

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Finance and Administration</b>	<b>Agenda Item 5</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>16 September 2010</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Lead Officer's Report</b>	
<b>Author:</b>	<b>Adrian Webb, Director of Central Services, 01799 510421</b>	Item for decision

---

## Summary

This report updates Members on matters arising from the minutes that are not otherwise on this Agenda and other items of interest.

## Procurement

The Council's new Procurement Manager, Cristine Oakey, took up post on 16 August. Cristine has previously carried out similar roles with Essex Police Authority and Braintree District Council. Cristine's early priorities will be supporting the implementation of the new purchasing system, and assisting services with tendering activity. Cristine will be progressing the Procurement Strategy Action Plan during the next few months. The Council shall withdraw from the Essex Procurement Hub in September.

## Asset Management

The arrangement with Basildon District Council for them to provide asset management services did not work out and has been discontinued. It remains the case that there is no internal capacity or capability to take forward corporate asset management. Officers have met with two asset management consultancy providers and received written proposals from them. SMB will determine the way forward in September.

## Housing Benefit

During the Spring of 2010 the number of live Housing Benefit claims began to decrease. However, in the last two months the number has begun to increase again with August seeing the largest number of new claims received for any month in this calendar year. The table below shows the number of live claimants over the last 5 years.

Date	Number of live Housing Benefit claims
31 March 2006	3,314
31 March 2007	3,386
31 March 2008	3,479
31 March 2009	3,942
31 March 2010	4,302
31 August 2010	4,345

### **Council Offices, 46 High Street, Gt Dunmow**

On 5 August an email was sent to all Members informing them that exchange of contracts had taken place and the completion date was set for 30 September 2010. At that point in time the voluntary sector will be transferring their short term tenancy to the new owners.

### **Saffron Walden Town Council**

Members will be aware that the Town Clerk retired on 31 August 2010. At the request of the Town Council discussions were held to determine whether it was possible for the District Council to assist in the day to day running of the Town Council whilst the recruitment process for a new Town Clerk took place. Officers met with Town Council Members and following discussions it was agreed that there was an opportunity for partnership working in this area on a short term basis. The timing of the retirement meant it was not possible to fit the request into the Committee cycle, therefore the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman of Finance and Administration Committee agreed to a request from the Mayor of Saffron Walden to assist with the interim running of the Town Council pending the recruitment of a new Town Clerk. It was agreed that this support would be offered at no cost to the Town Council.

**It is therefore recommended that** Members endorse the action undertaken by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman of Finance and Administration Committee in so far as Uttlesford District Council provides an interim 'Proper Officer' (the statutory role usually given to the Town Clerk) pending the recruitment of a permanent replacement.