan for Cabinet in February 2010 regarding Delapre Abbey. This was commissioned on behalf of NBC to draw up professional historic landscape experts' advice to provide an options appraisal. Disposal is not the only option and if a long-term lease is offered, the Council is likely to lose the freehold in the long term.

Q: You were Heritage Champion at the time of the 7th April 2008 decision but you advised that you were not aware of the report to Cabinet at that time and that you were not consulted. There was at the time wide press coverage of the issue. Why is it only recently that you have contacted Friends of Abington Park?

R: My immediate reaction was that of guilt, I should have become involved earlier. I assumed that other, more senior Councillors had the interest at heart and the matter in hand.

The Call-In Hearing adjourned at 8.15pm and reconvened at 8.22pm

Councillor Clarke was invited to add further points to Councillor Hawkins' address.

Councillor Clarke opened his address by advising of the reasons why Councillor Hawkins and himself had not called-in the decision of April 2008. In support of his verbal evidence, written documentation was circulated to the Call-In Hearing, which in his view showed that the decision made on 16th December 2009 was a new decision. There had been a gap of 18 months between the two Cabinet meetings and during this time a lot had taken place, therefore the two decisions were different. Additional legal advice, in particular regarding the long-term contract over the future of Archway Cottages, was detailed in the report to Cabinet of 16th December 2009 meeting. It is therefore deemed a separate decision to that of 7th April 2008. Therefore, the decision was not to reaffirm the decision of 7th April 2008 but to receive new evidence. Councillor Clarke emphasised that this was a valid point.

Councillor Clarke advised that Councillor Hawkins had identified the heritage value of the Cottages. He went on to advise that he felt that various guidance, in particular *'Managing Local Authority Heritage Assets'*, had not been taken into consideration. The Council has a duty of care to put the Cottages back to a fit state. He added that a short-term decision cannot be taken based on a short-term budget decision; there is an option to borrow finance over a 200-year period to restore the cottages. Councillor Clarke added that the Council has not adhered to guidance. He went on to comment that the Portfolio Holder for Finance had previously advised that the Friends of Abington Park should have forwarded options for the future of the cottages. This Council is charged with coming up with solutions. There were options that were not considered. A report of this nature should have been authorised by several department heads. The Cottages were treated as financial assets.

Councillor Clarke advised that in his opinion this Council has failed to manage its long-term assets. The decision taken by Cabinet on 16th December 2009 was prejudiced and pre-determined. The Portfolio Holder for Finance had just one option for consideration. At this point Councillor Clarke circulated further written evidence (copies of email correspondence) in support of this comment. Councillor Clarke highlighted the Portfolio Holder for Finance's response in the email correspondence, stated that the sale of capital receipt was required for

managing the Council's organisation change programme. Other options were therefore not considered, the whole life of the buildings was not investigated and an Asset Register had not been produced.

Councillor Clarke acknowledged that Archway Cottages are currently relatively secure. There had been some problem with the boarding up of the windows, which had caused some damage. He queried whether the cottages were watertight. He felt that there was a period of 5-10 years to find a solution to ensure that Lady Wantage's gift of the Cottages could be used for the purpose that she intended.

Councillor Clarke concluded his address by asking the Committee to uphold the Call-In and asked it to consider whether the Council had operated in accordance with national guidance.

The Committee put questions to Councillor Clarke:

Q: Have you visited the Cottages and been inside?

R: I have not been permitted to go inside the Cottages, however I have visited the park and the cottages previously. Councillor Clarke added the English Heritage applauded and welcomed the use of the buildings for other purposes, as long as their heritage was protected. Councillor Clarke could see the future of Archway Cottages as social use. He went on to suggest that staff that work in this field, who are currently based at Cliftonville House, could perhaps be relocated to Archway Cottages.

Q With reference to your claims that the Cottages have been damaged when the windows were boarded up, but you have not visited of late, what evidence do you have?

Additionally, you commented that the Cottages could be left for five years and then funding applied for, what evidence can you supply to demonstrate that funding would be granted and would the Cottages not deteriorate over five years?

R: Councillor Clarke confirmed that he had visited the Cottages recently. He referred to the Freedom of Information request that had been submitted by Councillor Jean Hawkins; one internal message in particular had stated that that the Cottages needed to be protected. Steel panels should be cut to size; the required fixings do not need plugs therefore damage would not be created to the stonework. Other estimates were obtained for boarding up such as sandwich boards to the windows; this required the windows to be 'smashed' through to secure the boards. Councillor Clarke added that the decision had been taken to use the 'cheaper option' of securing the Cottages.

An application for funding could be submitted but there was no guarantee that it would be successful. The Council does not have a Lottery Officer to work with Local Groups. There was no intention for the Cottages to be for community use.

Q: The Cabinet meeting of 16th December 2009 asks for consideration of objections, it does not refer to the options

R: The report clearly states 'That Cabinet confirms its 'in principle' decision made on 7 April 2008 to dispose of the Property by the grant of 125 years lease, on terms that lead to the restoration of the properties in accordance with listed building requirements.'

The Call-In is in respect of the decision of Cabinet taken on 16th December 2009.

Q: How do you know the windows were smashed and not taken out?

R: Councillor Clarke confirmed that he had supporting evidence. The windows were 'put through' to secure the boards

Q: Is it your contention that Cabinet made an ill-informed choice?

R: It is clear that the information that was put to Cabinet on 7th April 2008 was incomplete; none of the viable options would ensure NBC taking control of these assets. Additional legal advice was detailed in the report to Cabinet of 16th December 2009 meeting; it is therefore deemed a separate decision to that of 7th April 2008.

The Cottages could remain boarded up until the Council receives a grant.

The Chair thanked the Call-in Authors for their address.

The Chair invited Councillor Mildren; Portfolio Holder for Finance, when the original decision dated 7 April 2008 was made, to add any further evidence.

Councillor Mildren felt that the decision taken on 7 April 2008 was 'in principle' and was a holding decision, he pointed out that the affirmation on 16 December 2009 of the original "in principle" decision of 7 April 2008 was less prescriptive than the original, in that there were no references to a developer with proven experience in dealing with listed and historic buildings.

At that time the Council could not move forward on this decision as it was dealing with the objectives and consultation. Quite a period of time elapsed before the advert regarding Archway Cottages was published. Since the decision of 7th April 2008, a lot has taken place, such as the Council securing funding for regeneration projects. Councillor Mildren queried whether this option had been investigated for the future of Archway Cottages.

Councillor Mildren commented that in order to achieve linguistic precision, it was necessary to compare the paragraphs numbered 2.2 in the reports to Cabinet of 7 April 2008 and 16 December 2009, he pointed out that the wording of 2.2 in the original report to Cabinet on 7 April 2008 was;

"The Cabinet should approve in principle, the disposal of the four properties by way of the grant of a single 125 year lease of the whole, to a developer with proven experience in dealing sympathetically with listed and historic buildings (on terms which will simultaneously ensure that the properties are properly restored and appropriate capital value is obtained for the Council)."

Whereas, wording of the paragraph 2.2 in the decisive report to Cabinet on 16 December read:

"That Cabinet confirms its "in principle" decision made on 7 April 2008 to dispose of the property by the grant of a 125 years lease, on terms that lead to the restoration of the properties in accordance with listed building requirements"

The Committee had no questions for Councillor Mildren. Councillor Mildren was thanked for his address.

The Chair invited Councillors David Perkins, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Councillor Brian Hoare, Leader of the Council, Isabell Proctor, Director of Finance and Support, and Simon Dougall, Asset Manager, to the table.

The Committee put questions to Councillor Brian Hoare, Leader of the Council:

Q: Why was this decision made?

R: The decisions made on 7 April 2008 and 16 December 2009 were taken based on professional officer advice. It was the best way forward for this Council and these properties.

Q: Did you read the report in full prior to making the decision?

R: Yes, all parts of the report.

Q Councillor Clarke referred to the budget as a `war chest`, i.e. selling off assets to prop up the budget, do you support this suggestion?

R: No, the Administration has to look at the immediate financial situation of the Council and make decisions around the best way forward with good use of the Council's assets.

Q Were you aware of the emails that referred to the budget as a `war chest`?

R: No.

Q Were you aware of Officers' advice and in following this advice, none of the options ensured that NBC would retain a long-term lease?

R: This question could be interpreted in a number of ways.

Q: As Leader, you should expect to receive this information, I have concerns that you are not being provided with sufficient briefings and advice.

R: Advice is available as set out in the report. I am able to question this advice.

Q What is the effect of `Right to Buy`?

R: Should the Cottages be renovated by this Council and we were in the position to offer them as part of the Council's housing stock, normal rent would be attracted, (this is detailed in the report to Cabinet on 16th December 2009), in doing this, the Cottages would be subject to right to buy. The Council could make an investment into these Cottages and then they could be subject to right to buy.

Q Councillor Clarke suggested that the Cottages could be left for five years and then an application for funding be put to English Heritage, has Cabinet taken part of any discussions of this nature?

R: It can always be said `whenever funds come available'. Cabinet looked at these properties with all costs associated to bringing them back to habitable use. Cost burdens need to be looked at.

Councillor Hoare was thanked for his address.

The Chair invited Councillors David Perkins, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Councillor Brian Hoare, Leader of the Council, Isabell Proctor, Director of Finance and Support, and Simon Dougall, Asset Manager, to the table.

Councillor David Perkins, Portfolio Holder for Finance, addressed the Committee. He commented that Councillor Clarke had been selective in his evidence regarding the email that he had referred the Call-In Hearing to. Councillor Perkins confirmed that the report to Cabinet of 16th December 2009 was in draft format at the time that he sent this email. The original report that was presented to Cabinet at its meeting on 7th April 2008 had contained details of all the viable options for the future of Archway Cottages. Non-viable options were not included.

The Council has to make decisions about capital assets and funds. It is proposed that the Cottages are returned to domestic use, to ask a Developer to renovate them and return to domestic use and in so doing relieve the council of the estimated £290,000 liability.

Councillor Perkins went on to refer to Councillor Clarke's address to the Call-In Hearing, commenting that the Council has a responsibility to utilise its resources in accordance with its priorities. Expenditure of £290,000 on the renovation of Archway Cottages could not be justified in a period of recession when it was more important to use available resources for the benefit of the most vulnerable in society e.g. Disabled Facilities Grants. A sale to the private sector, under the terms of the lease, together with the planning regulations relating to Grade II listed properties, would protect the heritage of the properties and ensure that the cottages were renovated to the appropriate standard and realise a capital sum for the Council. He confirmed that the decision to dispose of the cottages was consistent with the guidance contained within the English Heritage Report "Managing Local Authority Heritage Assets" and quoted the following passage from the report "Government guidance urges local authorities only to continue to hold property assets if they meet the current requirements of the authority in terms of enabling it to meet its objectives, including financial. Otherwise, assets should be disposed of in order to encourage alternative use."

Councillor Perkins confirmed that if the Cottages were sold, the Highways Authority would not permit a new access to the Cottages.

The ward Councillors were consulted and made no objections.

The Committee put questions to Councillor Perkins:

Q: If the properties were left sealed up, what would be the cost implications?

R: It would be a 'waste of an asset'. The longer properties are left empty, the more it would cost to restore them, the capital value would go down and they would deteriorate more.

Q How much would it cost for the Cottages to be retained and brought up to standard?

It would cost around £290,000 to restore the cottages to houses for letting purposes and they would, in the majority of situations, be subject to 'right to buy' legislation. If the Council undertook to renovate the cottages it would have to borrow this money and it was clear that any rental income would not cover the cost of the borrowing and in addition as the cottages would be subject to the right to buy legislation, the Council could end up disposing of the Cottages at a loss.

The rent paid by Council tenants is governed by Legislation and must be less than the market value, i.e. about £13,000 per annum. Borrowing costs would be in excess of £13,000, possibly around £20,000 and then the Cottages could be sold under 'right to buy'. It is clear that any rental income would not cover the cost of the borrowing and in addition as the

Cottages would be subject to the right to buy legislation, the Council could end up disposing of the cottages at a loss.

Q Is the comment made in your email of 13 October 2009 a political or organisational comment?

R: Councillor Perkins confirmed that it is his duty to encourage officers to use resources to the best use for the town and the comment was not politically driven.

Q: Have there been many private suitors for the Cottages

R: Not at present. If the decision could progress, the Cottages would be actively marketed.

Q: Was it always your view that NBC would retain some control over the lease of the Cottages?

R: The viable option was to dispose of the properties under a 125 year lease, but the issue regarding 'right to buy' had to be understood.

Q: The Council should have some control over the lease and what the Developer does with the Cottages?

R: There are enormous planning controls over Grade II listed properties.

Q Were you aware of the email of July 2009?

R: I was not aware. However I was aware that 'Right to buy' was always going to be an issue. Discussions were held with the Asset Manager in this respect.

Q There appears to be some confusion regarding should the Council retain the Cottages, return them to domestic use and they would be subject to 'right to buy'?

R: If the Council retains the Cottages with Council tenants – they would be subject to 'right to buy'. If the Cottages were sold to a Developer, who then leased them with a long lease, the lessee would still have the option to buy the properties.

The report to Cabinet on 16th December 2009 made the right to buy issue explicit.

Councillor Perkins was thanked for his address.

Isabell Procter, Director of Finance and Support, addressed the Committee clarifying that capital receipts could only be used for capital purposes and could not be used for underpinning any revenue purposes. A clear Capital Strategy is agreed by Cabinet each year. The Director of Finance and Support provides advice on looking at the different assets, whether they provide good value for money and whether the sale of an asset is advantageous to maintain other capital assets for the good of the community. Advice from valuers was provided for the options for the future of Archway Cottages.

A capital receipt from Archway Cottages could be used to enhance other capital assets. The two reports contained judgement of professional officers. All Cabinet reports are subject to a robust process of challenge to ensure that the financial and legal governance contained in the report is correct.

At this point, Francis Fernandes, Borough Solicitor, advised that comments had been made about pre-determination and governance issues. He asked Isabell Procter to clarify whether

the reports of 7th April 2008 and 16th December 2009 were based on professional officer judgement or produced by Cabinet.

In response, Isabell Procter advised that the two reports contained judgement of professional officers. All Cabinet reports are subject to a robust process of challenge to ensure that the financial and legal governance contained in the report is correct. If a report is not robust it does not go before Members.

Isabell Procter was thanked for her address.

Simon Dougall, Asset Manager, addressed the Committee clarifying that whole life costs for the restoration of Archway Cottages, include both the initial capital costs and holding costs. Holding costs (e.g. maintenance and management) would be significant given the nature of the premises. A Developer would almost certainly seek to recoup its investment by granting long-term leases of the properties. The risks of losing overall control/freehold ownership as a result of either: retention and renovation and associated with disposal were set out in the report to Cabinet of 16th December 2009.

The Committee put questions to Simon Dougall:

Q: Did you make Cabinet aware of all the options for the future of Archway Cottages?

R: In considering all options for the future of Archway Cottages, Officers had to be mindful that the premises were Grade II list buildings. A range of options for the future of Archway Cottages were considered, but in the context that they had to be financially viable in capital terms and sustainable in revenue terms.

Q: Do you have any views on Councillor Clarke's evidence regarding damage to the Cottages when boarding up took place?

R: I cannot comment in detail. I was not personally involved with agreeing the methodology of the boarding up of the Cottages, as one of my team was involved in organising the actual boarding up of the Cottages. I was consulted on placing an order for the boarding up due to the costs involved. The Cottages had a problem with squatters.

Q: When did the Cottages become vacant and to what degree have they deteriorated since?

R: The last tenant vacated Archway Cottages during early 2007. There has not been a great deal of recorded deterioration to the Cottages since this date, but there is the risk of further damage and deterioration if they continue to stand empty.

Simon Dougall was thanked for his address.

The Call-in authors were given the opportunity to add any points of clarification before any resolution or recommendation was moved.

Councillor Hawkins commented that in her opinion the evidence provided had proved the reason for call-in. She drew attention to the fact that Officers who were not represented at the meeting were those from Conservation and Regeneration and the Parks Directorate.

Councillor Clarke referred to his evidence pack stating that the terminology used in boarding up the windows of Archway Cottages was "break glass where required" and "break glass at the four corners of all windows". He commented that should steel have been used there

would not have been a need to break the glass. Councillor Clarke added that in his opinion the Committee had heard just some of the evidence that Cabinet should have been presented with and that the Call-In Hearing need to decide whether Cabinet had had all the facts to make a decision on the long-term use of the Cottages for the benefit of the town. Cabinet had failed to look at all the options.

Councillor Clarke went on to refer to the issues raised by the Youth Project and the fact that this was not referred to in the Cabinet report and the other potential uses for the Cottages which were also not referred to in the Cabinet report. He then asked the Committee to consider whether Cabinet had made a decision based on all the evidence and advice from all departments, whether there were alternatives and whether the decision was safe.

Francis Fernandes, Borough Solicitor, reminded the Executive Members present and those Councillors that were members of the Executive on 7th April 2008 of the need to leave the meeting and take no part in the Committee's deliberation session. The Call-In has, at Officer level, been deemed valid. There are no concerns that the decision was unlawful. The decision that Cabinet was required to make on 16th December 2009 was a consideration of objections following statutory advertisements as required for the sale of public open space. The reasons for the Call-In referred to the substantive decision, which was made on 7 April 2008. Whilst the December meeting asked for a reconfirmation of the earlier (April) decision, his view was that any Call-In for the substantive decision should have been made within 7 or exceptionally 21 working days from that decision. Whilst the April 2008 decision has not been implemented (because it was awaiting the completion of the statutory advertisement process), the Chair, with advice from the Borough Solicitor, had at the beginning of the meeting advised the Call-In Authors of the need to explain to the Committee their reasons for leaving it so late to call-in the decision.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Following the submission of all the evidence, the Committee concluded that Cabinet had been furnished with adequate evidence and had considered alternative options for Archway Cottages.

Following the deliberation session, it was proposed by Councillor Scott Collins and seconded by Councillor Pam Varnsvery, that the Call-In be rejected on the grounds that it was unfounded as Cabinet had considered adequate evidence and alternative options had been considered. Upon a vote, it was: -

Resolved:

- (1) That after all the evidence had been heard that the Call-In be rejected on the grounds that it was unfounded, as Cabinet had considered adequate evidence and alternative options had been considered.

The meeting concluded at 10.25pm

NORTHAMPTONBOROUGH COUNCIL

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3
IMPROVEMENT, PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE**

Monday 1 February 2010

PRESENT: Councillor David Garlick Vice Chair (In the Chair); Councillors Scott Collins, Keith Davies, Brendan Glynane, Matthew Golby, Jane Hollis and Marianne Taylor

Councillor David Perkins Portfolio Holder (Finance) – agenda item 6

Isabell Procter - Director - Finance and Support
Julie Seddon - Director – Environment and Culture – agenda item 6
Tracy Tiff - Scrutiny Officer

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jamie Lane (Chair) and Councillor Tim Hadland.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2009 were signed by the Chair as a true record.

3. DEPUTATIONS/PUBLIC ADDRESSES

There were none.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING)

There were none.

5 DRAFT BUDGET FOR 2010-11 TO 2012-2013

Isabell Procter, Director of Finance and Support, advised that the 2010-2013 draft budget was currently out to consultation. The budget would then be presented back to Cabinet and Council for approval post-consultation.

The Chair advised that this year, the same process as previously had been adopted for consulting Overview and Scrutiny on the Council's proposed budget. The Reporting and Monitoring Working Group would have been asked to select the issues from the budget proposals for each Overview and Scrutiny Committee but the meeting of the Reporting and Monitoring Task and Finish Group did not take place due to the inclement weather at that time.

The Committee asked questions, heard and made comment: -

- The budget process was started in May/June 2009 by producing the continuation budget, which is the current year budget restated at future years price base.
- There has been a significant increase in subsidy due to the significant increase in benefits claims.
- All Directorates were tasked with efficiency savings, i.e. same service for less money, looking at options to help bridge the gap along with service reductions.

- A draft report on the budget was presented to Cabinet in December 2009. This report is currently out to public consultation on the proposed options. The final public consultation meeting is on 4 February 2010. Comments and feedback will then be gathered and presented to Cabinet at its meeting on 24 February 2010 to seek its views on whether any of the proposals should be changed, the budget will then be presented to full Council for approval.
- A risk assessment on the proposal options for the budget has been completed and received by the Audit Committee.
- The budget options are being investigated to ascertain whether there is the need for equality impact assessments.
- The Committee suggested that it should be suggested to Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 (Housing and Environment) that it looks at the budget options EFFY97 delivery of phase 1 and EFFY98 phase 2 of delivery plan at its meeting on 8th February 2010. Both budget options contain substantial amounts of proposed savings. Isabell Procter confirmed that these issues had been highlighted for Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 to discuss in depth with the relevant Director at its next meeting.
- In response to a query regarding budget proposal EEFY101 – Savings in facilities staff based on moving out of Cliftonville by 30th May 2010, Isabell Procter advised that the review was going very well. A report was expected from a company who had reviewed and surveyed both the Guildhall and Westbridge, investigating how space could be configured to fit in staff. The report will comment on whether it is realistic. It was noted that the location of ICT and the server room had been an issue but a very encouraging report had been received on what could be done and how ICT and the Server Room could be relocated. Timescales will not be met by end of May 2010, as issues such as datalines can take around five months to put into place.
- In answer to a query how the Council sourced its providers for utilities, Isabell Procter confirmed that two methods were applied – use framework contracts that have been in place for some time, then the contract would go out to tender or spot testing – the Council buys a certain amount of, for example electricity, at the current price. An advisor assists on this process. The Council is leading on this process, on behalf of five other districts, through the joint procurement process.
- The Committee queried the proposed budget option EFFY82 - Target to reduce agency spend by an additional 1%. Isabell Procter advised that the Council acquires most of its Agency staff through Comensura. The workforce is being looked more closely so that the requirement for Agency Staff can be managed down. The Head of Human Resources manages the employment of Agency Staff. Ways of making savings include shortening the time from when the employee hands in notice to recruiting to that post.
- It was noted that budget proposal EEFY1 related to the deletion of a vacant post in the Head of Performance and Improvement Team. This post had been vacant for over a year. EEFY112 is in relation to restructuring in the policy area, again in the Performance and Improvement Team. The proposal is the reduction of one member of staff. The introduction of Performance Plus has meant that the same level of service can be delivered by the system producing the information.
- Regarding budget proposal EFFY83 Increase debt recovery rates, the Committee heard that this was an efficiency saving and that debt collection had improved. New processes have been put in place.

AGREED: That the Chair writes to the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 (Housing and Environment) advising that this Committee supports the Officer's recommendation that Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 discusses in depth with the relevant Director, the budget proposals - EFFY97 delivery of phase 1 and EFFY98 phase 2 of delivery plan at its next meeting on 8th February 2010.

6. UPDATE – MARKET TESTING OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Julie Seddon, Director for Environment and Culture, referred to the briefing note that had been circulated with the agenda recapping that it has been agreed to market test waste, grounds and street care. It would be jointly market tested with Daventry District Council. The costs of procurement is being It was highlighted that this may or may not lead to a joint contract. The current process is testing the market to see if the service could be delivered at a lower cost for a better standard, i.e. significantly better value, should this be the case it would be recommended that the service is outsourced.

The project is now at the stage where a lot of responses to the invitation to tender have been received. Over twenty have expressed an interest. Shortlisting will then take place shortly. From March to September 2010 competitive dialogue will take place – talking to shortlisted bidders for service solutions, obtaining idea of costs, types of service they could deliver etc. Throughout this process it is expected that some bidders will drop out. It is expected that a decision to select a preferred bidder will be made around December 2010. The process to enable any new contractor to mobilise the new service in March 2011 will then commence.

Julie Seddon confirmed that she would provide updates to future meetings of the Committee.

The Committee asked questions, heard and commented: -

- The Committee suggested there was a need for Overview and Scrutiny to be involved in this process, for example pre-decision scrutiny would be helpful especially in the latter stages. It was felt that pre-decision scrutiny would be most beneficial at the selection of the preferred bidder stage, looking at any risk involved etc It was further suggested that when the process enters into the competitive dialogue process, Overview and Scrutiny could become more involved. Julie Seddon confirmed that she would provide suggestions to the Chair how Overview and Scrutiny could become involved. The following Councillors expressed an interest in being involved in the pre-decision scrutiny process Councillors David Garlick, Keith Davies, Jane Hollis and Brendan Glynane. It was suggested that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee be asked to consider this item of pre-decision scrutiny for inclusion onto its work programme 2010/2011.
- In response to a query how it can be proved to those not involved in the process that it has been robust, Julie Seddon advised that there are two aspects – factual – how it is ensured that a good comparison is being made, and a reference case – description and cost and quality of service, which also allows you to predict into the future taking into consideration issues such as financial constraints. When comparisons are made the recommendation will be put forward
- In response to a query how the service will be kept going forward and improving throughout the process, Julie Seddon advised that there is a need to transform the culture of the service, to increase staff morale and improve sickness levels etc. The service needs to be at the best it possibly can be when the comparison is made in order that it is a most meaningful comparison.
- The Committee heard that there are a huge amount of pitfalls when undertaking market-testing exercise. It is the biggest procurement exercise this Council has ever undertaken. It is a big challenge. There is a need to ensure that the right expert advice is provided and for there to be challenge.
- Julie Seddon advised that she had not been able to identify another joint procurement, central Government supports joint procurement as it means best value for money.
- Daventry's approach – In Julie Seddon's opinion there had been not as much political challenge around Daventry's approach to the process – it appeared to be

more relaxed about the outsourcing of services. It was suggested that it be recommended to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee that a member of its Scrutiny Committee be co-opted for the pre decision scrutiny of this issue.

- AGREED:** (1) That it be recommended to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee that it be asked to consider this item of pre-decision scrutiny for inclusion onto its work programme 2010/2011.
- (2) That it be recommended to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee that a member of its Scrutiny Committee be co-opted for the pre decision scrutiny of this issue.
- (3) That Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 receive a progress report on this issue – Evaluating Ways of Delivering Neighbourhood Services at every meeting.

7 TASK AND FINISH GROUP UPDATES

7(a) REPORTING AND MONITORING WORKING GROUP UP

The Chair reminded the Committee that the meeting of this Group had not take place due to the inclement weather.

7(b) COST OF CONSULTANTS TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Committee noted the progress report from the Cost of Consultants Task and Finish Group. Councillor Matthew Golby advised the Group is still at the evidence gathering stage. Various Portfolio Holders for Finance have been invited to attend to provide evidence. Other witness evidence has been received. The Group is on schedule to finalise its report in April 2010.

AGREED: That the update be noted.

8 PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The Committee noted the Best Value Performance Indicators for the period November 2009. The Committee received an overview on those PIs that are red: -

- In response to a query regarding BVI9 – Percentage of council tax received in the year, Isabell Procter advised that there had been difficulty due to the recession and people cancelling direct debits. Latest statistics are showing an improvement however she is not confident that the target will be met. Benchmarking against other Local Authorities has taken place and Northampton is about same as other large Authorities but some smaller Councils doing better. The situation does improve during February and March as the last payment on direct debits is January – therefore two free months helps people to catch up.
- Regarding BV78b - Speed of processing: Average time for processing notification of change in circumstances, the Committee heard that factors such as increase/drop in income and change in Legislation affect this performance indicator. It has created a massive increase in caseload. In last 12 months there has been a 17% increase (new claims) and it has been challenged to keep up with this increase. It was noted that changes in circumstances in November was huge – especially due to changes in childcare benefits. Officers focused more on benefit claims to ensure that people received benefits etc. Northampton has the highest rise in caseload and is 100 out of top 100 Authorities (100th highest caseload) for sheer volume of benefit claims. The number of new claims is monitored on a weekly basis.

- In response to a query whether the Council has the capacity to meet the claims, Isabell Procter advised that change of circumstances is a challenge, however Officers are keeping on top of a chunk of it due to new ways of working, such as going live on E-benefits. Biggest success so far has been instead of queuing at the One Stop Shop – an appointments system is now running and it has average queuing time has reduced from around 30 minutes to 8 minutes. Customers now see a Benefits Officer at the appointment, the process is starting to make a difference and the Council is receiving positive feedback. The admin grant from the Department of Works and Pensions was received and through this funding three new admin temps were brought in until April 2010 to work on E-Benefits.
- The Committee put on record its compliments to the Head of Revenues and Benefits for introduced fresh thinking to the service. It was suggested that the Head of Revenues and Benefits be asked to give an update to a future meeting on the changes been implemented.

AGREED: That the Head of Revenues and Benefits be asked to give an update to a future meeting on the changes been implemented.

8(A) BV8 – THE PERCENTAGE OF INVOICES FOR COMMERCIAL GOODS AND SERVICES PAIDBY THE AUTHORITY WITHIN 30 DAYS OF BEING RECEIVED

Isabell Procter, Director for Finance and Support, advised that this Authority has always had difficulty with this BV8 but the December figures have improved. The biggest issue is getting services to deal with invoices in a prompt manner. Reminder emails are issued. Purchase orders must be raised properly, Good Received Receipted (GRNd) and then invoice matched. Often an invoice will come in, that has no Purchase Order, has not been GRN'd or has a different amount which can cause delays.

A monthly report is sent to all Heads of Services with outstanding invoices. (League tables are produced which name and shame). There is a robust chasing process. The Authority aims to attempt to pay a supplier with NN postcode within seven days. This rarely happens as an invoice can only be paid once it has cleared on the system.

The Committee heard: -

- NBC sets the limits for payment of invoices. It is not a statutory requirement to report on this Performance Indicator (PI) anymore but it has been suggested that it is kept as a corporate PI.
- Sometimes the right backup arrangements are not in place within the departments, for example, should the main contact for invoice payment be on leave or sick and the second nominees does not check the system, can cause delays in the process.
- Sometimes the departments with the highest volume are better at paying invoices on time.
- Current statistics can be provided to the Committee if requested.
- Performance Plus will make reporting simpler, but will not make any difference as the information is loaded into Performance Plus monthly. Directors will continue to receive data, as this is a corporate PI.
- Investigations are taking place into the overall processes and how goods and services are procured. A system is being looked at that will allow the Council to set up bookings and `picking lists for goods and services commonly ordered. Once GRN'd the invoice will be automatically paid at the end of the month.

9 WORK PROGRAMME 2009/2010

In accordance with the request from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, Councillors scoped the Review – Sickness Absence Management as attached. This document would be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee at its next meeting for approval.

Councillors Marianne Taylor and Matthew Golby expressed an interest to be members of this Task and Finish Group. It would be ascertained whether Councillor Jamie Lane, Chair, wanted to partake and an email would be sent to the Committee asking for further Councillors to join this Task and Finish Group.

AGREED: That the scope for the Review – Sickness Absence Management be presented to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee for approval.

10 FORWARD PLAN

The current Forward Plan was noted.

It was suggested that a briefing on pay and grading be available to all Councillors.

11 URGENT ITEMS

The Chair reminder Councillors of the work-programming event for 11 March 2010 at 6pm.

The meeting concluded at 20.03 hrs



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

SICKNESS MANAGEMENT TASK AND FINISH GROUP

1. Purpose/Objectives of the Review

- To evaluate the impact that staff absence has upon service delivery
- To review how health and well being policies can have a positive impact in reducing sickness absence
- To ensure absence management systems are robust

2. Outcomes Required

- To make recommendations for improvement, as appropriate,

3. Information Required

- A synopsis of all information available
Various Policies, including Absence Management Policy
Health and Well Being Policy
Flexible Working Policies
Dependency and Emergency Leave Policy
- Sickness absence trends, department by department
- Details of the impact sickness absence has on colleagues
- Injury related injury data
- Management Plans to tackle sickness absence
- Best practice Councils
- Details of Health and Safety Training and take up statistics

4. Format of Information

- Officer Briefings
- Officer Reports
- Published Reviews by other Councils
- Expert advice
- Witness evidence
- Presentations

5. Methods Used to Gather Information

- Interviews with the relevant Officers
- Task and Finish Group meetings
- Desktop research

6. Co-Options to the Review

- Suggested that Louise Procter, Director, Health Services, Northants PCT, be co opted to the Task and Finish Group for the life of the Review

7 Equality Impact Screening Assessment

- An Equality Impact Screening Assessment to be undertaken on the scope of the Review.

8 Evidence gathering Timetable

March/April 2010

Schedule of meetings to be agreed

9 Responsible Officers

Lead Officer	Catherine Wilson, Head of Human Resources
Co-ordinator	Tracy Tiff

10 Resources and Budgets

Catherine Wilson, Head of Human Resources, to provide internal advice.

11 Final report presented by:

Completed by April 2010. Presented by the Chair of the Task and Finish Group to Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 and then to Cabinet.

12 Monitoring procedure:

Review the impact of the report after six months (October/November 2010)

Overview & Scrutiny Committee **3**

IMPROVEMENT, PERFORMANCE
& FINANCE



Cost of Consultants

TASK AND FINISH GROUP

May 2010



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APPENDICES

Appendix A	Scope of the Review
Appendix B	Analysis of Agency Staff Costs from January 2008 to November 2009 – Breakdown of data

Foreword

The objective of this Task and Finish Group was: -

- To investigate the reasons for the use of consultants at Northampton Borough Council
- To investigate the reasons for the use of agency labour at Northampton Borough Council
- To consider the alternatives to using consultants
- To consider the alternatives to using agency labour
- To assess the risks involved in implementing these alternatives
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the work undertaken by consultants within the authority and determine the impact on the existing staff base
- To consider the costs involved by the Council in using consultants and to compare these costs to other similar local authorities, department by department, for the years 2005/06 and 2007/08
- To consider the costs involved by the Council in using agency labour and to compare these costs to other similar local authorities, department by department, for the years 2005/06 and 2007/08
- To examine the procurement arrangements associated with consultants department by department, for the years 2005/06 and 2007/08
- To examine the procurement arrangements associated with agency labour department by department, for the years 2005/06 and 2007/08
- To examine the procedure for the procurement arrangements associated with consultants and how this is budgeted for and financed
- To examine whether the use of consultants is a skilling or de-skilling process

The Task and Finish Group was made up from members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Improvement, Performance and Finance: - Councillors Matthew Golby, Jamie Lane, together with other non-Executive Councillors Joy Capstick, Jenny Conroy and myself.

A previous Overview and Scrutiny Review into Historic Buildings and Regeneration was undertaken which noted the engagement of consultants in Planning Services. When Overview and Scrutiny Committee finalised its work programme, the issue of the employment of consultants by the Authority was raised and it was requested that a Review of this issue be included onto the Work Programme. This request was agreed and the timescale for the Review set.

The London Centre of Excellence produced a Commissioning Toolkit for the procurement of consultancy and professional services. The toolkit was used within the scope of the Review to provide a comparison to Northampton's policy for engaging consultants as well as being considered by the Task and Finish Group as guidance material.

Desktop research was undertaken with a number of other Local Authorities regarding their usage of Consultants and Agency staff for the periods of time being investigated by the Task and Finish Group. The Task and Finish Group held interviews with the Portfolio Holder, Senior Staff at Northampton Borough Council and Trade Union Representatives. r.

Following the collation of the evidence, the Task and Finish Group draw various conclusion and recommendations that are contained in the report.

The Review took place between June 2009 and May 2010.

I would like to thank everyone who took part in this piece of work.



Councillor Tony Clarke
Chair, Cost of Consultants Task and Finish Group

Acknowledgements to all those who took part in the Review: -

- Councillors Joy Capstick, Jenny Conroy, Matthew Golby and Jamie Lane who sat with me on this Review
- Councillor David Perkins, Portfolio Holder (Finance) for providing a response to the Task and Finish Group's core questions
- Councillor Tim Hadland, Portfolio Holder (Finance) (2005/06) and Councillor Malcolm Mildren, Portfolio Holder (Finance) 2007/08 or providing a response to the Task and Finish Group's core questions
- A number of Councillors for completing the Task and Finish Group's short questionnaire regarding the engagement of consultants and agency staff
- Catherine Wilson, Head of Human Resources, for her support to this Review
- Lorraine Avery, Gordon Kimberly and Dave Labrum, representing the Trade Unions ,for providing evidence to inform this Review
- Garry Pyne, Head of Procurement, for providing a response to the Task and Finish Group's questions which informed this Review
- Julie Seddon, Director of Environment and Culture, for providing expert evidence to inform this Review
- John Capper, Relationship Manager, Comensura, for providing expert evidence to inform this Review

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the Task and Finish Group was:-

- To investigate the reasons for the use of consultants at Northampton Borough Council
- To investigate the reasons for the use of agency labour at Northampton Borough Council
- To consider the alternatives to using consultants
- To consider the alternatives to using agency labour
- To assess the risks involved in implementing these alternatives
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the work undertaken by consultants within the authority and determine the impact on the existing staff base
- To consider the costs involved by the Council in using consultants and to compare these costs to other similar local authorities, department by department, for the years 2005/06 and 2007/08
- To consider the costs involved by the Council in using agency labour and to compare these costs to other similar local authorities, department by department, for the years 2005/06 and 2007/08
- To examine the procurement arrangements associated with consultants department by department, for the years 2005/06 and 2007/08
- To examine the procurement arrangements associated with agency labour department by department, for the years 2005/06 and 2007/08
- To examine the procedure for the procurement arrangements associated with consultants and how this is budgeted for and financed
- To examine whether the use of consultants is a skilling or de-skilling process

A previous Overview and Scrutiny Review into Historic Buildings and Regeneration was undertaken which noted the engagement of consultants in Planning Services. When Overview and Scrutiny Committee finalised its work programme, the issue of the employment of consultants by the Authority was raised and it was requested that a Review of this issue be included onto the Work Programme. This request was agreed and the timescale for the Review set.

A Councillor Task and Finish Group was established comprising Councillor Tony Clarke (Chair); Councillors Joy Capstick, Jenny Conroy, Matthew Golby and Jamie Lane.

The Task and Finish Group agreed that the following needed to be investigated and linked to the realisation of the Council's corporate priorities:

- Detailed information for all Northampton Borough Council departments regarding spend in relation to consultants and Agency employees for the periods 2005/06 and 2007/08

- Data from other (best practice) Local Authorities for the same periods, in particular a large district council. For comparison purposes the data will be altered to reflect population in respect of spend per population
- Local Government Association (LGA) or similar guidance on the use of consultants and Agency workers
- Evidence from NBC Directors (or Heads of Services)
- Evidence from the Portfolio Holders (Finance) and (Performance and Improvement)
- Evidence from the Portfolio Holders (Finance) and (Performance and Improvement) for the years 2005/06 and 2007/08
- Evidence from members of the Council for the period 2005/06 and 2007/08 (current Members)

CONCLUSIONS AND KEY FINDINGS

A significant amount of evidence was heard, details of which are contained in the report. After gathering evidence the Task and Finish Group established that: -

- 6.1 After all of the evidence was collated the following conclusions were drawn:
- 6.1.1 In considering Transforming *the procurement of temporary, agency and interim staff: your toolkit for success*, which was commissioned by the London Centre of Excellence (LCE), the Task and Finish Group felt that there are alternatives to the employment of Agency Staff such as the engagement of different types of trainee posts such as undergraduate student placements, graduate placements, future jobs fund, and apprenticeships from The University of Northampton and Northampton College with generic skills. A central base of between one and four postgraduate students could be created. The Task and Finish Group further felt that it would be beneficial for there to be a 'floating workforce' that could be pooled by all departments.
- 6.1.2 The Task and Finish Group highlights the fact that during the period of 2005/2006 central Government had provided financial assistance to the Authority for the engagement of consultants. Bearing this in mind the figures for this period may appear high.
- 6.1.3 There is a need to know how the Council has received value from money from a consultant both during their skills of engagement with the Council and whether these skills have been maintained. The engagement of consultants should be according to service need or specialist positions and be time limited. It is crucial that there is a clear understanding about the difference between locum and consultant. The Task and Finish Group welcomed the definitions of such staff that were provided by the Head of Human Resources. The Task and Finish Group further realised that, as the engagement of consultants should be time limited there was a need for an independent check around the time scale of to be implemented.

- 6.1.4 It was noted that over the periods that the Task and Finish Group investigated the Council has a Policy to reduce the spend on Agency Staff, in particular as part of the budget savings in 2009/10 it had been agreed that the Authority would reduce its spend on agency staff by £200,000. This would be undertaken by applying this approach to agency staff. The Task and Finish Group was surprised to see this saving was for white collar Agency Staff only, and that blue collar Agency Staff were used more to generate savings. It appeared that the higher the cost of a Post the more of a saving by reducing consultants.
- 6.1.5 During the period of time of the Task and Finish Group brokers were changed, the Task and Finish Group recognised the need for changed but felt that there was a need for the Policy to be further developed and expanded
- 6.1.6 The Task and Finish Group noted that part of the way that business is carried out in Neighbourhood Environment involves using Agency staff and it was realised that this is the most value for money way in delivering the service also providing a lot of flexibility. Grounds and street maintenance do not need the cover as much as the refuse lorries. Agency staff is now only brought in to cover sickness absence on the refuse lorries not for street and grounds maintenance. In future, in-house staff may be asked to provide cover for sickness absence on the refuse lorries.
- 6.1.7 The Task and Finish Group highlighted the recruitment process within Neighbourhood Environment in particular when a permanent FTE left the service they would not be replaced with a full time employee but with Agency Staff. It was noted that the turnover of staff has not been huge, mainly due to the recession. It was also noted that this method of recruitment is set to continue as it makes NBC more competitive in terms of costs. Bearing this in mind, the Task and Finish Group felt that there is a need for the Council to have a Policy stating, for example that no more than 30% Agency Staff be employed. Should the service go out to competitive dialogue with a Company that has say for example, 80% Agency staff and just 20% full time employees this would not meet the Council's Policy. It was emphasised that there does need to be a balance between quality and cost. The Task and Finish Group suggested that a Policy could be produced which stated that the Council managed the workforce and maintained the standard. It was emphasised that there would be clear legal implications regarding a stated Policy on the employment of Agency Staff. As a major employer the Council needs to be seen to helping the economy. It is accepted that there is a need for Agency Staff but an appropriate level must be met in normal circumstances.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The above overall findings have formed the basis for the following recommendations. The Task and Finish Group therefore recommends to Cabinet that: -

- 7.1.1 A procedure based on the document "*Transforming the procurement of temporary, agency and interim staff: your toolkit for success*" is produced and used by each Service Area when engaging temporary, Agency and Interim staff.
- 7.1.2 Cabinet considers the engagement of students from University of Northampton and Northampton college as well as apprenticeships and future job fund opportunities with generic skills, for the filling of temporary vacancies that are currently filled by Agency Staff. A central base of between one and four postgraduate students could be created.
- 7.1.3 Consideration is given to the introduction of a floating workforce that could be pooled by all departments.
- 7.1.4 Build into the Consultant engagement process an independent review after a set time period by the Head of Human Resources to ensure the engagement is still appropriate.
- 7.1.5 The Policy regarding the employment of Agency Staff be expanded and reviewed including: -
 - Setting a maximum percentage target for each directorate of Agency staff.
 - Confirm the definitions within the policy based on the definitions as set out in this report

Northampton Borough Council

Overview and Scrutiny

Report of the Cost of Consultants Task and Finish Group

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of the Task and Finish Group was: -

- To investigate the reasons for the use of consultants at Northampton Borough Council
- To investigate the reasons for the use of agency labour at Northampton Borough Council
- To consider the alternatives to using consultants
- To consider the alternatives to using agency labour
- To assess the risks involved in implementing these alternatives
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the work undertaken by consultants within the authority and determine the impact on the existing staff base
- To consider the costs involved by the Council in using consultants and to compare these costs to other similar local authorities, department by department, for the years 2005/06 and 2007/08
- To consider the costs involved by the Council in using agency labour and to compare these costs to other similar local authorities, department by department, for the years 2005/06 and 2007/08
- To examine the procurement arrangements associated with consultants department by department, for the years 2005/06 and 2007/08
- To examine the procurement arrangements associated with agency labour department by department, for the years 2005/06 and 2007/08
- To examine the procedure for the procurement arrangements associated with consultants and how this is budgeted for and financed
- To examine whether the use of consultants is a skilling or de-skilling process

1.2 A copy of the Scope of the Review is attached at Appendix A.

2. Context and Background

2.1 A previous Overview and Scrutiny Review into Historic Buildings and Regeneration was undertaken which noted the engagement of consultants in Planning Services. When Overview and Scrutiny Committee finalised its work programme, the issue of the employment of consultants by the Authority was

raised and it was requested that a Review of this issue be included onto the Work Programme. This request was agreed and the timescale for the Review set.

- 2.2 A Councillor Task and Finish Group was established comprising Councillor Tony Clarke (Chair); Councillors Joy Capstick, Jenny Conroy, Matthew Golby and Jamie Lane.
- 2.3 The Task and Finish Group agreed that the following needed to be investigated and linked to the realisation of the Council's corporate priorities:
- Detailed information for all Northampton Borough Council departments regarding spend in relation to consultants and Agency employees for the periods 2005/06 and 2007/08
 - Data from other (best practice) Local Authorities for the same periods, in particular a large district council. For comparison purposes the data will be altered to reflect population in respect of spend per population
 - Local Government Association (LGA) or similar guidance on the use of consultants and Agency workers
 - Evidence from NBC Directors (or Heads of Services)
 - Evidence from the Portfolio Holders (Finance) and (Performance and Improvement)
 - Evidence from the Portfolio Holders (Finance) and (Performance and Improvement) for the years 2005/06 and 2007/08
 - Evidence from members of the Council for the period 2005/06 and 2007/08 (current Members)
- 2.5 This Review links to the Council's corporate priorities as it demonstrates the Task and Finish Group investigating the efficiencies of the engagement of consultants and agency staff. Corporate priority 4 (we will be a well managed organisation that puts our customers at the heart of what we do) refers.

3. Evidence Collection

3.1 In scoping this Review it was decided that evidence would be collected from a variety of sources:

3.2 The Head of Human Resources

3.2.1 The Head of Human Resources provided baseline data.

3.2.2 Key points:-

3.2.3 The Council's definitions of:-

3.2.4 Consultant

3.2.4.1 Individual/company that is providing a contract for services and is commissioned to undertake work for the Authority on a specific project. This is not part of the establishment. The payment would be through the invoice system.

Agency Staff

- 3.2.5 Engaged to undertake a substantive post on the establishment. They are
- 3.2.5.1 employed by a third party, not Northampton Borough Council (NBC).

Temporary Staff

- 3.2.6 Undertaking a substantive post on the establishment, Provided with a
- 3.2.6.1 temporary contract of employment with Northampton Borough Council. Temporary staff are paid through Northampton Borough Council's payroll.

The Recruitment / Procurement process

3.2.7

Temporary staff

- 3.2.8 To recruit to a temporary staff member, the post must already have been
- 3.2.8.1 created on the establishment. An Authority to recruit (ATR) form needs to be completed for each post, stating the reasons for the recruitment, how the post is funded, the impact of not recruiting and signed-off by Finance Department and the Service Director confirming the budget.

Agency staff

- 3.2.9 The majority of agency staff are procured through a vendor-neutral managed
- 3.2.9.1 service run by a broker, which means that they do not provide agency workers themselves, but act as a single point of contact between NBC and other agencies to reduce costs and meet the diverse needs of the Council. An ATR form needs to be completed for each agency worker before any orders are placed with a broker.

- 3.2.9.2 Agency staff at Neighbourhood Environment operates slightly differently [waste operations] due to the immediacy of this service, the ATR process is open ended and the management goes direct to the Agency each morning to obtain staff, a broker's system is completed retrospectively.

- 3.2.9.3 If a broker is unable to find an agency worker with the appropriate skills and experience required, there is an exemption clause in the agreement, which enables NBC to go to a specialist agency direct. This is also utilised where the agency role is of a senior nature and from experience it is acknowledged that a broker contract will not provide these skills. In both instances this has to be approved by the Director for Finance and Support.

Consultants

- 3.2.10 The procurement of consultants varies dependent on the reason and type of
- 3.2.11 project that needs to be undertaken.

Reasons for utilising these approaches

3.2.12

Reasons to engage a temporary member of staff

3.2.12.1

- Limited funded role
- Maternity cover
- Secondment cover
- Newly funded post awaiting permanent recruitment

Purpose of engaging an agency member of staff

3.2.12.2

Agency staff are engaged to provide cover for substantive posts on the establishment. This cover is provided:

3.2.12.3

- To cover absence – for specific reasons; statutory requirement, income generating, vulnerable people at risk or risk to Health and Safety of public/customers/employees
- To cover role whilst recruitment is considered / undertaken
- Workforce plan reason if there are fluctuations in demand for services, business strategy to have core workforce and flexible staff structure (agency staff) to cope with these fluctuations.
- If service is undergoing change that may alter the needs of the service in the short term the decision may be made to recruit agency rather than permanent staff to mitigate against any potential redundancies of permanent staff already employed.

All agency posts are reviewed after 13 weeks.

3.2.12.4

As part of the budget savings in 2009/10 it was agreed that the Authority would reduce its spend on agency staff by £200, 000. This would be undertaken by applying the above approach to agency staff.

3.2.12.5

Reasons for engaging Consultants

3.2.12.6

Engagement of consultants is considered dependent on the following criteria:

3.2.12.7

- Project
- Skills Required
- Timescale of Project
- Capacity within the organisation

3.2.12.8 The benefits of engaging consultants are the level of skill and expertise that company / individual can bring to the organisation with the ability to focus on delivery for a specified period. Dependent on the project these skills can also be transferred to NBC staff as part of the project.

Alternative approaches

3.2.13

Temporary Staff:

3.2.14

This is dependent on the purpose of recruiting temporary staff. For example:

3.2.14.1

Filling a substantive post – if there is limited funding for a post, it cannot be filled on a permanent basis due to the short-term

nature of the post and implications for the employee. There is no suitable alternative to this.

Maternity cover/secondment cover – as there is already someone in post, it can only be covered on a temporary basis and we need the confidence of a fixed-term contract to ensure continuity of cover.

Newly funded post – the cover would be short-term and potentially for more than 13 weeks.

Agency staff:

3.2.15

This would be dependent on the reasons for using agency staff in the first instances. For example:

3.2.15.1

Sickness Cover – The only reason agency staff should be utilised in this instance is where the service is required to provide the function e.g. statutory service, vulnerable people at risk or risk to Health & Safety of public/customers/other employees. This cover is normally required immediately.

Alternative

3.2.15.2

There is very little alternative to this service, given the size of the Authority and economics of scale. Alternative for a significantly bigger authority would be to have an in-house agency or recruit over establishment for some of these services.

3.2.15.3

3.2.15.4

Recruitment Cover – Agency staff are utilised in the instance whilst a post is vacant and the manager is undertaking the recruitment process. The main benefit to this is the speed of response from agency. Agencies have already pre-checked staff (References, CRB etc) and staff can start within a very quick period. This is only utilised where for following apply:

- Statutory requirement
- Income generating
- Vulnerable people at risk or risk to health & Safety of public / customers/ other employees)
- Other options have been considered for providing this cover and deemed inappropriate

3.2.15.5

Alternatives:

- Reduce timeline of recruitment process – work on this area has already been started
- Bank staff – undertake work to pre recruit staff in preparation for vacancies, so that they are ready to be employed immediately once a vacancy arises. Given the size of the organisation and breadth of type of roles, this would not be viable.

- Outsource recruitment services to agency to undertake our recruitment based on the above approach. An agency may be able to provide this service due to undertaking work with other organisations. Negative to this is we would not be recruiting based on our values and priorities.

Fluctuations in demand for service – In these areas have core workforce and then when work peaks we use agency staff to cover these peaks.

Alternative – In house agency. Negatives – size of organisation would not provide the economies of scale in this area.

Changes to service – In this instance employing agency staff whilst changes to service are undertaken that may mean this role may no longer be required. The benefit of utilising agency staff is that there is potential mitigation against redundancy for permanent employees.

No suitable alternative.

Consultants:

3.2.15.6

3.2.15.6.1

The purpose of recruiting consultants is to bring skills and capacity to the organisation that the Council currently does not have or because of the timescales of the project. Alternative options such as recruiting staff permanently, temporary or through agency would be considered prior to consultants being utilised.

Analysis of Agency Staff Costs from January 2008 to November 2009

3.3

3.3.1

The following data is from the beginning of a broker's contract, January 2008 to November 2009. Attached at Appendix B is a breakdown of this data.

3.3.2

A broker contract first came into operation. These reductions are particularly high across Customer Services and ICT, Housing Needs and Support, Landlord Services, Neighbourhood Environmental Services and Revenue and Benefits.

Borough Solicitors Division (Chief Executive Directorate)

3.4

3.4.1

There had been a number of Solicitors and Senior Solicitors posts vacant. The gap this produced was filled with the supply of Solicitors through a broker contract to ensure various statutory obligations were met.

3.4.2

This financial year there has been a recruitment campaign to permanently recruitment to several of the vacant posts. Nevertheless there is still the need for additional expertise and an Employment Solicitor is currently assigned through a broker to work on several tribunal cases.

3.4.3

Other posts covered through a broker's contracts were Meeting Services Officer, Administration Assistant, Legal Support Assistant and several

Electoral Services Administrative Assistants.

Customer Services and ICT Division (Finance and Asset Directorate)

3.5.

3.5.1

The majority of the Agency Staff procured through a broker across all three periods for Customer Services relates to front line staff, mainly Customer Information Officers. These staff were recruited to cover peaks, service continuity during training, sickness absence and vacant posts, in addition there was a need to cover the telephonist roles on a temporary basis prior to the new voice recognition system being implemented.

3.5.2

The ICT spend on a broker mainly relates to Helpdesk Assistants and Business Analyst for specific project work.

3.5.2

The Head of Customer Services and ICT confirmed that she has looked at all of these lines detailing costs for Agency Staff and with the exception of the customer contact centre, where agency staff was employed for a fixed amount of time prior to introduction of the VR system, because permanent staff who used to man the switchboard had successfully secured alternative employment within NBC, the agency staff were all used to fill vacancies whilst recruitment was taking place.

3.5.3

The Head of Customer Services and ICT confirmed that these are all key front line services where calls need to be answered, staff needed to deal with face to face customers, with security of buildings and the cleaning and maintaining of the buildings the service cannot carry vacant posts. There is also the need to provide cover where there is sickness absence, in particular long-term sickness. The timescale for recruitment can take up to three months – the process involves advertising, shortlisting, interview/assessment day and then period of notice for the successful applicant. The Service has an ongoing requirement for temporary staff whilst this recruitment is progressing. The cost of the temporary staff is met from the revenue budget as obviously the Service is not incurring spend against this budget whilst the posts are vacant. The exception to this is cover during staff sickness where the Service area would have to make savings elsewhere to pay for the temporary cover but as these are front line essential services we have no choice or service to customers would be severely affected.

Finance and Assets Division (Finance and Asset Directorate)

3.6

3.6.1

The ongoing implementation of more Agresso system modules has required specialist skills and knowledge which has been met through a broker contract and equates to almost half the spend in this area.

3.6.2

The spend against Asset Management covers the posts of Valuation and Estates Manager, Building Surveyor, Senior Maintenance Planner and Accommodation Officer due to new posts being identified in the proposed restructure, cover for a Career Break and the Accommodation Review.

Housing Needs and Support Division (Housing Directorate)

3.7

- 3.7.1 The majority of the spend in this area relates to the Housing Options Team, Housing Solutions and Sheltered Housing.
- 3.7.2 The Housing Options and Housing Solutions Teams have changed systems, introduced a Choice Based Lettings solution and have under gone a restructure. Additional resources were required to review the Housing Register and re-register all applicants under the Choice Based Lettings Policy.
- 3.7.3 Housing Option Officers, Housing Options Team Leader as well as a Housing Needs Manager was required during the restructure and pending filling posts.
- 3.7.4 Agency staff had been used in Sheltered Housing to cover Maternity Leave, vacant posts and absences due to Long Term Sickness primarily relating to the Sheltered Housing Coordinators.
- 3.7.5 The Head of Housing Needs and Support confirmed that there are two areas specifically where interim managers have been used - Housing Solutions and Independent Living.
- 3.7.6 Given the challenges in Homelessness and Allocations an experienced manager was needed to take the service forward, build capacity within the workforce and deliver some key outcomes e.g. Introduction of Choice based Lettings, reduction in numbers of households in Temporary accommodation.
- 3.7.7 There were no staff in the organisation with this skills set and an interim manager was recruited. This manager has now become the permanent Housing Solutions manager and has saved the council significant sums of money by driving down both the numbers in temporary accommodation and the costs of that accommodation and leading on developing the range of homelessness prevention services e.g. Mortgage Rescue. The Housing Options Team Leader post has been kept vacant in order to offset the costs of the interim arrangements.
- 3.7.8 The Council has unsuccessfully attempted to recruit to the post of Independent Living manager on three separate occasions in the past 18 months. Given the challenges in Sheltered Housing and Call Care services, it was felt to be important to bring in a skilled manager to support the team leaders and move the service forward particularly given the challenges in regard to Supporting people funding and delivery of the Quality Assessment framework. Over the past year there have been significant improvements in this service not least the accreditation to the Telecare services association (TSA) and the awarding of a level "B" by supporting people for the Sheltered Housing service.
- 3.7.9 It was highlighted that the proposed restructure of the Housing directorate will address the historic difficulties in recruiting to this post and it is not intended to continue with these interim arrangements once the structure has been agreed and any vacant posts recruited to. However, there may be specific pieces of work that require a range of skills that we do not currently have in the workforce. A good example would be the work on the PFI, which would not be manageable without external support. Given our Housing inspection later this year and our ambition to be a 3 star Housing service, such support is

occasionally necessary and presents value for money.

3.7.10 **Housing Strategy, Investment and Performance Division (Housing Directorate)**

3.7.11 Major Works have covered specific Projects and Vacant posts following the restructure through the use of Agency workers. The posts covered are Project Manager, Clerk of Works, Project Officer, Technical Clerk (Data) and Data Officer.

3.8 **Housing Landlord Services Division (Housing Directorate)**

3.8.1 Agency workers are used to cover holiday cover, workload peaks and seasonal variation in the requirement for Trade Operatives across all trades. Other areas of spend have related to Housing Officer post cover due to vacancies following the restructure.

3.8.2 Further details were supplied by the Head of Landlord Services regarding Agency staff usage over this period:-

3.8.3 The Agency staff costs have been examined.

3.8.4 Costs in property maintenance, including the electrical team are front line posts delivering repairs to tenants. They were used to cover vacant posts, and at a time of restructure whilst the permanent establishment was being put together.

3.8.5 Costs for housing needs were vacant posts and also buying in expertise that did not exist within the organisation for implementing choice based lettings.

3.8.6 Other posts were vacant front line posts and cover for maternity leave.

3.8.7 Overall costs were within budget, including the costs of Agency Staff.

3.9 **Neighbourhood Environmental Services Division (Environment and Culture Directorate)**

3.9.1 Domestic Waste, Recycling and Street Cleaning require Agency workers to ensure all rounds can be fully covered. Due to the nature of the service Agency workers are recruited on the same day they are required, this way of working ensures budget savings and service continuity during the Strategic Business Review.

3.10 **Planning Division (Planning and Regeneration Directorate)**

3.10.1 Agency workers were used during 2008/2009 to deliver improvements required in Planning under the Corporate Performance Assessment and service inspections. An Interim Development Control and Building Control Manager was procured through A broker initially for a four-month period as well as a support officer.

Revenue and Benefits Division (Finance and Asset Directorate)

- 3.10.2 The Revenue and Benefits service was one of the Council's Improvement
- 3.10.3 Priorities. Several vacant posts across the service for Benefit Assessors and Team Leaders has meant that Agency workers have been used to ensure key positions are filled, during 2008/2009 there were approximately 17,000 customers reliant upon Housing and Council Tax Benefit, many of whom are our most vulnerable members of the community.
- 3.10.4 Agency workers have continued to be used more in terms of sustaining current performance achieved at top quartile and not allowing the capacity issues created by the recession impacting on that performance.
- 3.10.5 Recruitment for Benefit Assessors has taken place to meet some of the gaps.
- 3.11 **Town Centre Management Division (Environment and Culture Directorate)**
- 3.11.1 Agency workers are used for day and night Bus Station cleaners. These workers cover sickness and other absences and are a cost effective way to cover these gaps.
- 3.11.2 Another post covered by an agency worker is Operations Assistant in Parking.
- 3.12 **A broker's criteria to engage Agencies**
- 3.12.1 Agents are required to sign up to:-
- A broker Supplier Agreement – Northampton Borough Council
 - Supplier Enrolment Registration Form
 - Supplier Rate Agreement
- 3.12.3 The contract with this particular broker ran from January 2007 until April 2010.
- 3.12.4 **A broker's Supplier Agreement**
- 3.12.5 A broker's Supplier Agreement includes information of the Supplier's obligations and Broker's Obligations as detailed below: -
- 3.12.6 **The Supplier's Obligations**
- 3.12.7 The Supplier has to comply with, and require the Temporary Workers to comply with, all reasonable instructions of a broker or the Customer in relation to access to the Customer's premises at all times during the Assignments including the Council's security requirements as detailed in the Agreement and such other security measures as are from time to time introduced by the Council at any Premises.
- 3.12.8 The Supplier is asked to at all times take all such precautions as are necessary to protect the health and safety of the Temporary and shall comply with the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and any other Acts, Regulations or Orders pertaining to Health and Safety at Work.

- 3.12.9 The Supplier is requested to provide to each Temporary Worker a copy of the Customer's Statement of Health and Safety at Work Policy and appropriate Codes of Practice and the Customer's Compliance Manual (including any amendments in force from time to time) copies of which will be made available on request. Whilst on the Customer's premises the Supplier shall require Temporary Workers to comply with the same.
- 3.12.10 The Suppliers are requested to immediately inform a broker where it becomes aware of any accident which has occurred during an Assignment involving any of the Temporary Workers and shall ensure that an accident report for the same, in such form as the Customer may from time to time require, is completed promptly in respect of each such accident.
- 3.12.11 The Suppliers performs all interviews, curricula vitae verification, and testing and/or background checks as specified in the Agreement and Schedules in respect of each Temporary Worker proposed to be assigned to the Customer.
- 3.12.12 The obligations further state that at any time, upon the reasonable request of a broker or the Customer, the Supplier shall remove any Temporary Worker assigned to the Customer and, upon the request of a broker the Supplier shall arrange for the provision of a replacement Temporary Worker at no extra cost. The Supplier shall indemnify a broker and the Customer for any claims, loss or damages made by the Temporary Worker as a result of such removal. Where A broker or the Customer requests the removal of a Temporary Worker within four (4) hours of commencement of an Assignment A broker will not be charged for four (4) hours of that Assignment.
- 3.12.13 The Supplier is asked to ensure all Temporary Workers assigned to the Customer are eligible to work legally in the Relevant Jurisdiction. In the event that a Temporary Worker is found to be ineligible to work in a Relevant Jurisdiction, then upon the Supplier becoming aware of such ineligibility, the Supplier shall cause the immediate termination of such Temporary Worker and shall where necessary arrange for the provision of a replacement Temporary Worker within a reasonable time thereafter. The Supplier shall indemnify a broker and the Customer for any claims, loss or damages made by the Temporary Worker as a result of such termination.
- 3.12.14 The Supplier must provide a broker with the reports and information reasonably requested by a broker or as set out in the Agreement.
- 3.12.15 The Supplier shall supply to each Temporary Worker any information disclosed by a broker to the Supplier under its obligations.
- 3.12.16 The Supplier is required to ensure that: -
- each of its Temporary Workers wear suitable clothing and safety footwear when on duty and for such clothing to be at all times smart and clean;
 - on termination of any Assignment, on the date of such termination security passes, instruction manuals, information and any other property of the Customer supplied by or on behalf of the Customer to

each Temporary Worker are returned to the Customer.

- 3.12.17 The Supplier must comply with the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998.
- 3.12.18 The Supplier should be able to demonstrate that it has in place policies and procedures to comply with all equal opportunities legislation including:
- demonstrating if requested effective implementation of equal opportunities policies and diversity in the workforce policies in relation to recruitment practices including at least evidence of open recruitment methods such as use of the Job Centre or press advertisements;
 - regularly review the full range of equality policies and procedures and take specific action to make any necessary changes; and
 - regularly monitor the ethnic composition of its workforce.
- 3.12.19 The Supplier is requested to observe as far as possible the Commission for Racial Equality's Code of Practice in Employment as approved by Parliament in 1983.
- 3.12.20 The Supplier shall in all matters arising in the performance of the Services comply with all Acts of Parliament and with all Orders Regulations Statutory Instruments and Bye-laws made with statutory Council by Government Departments or by local or other authorities that shall be applicable to the Agreement and shall indemnify and keep indemnified A broker and the Council against the consequence of any breach of its obligations under this clause.
- 3.12.21 The Supplier's staff and Temporary Workers are asked to observe any rules applicable to the Premises including but not limited to the Council's ban on smoking in the workplace. The Supplier shall not in the performance of the Agreement in any manner knowingly endanger the safety or unlawfully interfere with the convenience of the public.
- 3.12.22 The Supplier must comply, and require the Temporary Workers comply, with the Council's security requirements and such other security measures as are from time to time introduced by the Council at any Premises as notified to it or them by A broker or the Customer.
- 3.12.23 The Supplier must at all times take all such precautions as are necessary to protect the health and safety of the Supplier's staff, the Temporary Workers, the Council's employees and members of the public and shall comply with the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and any other Acts, Regulations or Orders pertaining to Health and Safety at Work.
- 3.12.24 Whilst on the premises the Supplier shall require the Supplier's staff and Temporary Workers to comply with the Council's Statement of Health and Safety at Work Policy and appropriate Codes of Practice.
- The Supplier must allow a broker access to all information in any format at any time, which relates to the Services including financial records and temporary

worker personnel records in order to audit the Supplier as necessary. The Supplier shall ensure that any permission to do this are procured from the temporary workers and third parties.

A broker's Obligations

3.12.25

Where available a broker shall provide the Supplier with a copy of the

3.12.26

Customer's rules of conduct and its rules for health and safety (including any amendments in force from time to time).

3.12.27

A broker shall designate the individuals with whom the Supplier and/or the Temporary Workers should communicate (as necessary in each Order) with respect to the Supplier's performance of the Services and with respect to the Temporary Workers' performance of the Assignments.

3.12.28

Where provided with the same by the Customer, A broker shall give the Suppliers full details of:

- the intended duties of the Temporary Worker;
- any special skills which it requires the Temporary Worker to have including any experience, training, qualifications or authorisations including those required by a professional body or by law;
- any risks to health and safety known to the Customer and any steps that may have been taken to prevent or control such risks;
- any specific health and safety information, which the Customer wishes to be passed on to the Temporary Worker.

3.12.29

A broker warrants it has secured written confirmation from the Customer that the Customer shall provide on behalf of the Supplier sufficient supervision, direction and control over the Temporary Worker throughout the Assignment and that it will discharge responsibility for the health and safety of each Temporary Worker from the start of any Assignment.

3.12.30

The Service Level Agreement (Schedule 1) sets out the required standards that shall be delivered by the Supplier

3.12.31

Supplier Enrolment Registration Form

3.12.32

The Supplier Enrolment Registration Form allows for a broker to 'screen' Agents applying to join the service. A broker asks the prospective Agents to provide detailed information about the company, which includes asking the Agent to sign up to the self-billing agreement.

3.12.33

Supplier Rate Agreement

The Supplier Rate Agreement sets out four main conditions as detailed below:-

- All transactions will take place via a broker's website;

- The Supplier's charges will be made up of temporary worker's pay + a mark up over pay. A broker express „mark-up“ as a mark-up over the basic rate of pay + NI + WTR + agency margin in the case of PAYE temporary workers, and basic rate of pay + agency margin only in the case of self-employed temporary workers. All mark-up figures quoted will be consistent with this approach;
- The Supplier will be required to meet the obligations, and undertake to abide by the contractual terms, set out in the Supplier Agreement, which will be provided to you by a broker. The Supplier understands and acknowledges that failure to agree to the same may result in the Supplier being unable to continue to supply; and
- The Supplier agrees and acknowledges that neither A broker nor the Client shall be under any obligation to pay invoices in respect of any timesheets or expenses submitted at any time following the expiry of a six week period from the date of the assignment.

3.12.34 Supplier's performance will be reviewed within the first three (3) months of the go live date in accordance with a broker-balanced scorecard. Once this review is complete, Suppliers will be organised into tiers and orders cascaded accordingly

3.12.35 A new contract with a different broker was entered into in April 2010. The broker is not vendor neutral but is a managed service contract. The Council is required to sign up to a Framework Agreement relating to the managed service for temporary workers.

3.12.36 The section relating to the service provided by the broker states:-

3.12.37 **“The Services**

3.12.38 *The Contractor shall provide the Services under any Contract made in connection with this Agreement in accordance with the Council's requirements as set out in the Specification and the relevant Access Agreement in consideration of the payment of the Price, and on the terms of this Agreement and the Contract. If the end date for any Services extends beyond the expiry of the Term, then the terms of this Agreement shall be deemed to apply to such Services until the relevant end date.*

The Contractor will be responsible for providing all Temporary Workers ordered from the Contractor by the Council.

The Contractor will offer a Managed Solution for the provision of Temporary Workers through a centralised management agent to the Council. The Contractor is permitted to use associated companies or subsidiary companies including sister/parent companies as a source of supply provided that the Contractor ensures that the following conditions are met:

In sending out requests for Temporary Workers, associated subsidiary and

sister/parent companies of the Contractor do not receive favourable treatment

All quotes returned to the Contractor are treated equally

The Services shall include a guarantee by Contractor that the Equipment shall maintain such standards and specifications as to compatibility with other systems and equipment as described in the Specification. The Council and the Participating Authorities shall have the power to inspect and examine the performance of the Services at the Council's Premises at any reasonable time or, provided that the Council gives reasonable notice to the Contractor, at any other premises where any part of the Services is being performed.

The Contractor shall at all times deliver the Services in accordance with the Law.

In the event that the Council notifies the Contractor of the Council's reasonably held opinion that any part of the Services do not meet the requirements of the Contract or differ in any way from those requirements, and this is other than as a result of default or negligence on the part of the Council, the Contractor shall at its own expense re-schedule and perform the Services correctly within such reasonable time as may be specified by the Council.

The Contractor shall use reasonable endeavours to provide the Services in a timely way, including in relation to commencing the provision of the Services within the time agreed or on a specified date.

Without prejudice to any other rights and remedies the Council may have pursuant to the Contract, the Contractor shall reimburse the Council for all reasonable costs incurred by the Council which have arisen as a direct consequence of the Contractor's delay in the performance of the Contract which the Contractor has failed to remedy after being given reasonable notice from the Council. "

The specific section regarding the engagement of Agency Staff details:-

3.12.39

"Temporary Workers

3.12.40

In providing the Services the Contractor shall take appropriate steps to ensure that its vendors are aware they must supply only persons who are appropriately qualified, experienced and trained in the appropriate accountabilities.

The Authorised Representative, acting fairly and reasonably, shall be entitled on request, which, if given orally shall subsequently confirmed in writing, to require the Contractor, at no cost to the Council or the Participating authorities to facilitate the remove of any Temporary Worker provided by a vendor from the provision of the Services and, if required, provide a replacement, where a replacement is available. Such removal shall only be required after the vendor has been given the opportunity to make representations to the Contractor. If a Temporary Worker is rejected within the first four hours there will be no charge to the Council.

The Contractor shall take all reasonable steps to ensure that when on Council or the Participating Authorities premises, Temporary Workers carry identification as and when specified by the Council or the Participating Authorities and produce this identification when requested to do so by any member of the Council or the Participating Authorities' staff or by any service user.

The Contractor shall take all reasonable steps to ensure that Temporary Workers are aware they must:

Perform their duties in a competent, orderly and efficient manner and as quietly as may reasonably be practicable having regard to the nature of the duties being performed by them; and

Adhere to the Council or the Participating Authorities' policies and procedures as communicated to the Contractor by the Authorised Representative;

Do not smoke on Council or the Participating Authorities premises other than in designated areas, if any

Are properly attired in any necessary protective clothing and presentable,

While on the Council or Participating Authorities' premises or otherwise in the course of their Assignment do not engage in behaviour or activities, which are contrary to the Council or the Participating Authorities' interests,

Do not accept or solicit any gratuity, tip, or other benefit or reward.

The Contractor recognises that performance of the Contract may require Temporary Workers to work on duties involving access to children, vulnerable adults, or other members of the public towards whom the Council or the Participating Authorities owes a special duty of care, or have access to information of a sensitive or confidential nature. In such instances, the Contractor will be responsible for ensuring by specifying the requirement in the contract with vendors and undertaking regular audits to determine compliance, that the vendor carries out the necessary recruitment vetting checks as specified by the Council or the Participating Authorities. The Contractor shall ensure by specifying the requirement in the contract with vendors that Temporary Workers have given their written permission for such a check to be made and that they are aware that any spent convictions will be disclosed on such a check.

Any person whom the Authorised Representative deems to be unsuitable, either as result of the checks or by virtue of a lack of co-operation in facilitating the check, shall immediately be removed and replaced in accordance with the relevant sub-clause. The Authorised Representative shall not exercise the right contained within this sub-clause arbitrarily, vexatiously or capriciously.

Save to the extent that any removal in accordance with the relevant clauses is unlawful or unreasonable, the Council shall not in any circumstances be liable to either the Contractor or the Temporary Worker in respect of any liability, loss or damage occasioned by such removal and the Contractor shall fully

indemnify the Council against any such claim.”

3.13 **Desktop Research**

- 3.13.1 The London Centre of Excellence produced a Commissioning Toolkit for the procurement of consultancy and professional services. The toolkit was used within the scope of the Review to provide a comparison to Northampton’s policy for engaging consultants as well as being considered by the Task and Finish Group as guidance material.
- 3.13.2 The London Centre of Excellence (LCE) gave grant funding to the London Borough of Havering in 2005/06 to analyse the use of agency staff, and to find ways of achieving cashable and non-cashable savings in the procurement of this element of the workforce.
- 3.13.3 The project had three main objectives:
- To undertake an in-depth analysis of a typical London Local Authority with unmanaged agency staff expenditure;
 - To undertake an analysis of the London-wide position with regard to the use of agency staff.
 - To develop a step-by-step guide for authorities to use in order to achieve efficiency savings in the procurement of agency staff.
- 3.13.4 The Review found that around £500 million was spent on agency staff across London during 2004-05, and agency and temporary workers accounted for up to 25% of the total workforce. Few Local Authorities had readily available management information about their agency and temporary workforce, commission, rates of pay, and quality of service from agencies was dissimilar.
- 3.13.5 The Toolkit uses four basic models for the provision of temporary workers through a managed service have been identified, namely Vendor Neural; Master Vendor; Internal and Partially Outsourced Human Resources. The guidance was written by local government HR, finance and procurement professionals and sets out the different approaches to attracting and engaging temporary workers supplied to the public sector through the large number of temporary staffing agencies. It also offers guidance on how to select the approach best suited to an organisation's needs, the latest legal and HR advice and number of best practice case studies.
- 3.13.6 No ideal solution emerged from these market studies and there are pros and cons associated with each model, but all four models of managed service offer the potential of significant savings and other management benefits to the client compared with an unco-ordinated and uncontrolled environment.
- 3.13.7 The Toolkit highlights potential risks where procurement of agency and temporary workers is not managed, illustrates options available for taking control and provides information on best practice in implementing a managed service from the experience of local and district authorities both within and outside of London.
- 3.13.8

The Toolkit lists the possible reasons for using agency staff: -

- · Flexibility
- · Covering sickness
- · Inability to recruit permanent staff
- · Time to recruit
- · Seasonal
- · Business process
- · Cost

3.13.9

The Task and Finish Group considered possible benefits of alternatives to the employment of Agency Staff such as the engagement of postgraduate students with processing skills and a 'floating workforce' that could be pooled.

3.13.10

Research with Other Local Authorities regarding spend on Agency Staff and Consultants

3.13.11

Desktop research was undertaken with other Local Authorities regarding their usage of Consultants and Agency staff for the periods of time being investigated by the Task and Finish Group.

3.13.12

Some of the information provided by other Local Authorities is confidential and some of the Authorities contacted have asked not to be named in this report. The Local Authorities are therefore referred to as Authority A, Authority B, Authority C etc. Local Authorities in Northamptonshire, district Authorities with a similar population to that of Northampton and Unitary Councils in England with a similar population were contacted.

3..13.13

The following questions were put to the Local Authorities: -

- The costs involved by the Council in using consultants, department by department, for the years 2005/06 and 2007/08
- The costs involved by the Council in using agency labour, department by department, for the years 2005/06 and 2007/08
- Number of full time equivalent employees
- Type of Authority such as Unitary/District etc. Details of which are provided in paragraph 1.3 of this briefing note
- Which Services such as Housing, Leisure or Waste are in house
- The Council's current rating score.

3.13.14

Some Local Authorities were not able to answer all of the questions. Some were able to just group the figures by year, rather than department by department.

3.13.15

Summary – District Councils

Authority A's spend on consultancy costs for the two periods were the highest of the five district councils at £7.47 and £25.12 respectively. The same applies to s costs for Agency staff at £15.40 and £17.37. However, the Authority A stressed that external funding from Grants (Growth Area Funding and Planning Delivery Grant) matched Authority A's expenditure and did not form part of the cost to be met from Council Tax Payers.

3.6.7

3.6.8 Authority B's spend on consultancy costs per head of population for the two periods was £1.73 and £2.93 respectively and was the lowest. However, Authority B's Agency staff spend per head of population for these periods was the second highest from the five Councils that responded.

3.6.9 Authority C's Agency staff costs for the two periods was the lowest of the five district councils that responded.

3.6.10 Data published in December 2009 details that all of the district councils that had supplied consultancy and agency usage data have a CAA score of 2 for use of resources.

3.6.11 The reasons for consultancy and agency use by the Local Authorities was not collected.

Summary – Unitary Authorities

3.6.12

It is reiterated that the reasons for consultancy and agency use by the Local Authorities was not collated. In addition, Unitary Authorities may include costs for consultants and agency staff for services that are delivered at a county council level such as social services and education; FTE figures will also include staff for such areas.

3.6.13

Based on the costs per head of population for the period 2005/06 for consultants, Authority D's costs were lower than Authority E's by £6.97 per head. The same information for both Councils was not available for the period 2007/08.

3.6.14

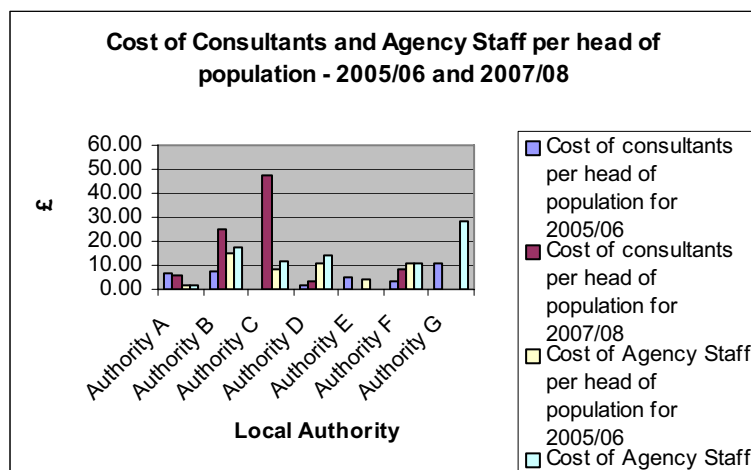
Agency staff costs for the two periods for Authority D had remained very similar at £2,090,298 and £2,063,800 respectively. However, Agency spend for Authority E over the two periods had risen by around 171.34% to £5,453,555.63.

3.6.15

Data published in December 2009 confirms that Authority DI has a CAA score of 2 for use of resources and Authority E a score of 4.

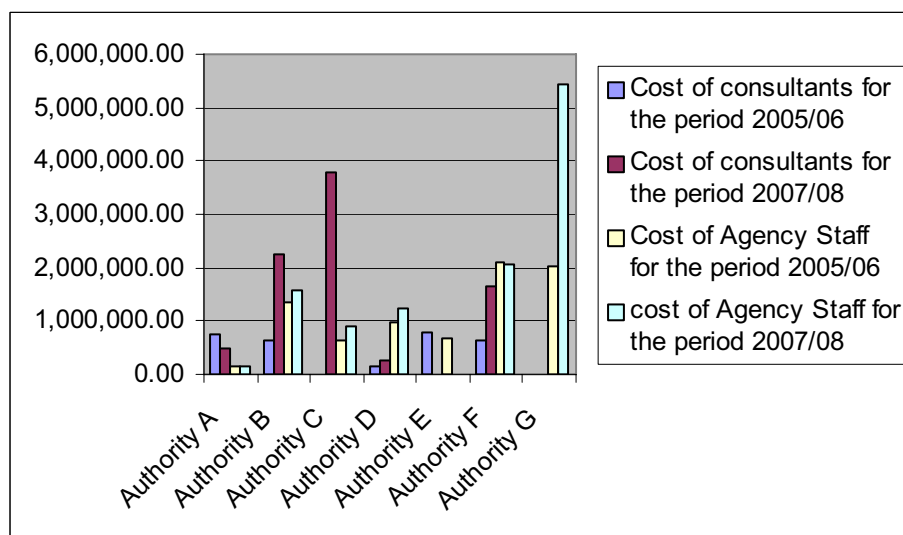
3.6.16

The graph below shows a comparison of the seven Local Authorities of the consultant costs and Agency costs per head of population for the periods 2005/06 and 2007/08. It is noted that where the line shows £0 this is because the Authority provided no cost data for that year.



3.6.17

The graph below details a comparison of the total costs of consultant use and agency staff for the periods 2005/06 and 2007/08.



4

4.1 Witness Evidence

4.2 A list of core questions were devised and put to the Portfolio for Finance for the periods 2005/2006, 2007/2008 and the current Portfolio Holder for Finance:

4.2.1 Portfolio Holder (Finance) for the period 2005/06

Key points:

- The Portfolio Holder for Finance 2005/06's personal definition of a consultant was to provide a service that was not available internally, more specialists that you would expect to find within the organisation. The role of a consultant should be time limited. Consultants can be seen to be a pricey way of arriving a solution. Consultants come from a self-generating industry where a need or requirement is identified and the solution comes from a fairly limited pool. A locum is an individual covering an absence or short term skill of what would usually be provided in-house, for example doctor locum – short term. An individual covering a vacant post in his opinion would be temporary staff; a consultant should bring something extra to the organisation.

- During 2005/06 central Government was keen that the Council had external help and central Government provided funding for this. A high proportion of the costs of consultants during this time did not infringe upon the taxpayer. There was a fairly constant aura of reorganisation at the time, for instance generalist Directors and generalist managers. The next tiers down did not get completely going as the Chief Executive at time left the Authority.
- Consultants are brought in for specific Reviews and Projects and that this work has been externalised, is the case because the organisation is looking for a broader solution. Previously the view was to keep all work in house, there is now a need to look wider, and it is unlikely that an Authority will have all knowledge in house. There is also a need for objectivity.
- We don't always find what we need in-house. By their very nature consultants are likely to have a broader knowledge of running services, if consultants come in they can bring in broader knowledge, they should be able to bring objectivity to it which carries greater weight than the department saying we are great.
- It is for higher-level managers to manage and produce results. The Portfolio Holder for Finance 2005/06 would expect to see how they are moving towards results but would not expect to be involved in recruitment.
- During 2005/06 there was a pro consultant management culture, partly due to comfort and partly due to all the changes that were being implemented. During this period consultants brought a broader view of how services should be run.
- The role of Councillors in the Portfolio Holder for Finance for 2005/06's opinion is to decide the direction of the Authority, how much it will spend, monitoring process and what it is going to charge its tax payers.
- There is a need to have the brief prior to engaging a consultant, for example a consultant being required in housing in respect of tenant transfers, the consultant would need to be an expert in consulting with tenants. Politicians need to decide on the end target and it is up to the consultant to get you there.
- Consultants are based on their reputation if they are known to be steered on working on management advice and not their expertise, they would find it difficult to obtain contracts.

4.4

4.4.1

Portfolio Holder (Finance) for the period 2007/2008

Key point: -

- A top-level consultant would be expected to provide expert advice and have professional expertise in the project. The gross turnover of the

Authority, including rent collections, which equates to around £200 million, plus capital projects must be taken into account in respect of the engagement of consultants.

- External regional funding has been provided for some projects. Consultants may be engaged for such projects. In the main most consultants incur in house expenditure.
- A consultant was engaged for a long time in Revenues and Benefits. `Interim` staff were also employed.
- The Portfolio Holder for Finance would be involved if the engagement of consultants was at Management Board level.
- Any Consultancy company with any merit would provide a letter of understanding together with its daily rates; estimated time to complete the work etc and the project would be managed in accordance to this. If the project identifies further work, the consultant's contact is often extended.
- Some consultants that were engaged during this timescale have now left and posts have been filled by permanent employees. An organisation of this size will very rarely be without the engagement of consultants of some kind, but this needs to be managed.
- All funding is public money and external funding is required to be dealt with as sensibly and tightly as if it was Council money.

4.5

Current Portfolio Holder (Finance)

4.5.1

Key points: -

- The Portfolio Holder for Finance confirmed that he was not surprised that the Council engaged Agency, temporary and Consultancy staff but felt the extent of usage to be interesting.
- It would not be expected for an organisation to rely on such staff for long periods unless it was going through a period of change, during which time it would be expected for the usage to increase. Once the period of change had ended and any problems rectified it would be expected that usage of Agency, temporary and consultancy staff would diminish. This Authority has gone through a significant period of change over the last six years, therefore the usage of Agency, temporary and Consultancy staff would be expected to reduce as the Authority settles down.
- The Portfolio Holder for Finance would expect that usage of temporary and Agency staff would be ongoing to cover, for example, maternity leave, sick leave and seasonality in workload. Such staff could be used whilst the Pay and Grading Review is being undertaken as it may be difficult to recruit when there could be uncertainty regarding the level of pay.
- There needs to be a good, valid reason to recruit Agency and temporary staff. Consultants are more expensive and visible and their usage is expected to diminish. Consultants are engaged where there is a need for an area of expertise, for example in regeneration. Consultants are usually engaged for `one off projects.` Another layer of consultants is in respect of change management, which in the Portfolio Holder for Finance's opinion usage of which within the Authority would now begin to diminish.
- There are signs of consultant usage within the Authority diminishing; for

example, a consultant has finished its work within Revenues and Benefits. A consultant had also been engaged on the bank reconciliation project. This project has now been completed, NBC staff has been trained and the organisation has improved as a result.

- Many consultants, particularly in the area of Regeneration, are engaged due to technicalities and diversity of the issues and projects. The Portfolio Holder for Finance confirmed that he would expect this to be ongoing.
- Some consultants are engaged for change management where they can act as a catalyst for change, for example the Pay and Grading Review and in Housing.
- Regarding Locum Solicitors being categorised as a consultant or Agency staff, the Portfolio Holder for Finance confirmed that he would look at all the facts as to what job they did and its purpose. If this was exceptional, such as working on a project they would be classed a consultant. However, it would be dependant upon all the facts of the case and not the means by which they were engaged.
- Over the past six years there has been exceptional usage of Agency staff and consultants. During this period there were significant periods of change. The Portfolio Holder for Finance would expect a decline in the engagement of consultants as changes are implemented. There has been a lot of Agency staff engaged in direct labour this could be due to the Pay and Grading Review. There have clearly been significant usage of consultants in Revenues and Benefits and Housing but it is expected that this will come to a close around Christmas 2009. There might be the need for consultants in respect of the PFI bid to provide legal and accountancy advice.
- The decision regarding the engagement of consultants is made at director and chief executive level. It depends of the type of consultant required, for example if a consultant is required for a specific project the decision is taken by the relevant director. If a change management consultant is required, the decision is taken in consultation with the Chief Executive.
- One of the areas of change that has been identified regarding the need to improve is Human Resources computerised records and systems so that it becomes routine and not an onerous task to obtain such requested data. There is a need to ensure consistency of coding of consultancy and Agency Staff, which is part of on-going change and training.
- There are historic inconsistencies of data coding.
- Procurement and finance for consultants would be built into the budget. Requirements for specific projects would be identified, for example, within Regeneration; this is built into the budget for big tasks/projects. Next year's budget is also informed by last year's expenditure. When putting together the budget, accountants would look both backwards and forwards.

4.6

Councillors

4.6.1

Councillors for the years 2005/06 and 2007/08 were contacted and asked to provide a response to a list of core questions. The questions that were put to

there Councillors were: -

- What is the set criterion that defines a consultant
- What is the range of consultants used by the Authority, for example, previous employees to the Council that have now retired to the use of Consultancy Agencies?
- Who makes the decision regarding the employment of Consultants?
- How is the budget for consultants procured/financed?
- Any additional comments that in respect of the use of consultants during your term of office

4.6.2

Four responses were received as detailed below: -

4.6.3

In summary the four Councillors were not aware of the criterion that defines a consultant but one Councillor suggested that he would define a consultant as someone who is contracted by the Council, but not directly employed, to give specialist advice or someone with specific knowledge or expertise that is employed or contracted for specific time to complete or advise on a specific course of action. For example an outside person employed to provide training for Councillors.

4.6.4

The perceived range of consultants used by the Authority varied: -

- Agency Staff to support tenants
- Solicitors
- Agency Staff to carry out consultations, e.g., stock transfer
- Experts in the field of planning and regeneration

4.6.5

The Councillors that responded to the questionnaire felt, in the main, that the decision regarding the employment of a consultant was made politically but could depend upon the size and nature of the contract as defined in the council's contract and procurement procedures

4.6.6

The four Councillors were not aware of how the budget for consultants was procured/financed but commented that budgets exist for which it may be decided that the best way to achieve the desired outcome from that budget is through the use of consultants. Budgets for consultants can also be procured in different ways at different times. For example during the period when the council was being monitored externally The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) provide finance for and I believe appointed many of the outside "helpers"

4.6.7

Additional comments included on the completed questionnaires: -

- In regeneration consultants have been used for a number of purposes. In particular for the specialist advice relating to the signing of the Grosvenor/Greyfriars development agreement. It would not have been possible to have confidence that the agreement was the best possible one for the council without that specialist advice.
- In planning, specialist advice has been sought on retail development, in particular on specialist retail in the town centre,

and the impact of out of town retail development.

- The Council has sought specialist advice for the market square project, in its design and layout, particularly in relation to the gateway area (including the fountain) and specialist advice on lighting.
- External advisors have also been contracted to assist the council in the development of its car parking strategy.
- In all cases these cases I believe these consultants have offered us specialist advice, which the council could not expect to retain in house as, employed staff.

4.7

Trade Union Representatives

4.7.1

Key points: -

- A discussion took place around six years ago regarding the introduction of a Council Policy for the employment of Agency Staff – this had been supported by the Trade Unions. However, the current Management Board has not as yet discussed this issue.
- Trade Unions can see the need for the employment of Agency staff especially where there are peaks and troughs in workloads and in restructure situations where there could be the potential for redundancies. In the past, the employment of Agency staff had been along these lines.
- Agency Staff are often employed as manual and craft Agency employees, for example within Property Maintenance. There are often peaks and troughs in workload within this area.
- The Trade Unions have concerns regarding the extended use of Agency staff in areas such as Street Scene. For example, if the service is running at an average of ten per cent sickness, there would be a need for Agency Staff to cover this, i.e. there is a need for the refuse area to be fully staffed.
- Within last year's budget (2009/2010), savings from Street Scene were aimed to be achieved by replacing twenty-seven permanent staff with Agency staff. The Trade Unions had concerns regarding the terms and conditions of Agency staff, for example some Agency staff arrive at 7am and are informed that there is no work available for that day. Agency staff is a cheaper way to provide the labour but creates a two-tier workforce.
- The Trade Unions has concerns regarding the amount that is spent on the employment of Consultants. The Trade Unions did however understand the need for consultants when the Council was in the process of recruiting its Management Board.
- The Trade Unions felt that the level of expertise bought in (consultants) did not appear to be delivering the outcomes, in their opinion there has been a number of failings.
- The Trade Unions were not fully aware of the sum being spent on consultants by the Council, but felt that this sum should be used to support full time, permanent posts.
- It is the Trade Unions belief that Agency Staff provided by a broker are employed on a 13-week rolling contract, which in their opinion denies them to have any employment rights.

- In respect of multi skilling and tasking the Trade Unions felt that there is a wooliness and degree of flexibility. In their opinion there is reluctance for people to work flexible because of the Review that is currently going on in respect of Waste Management.
- The Trade Unions felt that Agency Staff and permanent employees work well together. There have been issues in the past. In the Trade Unions opinion Agency Staff are reluctant to take holidays because they can be easily be replaced.
- Regarding multi skilling/multi tasking, the Trade Unions felt that staff cross over to a degree. In the winter the Trade Unions believed that the gardeners could litter pick. .
- In the Trade Unions' opinion there has been an increase strategically. Contracts with Consultants need to be monitored to prevent abuse. The Trade Unions realised that there is a need for Consultants but its concerns are that in the past, they have appeared to have taken holidays during crucial times when deadlines were required to have been met.
- The Trade Unions are not aware of an increase in the engagement of consultants; however, they are not as involved in the process as they were previously.

4.8

Head of Procurement

4.8.1

The Head of Procurement attended the meeting of the Task and Finish Group on 13 January 2010. Key points of evidence: -

- Regarding temporary staff contracts, Northampton Borough Council (NBC) currently uses the contract with a broker, which was tendered by Northamptonshire County Council in 2006. NBC has been using this contract since January 2008. The contract is for a managed service, in the industry it is known as a “neutral vendor arrangement”.
- A broker provides the Council with a managed service for the sourcing, ordering and provision of agency staff in the majority of job roles. Orders for the Council's requirements are submitted electronically. A broker sends details of the Council's requirement along with a pre-agreed job description and pay rate to the Employment Agencies assigned to NBC. Suitable candidate details are returned by the Agency via a broker to NBC for short listing, interview and selection along with details of the margin charged by the agent for that candidate.
- Margins are pre-negotiated for most roles by the broker using their purchasing leverage in the industry. The job role pay rate is agreed with NBC beforehand. The agent or a broker, without NBC authorisation, cannot change the pay rate.
- The business benefits of this arrangement were reported:
 - Lower margins than NBC could achieve alone
 - More agencies to choose candidates from and potentially provides better candidates
 - Provides quicker process to hire temporary staff
 - Provides useful management information on our temporary staff establishment
- An Agent provides a member of its staff to organise assignments for

Environmental Care (based at Westbridge depot) at the start of the shifts to ensure the process is as smooth as possible in such a fast moving environment. NBC does not charge office space costs, nor is the Council charged for this service. This is a mutually agreed agreement.

- The Head of Procurement does not hold wage details for individual Agency Staff, however, pay rises for those being paid the minimum wage would follow the dates of increase under the Legislation. A broker would flag up this issue with NBC. Those being paid marginally above the minimum wage would be reviewed at the same time in case any adjustments are required to ensure staff retention.
- A number of Agencies are included for each assignment; a specific Agent would win assignments based on the quality of their candidates and their margin. NBC is solely responsible for agreeing the pay rates. Candidates are free to sign up to whichever Agency they so wish unless there is a specific term in the contract that states otherwise.
- NBC is responsible for providing Personal Protective Equipment where it is necessary for the undertaken of an assignment whether or not they employee is temporary.
- Should Agency Staff be paid the minimum wage, the Council would pay the agreed rate on top of this.
- If the Council upped its rate it would notify A broker who would notify the Agent who would then pass on the rate.
- There are a number of pre-determined jobs with pre-determined rates when the contract was set up.
- Manual workers have bonuses, which are a fixed payment, included in their wages.
- There are peaks and troughs in the engagement of Agency Staff; however there is some degree of static in Neighbourhood Environment..

4.9

4.9.1

Director of Environment and Culture

The Director of Environment and Culture attended the meeting of the Task and Finish Group on 13 January 2010. Key points of evidence: -

- Part of the way that business is carried out in Neighbourhood Environment involves using Agency staff. The Director of Environment and Culture confirmed that his is undoubtedly the most value for money way in delivering the service, which also provides a lot of flexibility. A refuse lorry cannot leave the depot without a full crew. The public rate the emptying of their bins extremely highly.
- Neighbourhood Environment has a history of high sickness levels. It is very hard work, for example. a Loader on the Refuse Lorry covers on average, 13 miles a day; heavy lifting is also part of the role.
- Cover is provided for the high sickness levels to ensure that the service can be delivered. Some changes have been made recently. Grounds and street maintenance do not need the cover as much as the refuse lorries. Agency staff are now only brought in to cover sickness absence on the refuse lorries not for street and grounds maintenance. In future, in-house staff may be asked to provide cover for sickness absence on the refuse lorries.
- When a permanent FTE leaves the service they will not be replaced with a full time employee but with Agency Staff. However, the turnover of

staff has not been huge, mainly due to the recession. This method of recruitment is set to continue as it makes NBC more competitive in terms of costs.

- Some Agency Staff come in the morning and may be turned away if they are not required. Seasons do change the requirement. Details of those on long term sick leave is known and cover would be planned in advance.
- Plans are being looked at for multi skilling staff, which would reduce the number of Agency Staff used. The target is for around 7-9 days per year.
- There are `regular' Agency Staff, such as individuals that have worked in the area before a few times but also new Agency Staff who will receive the induction training. It is possible to estimate, on a day to basis, the approximate number of Agency staff required. The first requirement is to get the refuse lorry out.
- Agency Staff come from reputable Agencies and both the Agent and the Council complies with its legal responsibilities. Risk assessments are also undertaken.
- In terms of cost, if a permanent employee left and was replaced with Agency staff there would be a cost reduction to the Council but if a FTE was off sick and cover provided by Agency staff, additional cost incurred would be incurred.
- It would not be practical for there to be no permanent FTE staff and just Agency employees, the service would deteriorate. When a refuse lorry is sent out it comprise a mix of skills and would not leave the depot with just Agency Staff. If mix became too many Agency employees and not enough FTE the service would deteriorate. .
- A broker carries out audit checks to ensure that Agency staff meets the Authority's requirements.
- Around 30 Agencies are used which comprises multi-national Agencies to local Agencies. An Agency can apply to join the broker and sign up to the agreement. There are a number of Agencies that the Council uses on a daily basis but some are used as `specialist Agencies'.

5 Equality Impact Assessment – Screening

- 5.1 Following the scoping of the Review, an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) – Screening was undertaken.
- 5.2 This exercise identified: -
- 5.2.1 The Review itself has limited potential for adverse impact or unlawful discrimination, but there is a risk that any recommendations generated by the Review could have an impact.
- 5.2.2 This activity was generated because there it was felt that there was a need to investigate the use of consultants and agency staff at the Council. This could have a potential adverse impact on permanent staff, currently employed agency staff and consultants, local residents (such as local jobs for local people), Small to Medium Enterprises (SME) and Black and Minority Enterprises.

- 5.2.3 The London Centre of Excellence (LCE) gave grant funding to the London Borough of Havering in 2005/06 to produce guidance: *Transforming the procurement of temporary, agency and interim staff: your toolkit for success* asks the Local Authority to consider, amongst other questions:-
- 5.2.4 *How important is the issue of supporting Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and Black and Minority Enterprises in your authority?* It is recognised in the Toolkit that many Employment Agencies could be SMEs or Black and Minority Enterprises and any changes to the employment of consultants and agency staff could have an impact on these.
- 5.2.5 Equality and diversity – The Toolkit stresses that it is important that Agencies use policies that treat candidates and workers fairly. The database can track diversity issues and also compare that to the candidates not selected for posts to ascertain whether there are any trends.
- 5.2.6 It is possible that those people, with multiple characteristics, that have been employed as an agency worker or consultant outside the period of time being investigated may feel disadvantaged. The Task and Finish Group suggested the actual time periods so that they sampled periods of time from two separate Administrations. This was the period of time that the Overview and Scrutiny Review therefore concentrated upon. It is hoped that the report will provide data to inform Cabinet and follow any recommendations that may arise
- 5.2.7 The Action Plan included in the Equality Impact Assessment (Screening) included the following details: -
1. The data gathered would be reviewed and appropriate recommendations made.
 2. If it is found that it is difficult to obtain evidence due to a lack of data, it may be necessary to consider monitoring to improve data intelligence. If required this will be undertaken using the principles set out in the EIA Toolkit.
 3. It is possible that a recommendation contained in the final report could be that further work be undertaken at a later date. If this were the case a recommendation would be made to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee in this respect.
 4. There is a slight possibility that some groups, for example SMEs and Black Minority Enterprises, may be disadvantaged from some of the recommendations contained in the final report.

6. Conclusions and Key Findings

- 6.1 After all of the evidence was collated the following conclusions were drawn:
- 6.1.1 In considering Transforming *the procurement of temporary, agency and interim staff: your toolkit for success*, which was commissioned by the London Centre of Excellence (LCE), the Task and Finish Group felt that there are alternatives to the employment of Agency Staff such as the engagement of different types of trainee posts such as undergraduate student placements, graduate placements, future jobs fund, and apprenticeships from The University of Northampton and Northampton College with generic skills. A central base of between one and four postgraduate students could be created. The Task and Finish Group further felt that it would be beneficial for there to be a 'floating workforce' that could be pooled by all departments.
- 6.1.2 The Task and Finish Group highlights the fact that during the period of 2005/2006 central Government had provided financial assistance to the Authority for the engagement of consultants. Bearing this in mind the figures for this period may appear high.
- 6.1.3 There is a need to know how the Council has received value from money from a consultant both during their skills of engagement with the Council and whether these skills have been maintained. The engagement of consultants should be according to service need or specialist positions and be time limited. It is crucial that there is a clear understanding about the difference between locum and consultant. The Task and Finish Group welcomed the definitions of such staff that were provided by the Head of Human Resources. The Task and Finish Group further realised that, as the engagement of consultants should be time limited there was a need for an independent check around the time scale of to be implemented.
- 6.1.4 It was noted that over the periods that the Task and Finish Group investigated the Council has a Policy to reduce the spend on Agency Staff, in particular as part of the budget savings in 2009/10 it had been agreed that the Authority would reduce its spend on agency staff by £200,000. This would be undertaken by applying this approach to agency staff. The Task and Finish Group was surprised to see this saving was for white collar Agency Staff only, and that blue collar Agency Staff were used more to generate savings. . It appeared that the higher the cost of a Post the more of a saving by reducing consultants.
- 6.1.5 During the period of time of the Task and Finish Group brokers were changed, the Task and Finish Group recognised the need for changed but felt that there was a need for the Policy to be further developed and expanded
- 6.1.6 The Task and Finish Group noted that part of the way that business is

carried out in Neighbourhood Environment involves using Agency staff and it was realised that this is the most value for money way in delivering the service also providing a lot of flexibility. Grounds and street maintenance do not need the cover as much as the refuse lorries. Agency staff is now only brought in to cover sickness absence on the refuse lorries not for street and grounds maintenance. In future, in-house staff may be asked to provide cover for sickness absence on the refuse lorries.

6.1.7

The Task and Finish Group highlighted the recruitment process within Neighbourhood Environment in particular when a permanent FTE left the service they would not be replaced with a full time employee but with Agency Staff. It was noted that the turnover of staff has not been huge, mainly due to the recession. It was also noted that this method of recruitment is set to continue as it makes NBC more competitive in terms of costs. Bearing this in mind, the Task and Finish Group felt that there is a need for the Council to have a Policy stating, for example that no more than 30% Agency Staff be employed. Should the service go out to competitive dialogue with a Company that has say for example, 80% Agency staff and just 20% full time employees this would not meet the Council's Policy. It was emphasised that there does need to be a balance between quality and cost. The Task and Finish Group suggested that a Policy could be produced which stated that the Council managed the workforce and maintained the standard. It was emphasised that there would be clear legal implications regarding a stated Policy on the employment of Agency Staff. As a major employer the Council needs to be seen to helping the economy. It is accepted that there is a need for Agency Staff but an appropriate level must be met in normal circumstances.

7.

Recommendations

- 7.1 The Task and Finish Group therefore recommends to Cabinet that:
- 7.1.1 A procedure based on the document "*Transforming the procurement of temporary, agency and interim staff: your toolkit for success*" is produced and used by each Service Area when engaging temporary, Agency and Interim staff.
- 7.1.2 Cabinet considers the engagement of students from University of Northampton and Northampton College as well as apprenticeships and future job fund opportunities with generic skills, for the filling of temporary vacancies that are currently filled by Agency Staff. A central base of between one and four postgraduate students could be created.
- 7.1.3 Consideration is given to the introduction of a floating workforce that could be pooled by all departments.
- 7.1.4 Build into the Consultant engagement process an independent review after a set time period by the Head of Human Resources to ensure the engagement is still appropriate.
- 7.1.5 The Policy regarding the employment of Agency Staff be expanded and reviewed including: -
- Setting a maximum percentage target for each directorate of Agency staff.
 - Confirm the definitions within the policy based on the definitions as set out in this report

Appendices



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

COST OF CONSULTANTS TASK AND FINISH GROUP

1. Purpose/Objectives of the Review

- To investigate the reasons for the use of consultants at Northampton Borough Council
- To investigate the reasons for the use of agency labour at Northampton Borough Council
- To consider the alternatives to using consultants
- To consider the alternatives to using agency labour
- To assess the risks involved in implementing these alternatives
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the work undertaken by consultants within the authority and determine the impact on the existing staff base
- To consider the costs involved by the Council in using consultants and to compare these costs to other similar local authorities, department by department, for the years 2005/06 and 2007/08
- To consider the costs involved by the Council in using agency labour and to compare these costs to other similar local authorities, department by department, for the years 2005/06 and 2007/08
- To examine the procurement arrangements associated with consultants department by department, for the years 2005/06 and 2007/08
- To examine the procurement arrangements associated with agency labour department by department, for the years 2005/06 and 2007/08
- To examine the procedure for the procurement arrangements associated with consultants and how this is budgeted for and financed
- To examine whether the use of consultants is a skilling or de-skilling process

2. Outcomes Required

- .To establish the cost of consultants to the Authority and whether value for money is provided.
- To make recommendations for improvement, as appropriate

3. Information Required

- Detailed information for all NBC departments regarding spend in relation to consultants and Agency employees for the periods 2005/06 and 2007/08
- Data from other (best practice) Local Authorities for the same periods, in particular a large district council. For comparison purposes the data will be altered to reflect population in respect of spend per population
- Local Government Association (LGA) or similar guidance on the use of consultants and Agency workers
- Evidence from NBC Directors (or Heads of Services)
- Evidence from the Portfolio Holders (Finance) and (Performance and Improvement)
- Evidence from the Portfolio Holders (Finance) and (Performance and Improvement) for the years 2005/06 and 2007/08
- Evidence from members of the Council for the period 2005/06 and 2007/08 (current Members)

4. Format of Information

- Officer reports/presentations
- Baseline data
- Published guidance for the employment of Consultants and Agency employees
- Best practice evidence external to Northampton
- Witness interviews/evidence
- Portfolio Holder evidence
- Portfolio Holder (2005/06) and (2007/08) evidence f

5. Methods Used to Gather Information

- Minutes of the meetings
- Desktop research
- Officer reports
- Examples of best practice
- Witness Interviews/evidence: -
Directors/Heads of Services
Members of the Council for the period 2005/06 and 2007/08(current members)
Portfolio Holder (Performance)

6. Co-Options to the Review

- None suggested for this Review. The Chair will contact all non Executive Councillors asking if Councillors are keen to be involved in this Review.

7 Equality Impact Screening Assessment

- An Equality Impact Screening Assessment to be undertaken on the scope of the Review.

8 Evidence gathering Timetable

June to March 2010

18 June 2009 Scoping Meeting

- 12 August 2009 Evidence gathering
- 10 September Evidence gathering
- 5 November Evidence gathering
- 13 January 2010 Evidence gathering

- 17 March Finalise Chair's report

Meetings to commence at 5.15pm

7. Responsible Officers

Lead Officer Rebecca Smith, Assistant Head of Finance
Co-ordinator Tracy Tiff

8. Resources and Budgets

Rebecca Smith, Assistant Head of Finance and Ann Davies, Finance Manager, to provide internal advice.

10 Final report presented by:

Completed by 17 March 2010. Presented by the Chair of the Task and Finish Group to Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 and 3 and then to Cabinet.

11 Monitoring procedure:

Review the impact of the report after six months (October/November 2010)

Analysis of Agency Staff Costs from January 2008 to November 2009 - Breakdown of data

Appendix B

Sum of AMOUNT	Period			
DIVISION	2008-01-01 to 2008-03-31	2008/2009 full year	2009-04-01 to 2009-11-20	Grand Total
Chief Executives	1,304.80	114,310.51	155,246.29	270,861.60
Finance and Assets	250,839.12	1,090,443.84	513,844.49	1,855,127.45
Housing	341,388.17	1,757,748.34	779,538.61	2,878,675.12
Environment and Culture	186,139.49	997,547.78	594,429.25	1,778,116.52
Planning and Regeneration	40,916.25	138,726.50	2,585.16	182,227.91
Grand Total	820,587.83	4,098,777	2,045,644	6,965,009

Northampton Borough Council Overview and Scrutiny



**Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1
(Regeneration, Partnerships, Community Engagement &
Safety)
19 April 2010**

**Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2
(Housing and Environment)
18 May 2010**

**Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3
(Improvement, Performance and Finance)
13 May 2010**

Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2010/2011

1 Background

- 1.1 Following the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programming Workshop that was held on 11 March 2010 where Councillors present at the workshop, had in Groups, supported by a Director and a Head of Service, put forward suggested issues for inclusion on next year's Overview and Scrutiny work programme. Cabinet Members also sat with the Groups to provide points of clarity, as requested, on their priorities and objectives for 2010/11.
- 1.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Improvement Plan details the need to involve the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holders in Overview and Scrutiny Work Programming. Therefore, Cabinet Members were invited to attend the event to inform of their priorities and objectives for the year. The Leader of the Council provided a precis of Cabinet's priorities and objectives and along with other Portfolio Holders present, provided further information as required to the workshop on these issues.
- 1.3 It is important that the Council works with Scrutiny and vice versa. Overview and Scrutiny can also suggest its own issues for Review.
- 1.4 The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee noted the success of the Workshop emphasising that a similar event should be held

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E-mail: scrutiny@northampton.gov.uk

Northampton Borough Council Overview and Scrutiny

annually. The background information provided had been very comprehensive but shorter summaries would have been useful.

- 1.5 The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, at its meeting on 29 March 2010, considered the issues suggested for inclusion and agreed that the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2010/2011 be ratified by the new Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its first meeting in June 2010.

2 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2010/2011

- 2.1 In considering the issues suggested for the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2010/2011, Directors and Heads of Service provided expert advice as required.
- 2.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee concluded that the following Issues and Reviews be included in the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2010/2011:

- **Leisure Strategic Business Review** - To review the proposal to form a new Charitable Trust for the provision of Leisure and Sports Development Services.

This Review could follow the format of an Appreciative Inquiry. Further details regarding this issue will be supplied to Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 at its meeting on 19 April 2010.

- **Pre-decision Scrutiny: Procurement (Market Testing) of Environmental Services** - To continue with the pre-decision Scrutiny work that Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 (Improvement, Performance and Finance) has commenced.
- **Neighbourhood Model** - To investigate which groups will be engaged with and who the Council will be working with.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 will receive a briefing on this issue at its meeting on 19 April 2010.

- **Northamptonshire Alcohol Strategy** - To review the local delivery of Northamptonshire Alcohol Strategy in Northampton.

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Northampton Borough Council Overview and Scrutiny

- **Independent Living Strategies** - To review the Council's Independent Living Strategies making any recommendations for improvement as appropriate.

It is suggested that this Review be joint with NCC or a Member and Officer from NCC be co-opted onto the Panel for the life of this Review.

- **Proposals for Cliftonville House** - To investigate the proposals for Cliftonville House, in particular the relocation of staff and the disposal of the site.

It was suggested that Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3, at its meeting on 13 May 2010, will consider the issue of staff relocating from Cliftonville House.

- **Commissioning Framework for the Third Sector** - To investigate the development of a Commissioning Framework for the Third Sector.

Following advice, the Overview and Scrutiny Management agreed that this Review should not commence prior to appointment of the Officer responsible for Commissioning the Framework.

- 2.3 The following suggested Reviews were deferred for consideration at a later date. Dependant upon the receipt of additional information and sufficient timescale, these Reviews could be added to next year's Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme:-

- **Choice Based Lettings (CBL)** - To review the CBL system since its implementation, making any recommendations for improvement as appropriate.

It is anticipated that further information regarding CBL will be available from the summer 2010. It was agreed that there was a need to await the report to Cabinet (June 2010) on CBL to ascertain whether there were any outstanding issues.

- **New Tenancy Agreement** - To review the success of the new Tenancy Agreement, making any recommendations for improvement as appropriate.

The new Tenancy Agreement was agreed by Cabinet early in 2010. It was therefore suggested that this issue be deferred until the autumn 2010 and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee receives a progress report. The Committee would then decide whether it felt the new Agreement was operating successfully and whether there was a need for further scrutiny work.

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- **Absent Management** – The purpose of the Review was suggested: -
 - To evaluate the impact that staff absence has upon service delivery
 - To review how health and well being policies can have a positive impact in reducing sickness absence
 - To ensure absence management systems are robust

It would be decided later in the year whether this Review should be included onto the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2010/2011.

3 Conclusions

- 3.1 That, when finalised by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, the draft Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2010/2011 be circulated to all non-Executive Councillors.
- 3.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee recommends that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, at its first meeting of the new Municipal Year, formally agree the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2010/2011.
- 3.3 Following formal agreement of the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2010/2011, it would be widely distributed, both internally and externally, and published on the Overview and Scrutiny WebPages.

Brief Author: Tracy Tiff, Overview and Scrutiny Officer, on behalf of Councillor John Yates, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

16 April 2010

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PERFORMANCE REPORT: February 2010 - Overview & Scrutiny Committee 3

KEY TO STATUS COLOURING
KEY TO QUARTILE COLOURING

KEYS

CURRENT STATUS										BV12r - rolling colour status not counted											
G	7	58.3%	A	3	25.0%	R	2	16.7%	NO DATA	0	0.0%										
MONTH ON MONTH TREND & QUARTER ON QUARTER TREND										AMBER:											
↑	6	50.0%	↔	0	0.0%	↓	6	50.0%	NO DATA	0	0.0%										
YEAR ON YEAR TREND										RED:											
↑	5	41.7%	↔	0	0.0%	↓	4	33.3%	NO DATA	3	25.0%										

GREEN:		Overall performance on or exceeding target Top or Upper Median Quartile	-	Interim figures yet to be validated
AMBER:		Overall performance within range stated in "Target Tolerances" column" Lower Median Quartile		BV12r - Rolling colour status not counted
RED:		Overall performance outside the stated "Target Tolerances" Bottom Quartile		

Please contact Dale Robertson Ext 7110, if you require further information or support

ID	NAME	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	OVERALL PERFORMANCE TO DATE	ANNUAL TARGET	CURRENT PROFILED TARGET [if any]	TARGET TOLERANCES	PERFORMANCE AGAINST LAST REPORTING PERIOD	OVERALL PERFORMANCE AGAINST SAME TIME LAST YEAR	NBC 08/09 OUTTURN & QUARTILE POSITION	NBC 07/08 OUTTURN & QUARTILE POSITION	
Human Resources [Catherine Wilson]		BV 12r - rolling colour status not counted										G 0	A 1	R 0	No data	0						
Monthly Indicators																						
↓ BV 12	The number of working days/shifts lost due to sickness absence	0.96	0.83	1.03	1.15	0.92	0.96	1.03	0.93	0.92	0.81	0.88		10.41 Days	11.00 Days	10.08 days	5%	↓	↑ 12.08 Days	12.86 Days Bottom	11.89 Days Bottom	
↓ BV 12r (Rolling 12 months)	The average number of working days/shifts lost due to sickness absence for rolling 12 month period	12.99	12.84	12.86	12.97	12.99	12.87	12.83	12.63	12.22	11.66	11.44		11.44 Days	11.00 Days		5%	↑	New measure with rolling cumulative figures - No comparable data			
Finance & Assets [Gavin Chambers]		G 1										A 0	R 0	No data	0							
Monthly Indicators																						
↑ BV 8	The percentage of invoices for commercial goods and services paid by the authority within 30 days of being received	97.00	93.88	94.69	96.11	94.17	92.96	93.82	96.91	96.19	95.89	96.51		95.30%	95.00%		2% points	↑	↑ 94.17	94.38% Lower Median	91.51% Lower Median	
Revenues & Benefits [Robin Bates]		G 5										A 2	R 2	No data	0							
Monthly Indicators																						
↑ NI 180	Changes to Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit entitlements within year	730.9	471.8	92.4	81.8	81.3	93.5	489.0	166.1	61.8	84.9	81.3		2,334.6	940.5	862.2	5%	↓	New NI 2009/10 - No comparable data			
↓ NI 181	Time taken to process Housing Benefit/Council Tax new claims/changes	15.9	15.3	14.4	15.6	11.5	12.0	14.6	9.3	15.1	15.9	11.9		13.3 Days	14.0 Days		2.0 Days	↑	New NI 2009/10 - No comparable data			
↑ BV 9	Percentage of council tax received in the year	11.25	9.01	9.24	9.23	8.99	9.25	9.14	9.13	9.26	8.82	1.97		95.09%	97.50%	96.20%	0.5% points	↓	↓ 95.76%	96.94% Lower Median	97.95% Upper Median	
↑ BV 10	% of non domestic rates due for the year which were received by the authority	11.62	9.55	10.18	9.69	9.73	9.08	8.58	9.70	9.87	7.79	0.57		97.97%	99.50%	98.40%	2% points	↓	↑ 97.10	99.12% Top	99.79% Top	
↑ BV 76c	Housing Benefit Security: the number of fraud investigations	76	52	71	57	96	99	95	109	94	102	61		912	950	870	5%	↓	↑ 879	949	877	
↑ BV 76d	Housing Benefit Security: the number of prosecutions and sanctions	10	7	10	7	8	9	10	14	7	14	8		104	87	79	5%	↓	↑ 88	91	87	
↓ BV 78a	Speed of Processing: Average time for processing new claims	23.5	21.8	18.9	19.4	15.9	16.7	18.4	18.9	17.4	18.1	15.0		18.77	19.0 Days		2.0 Days	↑	↓ 15.5 Days	16.1 Days Top	23.8 Days Upper Median	
↓ BV 78b	Speed of Processing: Average time for processing notifications of change in circumstances	11.8	12.1	12.2	13.7	9.5	10.3	13.1	7.2	14.1	14.9	11.5		11.2	8.0 Days		1.0 Day	↑	↓ 8 Days	8.0 Days Upper Median	10.9 Days Lower Median	
↑ LI 364 (Previously BEN LPI 1)	Percentage of cases from complete to determined within 14 days	84.10	84.71	90.62	92.67	95.13	97.12	88.50	91.06	93.36	93	97.19		91.28%	92.00%		2% points	↑	↓ 97.79%	96.82%	86.4%	
Customer Services & ICT [Marion Goodman]		G 1										A 0	R 0	No data	0							
Monthly Indicators																						
↓ NI 14	The percentage of customer contact that was 'Avoidable'	16.7	12.2	19.0	11.5	13.9	11.7	16.3	8.5	11	14.6	9.6		14.1%	50.0%		10%	↑	New NI 2009/10 - No comparable data			

Agenda Item 8

FORWARD PLAN

FOR THE PERIOD 4 MAY 2010 TO 31 AUGUST 2010

What is a Forward Plan?

The Forward Plan is a list of the key decisions, which are due to be taken, by the Cabinet during the period covered by the Plan. The Council has a Statutory duty to prepare a Forward Plan. The Plan is updated monthly and is available to the public 14 days before the beginning of each month. It covers a 4-month rolling period. It can be accessed from the One Stop Shop and/or the Council website www.northampton.gov.uk.

What is a Key Decision?

A key decision in the Council's constitution is defined as:

- Any decision in relation to the Executive function* which results in the Council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of saving which are significant having regard to the Council's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates. For these purposes the minimum financial threshold will be £50,000;
- Where decisions are not likely to involve significant expenditure or savings but nevertheless are likely to be significant in terms of their effects on communities in two or more wards or electoral divisions; and
- For the purpose of interpretation a decision, which is ancillary or incidental to a Key decision, which had been previously taken by or on behalf of the Council shall not of itself be further deemed to be significant for the purpose of the definition.


* Executive functions are those, which are the responsibility of the Cabinet as opposed to, for example, regulatory functions, which are the responsibility of the Council's Planning or Licensing Committees.

Who takes Key Decisions?

Under the Council's constitution, key decisions are taken by

- Cabinet
- The Leader or Deputy Leader (in matters of urgency only)
- Individual officers acting under delegated powers (it is rare for any decision delegated to an officer to be a key decision)

Are only Key Decisions listed in the Forward Plan?

The Council only has a statutory obligation to publish only Key Decisions on the Forward Plan. However, the Council has voluntarily decided to list non-key Cabinet decisions on the Plan as well. In order to clarify matters on the Plan, Key decisions have a  symbol next to the item.

What does the Forward Plan tell me?

The Plan gives information about:

- What key and non-key decisions are coming forward in the next four months (these decisions have a symbol next to them)
- Other non-key Cabinet decisions that are coming forward in the next four months
- Whether the decision will be taken in public or private
- When those key decisions are likely to be made
- Who will make those decisions
- What consultation will be undertaken
- Who you can contact for further information

Who is the Cabinet?

The Members of the Cabinet and their areas of responsibility are:

Councillor Brian Hoare	Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Partnership & Improvement	cllr.bhoare@northampton.gov.uk
Councillor Paul Varnsvery	Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement	cllr.pdvarnsvery@northampton.gov.uk
Councillor Sally Beardsworth	Portfolio Holder for Housing	cllr.sbeardsworth@northampton.gov.uk
Councillor Richard Church	Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration	cllr.rchurch@northampton.gov.uk
Councillor Trini Crake	Portfolio Holder for Environment	cllr.tcrake@northampton.gov.uk
Councillor Brian Markham	Portfolio Holder for Performance and Support	cllr.bmarkham@northampton.gov.uk
Councillor David Perkins	Portfolio Holder for Finance	cllr.dperkins@northampton.gov.uk

What is the role of Overview and Scrutiny?

The Council has three Overview and Scrutiny Committees namely

Overview and Scrutiny 1 - Partnerships, Regeneration, Community Safety and Engagement

Overview and Scrutiny 2 - Housing and Environment


Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 - Improvement, Performance and Finance

The Committees' role is to contribute to the development of Council policies, to scrutinise decisions of the Cabinet and to consider any matter affecting the area of Northampton or its citizens. Dates of these meetings and other Council meetings can be found at www.northampton.gov.uk





How and who do I contact?


Each entry in the Plan indicates the names of all the relevant people to contact about that particular item. Wherever possible, full contact details are listed in the individual entries in the Forward Plan. They can also be reached via the switchboard (01604) 837837.

For general information about the decision-making process please contact Frazer McGown, Democratic Services Manager at The Guildhall, St Giles Square, Northampton NN1 1DE Tel: 01604 837101, E-mail: fmcgown@northampton.gov.uk.
Councillor Brian Hoare, Leader of Northampton Borough Council






 = Key Decision


Forward Plan : 4 May 2010 to 31 August 2010

Subject	Expected Decision to be Made ( = KEY decision)	Decision to be made by	Expected Date of Decision	Key or Non-Key Decision	Who Will be consulted	How will they be consulted	Report Published /Portfolio Holder/ Contact Officer
Response to O & S 2 Recommendations following the Call-In of New Tenants Participation Structure Decision made by Cabinet on 14 October 2009	 To agree the process of forming Tenant Area Partnership Boards	Cabinet	19 May 2010	KEY	Borough Solicitor, Section 151 Officer, Portfolio Holder	Draft report	11.05.10 Cllr Beardsworth Lesley Wearing, Director of Housing lwearing@northampton.gov.uk
Rechargeable Repairs Policy	 To approve the rechargeable repairs policy	Cabinet	19 May 2010	KEY	Tenants, Finance department, Borough Solicitor	Copy of the draft report	11.05.10 Cllr Beardsworth Christine Ansell, Head of Landlord Services cansell@northampton.gov.uk
'Free Swimming Initiative - a year on'. Performance results.	Cabinet to note the report	Cabinet	19 May 2010	NON-KEY			11.05.10 Cllr PD Varnsberry Ian Redfern, Head of Leisure and Culture iredfern@northampton.gov.uk
Parish Partnerships - the Northamptonshire Councils' Charter	 Cabinet to approve the Charter	Cabinet	19 May 2010	KEY	Chief Executive, Directors and Heads of Service and other officers whose services are directly affected by the Charter; Members of Cabinet	Via E-mail and face-to-face discussions	11.05.10 Cllr PD Varnsberry Cassie Triggs ctriggs@northampton.gov.uk




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Subject	Expected Decision to be Made ( = KEY decision)	Decision to be made by	Expected Date of Decision	Key or Non-Key Decision	Who Will be consulted	How will they be consulted	Report Published /Portfolio Holder/ Contact Officer
Performance Monthly Report - March 2010	To note the current position.	Cabinet	19 May 2010	NON-KEY	Heads of Service	Meetings with Accountants	11.05.10 Cllr B Markham Dale Robertson, Head of Performance and Improvement drobertson@northampton.gov.uk
Capital Programme - Capital project appraisals and project variations	 Approval of capital project appraisals and/or variations	Cabinet	19 May 2010	KEY	Budget Manager; Finance Manager (Capital and Treasury); Corporate Director (or Chief Executive); Head of Service; Member with Portfolio; Section 151 Officer	Review and sign off of capital appraisal forms and variations detailing the project and its relevance and importance to the authority.	11.05.10 Cllr Perkins Gavin Chambers, Head of Finance and Assets gchambers@northampton.gov.uk
Voids Lettable Standards	 To approve the lettable standard	Cabinet	9 Jun 2010	KEY	Tenants	Survey and meeting with Sounding Board members	01.06.10 Cllr Beardsworth Christine Ansell, Head of Landlord Services cansell@northampton.gov.uk
Vulnerable Tenants Strategy	 To approve the strategy	Cabinet	9 Jun 2010	KEY	Stakeholders working with vulnerable tenants, Tenants Sounding Board	Survey of views and discussions over draft proposals	01.06.10 Cllr Beardsworth Christine Ansell, Head of Landlord Services cansell@northampton.gov.uk
Choice Based Lettings (CBL) Allocations Policy	 To approve the revised allocations policy	Cabinet	9 Jun 2010	KEY	Tenants, partners, Portfolio Holder, Borough Solicitor, Chief Executive	Copy of the draft report	01.06.10 Cllr Beardsworth Fran Rodgers, Head of Housing Need and Support frodgers@northampton.gov.uk







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Subject	Expected Decision to be Made ( = KEY decision)	Decision to be made by	Expected Date of Decision	Key or Non-Key Decision	Who Will be consulted	How will they be consulted	Report Published /Portfolio Holder/ Contact Officer
Housing Strategy	 To approve the final version of the Housing Strategy for adoption and publishing	Cabinet	9 Jun 2010	KEY	Portfolio Holder for Housing, Director of Housing, Director of Planning and Regeneration, Director of Finance, Borough Solicitor, Members of the Public, External Stakeholders.	12-week consultation period to respond to Draft Housing Strategy; 2 consultation events for all members of the public to attend during the 12-week consultation period; copy of the draft strategy to be sent to all external stakeholders for comments.	01.06.10 Cllr Beardsworth Fran Rodgers, Head of Housing Need and Support frodgers@northampton.gov.uk
Housing Asset Management Strategy	 To approve the final version of the Housing Asset Management Strategy for adoption and publication.	Cabinet	9 Jun 2010	KEY	Portfolio Holder for Housing; Director of Housing; Director of Planning and Regeneration; Director of Finance; Borough Solicitor; Members of the public; External stakeholders.	12-week consultation period to respond to Housing Asset Management Strategy. Consultation events for members of the public to attend during 12-week consultation period. Copy of draft strategy sent to external stakeholders for comments.	01.06.10 Cllr Beardsworth Christine Ansell, Head of Landlord Services cansell@northampton.gov.uk




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Equalities and Engagement (Forums) Report	 To approve the updates to the Single Equalities Scheme and changes to Forums and equalities governance structures	Cabinet	9 Jun 2010	KEY	Forum co-Chairs, Corporate Equalities Steering Group	Variety of meetings, e-mail and other communications between January and April 2010	01.06.10 Cllr PD Varnsberry Thomas Hall, Head of Policy and Community Engagement thall@northampton.gov.uk
Garage Review	 To note the outcome of the review and approve the recommendations	Cabinet	9 Jun 2010	KEY	Tenants	Survey and meetings with Sounding Board members	01.06.10 Cllr Beardsworth Christine Ansell, Head of Landlord Services cansell@northampton.gov.uk
Rent Arrears Recovery Strategy	 To approve the strategy	Cabinet	9 Jun 2010	KEY	Tenants	Surveys and meetings with Sounding Board members	01.06.10 Cllr Beardsworth Christine Ansell, Head of Landlord Services cansell@northampton.gov.uk
Capital Programme - Capital project appraisals and project variations	 Approval of capital project appraisals and/or variations	Cabinet	9 Jun 2010	KEY	Budget Manager; Finance Manager (Capital and Treasury); Corporate Director (or Chief Executive); head of Service; Member with Portfolio; Section 151 Officer.	Review and sign off of capital appraisal forms and variations detailing the project and its relevance and importance to the authority	01.06.10 Cllr Perkins Gavin Chambers, Head of Finance and Assets gchambers@northampton.gov.uk
Cliftonville Review	 To approve the outcome of the Cliftonville Review	Cabinet	28 Jun 2010	KEY	Members, HR, Finance and Legal	As part of the Review	18.06.10 Cllr Perkins Isabell Procter, Director of Finance and Support iprocter@northampton.gov.uk





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Subject	Expected Decision to be Made ( = KEY decision)	Decision to be made by	Expected Date of Decision	Key or Non-Key Decision	Who Will be consulted	How will they be consulted	Report Published /Portfolio Holder/ Contact Officer
Delapre Abbey Options Appraisal	 To determine the way forward on options for the restoration and development of Delapre Abbey and Parkland	Cabinet	28 Jun 2010	KEY	Management Board, Delapre Abbey Preservation Trust	Draft report and meetings	18.06.10 Cllr Perkins Gavin Chambers, Head of Finance and Assets gchambers@northampton.gov.uk
Approval of the Financial Implications of the Pay and Grading Review	 To approve the budgetary implications of the Pay and Grading Review	Cabinet	28 Jun 2010	KEY	Board, Trade Unions, General Purposes Committee for changes to terms and conditions	Reports to Board and Trade Unions, General Purposes Committee (tbc June 2010)	18.06.10 Cllr Perkins Catherine Wilson, Head of Human Resources cwilson@northampton.gov.uk
O & S Sheltered Housing and Housing Options for Older People	To consider the final report of the Overview and Scrutiny Sheltered Housing Options for Older People Task and Finish Group	Cabinet	28 Jun 2010	NON-KEY	Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 (Housing and Environment); Overview and Scrutiny Sheltered Housing and Housing Options for Older People Task and Finish Group	Individual meetings	18.06.10 Cllr Beardsworth Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer ttiff@northampton.gov.uk
Outturn Performance Report 2009-10	To note the current position	Cabinet	28 Jun 2010	NON-KEY	Heads of Service, Directors	Draft Report	18.06.10 Cllr B Markham Dale Robertson, Head of Performance and Improvement drobertson@northampton.gov.uk
Draft Housing Revenue Account Outturn 2009/10	To note the outturn (also may include items that need approval)	Cabinet	28 Jun 2010	NON-KEY	Budget Managers, Heads of Service, Directors, Management Board, Portfolio Holder	Draft outturn figures and draft report through the usual reporting process	18.06.10 Cllr Perkins Gavin Chambers, Head of Finance and Assets gchambers@northampton.gov.uk





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Subject	Expected Decision to be Made ( = KEY decision)	Decision to be made by	Expected Date of Decision	Key or Non-Key Decision	Who Will be consulted	How will they be consulted	Report Published /Portfolio Holder/ Contact Officer
Draft General Fund Outturn 2009/10	To note the outturn (may also include items that need approval)	Cabinet	28 Jun 2010	NON-KEY	Budget Managers, Heads of Service, Directors, Management Board, Portfolio Holder	Draft outturn figures and draft report through the usual reporting process	18.06.10 Cllr Perkins Gavin Chambers, Head of Finance and Assets gchambers@northampton.gov.uk
Draft Capital Outturn 2009/10	 To note the outturn (may also include items that need approval)	Cabinet	28 Jun 2010	KEY	Budget managers, Heads of Service, Directors, Management Board, Portfolio Holder	Draft figures and draft report through the usual reporting process	18.06.10 Cllr Perkins Gavin Chambers, Head of Finance and Assets gchambers@northampton.gov.uk
Capital Programme - Capital project appraisals and project variations	 Approval of capital project appraisals and/or variations	Cabinet	28 Jun 2010	KEY	Budget Manager; Finance Manager (Capital and Treasury); Corporate Director (or Chief Executive); Head of Service; Member with Portfolio; Section 151 Officer.	Review and sign off of capital appraisal forms and variations detailing the project and its relevance and importance to the Authority	18.06.10 Cllr Perkins Gavin Chambers, Head of Finance and Assets gchambers@northampton.gov.uk
Future of Sheltered Housing and Options for Independent Living	 To pilot a number of different ways of working within the sheltered housing services to increase the flexibility of the service and delivery of options available to customers to promote independent living.	Cabinet	28 Jul 2010	KEY	Tenants of sheltered housing	Using the consultation toolkit, public consultation meetings, area surgeries, postal/telephone surveys	20.07.10 Cllr Beardsworth Fran Rodgers, Head of Housing Need and Support frodgers@northampton.gov.uk



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RSL Framework	 To approve the Framework Agreement as part of the procurement process for the appointment of Affordable Housing Investment Partners	Cabinet	28 Jul 2010	KEY	Portfolio Holder for Housing, Director of Housing, Director of Planning and Regeneration, Director of Finance, Borough Solicitor, RSL Partners, procurement team, Legal Services	Copy of Framework Agreement and Cabinet Report	20.07.10 Cllr Beardsworth Fran Rodgers, Head of Housing Need and Support frodgers@northampton.gov.uk
Corporate Debt Policy	 To approve the Council's policy towards the collection of debt across Northampton Borough Council	Cabinet	28 Jul 2010	KEY	Internal: Revenues and Benefits, Housing and Finance; External: Third sector welfare agencies	Input to policy from internal departments and external review and comments on draft policy from the third sector	20.07.10 Cllr Perkins Bill Lewis, Finance Manager blewis@northampton.gov.uk
Extension of Caretaking and Cleaning Service	 To consider provision of cleaning service, funded by Service Charging	Cabinet	28 Jul 2010	KEY		Copy of draft report	20.07.10 Cllr Beardsworth Christine Ansell, Head of Landlord Services cansell@northampton.gov.uk

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BME Housing Strategy 2010-2013	 To approve the final version of the BME Housing Strategy for adoption and publication	Cabinet	28 Jul 2010	KEY	Portfolio Holder for Housing; Director of Housing; Director of Planning and Regeneration; Director of Finance; Borough Solicitor; members of the public, external stakeholders	12-week consultation period to respond to Draft BME Housing Strategy; 2 consultation events for all members of the public to attend during the 12-week consultation period; copy of the draft strategy sent to all external stakeholders for comments.	20.07.10 Cllr Beardsworth Fran Rodgers, Head of Housing Need and Support frodgers@northampton.gov.uk