

**FORMAL RESPONSE OR CONSULTATION REQUESTS FROM THE CABINET AND/OR  
SELECT COMMITTEES FOLLOWING MATTERS REFERRED BY THE COMMITTEE**

- a) Performance Management End of Year Results (Response from Services Select Committee – 25 September 2012)

Minute 14 - Performance Management End of Year Results (Referral from Performance and Governance Committee – 12 June 2012)

Members noted that the Performance Indicators for the Housing Benefits Service would be considered at Agenda Item 8 (Minute 19). The Committee also noted the additional information tabled referring to the Green Waste Service Performance Indicators and the update from the Head of Environmental and Operational Services.

Minute 19 - Benefits Performance - Verbal Update

The Group Manager – Financial Resources gave a verbal update on the red status of the benefits performance indicators in response to the referral from the Performance and Governance Committee (Minute 14 (a)), and referred Members to the updated results which had been tabled.

He reported that, as detailed in the Universal Credits report, activity levels had increased by 70% since April 2011. The number of claimants had not significantly changed but there were many more changes of circumstances. These were due to: the economy; people moving and work changes (e.g. reduced hours, short contracts; redundancy; and increased workload from the DWP via the ATLAS system (automatic transfer to local authorities for changes of circumstances) - started in July 2011. Other core reasons for the performance levels were the loss of a number of staff. It was difficult to recruit assessors in an environment where people were changing careers due to the uncertainty caused by Universal Credits for Benefits professionals. The uncertainties and complexities in benefits elsewhere was also causing the need to spend more time with people who were contacting the Council. In future there would also be additional work required for welfare reform changes.

Actions that had been taken so far included: recruiting additional temporary staff in a competitive market; development of the apprentices who started two years ago; the use of an external agency to process some new claims on a unit cost basis; redirection of some calls to the Dartford Borough Council Contact Centre; and the re-engineering of some processes.

Referring to the tabled information, the Group Manager – Financial Services reported that the average number of days to process new benefits claims had improved in the past two months and with dedicated staff in place he expected a steady and sustainable improvement over the coming months.

- b) Argyle Road Offices, Accommodation for Outside Organisations (Cabinet 11.10.12 Minute 36)

Members considered a report outlining proposals for the use of the office accommodation vacated following the relocation of Environmental Health to Dartford. The District Council had been approached by Moat Housing, currently renting 12 desk spaces, with a request to rent a further 3 desk spaces. In order to accommodate the

additional desk spaces it was proposed that Moat Housing move to the area vacated by Environmental Health on the first floor of the Argyle Road Offices.

Officers were also in discussion with Kent County Council Social Services who were looking for accommodation for 6 staff. These staff could be accommodated within the second floor area that would be vacated as a result of the proposed Moat Housing move with the remaining 6 desk being used as corporate hot desks until an alternative occupier was identified.

To achieve this capital expenditure in the sum of £7,000 was needed to be invested by the District Council in respect of furniture and alterations to the power supply with each proposed tenant being responsible for providing their own IT and telephony systems at no cost to the District Council.

The Property Manager explained that the proposals would increase income to the Council and would reduce revenue costs on the building.

In response to a question from a visiting Member, the Property Manager explained that staff from outside organisations were given coded Entacards which enabled them to access the building but restricted access to the car park.

Resolved: That capital reserves be used to provide office accommodation for Moat housing and Kent County Council on the terms and conditions detailed in the report and to such other conditions as the Council's legal advisors consider necessary to protect the Council's interests.

c) Annual Treasury Management Report 2011-12 (Cabinet 11.10.12 Minute 37)

Members considered a report providing a review of investment activity during 2011/12 as required by the Council's Financial Procedure Rules. The report outlined the strategy adopted during the year, showed the position of the investment portfolio at the beginning and the end of the year and provided details of how the fund performed in comparison with previous years and against various benchmarks.

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Resources reported as a result of the issues experienced with the Icelandic investments the Council has taken a more cautious approach when considering potential investments.

Members noted that a further review would be undertaken by the Performance and Governance Committee in November 2012.

Resolved: That the Annual Treasury Management Report for 2011/12 be approved.

d) Performance Monitoring (LPI CD 007 number of domestic burglaries per 1,000 households) (Response from Social Affairs Select Committee 30.10.12)

To follow.