



Leicester
City Council

MINUTE EXTRACT

Minutes of the Meeting of the AUDIT COMMITTEE

Held: WEDNESDAY, 5 NOVEMBER 2008 at 5.30pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Johnson (Chair)
Councillor Manish Sood (Vice Chair)

Councillor R Blackmore
Councillor Clair

Councillor Patel

Councillor Chowdhury
Councillor Desai

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32. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were requested to declare any interests they may have in the business to be discussed and/or indicate that Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 applied to them.

No declarations were made.

37. COUNTER-FRAUD UPDATE REPORT

A joint report of the Chief Finance Officer and the Interim Corporate Director of Adults and Housing was considered which gave an update on the Council's Counter-Fraud activities and the Audit Commission's National Fraud Initiative. Details were also given of the 2006/07 data matching exercise and the position regarding the 2008/09 exercise which matched data held by local authorities to that held by other public organisations nationally to help detect and deal with potential fraudulent and erroneous payments.

It was noted that following consideration of the issues by Cabinet a series of training sessions had been organised for certifying officers to increase awareness of the risk of fraud and stated that so far 932 officers had received training. In relation to data matching it was stated that in 2006, following legal advice, data relating to Council Tax single person discounts and electoral registration was not provided. Further legal opinion would be sought before the 2008/09 exercise.

In relation to Housing Benefits it was stated that a 24-hour reporting hotline was in place with referrals from Inland Revenue and the data matching exercise followed up. Members referred to problems where members of the public neglected to inform Housing Benefits officers of a change in circumstances. It was suggested that to protect against this a letter could be sent to all claimants reminding them of the need to declare a change in circumstances and, once signed by the claimant to indicate they had received it, returned to the Council.

RESOLVED:

1. that the Committee receive the report; and
2. that Cabinet be requested to consider asking the Corporate Director to write to all Housing Benefit claimants each year to remind them of the need to notify the Council of any changes in circumstances and to sign that they received the reminder.