

Council – 8 November 2006

Item 13.2 Councillors' Question Time (Part 4 – Paragraph 9.2(a) of Constitution – Page 4 - 8)

Question 1 from Councillor R Hayward to Councillor Neville, Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Scene:

“Would Councillor Neville, inform the Council what steps he is taking to address the increasing problem of parking across the borough?”

Reply from Councillor Neville:

“Like most of us I have been acutely aware of the growing problems of parking in the borough for some while. Traditionally, Enfield has approached this problem on a reactive basis by introducing Controlled Parking Zones in various parts of the borough, almost on demand. Inevitably this causes a displacement of vehicles and does not necessarily address the general question of best use of road space. In those circumstances, I have initiated a thorough review of parking policy with the objectives of striking a better balance between the legitimate demands of residents and the competing demands for road space. It is likely that this review will take until mid summer 2007 to complete. Against that background, we will not be declaring any new CPZs whilst the review is undertaken, or indeed any significant extensions to existing zones. I am also aware that Special Projects Scrutiny Panel have included this matter within their work programme.”

Question 2 from Councillor Stafford to Councillor Rye, Leader of the Council:

“In view of the continuing uncertainty as to the future of Enfield Leisure Centres Ltd, is the Leader of the Council able to give an assurance that the new Edmonton Leisure Centre will be completed as planned and to the specifications agreed.”

Reply from Councillor Rye:

“There is no uncertainty about Enfield Leisure Centres Limited. It is in insolvent liquidation and will be wound up. Subject to certain legal formalities the services contract with ELCL will terminate. The service will be brought back under the Council's direct control. It is unhelpful and counterproductive to suggest there is any uncertainty about this process. In fact the decision to persuade ELCL that it was insolvent and to wind itself up was to create certainty and to protect leisure services provision in the Borough and not to permit the previous state of affairs to continue, where there was a lack of marketing, reduced opening hours, and ongoing problems. We are currently discussing with St. Modwens the possibility of bringing forward the opening of the new Edmonton Leisure Centre, which has been built according to the specifications set out in the contract. Hopefully this will be one of the first tangible benefits of the decision we have made to bring back leisure services under democratically elected control.”

I beg the question would Councillor. Stafford have had the opportunity of asking this question or for that matter have got a straight answer if the service was still being run by ELCL. I very much doubt it.

Question 3 from Councillor Pipe to Councillor Neville, Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Scene:

“Will Councillor Neville tell the Council what actions have been taken by the Safer Neighbourhood Parks Unit in parks across the borough since its creation?”

Reply from Councillor Neville:

Since the creation of the unit on 1 July 2005 it has to date taken the following actions:

**Safer Neighbourhoods Parks Unit
Total Incidents**

Stop & Accounts (Form 5090)	1981
Intelligence Reports	1244

<u>Fixed Penalty Notices:-</u>	135
Drink	43
Litter	83
Dogs	1
Traffic	4
Fireworks	5
Process (Traffic Offences)	12
S59 Notices	38
Scooters seized	9
Detentions	141

<u>Arrests:-</u>	47
Burglary/ Robbery	13
Stolen Motor Scooters	3
Warrants/ Wanted	3
Affray	1
Drink Drive	3
Various Offences	8
Drugs (theft)/ Drinking	5
Breach of Bail	2
Criminal Damage	2
Bomb Threat	1
Imitation Firearm/Weapon	3

<u>Cannabis Detentions</u>	61
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<u>Verbal Warnings:-</u>	1093
Meetings Attended	117
Assistance Rendered	35
Abstractions	33
Other Public Related Enquiries	35

Question 4 from Councillor Rodin to Councillor Rye, Leader of the Council:

“How and when were Vantis insolvency consultants appointed by the Council, did their appointment comply with EU procurement regulations, what were their instructions and what experience of running a Leisure operation do they have?”

Reply from Councillor Rye:

“Vantis were appointed on 30th May 2006. They were appointed on the basis of a response (dated 24th May 2006) to a brief written by the Director of Finance & Corporate Resources, which was agreed with the Director of Education, Children’s Services and Leisure, and also agreed with Mr. Simon Parkinson, Managing Director of Enfield Leisure Centres Ltd and Mr. Phill Sowter, Chair of Enfield Leisure Centres Ltd. The brief is appended to this answer.

Following the Council’s Contract Procedure Rules (paragraph 2.3 applies), which are fully informed by and compliant with EU Procurement Regulations, the Director contacted four firms of chartered accountants and licensed insolvency practitioners, namely PKF, Baker Tilly, Vantis and Deloitte Touche. The latter company is an existing partner of the Council (providing specialised Internal Audit consultancy) and the former three firms have specialisms in both medium sized companies and the not-for-profit sector. Vantis (previously known as Numerica) carried out the funded liquidation of the Millfield Theatre Trust in 2004. The Director of Finance & Corporate Resources spoke to the relevant partner in each firm and explained the brief, inviting abstracts of how they would proceed, with indicative costs and timescales.

In the event two firms responded, but only one before the deadline. This response was from Vantis and they were duly appointed on 30th May 2006 under the delegated authority of the Director of Finance & Corporate Resources. The Director consulted with the Director of Education, Children’s Services and Leisure, and with Simon Parkinson and Phill Sowter. The work was led by Mr. Nick O’Reilly, Client Partner in the Business Recovery Team.

The quoted fee was £15,000.

As Members know, the work carried out by Vantis led to the acceptance by the Board and Members of Enfield Leisure Centres Ltd. that the company was very close to insolvency. At their meeting of Sunday 3rd September the Members of Enfield Leisure Centres Ltd. agreed to enter Members’ Voluntary Liquidation. The Members of the company appointed Vantis as liquidators and the Council entered into an indemnity agreement with the liquidators.

On 1st September 2006 I signed a delegated authority report granting authority to enter into an agreement with the liquidators regarding the funding of services by the Council from 4th September 2006 until, in the first instance and subject to further Council approval if necessary, 31st December 2006, to enable them to run ELCL in liquidation and maintain services. Authority was also given to grant the liquidators an indemnity against personal liability. In the same report the Council agrees to underwrite the current deficit in the finances of ELCL to the extent necessary to allow the Board to enter a solvent liquidation. This deficit was estimated as at 30th August 2006 to be a maximum of £684,766.

These decisions allowed Enfield Leisure Centres Ltd (in liquidation) to continue trading, allowing the leisure centers to remain open, maintaining leisure services for the public

whilst ELCL is wound up, and protected the interests of the customers, staff and directors of ELCL from the consequences of an insolvent liquidation. The Council is empowered under section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 to do anything calculated to improve the social, economic or environmental well-being of the area or its inhabitants.

To complete the answer to Councillor Rodin's question. The instructions given to Vantis during the independent financial review are as stated in the brief agreed with the Managing Director and Chair of ELCL. The Council does not instruct the liquidators, who were appointed by the Members of ELCL. It does however work in partnership with the liquidators to ensure that services continue to be provided and promoted and that the net costs are contained and reduced. The Council's Cabinet receives an up-to-date report to this effect at every meeting. The liquidators are not experienced leisure centre operators. They are insolvency practitioners and business recovery specialists, skills that are sadly needed in this case. However they have appointed an experienced and skilled Operations Manager, who regularly meets with senior Council officers to discuss his plans and achievements as manager of the facilities. The Council will hopefully soon be in a position to determine the long-term management arrangements for the leisure centers following the completion of the liquidation of Enfield Leisure Centres Ltd."

Enfield Leisure Centres Ltd

Brief for: Independent Review of Solvency and Business Prospects

Introduction

Enfield Leisure Centres Ltd. (ELCL) is an industrial & provident society set up in 1998 to manage the leisure centres of the London Borough of Enfield. Like many such organisations, the motivation for its creation was the favourable treatment of business rates on its operational premises.

Although ELCL have relationships with other local authorities, the major partnership is with the London Borough of Enfield. ELCL runs four major leisure centres in Enfield and four smaller facilities.

The London Borough of Enfield ("the Council") retains the responsibility for the provision of leisure services and has a financial, service and reputational stake in the continued provision of services. The Council is concerned about the financial position of ELCL and wishes to have a full and independent financial analysis of its current financial position and business prospects to inform its decision making process.

The Council requires the services of a firm of chartered accountants with experience in (i) the leisure sector and / or the charities sector; and (ii) business recovery advice.

The purpose of the independent analysis is to:

- Establish the current trading position of ELCL
- Establish the possible outcomes in the short terms regarding financial position and profitability
- Briefly establish the reasons behind current trading conditions

Financial Information

ELCL has a July to Jun financial year. Forecast turnover for the 2005-6 year was £4.82 million, with forecast expenditure of £4.63 million. As at 30-6-95 the accumulated surplus was £580,000.

As of the latest set of management accounts (comparing the budget profile for July to February with actual income and expenditure) there is a £253,000 shortfall in income and an £65,000 excess of expenditure. There is thus the danger that a deficit of over £300,000 could increase in the remaining months of the financial year, leading to a situation where it approached or exceeded the accumulated surplus.

In addition the company is experiencing cash flow problems.

The Concerns of the London Borough of Enfield

The Council is responsible for the provision of, availability of, and quality of leisure provision in the Borough. ELCL manage this provision at the leisure centres. The current financial problems of ELCL threaten this provision. This independent financial analysis is

to be commissioned, and paid for, by the Council. The financial adviser will have full access to the officers and records of ELCL.

Essentially the Council requires advice to help answer the following questions:

- What are the reasons for ELCL's current financial difficulties?
- What would be required to resolve these difficulties?
- What are the short, medium and longer-term prospects for ELCL?
- What recommendations would improve the situation in the short terms?

Costs and Timescales

It is essential that this study be completed by Friday 23rd June. Appropriately qualified firms are invited to present abstracts of how they would proceed, with indicative costs and timescales.

Contact

Mark M^cLaughlin
Director of Finance and Corporate Resources
London Borough of Enfield

020 8379 4600

mark.mclaughlin@enfield.gov.uk

Question 5 from Councillor E Savva to Councillor Neville, Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Scene:

“Will Councillor Neville give the Council an update on Planning Enforcement since that responsibility was merged with the Environmental Crime Unit on 1st January 2004?”

Reply from Councillor Neville:

“Since transferring the Planning Enforcement function to the Environmental Crime Unit, the volume of activity has increased significantly. In 2003, the number of new cases to investigate was 735. This had increased to 1281 in 2005 (an 82% increase) and is expected to continue to rise further this year to between 1600 and 1700 new cases.

There has also been a corresponding increase in formal action through enforcement notices. In 2003, 59 Enforcement Notices were served. This had increased to 159 in 2005 (a 169% increase) and is expected to rise further this year to about 200.

There has also been an increase in the number of prosecutions, with 12 so far this year, including significant penalties for a breach of a Stop Notice issued in respect of the unlawful importation and storage of waste onto greenbelt land and unlawful pollarding of a tree which was subject to a Tree Preservation Order.

The Council has a much larger number of officers now trained and competent to deal with Planning Enforcement Cases, which will enable a more sustainable position to ensure that this important area of work is appropriately prioritised. The profile of the Planning Enforcement Team is also very high at present, which has also contributed to the higher level of contact by the public to report unlawful development in the Borough.”

Question 6 from Councillor Stafford to Councillor Neville, Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Scene:

“Can the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Scene advise when the development at 35-41 Silver Street will be completed and the taxpayers of Enfield can finally have their pavement back.”

Reply from Councillor Neville:

“I understand that the 35-41 Silver Street development should be completed by 13 November 2006, when the hoarding will be removed. Any damaged paving will then be repaired.”

Question 7 from Councillor E Savva to Councillor Neville, Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Scene:

“Would Councillor Neville inform the Council which roads will benefit as part of the Council’s £17m capital investment in roads and footpaths during the coming three months?”

Reply from Councillor Neville:

“During the three months period November 06 to Jan 07, the Council will be implementing the following schemes:

Borough Road Re-surfacing Programme

Whitewebbs Lane - Chase Ward	£490,000
Brookdale – Southgate Green Ward	£ 30,000
Scotland Green Road – Ponders End Ward	£109,000
Quakers Walk – Grange Ward	£ 34,000
Broadoak Avenue – Turkey Street Ward	£32,000
Kingsfield Way – Turkey Street Ward	£16,000
Kingsfield Drive – Turkey Street Ward	£38,000
Tenniswood Road – Town Ward	£95,000
Chase Road - Cockfosters/Southgate Wards	£155,000

I am currently considering proposals for works to Bull Lane – Upper Edmonton Ward and Ferny Hill/Hadley Road – Chase and Highlands Wards.

Principal Road re-surfacing

A programme for resurfacing a number of Principal Roads is due to start at the end of January for completion this financial year.

This will include the following roads:

Cannon Hill – Southgate Ward	£220,000
High Street, N14 – Southgate Ward	£220,000
The Green/Waterfall Road – Southgate Green Ward	£140,000
Green Lanes (a section north of A406) - Palmers Green Ward	£300,000
London Road (a section south of Enfield Town) – Grange Ward	£121,000

Footway Renewal works:

Progress on footway schemes has been delayed due to the decision to ensure that we complete the renewal of street lighting columns before renewing footways. The following schemes will be on site:

Chaseville Park Road N21 - Southgate Ward	£250,000
Lincoln Road (continuation of current scheme) – Southbury Ward	£370,000

BSP funded improvement schemes:

Local safety schemes, comprising the installation of vehicle activated signs, improvements to warning signs and the introduction of some waiting restrictions on:

Clay Hill – Chase Ward	£18,000
Hoppers Road – Winchmore Hill Ward	£21,000
Hoe Lane – Turkey Street Ward	£8,000
Old Park Ridings – Grange Ward	£42,000

Roundabout improvements at:

Carterhatch Lane / Linwood Crescent – Chase Ward	£25,000
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Part time 20mph speed Limit and vehicle activated signs are under consideration for Wellington Road - Bush Hill Park Ward at a cost of £63,000.”

Question 8 from Councillor Georgiou to Councillor Rye, Leader of the Council:

“At the Bowes, Southgate and Southgate Green Area Forum on 4 July 2006, ‘Councillor Lamprecht apologised to residents for the Conservative Group’s election literature being misleading’ (minutes as agreed at the Forum’s meeting on 26 September). The apology related to information on parks that had, or had not, Green Flag status. As Leader of the Conservative Group, will you also apologise for this ‘misleading’ ‘literature’?”

Reply from Councillor Rye:

“I understand that the election literature referred to a particular park having Green Flag status when that was not the case. It referred to four parks having such status as opposed to three. The Conservative Party has on more than one occasion and on the doorsteps in Southgate openly acknowledged the mistake. Councillor Lamprecht, in his capacity as agent for the candidates, has apologised for the error. No one has suggested that this was a lie. Unlike the Labour Party we are not afraid to apologize and I congratulate Councillor Lamprecht for doing so publicly and fully endorse his actions.

Following the acknowledgement of the mistake the claim has never been repeated.

On several occasions we have raised in this Council Chamber the issue of claims made by the Labour Party in election literature and other communications which are untrue. Despite this, the Labour Party continues to make false claims after they have been demonstrated to be false. At the last Council meeting a Conservative Councillor accused the Labour Group of lying. Councillor Lavender went to great lengths to explain to the Council how the allegations raised by Councillor Rodin that the Conservative Group had amassed large reserves was false. Councillor Rodin was reported as having repeated those allegations in last week’s Enfield Independent.

I applaud Councillor Georgiou for his attempts to distract attention from this Conservative Group’s attempt to remove from Enfield politics the culture of spin and falsification of facts which are prevalent in Labour Party literature by concentrating on this one minor mistake in one leaflet. The only way he will succeed in doing this is if he uses his influence to clean up Labour Party Communications and election literature.

Perhaps Councillor Georgiou would like to take this opportunity to apologize for the many examples of misleading Labour Party election literature. To be helpful I offer him two examples from recent months:

(1) Joan Ryan and Labour’s Council candidates to Southbury Ward electors in May this year, “the Conservative Council is not prioritizing our local environment”. Nothing could be further from the truth as evidenced by:

- Increased satisfaction with street cleansing-MORI shows four rises since 2002 from 48% to 66%
- Recycling rate now more than 30%, (2002 under Labour 8%)
- £7 million of extra investment spent on street cleansing, day to day highway maintenance, environmental crime unit, enforcement, restoration of out of hours noise nuisance service
- Investment of £30 million on roads and footways
- PFI on street lighting to replace all street lights over the next 4 years

(2) Joan Ryan and the Labour Party Candidate to Turkey Street Ward electors this year, “and let’s not forget the lack of consultation over the demolition and development of the Plough Pub and failure to reopen the public toilets in Turkey Street”. As Councillor. Georgiou is well aware:

- The Plough Public House in Turkey Street was not owned by the Council and knocked down on his watch, under the last Labour Council
- The Council’s capital programme has delivered a new public toilet for Turkey Street and at the time the misleading literature was published, was awaiting installation at the Council’s depot.”

Question 9 from Councillor Headley to Councillor Lavender, Deputy Leader of the Council:

“What was the amount of investment allocated for the Edmonton Carnival in the years 2004, 2005 and 2006. Was this money at any time allocated to other budgets and, if it was, to which budget and for what purpose was it allocated?”

Reply from Councillor Lavender:

“The Council has not provided any direct financial support in the years 2004, 2005, or 2006 to any of the carnivals which take place in the borough. As far as I am aware the Council has never done so and I can confirm that there has been no decision made in any budget in which I have been involved to reduce or cut such funding. I am aware that indirect support is given for example by advertising .

It is important to recognise the good work that is undertaken by people who support the carnivals within the borough. One of the purposes of the carnivals is for funds to be raised for charity by local people.

I have concerns about the level to which charitable donations are being reduced because the voluntary sector is being crowded out by state funded organisations. Although it would be wrong to create policy on the hoof in answer to a Council question, I believe the Council should think long and hard before it appropriates Council tax payers money to purposes which are being supported voluntarily and more than adequately by the people of this borough.”

Question 10 from Councillor Rodin to Councillor Neville, Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Scene:

“How many parks have you visited since August 1st when you have been accompanied by officers of the relevant Friends of Parks Groups? Which parks were they and on what dates were your visits.”

Reply from Councillor Neville:

“I have had no invitations from Friends’ groups to do so though I am planning to visit Jubilee with that park’s Friends Group shortly. I visited a number of different parks through the summer months and I would be pleased to visit some more of our 127 parks and open spaces with Councillor Rodin if he would like to do so. In the meantime, the Acting Assistant Director wrote to all Friends groups upon his appointment in August inviting them to meet with him and he has in fact held four such meetings personally. I am also pleased

to inform members that he and other officers held a very successful meeting with officers of Friends groups in the Civic Centre on 26 October, this being the first of a proposed regular series of such meetings.

I am pleased to announce that the Council has now proposed an agreement to all Friends Groups which will enable them to access funding set aside by the Council which this year amounts to £20,000 and £10,000 in future years.

At the last Council Meeting I told Council that I was very disappointed at the loss of Green Flag status for some of our parks and that I was taking steps to secure an ongoing improvement in the parks. Our parks and open spaces are being inspected on a weekly basis to check that they meet the standards which we have set for safety, cleanliness, and attractiveness and to ensure that they are welcoming. These are undertaken by the Parks Operations Manager, but the Acting Assistant Director has participated in these inspections on three occasions since August, visiting Durants, Pymmes, Jubilee, Town, Library Green, New River, Craig, Bush Hill, Montague, Grovelands and Ponders End Recreation ground. I will continue to make random visits myself to ensure appropriate standards are maintained.”

Question 11 from Councillor Rodin to Councillor Lavender, Deputy Leader of the Council:

“Can Councillor Lavender inform the Council of the daily and monthly charges to staff who park in the ground floor car park of the Civic Centre?”

Reply from Councillor Lavender:

“The current charge is £47.27 per month. We do not have a daily charge for staff. Daily use by staff is actively discouraged unless there are circumstances such as illness, where we may allow staff to park on a daily basis if they have a doctor’s certificate to that effect. Members of the public can park in the visitors’ ground floor for 2 hours for 50p.”

Question 12 from Councillor Charalambous to Councillor Lavender, Deputy Leader of the Council:

“How many consultants have been employed by the Council (to be broken down by Department) over the last two years and what was the cost of each one?”

Reply from Councillor Lavender:

The Council employs external consultants to specific briefs for projects where the Councils cannot provide the capacity or experience required from its own staff resources.

The table below details all consultants used for the two years 2005-6 and 2006-7. The total expenditure was £2.8 million.

Subject	Company	2005/06	2006/07	Total
		£	£	£
ESSP				
	Parkway Planning Consultants	19,185	3,499	22,684
	ERM Waste Consultants		18,000	18,000
Planning Development	Faulkners		7,073	7,073
	Kernons Agricultural Consultant		300	300
	Design Advice Consultant		300	300
	Pearson Associates	1,000		1,000
Planning Policy	Atkins, ERM, Halcrow, Lichfields, Paul Dury, Scott Wilson	90,000	60,000	150,000
Emergency Planning	Casella-Winton	10,500		10,500
	Playing Up Consultancy		200	200
Parks	Groundwork Environmental Mgt	9,666		9,666
	ERL Landscape Principles	4,538		4,538
Regeneration	Regenfirst	0	20,000	20,000
	PwC	291,620	11,222	302,842
Street Lighting PFI	Addleshaw Goddards	217,548		217,548
	Derek Rogers Associates	26,292		26,292
	PwC	24,464	49,104	73,568
Highways Partnership/EoI	Halcrow	24,522	36,196	60,718
Mossops Creek Footbridge Ecology Study	Annie Chipchase	950		950
Inspection of Highways Network	Barretts Consulting Ltd		49,810	49,810
Highways Network Condition Mapping	Scott Wilson	5,110		5,110
Chief Executive's Dept				
Customer Service Centre Performance Work	Effective Service Provision Ltd.			25,978
Staff Survey	Market & Opinion Research			16,200
Employment Strategy & Job Evaluation	Symetra Ltd			5,100
	Hay Group Management			59,834
F&CR				
Procurement Consultancy	Hedra			286,907
	Helm Corporation			54,862
Property Review	Donaldsons			63,742
Property Consultancy	RFS Associates			126,640
	Charles Somerset Ltd			98,375
	Berwin Leighton			59,422
	Lambert Smith Hampton			18,818

	Paul Samson			18,500
	Ashurst			12,017
	Bowyer price			9,272
	Chase & partners			9,000
	Strutt & Partners			7,875
	Ian Gibbs			7,800
	Adlers			5,286
	Donald Install Associates			4,754
	Barnfields			4,300
Transport Planning	JPM Consulting			4,638
Feasibility Study - Property	Thames Energy			23,000
Research Services CIT	Gartner UK Ltd			15,000
Drafting Older People's Strategy	Symetra			22,320
Beacon Status Application	Bell Potinger			7,058

ECSL

Film Festival	Andrea Corbett	2,100		2,100
	Paul Drury partnership	20,000	20,000	40,000
Forty Hall Plan	Giles Arnold & Assoc.	1,300		1,300
	JMP Consultants		4,000	4,000
Library Review	Mouchel Parkman Services	45,800	171	45,971
Museum Development Plan	Matthews Millman		22,161	22,161
Museum Condition Survey	Amelia Rampton		1,200	1,200
	Victoria Leanse		1,750	1,750
Museum Access Plan	Cassie Herschel		1,808	1,808
ELCL Liquidation	Vantis		39,189	39,189

CHASS

Housing Revenue

Stock Options Appraisal Training	Alternative Futures	2,000	1,275	3,275
Recruitment Consultancy	Gatenby Sanderson	32,746	12,932	45,678
Whitefields Estate	JCMT Architects		12,524	12,524
Tenants' Survey	Market & Opinion Research		4,835	4,835
Work associated with ALMO bid and preparation for the ALMO	HQN Services	33,287	15,064	48,351
Independent Tenants' Advisers	SOLON Housing	10,313	17,284	27,597
Development of Partnering contract	Mouchel Parkman Services Ltd	21,335		21,335

**Community,
Regeneration**

BIC Liquidation	PwC	275,098	45,000	320,098
Customer Service Centre - Review of Staffing	Effective Service Provision Ltd		26,212	26,212
Review of Regeneration Function	Regeneration First	22,750		22,750
IT Replacement - framework set up	Birch & Starkey Ltd	20,611		20,611
Housing Stock	Building research establishment	5,000		5,000
Housing Need Survey	Fordham Research	28,470		28,470

Adult Social Services

Independent Review of Performance for Clients Helped to Live at Home.	Care & Health Consulting	14,429	9,356	23,785
Improving Provision of Adaptations Review	Contract consulting	25,000		25,000
Modernising LD Community Services	Peter Docherty	30,900	7,200	38,100
Modernising Dementia Services	Robson Rhodes	7,000		7,000
Assistive Technology	The Change Co.	4,861		4,861
No Secrets' Guidance - Adult Protection	Chrissie Pearce	5,289		5,289
Review of Process for Allocating Care Packages	Social Care Consulting	1,400		1,400

Total all Depts**2,799,447**

Question 13 from Councillor Charalambous to Councillor Zinkin, Cabinet Member for Corporate Strategy and Communications.

“How many locum staff are currently employed by the Council (to be broken down by Department) and what is the annual cost of locum staff for each Directorate?”

Reply from Councillor Ann Zinkin:

The Council currently has a total of 467 agency workers (permanent staff complement is currently 5,077). 246 cover clerical and administrative jobs while 221 (including 22 Social Workers) cover professional and technical jobs. This total does not include agency workers covering manual jobs as these details are currently not collated centrally.

The Departmental breakdown of the total is

Chief Executive's	10
Community Housing & Adult Social Services	226*
Education, Children's Services & Leisure	54
Environment, Street Scene & Parks	57
Finance & Corporate Resources	120
Total	467

* A significant number (about 40) of these agency workers are engaged in the Contact Centre pending a review of the current organisation structure.

The use of agency workers tends to fluctuate throughout the year. However, the projected corporate costs at current engagement rates are £885,800 per month/£10,630,000 per annum, i.e. 7.8% of non-schools paybill.

The Council has two centrally negotiated contracts managed by the HR Unit covering the procurement of all non-schools agency/locum workers – with the current exception of Social Workers. Negotiations are currently in progress to bring this category of worker with the scope of these contracts. Consideration is also being given to extending the scope of the contract to include the procurement of blue-collar agency workers. The adoption of the centralised contracts is projected to deliver cashable savings of £400,000 in 06/07.

One of the efficiency benefits to the Council of adopting centralised contracts is that the Council receives monthly consolidated invoices. In the time available to respond to this question, it has not been possible to break down this expenditure to a departmental level. However, Members can be provided with a written breakdown if this is required.

The present administration sees value in the employment of agency staff and currently, the number of agency workers covering clerical and administrative posts is higher than in the past. This is a consequence of adopting a strategy of using agency workers to cover vacancies to avoid the need to make permanent staff redundant as efficiency gains are implemented. You will appreciate that the number of non-schools staff has reduced by around 200 in the last 2½ years (since 2004).

Please also be aware that the unit cost of agency workers compared to permanent staff is frequently more favourable.

Certain professional disciplines have an embedded culture of agency working arrangements in both the public and private sectors which is unavoidable.

The use of agency workers also allows the Council to vary its workforce easily to meet fluctuations in workload and demand.

Question 14 from Councillor Charalambous to Councillor Lavender, Deputy Leader of the Council:

“How many times over the last 12 months did the Council spend over £1,000 on external legal fees, what were these fees for and did these cases involve the Council paying damages? If so how much and what were the damages for?”

Reply from Councillor Lavender:

“It would take considerable resources to assemble the information requested. I am happy to do so, provide it as soon as possible privately and then have it published in the next Council agenda, however I want to establish first that this information is actually required and is not a waste of resources where the real matter under scrutiny relates to one instance and is the subject of some specific pithy supplementary. I don't mind specific pithy supplementary questions but I would like to avoid unnecessary expense in getting there.

I can inform Councillor Charalambous that we engaged the services of Counsel on 104 occasions and external solicitors on 47 occasions during the last 12 months. This may or may not be the same as the £1000.00 threshold but should roughly approximate to that sum.

The total fees incurred have been £532,055.00 net.

Costs on 7 occasions amount to £53,460.00 net.

Can I take this opportunity of reminding the Council of the fact that we have an award winning Legal Team which in my opinion provides excellent value and properly strikes the right balance between the use of internal and external resources in terms of correct expertise and management of workload.”