

**To: Leader and Members of the Executive Board  
(Councillors M Stanley, Hayfield, Humphreys, Moore, Morson, Phillips, Simpson, Smith and Sweet)**

**For the information of other Members of the Council**

**For general enquiries please contact David Harris, Democratic Services Manager, on 01827 719222 or via e-mail - [davidharris@northwarks.gov.uk](mailto:davidharris@northwarks.gov.uk).**

**For enquiries about specific reports please contact the officer named in the reports.**

**The agenda and reports are available in large print and electronic accessible formats if requested.**

## **EXECUTIVE BOARD AGENDA**

**25 NOVEMBER 2013**

The Executive Board will meet in the Committee Room at the Council House, South Street, Atherstone, Warwickshire on Monday 25 November 2013 at 6.30pm

### **AGENDA**

- 1 Evacuation Procedure.**
- 2 Apologies for Absence / Members away on official Council business.**
- 3 Disclosable Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests**

4 **Public Participation**

Up to twenty minutes will be set aside for members of the public to ask questions or to put their views to elected Members. Participants are restricted to five minutes each. If you wish to speak at the meeting please contact David Harris on 01827 719222 or email [democraticservices@northwarks.gov.uk](mailto:democraticservices@northwarks.gov.uk).

5 **Requests for discussion of En Bloc items.**

**PART A – ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND DECISION  
(WHITE PAPERS)**

6 **2012/13 Annual Audit Letter** – Report of the Deputy Chief Executive

**Summary**

This report presents the 2012/13 Annual Audit Letter received from the Council's external auditors, PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP.

The Contact Officer for this report is Sue Garner (719374)

7 **Council Tax Support Scheme 2014/15** - Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and the Assistant Chief Executive (Community Services)

**Summary**

This report gives options for a Council Tax Support Scheme for 2014/15.

The Contact Officer for this report is Sue Garner (719374)

8 **Council Tax Support Grant to Parish Councils** - Report of the Deputy Chief Executive

**Summary**

The Board is asked to consider the Council's ability to continue to provide grant to parish councils.

The Contact Officer for this report is Sue Garner (719374)

9 **Portas Funding – the High Street Innovation Fund** - Report of the Assistant Chief Executive and Solicitor to the Council

**Summary**

The report seeks Member approval for an approach to using the funding in Atherstone that the Council has received through the Portas scheme.

The Contact Officer for this report is Steve Maxey (719438).

10 **Coventry and Warwickshire Joint Committee - Report of the Chief Executive**

**Summary**

This report sets out a proposal to establish a Joint Committee of all the local authorities across the Coventry & Warwickshire City Deal area to provide sub-regional governance to the economic development of the area.

The Contact Officer for this report is Jerry Hutchinson (719200).

11 **Corporate Peer Challenge - Report of the Chief Executive**

**Summary**

The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the result of the Peer Challenge exercise carried out by the Local Government Association in July 2013 and to make recommendations on how the areas for action, highlighted in the Peer Challenge Team's report, can be taken forward.

The Contact Officer for this report is Jerry Hutchinson (719200).

12 **Federation of Small Businesses Procurement Charter - Report of the Assistant Chief Executive and Solicitor to the Council**

**Summary**

This report seeks Member approval to adopt the Federation of Small Businesses' Procurement Charter.

The Contact Officer for this report is Steve Maxey (719438).

13 **Conservative Group - Report of the Chief Executive**

**Summary**

The purpose of this report is to seek authorisation for any possible amendments to representation on Boards resulting from the impending change in the leadership of the Conservative Group.

The Contact Officer for this report is David Harris (719222).

## **PART B – ITEMS FOR EN BLOC DECISIONS (YELLOW PAPERS)**

- 14 **Calendar of Meetings 2014/15** - Report of the Chief Executive

### **Summary**

The purpose of this report is to approve a calendar of meetings for 2014/15.

The Contact Officer for this report is David Harris (719222).

- 15 **2013/14 Capital Programme** - Report of the Assistant Director (Finance and Human Resources)

### **Summary**

This report informs Members of action taken by the Chief Executive, using his urgent business powers, in respect of an amendment to the approved 2013/14 capital programme, in order that suitable plant could be ordered for delivery in time for the commencement of the new carriageway sweeping service.

The Contact Officer for this report is Sue Garner (719374).

- 16 **Implementing Individual Electoral Registration** – Report of the Chief Executive

### **Summary**

To inform the Board of the progress being made towards the implementation of Individual Electoral Registration (IER)

The Contact Officer for this report is David Harris (719222).

- 17 **Budgetary Control Report 2013/14 - Period Ended 31 October 2013** - Report of the Assistant Director (Finance and Human Resources)

### **Summary**

The report covers revenue expenditure and income for the period from 1 April 2013 to 31 October 2013. The 2013/2014 budget and the actual position for the period, compared with the estimate at that date, are given, together with an estimate of the out-turn position for services reporting to this Board.

The Contact Officer for this report is Nigel Lane (719371).

- 18 **Progress Report on Achievement of Corporate Plan and Performance Indicator Targets – April 2013 to September 2013 – Report of the Chief Executive and the Deputy Chief Executive**

**Summary**

This report informs Members of the progress with the achievement of the Corporate Plan and Performance Indicator targets relevant to the Executive Board for April to September 2013.

The Contact Officer for this report is Robert Beggs (719238).

- 19 **Minutes of the meetings of the Special Sub-Group held on 16 September, 20 October (enclosed herewith) and 18 November 2013 (to follow) to be received and noted.**

**PART C – EXEMPT INFORMATION  
(GOLD PAPERS)**

- 20 **Exclusion of the Public and Press**

**Recommendation:**

**That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business, on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by Schedule 12A to the Act.**

- 21 **Coventry and Warwickshire City Deal – Report of the Chief Executive**

The Contact Officer for this report is Jerry Hutchinson (719200)

JERRY HUTCHINSON  
Chief Executive

**Agenda Item No 6**

**Executive Board**

**25 November 2013**

**Report of the  
Deputy Chief Executive**

**2012/13 Annual Audit Letter**

**1 Summary**

1.1 This report presents the 2012/13 Annual Audit Letter received from the Council's external auditors, PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP.

<p><b>Recommendation to the Board</b></p> <p><b>That the report presented as Appendix A be noted.</b></p>
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**2 Introduction**

2.1 The Council's external auditors, PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, have summarised the work they undertook relating to the 2012/13 financial year in an annual audit letter. This is attached as Appendix A.

**3 Report Implications**

**3.1 Finance and Value for Money Implications**

3.1.1 Budget provision for external audit costs has been made. The auditors review the financial arrangements of the Council, including an assessment of the value for money achieved by the council in terms of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

**3.2 Risk Management Implications**

3.2.1 An external audit process provides some assurance over the Council's internal control system, and highlights any areas where improvements could be made.

The Contact Officer for this report is Sue Garner (719374).

**Background Papers**

Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D, as substituted by the Local Government Act, 2000 Section 97

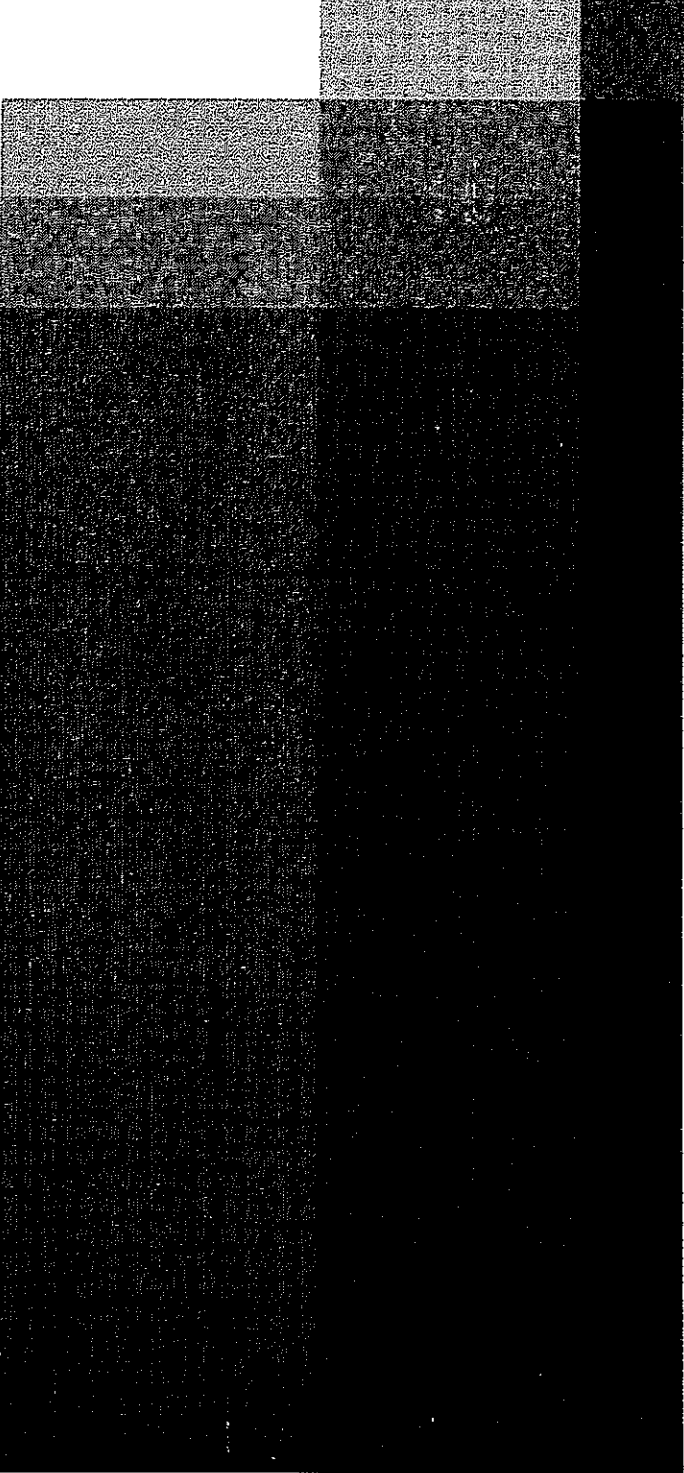
Background Paper No	Author	Nature of Background Paper	Date

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# North Warwickshire Borough Council

*Annual Audit Letter*

2012/13



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Government and  
Public Sector

October 2013

**PWC**

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## *Code of Audit Practice and Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and of Audited Bodies*

*In April 2010 the Audit Commission issued a revised version of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and of Audited Bodies. It is available from the Chief Executive of the Authority. The purpose of the Statement is to assist auditors and audited bodies by explaining where the responsibilities of auditors begin and end and what is to be expected of the audited body in certain areas. Our reports and letters are*

*prepared in the context of this Statement. Reports and letters prepared by appointed auditors and addressed to members or officers are prepared for the sole use of the audited body and no responsibility is taken by auditors to any Member or officer in their individual capacity or to any third party.*



*An audit is not designed to identify all matters that may be relevant to those charged with governance. Accordingly, the audit does not ordinarily identify all such matters.*

# Introduction

## The purpose of this letter

This letter summarises the results of our 2012/13 audit work for members of the Council.

We have already reported the detailed findings from our audit work to the Council's Executive Board in the following reports:

- Audit opinion for the 2012/13 financial statements, incorporating our opinion on the Council's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.
- Report to those charged with governance (ISA (UK&I) 260).

*The matters reported here are the most significant for the Council.*

## Scope of Work

The Council is responsible for preparing and publishing its Statement of Accounts, accompanied by the Annual Governance Statement. It is also responsible for putting in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

Our 2012/13 audit work has been undertaken in accordance with the Audit Plan that we issued in February 2013 and is conducted in accordance with the Audit Commission's Code of Audit Practice, International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland) and other guidance issued by the Audit Commission.

We met our responsibilities as follows:

North Warwickshire Borough Council

Audit Responsibility	Results
<p>Regard to the audit of the accounts in accordance with the Audit Practice Board's International Standards on Auditing (ISA (UK&amp;I))</p> <p>▲</p>	<p>We reported our audit findings to the Council and issued an unqualified audit opinion on 30 September 2013.</p>
<p>Regard to the Statement of Accounts in the accounts submitted to the Council in accordance with the Audit Practice Board's International Standards on Auditing (ISA (UK&amp;I))</p> <p>▲</p>	<p>The Council fell below the threshold for a full audit, therefore we issued a short form Assurance Statement to the NAO on 30 September 2013 in respect of the Council's Whole of Government Accounts consolidation pack.</p>
<p>Form a conclusion on the arrangements the Council has made for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources</p> <p>▲</p>	<p>On 30 September 2013 we issued an unqualified value for money conclusion.</p>
<p>Consider the completeness of disclosures in the Council's Annual Governance Statement, identify any inconsistencies with the other information of which we are aware from our work and consider whether it complies with CIPFA / SOLACE guidance.</p> <p>▲</p>	<p>There were no issues to report in this regard.</p>
<p>Consider whether, in the public interest, we should make a report on any matter coming to our notice in the course of the audit.</p> <p>▲</p>	<p>There were no issues to report in this regard.</p>
<p>Determine whether any other action should be taken in relation to our responsibilities under the Audit Commission Act</p> <p>▲</p>	<p>There were no issues to report in this regard.</p>

**Audit Responsibility**

It is the responsibility of the Council to prepare financial statements for the year which give a true and fair view of the state of the Council's affairs and of the results of its operations and to ensure that the financial statements are prepared in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and the Accounting and Financial Regulations 2005. The Council is also responsible for ensuring that it complies with the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and the Accounting and Financial Regulations 2005 in relation to the preparation and presentation of the financial statements.

**Results**

We issued our completion certificate on 30 September 2019.

*Included within this section are details of our findings within the following areas:*

- Accounts;
- Use of resources;
- Annual Governance Statement; and
- Whole of Government Accounts.

# Audit Findings

## Accounts

We audited the Council's accounts in line with approved Auditing Standards and issued an unqualified audit opinion on 30 September 2013.

Overall, the Council's accounts preparation performance was good.

One key issue was identified during our audit of the Council's Statement of Accounts in respect of the Council's Local Authority Mortgage Scheme (LAMS).

The Council participates in the LAMS by acting as a financial guarantor for mortgages offered by Lloyds Banking Group to first time buyers who require up to 95% loan to value mortgages.

The Council invested £1 million in its LAMS in 2012/13. This was funded through borrowing.

During the year we discussed with the Council the appropriate interpretation of the regulations governing the accounting treatment for the LAMS, in particular, whether the scheme could be treated as capital expenditure. Our view was that there was strong argument for the scheme to be accounted for as revenue expenditure.

Following further discussions with the Finance Team and given the uncertainty in legal interpretation of the regulations in this area, we requested that the accounts be amended to include additional disclosure as to the critical judgement being made by the Council in accounting for the LAMS as capital expenditure. The Council included this additional disclosure in Note 2 in the Statement of Accounts.

## Use of Resources

We carried out sufficient, relevant work in line with the Audit Commission's guidance, so that we could conclude on whether the Council had in place, for 2012/13, proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of the Council's resources.

In line with Audit Commission requirements, our conclusion was based on two criteria:

- the organisation has proper arrangements in place for securing financial resilience; and
- the organisation has proper arrangements for challenging how it secures economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

To reach our conclusion, we carried out a programme of work that was based on our risk assessment. We considered:

- the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan and how the Council had taken account of the Local Government Finance Settlement;

- how the Council is preparing for changes resulting from the Welfare Reform Act and Local Government Finance Act 2012 which bring about changes to the benefits system, business rates and the localisation of council tax benefit; and
- the Audit Commission's profile tools (available on the Audit Commission's website) to compare the Council's performance to its peers.

Further to this, we reviewed minutes and external documents to identify any other matters which may have cast doubt on the Council's financial standing.

We issued an unqualified conclusion in respect of the two criteria above.

### *Annual Governance Statement*

Local authorities are required to produce an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) that is consistent with guidance issued by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountants (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE). The AGS accompanies the Statement of Accounts.

We reviewed the AGS to consider whether it complied with the CIPFA/SOLACE guidance and whether it might be misleading or inconsistent with other information known to us from our audit work. We found no areas of concern to report in this context.

### *Whole of Government Accounts*

We undertook our work on the Whole of Government Accounts consolidation pack as prescribed by the Audit Commission. The Council was below the threshold set by the National Audit Office (NAO) for full assurance and so we issued a short form Assurance Statement. The audited pack was submitted to the NAO on 30 September 2013. We found no areas of concern to report in this context.

# Final Fees

## Final Fees for 2012/13

We reported our fee proposals in our 2012/13 Audit Plan.

Our actual fees for the Statement of Accounts were in line with our proposals.

	2012/13 actual	2012/13 fee proposal	2011/12 final actual
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Audit work performed under the Code of Audit Practice

Statement of Accounts (including Whole of Government Accounts and our conclusion on the Council's Use of Resources)	55,581	55,581	92,635
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Certification Work	Note 1	15,400	36,943
Non Audit Work	-	-	-

Our fee for certification of claims and returns is still to be finalised for 2012/13 and will be reported to the Council's Executive Board in February 2014 within our 2012/13 Annual Certification Report.



In the event that, pursuant to a request which North Warwickshire Borough Council ("the Council") has received under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, it is required to disclose any information contained in this report, it will notify PwC promptly and consult with PwC prior to disclosing such report. The Council agrees to pay due regard to any representations which PwC may make in connection with such disclosure and the Council shall apply any relevant exemptions which may exist under the Act to such report. If, following consultation with PwC, the Council discloses this report or any part thereof, it shall ensure that any disclaimer which PwC has included or may subsequently wish to include in the information is reproduced in full in any copies disclosed.

This document has been prepared only for the Council and solely for the purpose and on the terms agreed through our contract with the Audit Commission. We accept no liability (including for negligence) to anyone else in connection with this document, and it may not be provided to anyone else.

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## **Agenda Item 7**

### **Executive Board**

**25 November 2013**

**Report of the Deputy Chief Executive  
and the Assistant Chief Executive  
(Community Services)**

**Council Tax Support Scheme  
2014/15**

## **1 Summary**

1.1 This report gives options for a Council Tax Support Scheme for 2014/15.

<p><b>Recommendation to the Council</b></p> <p><b>a To approve the retention of an 8.5% reduction in Council Tax Support to all current working age customers, in the 2014/15 Council Tax Support Scheme; and</b></p> <p><b>b To approve that the Council Tax Support Scheme adopted for 2014/15 be uprated in line with the statutory increases as notified by the Department of Work and Pensions.</b></p>
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## **2 Introduction**

2.1 Before the Council implemented its 2013/14 Council Tax Support scheme, which replaced the previous nationally funded Council Tax Benefit scheme, a consultation exercise was carried out which included an option of reducing the support given to working age claimants by up to 20%. The actual scheme eventually implemented for 2013/14 passed on a reduction in support of 8.5%, as the Council decided to take the transitional grant on offer from the government to keep any cuts at this level. The transitional grant is payable for one year only, therefore there is a need to reassess the scheme for 2014/15.

## **3 Possible Schemes for 2014/15**

3.1 For 2014/15, the Council has two options. It could retain the scheme at its present level, using an 8.5% cut, or increase the cut by up to 20%. Whilst a 20% cut would reduce the cost of the scheme to all precepting authorities, this reduction is less once an allowance has been made for an increase in the assumed non collection of council tax from those who have previously not paid a charge at this level. Assumed non collection is based on the experiences of Council's who have passed on the biggest cuts experiencing the biggest falls in council tax collection rates.

- 3.2 In respect of our own collection rate, we have currently collected 67.78% of the yearly debit as at the end of October 2013, against 68.16% at the same point in time in 2012, a drop of 0.38%. The actual collection rate from those customers who previously qualified for 100% Council Tax Benefit is 43.77%, indicating the increased difficulty in collecting monies from those impacted by the reduction in the help provided to them to pay their council tax liability.
- 3.3 North Warwickshire received grant of £649,000 towards the Council tax Support scheme in 2013/14, of which £112,000 was passed onto parishes. This grant was included in the overall council funding received from the government. For 2014/15 this funding has been reduced by 13.5% and therefore it is reasonable to assume a similar reduction to Council Tax Support grant (£72,493) when calculating the cost of the scheme to the Council.
- 3.4 The costs of the two schemes are set out below.

#### Comparison of Schemes

	<b>Cost including an 8.5% reduction</b>	<b>Cost including a 20% reduction</b>	<b>Variance</b>
<b>Cost of Discount</b>	<b>544,922</b>	<b>516,701</b>	<b>-28,221</b>
Central Grant	-464,507	-464,507	-
<b>Net cost of Discount</b>	<b>80,415</b>	<b>52,194</b>	<b>-28,221</b>
Assumed non collection of CTS from working age claimants	1,460	15,571	14,111
<b>Expected Cost of Discount Scheme</b>	<b>81,875</b>	<b>67,765</b>	<b>-14,110</b>

- 3.5 The Revenues and Benefits team has already seen a significant increase (in the region of 40%) in the numbers of reminder's and summons issued, and court orders obtained, in administering a scheme with an 8.5% reduction compared to 2012/13. As such, increasing the reduction to 20% will inevitably increase this workload further, assuming similar experience to other Councils nationwide where a cut of this size was passed on to customers. Based on this information and current experiences to date, the service has expressed major concerns about their ability to manage the additional workload without any more resources. Even if the additional administration can be accommodated, an increase in the non collection of council tax would need to be assumed, as shown in the table set out above. It should be noted that in the event that additional staffing resources were needed, the full cost of this would fall on North Warwickshire.
- 3.5 Members will recall that the Council introduced a number of changes to Council Tax exemptions in 2013/14 to offset the costs of Council Tax Support. Based on current experience, these should raise in the region of £57,400



towards the expected cost of the Discount Scheme. The council assumptions regarding the level of charges that would be raised and the likely collection of increased empty property charges have proven to be correct.

- 3.6 The other two major precepting authorities have been consulted on the possible retention of an 8.5% reduction, having been consulted on a potential 20% reduction last year. Warwickshire County Council has indicated that as it set its original policy last year on supporting a reduction in line with the general reduction in council tax benefit, then it would be supportive of a proposal to retain the current scheme which was adopted in 2013/14.

#### **4 Report Implications**

##### **4.1 Finance and Value for Money Implications**

- 4.1.1 The net expected cost of an 8.5% reduction, after taking changes to Council Tax exemptions into account, is £24,475.

- 4.1.2 The net expected cost of a 20% reduction, after taking changes to Council Tax exemptions into account, is £10,365. However this cost would increase by any additional staffing resource required, which is likely to negate the financial benefit of any change to the current scheme.

##### **4.2 Human Resources Implications**

- 4.2.1 Reducing the Council Tax Support Scheme further for working age claimants would put greater pressure on staff administering the scheme. There would be additional workload in collection, recovery and appeal activity, which existing members of staff are unlikely to be able to absorb, as explained in paragraph 4.1.2.

##### **4.3 Risk Management Implications**

- 4.3.1 The key financial risk to the Council and Major Preceptors is a possible increase in caseload in future years, from both working age claimants and pensioners. However it should be noted that over the past 12 months, the benefit caseload of the council has reduced and this can be attributed in large part to the job opportunities available in the Borough which continue to grow.

##### **4.4 Equalities Implications**

- 4.4.1 Any reduction in Council Tax Support will impact across the whole of the working age caseload, but not disproportionately on different groups within it.

The Contact Officers for this report are Sue Garner (719374) and Bob Trahern (719378).

### Background Papers

Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D, as substituted by the Local Government Act, 2000 Section 97

Background Paper No	Author	Nature of Background Paper	Date
Adoption of a Council Tax Support Scheme for 2013/14	NWBC	Report to Executive Board	26 November 2012
Reduction of council Tax Discounts for Second Homes and Long Term Empty Dwellings	NWBC	Report to Executive Board	17 January 2013
The Impact of Council Tax Support on Parish Councils	NWBC	Report to Executive Board	17 January 2013

**Agenda Item No 8**

**Executive Board**

**25 November 2013**

**Report of the  
Deputy Chief Executive**

**Council Tax Support Grant to  
Parish Councils**

**1 Summary**

- 1.1 The Board is asked to consider the Council's ability to continue to provide grant to parish councils.

<p><b>Recommendation to the Council</b></p> <p><b>To consider the Council's ability to continue to provide grant to parish councils.</b></p>
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**2 Introduction**

- 2.1 The introduction of Council Tax Support from April 2013 reduced the tax base of all precepting authorities, including town and parish councils. In 2013/14, the government provided grant to offset 90% of the reduction in council tax income. The relevant proportion of this grant, amounting to £112,423, was passed to town and parish councils.

**3 Grant Funding in 2014/15**

- 3.1 The specific grant received towards loss of Council Tax income was included in the Council's general allocation of grant in 2013/14, but was identified separately. For 2014/15 onwards, any specific grant towards loss of Council Tax will not be identified.
- 3.2 The Council's general allocation of grant for 2014/15 has been reduced by 13.5% and therefore it is reasonable to assume a similar reduction to the specific amount relating to Council Tax Support grant. This will reduce the grant to Parish Councils to £97,245 in 2014/15, with further reductions required in following years to match the on going loss of general grant in 2015/16 onwards.

**4 Options for Savings**

- 4.1 Any decisions on the use of the general grant received from the government rests with the Borough Council. The Council can retain the full grant received, or can continue to pass an element of grant to the parishes. Given the

significant pressures on the Borough's finances, Members may wish to consider whether they wish to continue to pass grant to the parish councils.

- 4.2 The Council could chose to provide some grant funding for 2014/15, but give notice to the parishes that it will not be provided in 2015/16. Alternatively the grant could be phased out over a couple of years.

## 5 Provision of Information

- 5.1 Parishes will need to be informed of what, if any, grant they can expect for 2014/15, before they consider the level of precept they require for 2014/15. An indication of grant in subsequent years would also assist in their financial planning.

## 4 Report Implications

### 4.1 Finance and Value for Money Implications

- 4.1.1 If the Council decided to discontinue grant provision to the parishes, there would be a saving of £97,245.

The Contact Officer for this report is Sue Garner (719374).

### Background Papers

Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D, as substituted by the Local Government Act, 2000 Section 97

Background Paper No	Author	Nature of Background Paper	Date

**Agenda Item No 9**

**Executive Board**

**25 November 2013**

**Report of the Assistant Chief Executive  
and Solicitor to the Council**

**Portas Funding – the High Street  
Innovation Fund**

**1 Summary**

- 1.1 The report seeks Member approval for an approach to using the funding in Atherstone that the Council has received through the Portas scheme.

**Recommendation to the Council**

**That the Assistant Chief Executive and Solicitor to the Council be given delegated authority to approve bids in respect of Atherstone's share of the funding in consultation with the Borough Councillors for Atherstone**

**2 Consultation**

- 2.1 The Atherstone Councillors have been invited to the meetings held so far regarding Atherstone. A copy of this report has been sent to them and any comments will be reported verbally to the Board.

**3 Report**

- 3.1 Earlier this year the Government awarded £100,000 to this Council under the High Street Innovation Fund, part of the Portas scheme to renew the "High Street". The Council received the money as a result of the number of empty business premises as a whole, rather than just in the "High Street" shopping areas.
- 3.2 The money is intended to help Councils support retailers against recent trends, such as the effects of the internet and out of town shopping areas. The remit of the fund could therefore be said to be ambitious, particularly given that it is a "one-off" payment. Notwithstanding that it is suggested that a number of useful measures can be undertaken and it has had the effect of improving links with "High Street" retailers, Councils, business support and other agencies.
- 3.3 The Council has previously decided that the fund be divided equally between the three main market towns – Atherstone, Polesworth and Coleshill. This would give each area just over £33,000.

- 3.4 Many meetings have been held with groups representing retailers in Atherstone, the Town Council and local Members. It has proved very difficult obtaining detailed plans from retailers regarding how they would like to spend the money but the latest meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> October did produce a number of ideas. A note of that meeting is attached and details some of the ideas discussed.
- 3.5 These and other schemes will now be worked up and it is suggested that rather than bringing each scheme back to this Board that delegated authority is given to the Assistant Chief Executive and Solicitor to the Council to agree the detail of the schemes together with the Borough Councillors for the Atherstone Central, Atherstone North and the Atherstone South and Mancetter Wards.

#### **4 Report Implications**

##### **4.1 Finance and Value for Money Implications**

- 4.1.1 The funding for the measures discussed above comes from a one-off, non ring fenced grant from Government. There are no conditions attached (even to the extent of spending it on this area of work) and no time limits.
- 4.1.2 When localisation of business rates is brought into effect next year, work to help sustain local businesses could have a direct effect on the resources available to the Council

##### **4.2 Environment and Sustainability Implications**

- 4.2.1 A vibrant "high street" improves the liveability of an area particularly if these include physical improvements to town centres.

The Contact Officer for this report is Steve Maxey (01827 719438).

# DRAFT

## Notes of Meeting to discuss the High Street Innovation Fund in Atherstone

### In attendance:

Steve Maxey (NWBC), Alan Ottey (WCC), Councillors Pickard, Forwood, Freer, Dirveiks, Davis (NWBC), Councillors Barnard, Freer, Shaw, Clews (Atherstone Town Council), Val Maund, Laura Smalley, Geoff Smalley, Matthew Gothard, Ashley Haines, David Weston, Jill Weston.

9 October 2013

		ACTION
1	Steve Maxey welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were done.	
2	<p>The aims of the meeting were briefly outlined by Steve Maxey. The Borough Council had been given £100,000 as part of the High Street Innovation Fund. The Council had agreed to split this equally between the three market towns, and so £33,000 was available for Atherstone. The aim of the Council is to work with the retailers in the town rather than spend the money ourselves and it was agreed that we were not going to solve the issue at this meeting. It was stressed that it would be recommended that the Ward Councillors, together with Steve Maxey would make the final decision on how the money was spent. But the idea was very much to discuss the schemes that have so far been nominated.</p> <p>There was then a general discussion regarding the fact that schemes that improved the appearance or experience of visiting the town could also be eligible, given that these could increase footfall into the area.</p>	
3	<p>There was then a general discussion regarding schemes that had been put forward to date, and some other matters that could be taken into account. Broad support, subject to suitable detail coming forward, was given for the following:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a an ice rink to coincide with Dickens Night</li><li>b a 10 kilometre run</li><li>c a general improvement to the street scene (for example cleaning of cobbles, painting of bollards, waste bins etc).</li><li>d An idea to provide canopies over the market square to provide all weather entertainment</li><li>e promotional material co-ordinating and publicising events that were to take place in Atherstone</li></ul>	

## DRAFT

	<p>f      Cycle rack in the town</p> <p>g      A visitor centre with a link to the Arcade and the proposed voluntary centre</p> <p>h      free WiFi in the town</p> <p>l      a town centre park including a feasibility study and possible allotment gardens</p> <p>A number of these may be subject to other funding and therefore the issue of match funding was discussed. Some of the items may not need any funding at all, and may be able to be co-ordinated, for example: the promotional material.</p> <p>Pride in Atherstone and Atherstone Town Council had also submitted a number of proposals, some of which overlapped with the above. Steve Maxey to discuss further with those organisations regarding the detail of the schemes.</p> <p>In addition, it was agreed that a central meeting of interested people twice yearly may have benefits particularly in co-ordinating commercial material. There was a particular need for this in terms of retail intelligence and marketing outside of the area. The need to provide a baseline audit of how the town is performing was also discussed.</p>	SM
4	<p>Next Steps</p> <p>Steve Maxey to discuss the detail of these schemes with local Members with a view to progressing these schemes</p>	SM



**Agenda Item No 10**

**Executive Board**

**25 November 2013**

**Report of the Chief Executive**

**Coventry and Warwickshire Joint  
Committee**

**1 Summary**

- 1.1 This report sets out a proposal to establish a Joint Committee of all the local authorities across the Coventry & Warwickshire City Deal area to provide sub-regional governance to the economic development of the area.

<p><b>Recommendation to the Council</b></p> <p><b>a That the report is noted;</b></p> <p><b>b That the Board agree in principal to the proposed Joint Committee;</b></p> <p><b>c That the Council's nominee to the Joint Committee be the Leader of the Council; and</b></p> <p><b>d That the power to finalise the terms of reference and other matters for the Joint Committee be delegated to the Special Sub Group .</b></p>
--

**2 Consultation**

- 2.1 The report has implications for the whole Borough and no specific consultation has therefore taken place.

**3 Report**

- 3.1 A report elsewhere on this agenda details the Coventry and Warwickshire ("CW") City Deal proposals. A key requirement from Government is that 'strong governance arrangements' are in place before any City Deal can be signed. During the development phase of the CW City Deal this has been provided by a Steering Group, comprising of all the Chief Executives of the 8 participating Councils, reporting to a Leaders' Board, comprising of the Leader (or their nominated deputy) of each Council.
- 3.2 However, Government has made it clear that these arrangements are not sufficiently robust to satisfy their governance requirements and allow a City

Deal to be signed. In addition, it has become clear to all the Councils involved in City Deal that stronger arrangements are required, not simply for City Deal, but to enable the delivery of a wider economic prosperity agenda that benefits the whole sub-region.

- 3.3 Members will recall that to date this Council has no representation on the Local Enterprise Partnership Board and has been concerned that governance arrangements are therefore not as strong as they could be.
- 3.4 The Steering Group established a sub-group to assess governance options and this identified three possible models:
  - Creation of a Joint Committee with delegated decision making powers
  - Creation of an Economic Prosperity Board
  - Creation of a Combined Authority
- 3.5 Further examination of the options revealed practical difficulties that would currently prevent the establishment of either a Combined Authority (CA) or an Economic Prosperity Board (EPB) for the City Deal area. In both cases the enabling legislation requires either entity to consist of two or more contiguous district/borough local authority areas, with those local authority's only permitted to be in one CA or EPB. Whilst it is possible for a CA or EPB to cover one or more district/borough council area without covering all of a county they must include the County Council for their area as a member. Unlike District/Boroughs this enables a County Council to be a member of more than one CA or EPB.
- 3.6 Clearly, with Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council an integral part of the CW City Deal this would mean that any CA or EPB that was established would have to include Leicestershire County Council as well as Warwickshire County Council, an arrangement that, even if considered to be desirable, is simply not feasible in the short term. An added complication of a CA is that whilst their remit, like an EPB, is to promote the economic development and regeneration of its area it also has to include the governance of Transport. This would add a further complication as there are currently separate Integrated Transport Authorities (ITAs) covering Warwickshire, Leicestershire and Coventry, with the latter being part of the West Midlands ITA.
- 3.7 A recent joint meeting of Leaders and Chief Executives of the 8 City Deal local authorities (Warwickshire County Council, Coventry City Council, the 5 District/Borough Councils in Warwickshire and Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council) concluded that the only viable option was to establish a Joint Committee.
- 3.8 Terms of Reference for the proposed Joint Committee are set out at Appendix One. The Leaders and Chief Executive meeting considered these to be sufficient to allow each participating council to take the necessary report proposing the establishment of the Joint Committee through their respective governance structures but that further work would be required to agree the detail of the Committee's work.

3.9 Members are therefore requested to approve the establishment of the Joint Committee, and this Council's participation within it, on the principle of the Terms of Reference at Appendix One but to delegate authority to the Special Sub Group to finalise the detail of how the Joint Committee will operate and the specific responsibilities delegated to it, as this decision may need to be made quickly. Potential areas of work, the detail of which requires finalisation, are set out in Appendix Two.

...

3.10 Given the importance of the emerging governance arrangements to the future economic prosperity of the sub-region and this Council's ability to deliver that agenda within the district it is proposed that our representative on the Joint Committee is the Leader of the Council or their nominee.

3.11 The recent Leaders/Chief Executives meeting also concluded that the future intention should be to move as rapidly as possible to the establishment of an EPB, subject to agreement with Government and/or revised legislation that this could allow Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council to become a member without the current membership requirement involving Leicestershire County Council. Any such proposal will be reported back to this Board.

3.13 Members will note that the draft Terms of Reference include the provision (section 9 (6) of Appendix One) for the Joint Committee to produce an annual report of its work. It is proposed that this should be reported back to this Board.

...

## **4 Report Implications**

### **4.1 Environment and Sustainability Implications**

4.1.2 The aim of the proposed joint committee is to provide its constituent local authorities with a forum in which to address collaboratively issues relating to economic development, regeneration and strategic planning at a sub-regional level and to enable collective decision-making on issues that require sub-regional agreement from the constituent authorities.

The North Warwickshire Sustainable Community Strategy 2009 -2026 has a current priority of raising aspirations, educational attainment and skills and this is being reviewed currently. A planned partnership event in December will consider progress made so far and will also consider developing a more skills and employment agenda. This would be consistent with the aims of the proposed joint committee.

### **4.1.3 Risk Management Implications**

4.1.4 Robust governance arrangements are needed to ensure that all councils benefit from partnership working, and that this Council is adequately represented on the Joint Committee.

4.1.5 The Contact Officer for this report is Jerry Hutchinson (719216).

**Draft Terms of Reference for Proposed Joint Committee**

**Composition**

1. The [insert name] shall comprise [insert total number of members] elected members appointed by the Authorities' Executive (or Full Council) as follows:  
[Insert details of membership]
2. All elected members appointed to the [insert name] must be members of their Authority's Executive or nominated by Full Council if the Authority does not operate an Executive model. The [insert name] need not be politically balanced.
3. Appointments of Members to serve on the Panel will be made by the Authorities' Executive (or Full Council) on an annual basis. A Member shall continue to serve on the Panel unless s/he ceases to be an elected Member; s/he resigns or is removed by their Authority's Executive (or Full Council) at any time.
4. Each Authority's Executive (or Full Council) may appoint [one] named substitute elected member to attend a meeting of the [insert name] if a Member of the [insert name] is unable to attend or otherwise unable to act.

**Chair and Deputy Chair**

5. The Chair and Deputy Chair of the [insert name] will be appointed by the [insert name] from among its members annually.

**Quorum**

6. The quorum of the [insert name] will be [insert number] members.

**Sub-Committees**

7. The [insert name] may appoint one or more sub-committees for the purpose of discharging any of its functions.

**Frequency of meetings**

8. The [insert name] will meet at least [insert number] times a year and meetings will be subject to the usual Access to Information requirements for joint committees exercising executive functions.

## **Terms of Reference**

9. The overarching aim of the [insert name] is to provide its constituent local authorities with a forum in which to address collaboratively issues relating to economic development, regeneration and strategic planning at a sub-regional level and to enable collective decision-making on issues that require sub-regional agreement from the constituent authorities. In particular the [insert name] will have the power to :
- (1) Develop economic and growth strategies for the sub-region and to keep the same under review ;
  - (2) Develop joint investment strategies for the sub-region and to keep the same under review;
  - (3) Consider, approve and implement decisions relating to sub-regional investment, including expenditure of external funding within the sub-region;
  - (4) Develop and encourage a co-ordinated approach within the sub-region to inward investment ;
  - (5) Develop and facilitate collaboration between the constituent authorities in the discharge of functions relating to economic development, regeneration and strategic planning including spatial planning; and
  - (6) Produce in September of each year, an annual report to the Executive of each of the constituent authorities on its work in the preceding municipal year.

**Potential Areas of Work for Joint Committee**

**Economic Growth**

Local Growth Strategy (with LEP)

Town centres

Infrastructure

**Joint Investment strategies**

Development of shared approach

**Funding**

European Strategic Investment Funding (with LEP)

**Planning**

Joint Housing strategy

Joint employment land study

Transport priorities

**Inward investment**

Co-ordination of activity

Tourism

**Other**

Shared Services

**Agenda Item No 11**

**Executive Board**

**25 November 2013**

**Report of the Chief Executive**

**Corporate Peer Challenge**

**1 Summary**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the result of the Peer Challenge exercise carried out by the Local Government Association in July 2013 and to make recommendations on how the areas for action, highlighted in the Peer Challenge Team's report, can be taken forward.

**Recommendations to the Board**

**That:-**

- (a) The report be noted;**
- (b) Reports be taken to appropriate Boards, where required, to progress actions set out under 'Comments' in section 3 of the report; and**
- (c) The Chief Executive liaises with the Local Government Association to maximise the opportunities arising from this review, including seeking expert support around economic development and taking opportunities, both to learn from Best Practice and to develop staff and Members.**

**2 Consultation**

- 2.1 This is a report relating to the general performance of the Council, following a review which took account of an extensive cross-section of stakeholders.

**3 Report**

- 3.1 Members will be aware that in July 2013 an independent team of local authority councillors and officers undertook a 'Peer Challenge' Review of the Council.

3.2 The review consisted of the team considering background information about the Council, prior to conducting an intensive three day exercise on site. This involved meetings and discussion taking place, either face to face or through telephone calls with a large cross-section of stakeholders, including Councillors, Managers, Council staff, unions, Tenant Associations, neighbouring local authorities, public, private and voluntary sector parties and our Auditors.

3.3 A copy of the slides delivered at the feedback session, together with a copy of the final version of the Peer Challenge Team's Report ('the Report') have been sent out previously, but are included as Appendices to this report.

3.4 As the final version of the Report (Appendix 2) was only agreed recently, this is the first opportunity to bring it to Members for formal consideration.

3.5 In a nutshell, the Report is very positive about the Council, saying that we are punching 'well above our weight', that we are in a relatively healthy financial position, with a good record for delivering savings. The team also reported that the Council had clear political leadership, a strong management team and good officer Member relationships, all supported by staff with an 'excellent can do attitude'. Partnership was seen as a particular strength.

3.6 Capacity was seen as a particular concern, however, in terms of the scale of the Council's priorities and the challenges that it faced in terms of influencing big issues, particularly in the economic development field.

3.7 The report concludes with a number of suggestions (eight in total) for consideration in order to build on our current position. These are aimed at helping the Council to improve the effectiveness and capacity to delivery our future ambitions and plans. They are grouped under the headings of the five areas looked at in the review and these are set out below, together with comments on how we can respond, where action is not already in hand.

(i) *Capacity and capability overall to delivery your ambitions and*

(ii) *Use of your senior management capacity*

1 Review the Council's overall approach to resourcing the delivery of economic growth. This includes identifying how relationships with key businesses will be resourced and how you will further develop relationships with private sector investors.

2 Identify more clearly how you will resource the Council's input into strategically high profile complex issues (eg HS2, Birmingham Airport, City Deal and the LEP).

COMMENT At the time of the Review, the Local Government Association representatives recommended the Council to put in a bid for Economic Development Consulting Advice from the Local Government Association,



which we subsequently did in tandem with Hinckley & Bosworth and Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Councils. This bid was unsuccessful but, following further discussions, we are likely to secure access to eight days free consultancy advice which we would intend to use to enable us to have a more focussed and sustainable approach to the economic growth and strategic development agendas, including the issue set out above.

- 3 Assure yourself that your alignment of spend to priorities is clear and robustly appraised.

COMMENT This recommendation related to the concern that the Council had a very ambitious agenda and a relatively large number of priorities, bearing in mind the team's concerns about capacity.

It has to be borne in mind that the Council's Priorities set at the beginning of this Administration were at a time when the Council's resources had not been constrained to the extent that they have been over the last three years.

We are now nearly three years through a four year cycle and, in preparing for the 2015 Election and beyond, Members will no doubt start thinking about their 2015 priorities over the next 12 to 18 months. This will of course involve discussions with officers around the resources and capacity available to deliver these priorities, bearing in mind the requirement in our mid-term financial strategy to deliver significant further savings.

- 4 Identify a proactive, strategic approach to communicating the Council's ambitions for the Borough through effective promotion and branding of North Warwickshire.

COMMENT This was largely about the Borough making the most of the opportunities that would be available if it sold itself more proactively.

In discussions, the team felt that, whilst we were rightly proud of our industrial heritage and beautiful countryside, we didn't always make enough of our vibrant local economy and the opportunities created by the presence of big national and multi-national businesses and the jobs that they created. If a more confident and proactive image was projected, this would help to improve the aspirations and attainment of local people.

A group of officers has just been set up to do some initial work on how we can improve communication relating to the Borough Council specifically and North Warwickshire more generally, including looking at the image which we project as an area.

(iii) *Building more effective resilience into your service*

- 5 Review service groupings to ensure a good fit in supporting the delivery of the corporate priorities. This includes risk assessment of all service areas in

order to identify potential vulnerabilities and developing a strategy which enables you to maintain a cohesive approach to service delivery.

COMMENT The appropriate time to do this is following the actions identified at 3 above and immediately following the setting of the priorities of the new Administration, following the 2015 Election.

- 6 Utilise opportunities for the Leadership Programme in the Workforce Strategy to be given a higher priority.

COMMENT This will be looked at by Management Team as part of setting the Annual Corporate Training Strategy, following Annual Appraisals early in the new year. It is essential that we continue to grow our future leaders.

- 7 Continue to develop a more embedded approach to asset management and utilisation both of the Council's land holdings and other public assets.

COMMENT The team was supportive of the Council's current approach, including working with other agencies to maximise the use of public assets (eg, Council offices project and joint use of sports facilities with local schools) but recommended that we continue to look for opportunities to collaborate with other organisations to maximise the returns to be gained. This is and will continue to be the Council's approach with opportunities reported to Members as they arise.

- (iv) *Opportunities for greater shared working and*
- (v) *Partnership working*

- 8 Keep under review your current criteria for taking forward decisions on shared services. This is to ensure that you are able to take full advantage of all opportunities to innovate through a range of options such as shared services, strategic alliance(s), shared management, commissioning, trading, insourcing and outsourcing.

COMMENT As the report acknowledges, the Council already makes extensive use of shared services and, earlier this year, the Council agreed a strategy for considering the business case when looking to deliver a shared service. As the Council looks for further savings over the next few years, the cost of service delivery is going to be key and all options will continue to be looked at as part of that exercise and on an ongoing basis.

#### 4 **Conclusions**

- 4.1 The review provided a very helpful snapshot of where the Council currently stands and how it is performing. It acknowledges our strengths whilst identifying areas where we need to consider embedding or strengthening existing practices and some points where we need to look at what we are doing and change it, when required.

4.2 It is recommended that Members note the report and ask for reports back to appropriate Boards on the actions outlined in the 'Comments' section of the report.

## 5 Report Implications

### 5.1 Finance and Value for Money Implications

5.1.1 The report makes recommendations for improving various aspects of service delivery against a backcloth of reducing resources.

### 5.2 Human Resources Implications

5.2.1 The report makes recommendations on training and development of staff.

### 5.3 Links to Council's Priorities

5.3.1 Various aspects of the report relate to a future review of priorities.

The Contact Officer for this report is Jerry Hutchinson (719200).

## Background Papers

Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D, as substituted by the Local Government Act, 2000 Section 97

Background Paper No	Author	Nature of Background Paper	Date



# North Warwickshire Borough Council

Peer challenge team feedback

Thursday 18 July 2013

# Scope and purpose of the peer challenge

## Peer challenges:

- Support local government improvement and are tailored to meet individual council priorities and needs, while taking account of local circumstances.
  - Are designed to complement and add value to a council's own performance and improvement priorities.
  - Use the experience and knowledge of local government peers to reflect on the information presented from the people they meet, from what they have heard and material read.
-

# The peer challenge process

- Not an inspection – invited in as “critical friends”
- Non attributable information collection.
- People have been open and honest.
- Very grateful for support – in particular from Karen Stokes, Jenny Price, Emma Humphreys and Amanda Tonks.
- Our feedback is based on the triangulation of what we have read, heard and seen. These have come from a range of views throughout the organisation and partners.

# Who we are

- 1. Ray Harding** (*Chief Executive, King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council*)
  - 2. Councillor Caitlin Bisknell** (*Leader, High Peak Borough Council*)
  - 3. Steve Blatch** (*Corporate Director, North Norfolk District Council*)
  - 4. Paul Shackley** (*Corporate Director, Allerdale Borough Council*)
  - 5. Ernest Opuni** (*Peer Support Team, LGA*)
  - 6. Ged Perkins** (*Peer Support Team, LGA*)
-

# Scope and purpose of the peer challenge

You asked the team to explore the following areas:

1. North Warwickshire Borough Council's capacity and capability overall to deliver its ambitions
2. Whether the council could make better future use of its senior management capacity (including a possible focus on the long-term succession plans for the senior management team)
3. Whether the council is getting the most out of its partnership working
4. Share our views on how the council can build more effective resilience into its services
5. Examine opportunities for greater shared working and sharing of service provisions.



# Scope and purpose of the peer challenge

In doing this the peer challenge team has considered the core components that all corporate peer challenges cover :

1. Understanding of local context and priority setting: *Does the council understand its local context and has it established a clear set of priorities?*
  2. Financial planning and viability: *Does the council have a financial plan in place to ensure long term viability and is there evidence that it is being implemented successfully?*
  3. Political and managerial leadership: *Does the council have effective political and managerial leadership and is it a constructive partnership?*
  4. Governance and decision-making: *Are effective governance and decision-making arrangements in place to respond to key challenges and manage change, transformation and disinvestment?*
  5. Organisational capacity: *Are organisational capacity and resources focused in the right areas in order to deliver the agreed priorities?*
-

## **Overview (1)**

- A small council which is punching well above its weight
  - Innovative in a number of areas – services to residents around financial inclusion, customer contact arrangements, EDM, Use of Hubs
  - Partnership working - for many the Partner of choice
  - Quality of staff- loyal hardworking and committed staff
  - Healthy financial position
-

# Overview (2)

However

- Capacity an issue
  - Identity/organisational confidence issue
  - Growth Agenda – Housing (numbers and type), building on the major inward investment, offer of Towns – Is this clear?
  - Use of Council and other public assets in regeneration
-

# **Capacity and capability overall to deliver your ambitions- Strengths**

- Strong partnerships with voluntary sector, Borough CSP and LSP.
  - Officers generally highly respected by members and partners but there are capacity issues given emerging strategic agenda.
  - EMT seen as corporate and effective.
  - Organisation has a track record of delivering savings.
  - Consensual politics over most issues.
  - Clear political direction.
-

# **Capacity and capability overall to deliver your ambitions- Areas for consideration**

- Resourcing the Council's input into complex issues (e.g. HS2, Birmingham Airport, City Deal and the LEP).
  - Relationships with key businesses – resourcing this appropriately.
  - Question over alignment of spend to priorities (e.g. opportunity to allocate New Homes Bonus to specific projects).
  - Project management capacity in relation to large projects.
  - Need a proactive approach to asset management/utilisation both of the council's land holdings and other redundant public assets.
  - Is the council ambitious and positive enough in promoting and branding the borough?
-

# **Use of your senior management capacity- Strengths**

- Leaders Group provides clear direction
  - Positive relationships between senior managers and members.
  - Extensive experience around the EMT table
  - ‘Can Do’ approach
  - Willingness to work with others as appropriate.
-

## **Use of your senior management capacity – Areas for consideration**

- Council faces a wide range of complex strategic issues. Greater clarity needed around how this is resourced.
  - No dedicated economic growth resource.
  - Review service groupings to ensure a good fit in supporting the delivery of the corporate priorities.
  - Opportunity for the Leadership programme in the workforce strategy to be given a higher priority
-

## **Partnership working - Strengths**

- North Warwickshire is well respected by its partners, is seen as the partner of choice as well as being a robust, critical friend.
  - There are many good examples of effective partnerships (e.g. BOB Hubs, Community Safety Partnership, Foodbanks, health agenda)
  - Innovative and exemplar engagement and working with Voluntary and Community Sectors.
  - Clear, complementary priorities developed by the LSP (health, education and access to services.)
-



# **Partnership working – Areas for consideration**

- Further develop relationships with private sector investors



# **Building more effective resilience into your services - Strengths**

- Strong commitment from staff with an excellent 'can do' attitude.
  - A pragmatic approach to collaboration with others.
  - Some good examples of using collaborative working to overcome resilience issues (e.g. Waste Manager, Waterloo Housing Development Team)
  - Expansion of Leisure Management Services.
-

## **Building more effective resilience into your services – Areas for consideration**

- Review current service provision and priorities against Corporate Plan. Organisation is conscious that: ‘ ...we never stop doing things... ’
  - Risk assess all service areas to identify potential vulnerabilities.
  - Take a more systematic approach to driving out costs (process reviews and IT).
  - Workforce profile – review and plan
-

# Opportunities for greater shared working - Strengths

- Number of examples of shared working arrangements with a variety of partners.
  - There are some good examples of shared accommodation.
  - There are a number of good examples of shared IT systems (elections management system and CRM).
  - Have adapted and improved good ideas from elsewhere (e.g. the BOB Hubs).
-

## **Opportunities for greater shared working – Areas for consideration**

- Development of a strategy in order to achieve a cohesive approach to service delivery.
  - Examine all approaches including shared services, strategic alliance(s), shared management, commissioning, trading, insourcing and outsourcing.
-

## **Concluding remarks**

- North Warwickshire is in a good place today. However the council faces some difficult decisions, financial and strategic, whilst having some terrific opportunities.
  - As we leave we encourage you to build on your positive relationships, to make the most of those opportunities and to overcome the challenges to improve the lives of local people.
  - Have the confidence to cherish your past ***and*** seize the future.
-

# **Your reflections & questions?**



# Next Steps

- Written report 3-4 weeks from being onsite
  - Further LGA support/Signposting
1. Whole team revisiting the authority for a day (6-12 months after the original Peer Challenge),
  2. Improvement planning workshop facilitated by lead peer, Peer Challenge Manager and Principal Advisor (a few weeks after the CPC),
  3. One or two members of the peer team providing a day or so further support or
  4. The PCM and PA coordinating other activity (e.g. mentoring, workshop, programme support)
-



# Contact details

**Ernest Opuni**  
Peer Support Team

**Local Government Association**

Tel: 07920 061193

Email: [ernest.opuni@local.gov.uk](mailto:ernest.opuni@local.gov.uk)

Jerry Hutchinson  
Chief Executive  
North Warwickshire Borough Council,  
South Street,  
Atherstone,  
Warwickshire.  
CV9 1DE  
August 2013

Dear Jerry

**North Warwickshire Borough Council - Corporate Peer Challenge  
16-18 July 2013**

On behalf of the peer team, I would like to say what a pleasure it was to be invited into North Warwickshire Borough Council to deliver the recent corporate peer challenge as part of the LGA offer to support sector led improvement.

Peer challenges are delivered by experienced elected member and officer peers. The make-up of the team reflected your requirements and the focus of the peer challenge. The peers were selected on the basis of their relevant experience and expertise and agreed with you. The peers who delivered the peer challenge in North Warwickshire were:

- Ray Harding (Chief Executive, King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council)
- Councillor Caitlin Bisknell (Leader, High Peak Borough Council)
- Steve Blatch (Corporate Director, North Norfolk District Council)
- Paul Shackley (Corporate Director, Allerdale Borough Council)
- Ernest Opuni (Peer Challenge Manager, LGA)
- Ged Perkins (Peer Support Team, LGA)

**Scope and focus of the peer challenge**

You asked the peer team to provide an external view on several specific areas and issues relating to the Council's ability to deliver its future plans and proposals. These included:

- The Council's capacity and capability overall to deliver its ambitions
- Whether the Council could make better future use of its senior management capacity
- Whether the Council is getting the most out of its partnership working
- How the Council can build more effective resilience into its services
- Opportunities for greater shared working and sharing of service provisions.

The peer team covered these by considering the core components looked at by all corporate peer challenges. These are:

1. Understanding of local context and priority setting: Does the Council understand its local context and has it established a clear set of priorities?
2. Financial planning and viability: Does the Council have a financial plan in place to ensure long term viability and is there evidence that it is being implemented successfully?
3. Political and managerial leadership: Does the Council have effective political and managerial leadership and is it a constructive partnership?
4. Governance and decision-making: Are effective governance and decision-making arrangements in place to respond to key challenges and manage change, transformation and disinvestment?
5. Organisational capacity: Are organisational capacity and resources focused in the right areas in order to deliver the agreed priorities?

### **The peer challenge process**

It is important to stress that this was not an inspection. Peer challenges are improvement-focused and tailored to meet individual Councils' needs. They are designed to complement and add value to a Council's own performance and improvement plans. The peers used their experience and knowledge of local government to reflect on the information presented to them by people they met, things they saw and material that they read.

The peer team prepared for the peer challenge by reviewing a range of documents and information in order to ensure they were familiar with the Council and the challenges it is facing. The team then spent 3 days onsite at North Warwickshire during which they:

- Spoke to more than 70 people including a range of Council staff together with Councillors and external partners and stakeholders.
- Gathered information and views from more than 20 meetings, visits to key sites in the area and additional research and reading.
- Collectively spent more than 200 hours to determine their findings – the equivalent of one person spending more than 6 weeks in North Warwickshire.

This letter provides a summary of the peer team's findings. It builds on the feedback presentation provided by the peer team at the end of their onsite visit (16 -18 July 2013). In presenting feedback to you, they have done so as fellow local government officers and members, not professional consultants or inspectors. By its nature, the peer challenge is a snapshot in time. We appreciate that some of the feedback may be about things you are already addressing and progressing.

## **Summary of feedback: overall messages**

North Warwickshire Borough Council is a well-regarded Council characterised by good relationships between members and officers. Partners and other stakeholders consider you to be a partner of choice as well as a robust, critical friend. Your partnerships with the voluntary and community sectors look to be innovative and effective. There is evidently a well-established and sustained culture of partnership working built over a number of years in the borough. This is demonstrated by the work of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP), your work in relation to the health agenda and through the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) which is enabling you to deliver outcomes for your communities in areas where the Council, working by itself, would struggle to achieve.

The Council's Executive Management Team (EMT) is clearly experienced. This, combined with clear political leadership and direction, and political consensus on key issues, has enabled the organisation to deliver impressive financial savings over recent years. This clear leadership is well supported by the organisation which demonstrates a 'can do' approach at all levels. The Council is adept at working collaboratively to overcome resilience issues, and is open to learning from elsewhere to improve practice and performance.

In terms of your finances, you appear to be in a reasonably good position at the present time. Solid financial management has provided you with the time to adapt to the impact of the 2015/16 CSR and beyond. The healthy level of reserves will provide the breathing space necessary to deal with further reductions in grant funding and New Homes bonuses. However, whilst there are good levels of reserves currently, the future savings required amount to approximately 14 per cent of the net budget by 2016/17. Consequently the Council will, we think, face some difficult financial and strategic decisions in the near future.

It is clear that you recognise the importance of effective asset management. This is evidenced by your disposal of assets in some cases to community partners well placed to make best use of facilities and in other cases as a means of yielding capital receipts whilst also providing a boost to the local economy in Coleshill. You have undertaken concentrated activity to increase take-up of units at industrial parks and are sharing leisure facilities with local schools. The Accommodation Project will support multi-agency use of Council offices whilst a systematic review of all your buildings has been timetabled.

Nonetheless we think there is more for you to consider as you seek to embed a more proactive approach to asset management and utilisation of both the Council's land holdings and other redundant public assets as part of your financial strategy moving forward. We questioned how well you are aligning your spend to your priorities, and also suggested there is an opportunity for the Council to better allocate finance to specific projects. You are, however, aware of this and have taken action to address this. We encourage you to maintain the proactive approach you are taking to ensure that you have the project management capacity required to deliver such work. Exploration of the potential to become more financially self-sustaining by taking advantage of the strong growth in NNDR income and some expansion in house building could also form an important element in the Council's medium term financial strategy we suggest.

The Council needs to be clearer on how it will resource its input into a number of complex issues which have a major impact on your strategic agenda for the area. These include the

High Speed 2 Rail Route and the proposed expansion of Birmingham Airport. We think there is also a need to identify how you will better resource your involvement in City Deal and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) at both a county-wide and a sub-LEP level. In order to achieve your aspiration for economic growth in the area it will be important for the Council to clearly identify how it will resource the ongoing development of your relationships with, and support to, key businesses. There is clearly an opportunity to further develop relationships with private sector investors but it was not clear to us how this will be taken forward in a sustainable and robust way.

It was clear that the heritage of the borough is of paramount importance to both the Council and the communities of North Warwickshire. The rural character of North Warwickshire clearly warrants protection. However we encourage you to see this agenda not as a threat but rather as an opportunity to safeguard the borough's character. The 'green belt' offers statutory protection and therefore supports this aspiration because it limits development in the areas you do not wish to see affected. Instead it gives the opportunity for North Warwickshire Borough Council to direct growth into the areas that you determine. Integral to this will be the vision in the Local Plan. We would encourage you to use this as an opportunity to demonstrate, and positively communicate, the Council's ambition as part of the on-going work for promoting and branding the borough.

We think there may be value in reviewing the current service groupings to ensure a good fit in supporting the delivery of your corporate priorities. This review of current service provision and priorities should, we think, be undertaken against the Corporate Plan and its ten priorities. We questioned whether this affords you the focus required in delivering on the outcomes most important to the area at a time of shrinking resources. A robust review, and possible rationalisation, of priorities will help identify both what the Council should focus on and what it may deem less critical for the future.

Part of this review process should involve assuring yourselves that your workforce profile puts you in a good position to deliver on the areas you identify as key for the future. There is an opportunity for your Leadership programme to be given a higher priority to ensure the Council is able to support its staff in taking forward the Council's vision. You might also consider risk-assessing all service areas to identify potential vulnerabilities and on the back of this develop a strategy which responds appropriately to the findings. As part of this, the Council should examine all approaches including shared services, strategic alliances, shared management, commissioning, trading, insourcing and outsourcing. This will build on your willingness and established track record of collaboration and joint working.

We feel that, moving forward, the Council has a great deal to be positive about. We encourage you to build on your effective relationships as these will be critical in you overcoming the future challenges faced as you work to improve the lives of local people and to enable and assist them to take advantage of the new employment opportunities which continue to emerge. There are significant opportunities for economic growth in North Warwickshire and you are particularly well placed to capitalise on these due to the number of reputable and high value private sector firms who are already located in the borough. We feel that in taking advantage of this it will be important that you communicate clearly with all communities, partners and stakeholders that North Warwickshire is a place able to achieve the balance of cherishing its past whilst having the confidence required to seize the opportunities for the future.

## **Summary of feedback: current performance, ability and capacity to deliver future ambitions**

### *Understanding of local context and priority setting*

We found there to be a number of priorities which were recognised and shared by the majority of people we met. For instance, there is a wide recognition that economic development - (focusing on building technical level skills, development of infrastructure, improving educational attainment by young people and attracting higher value, better jobs) - is a key priority for North Warwickshire and that the Council is being proactive in delivering on this agenda. An example of you doing this is through your support for the Apprenticeship Training Agency (ATA) in partnership with Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council, Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council and North Warwickshire Hinckley College. Other work you are doing includes working with the Chamber of Commerce including the coordination of joint visits to businesses of strategic importance to help build intelligence and information about their needs.

You have rightly recognised that, in infrastructure terms, there are a number of opportunities for North Warwickshire. These include the A5 corridor (especially from Tamworth through North Warwickshire to Hinckley), MIRA Enterprise Zone and the presence of the technology park. All of these support the borough's aims to stimulate a zone of high value, high tech manufacturing and can also contribute positively to your aspiration that companies remain in the borough (whilst also acting as a means of attracting other businesses into the area in future). There may be opportunities to secure localised business support through a source such as the LEP to enable you to continue this work.

Integral to your aspiration for further economic growth is how the mix of housing in North Warwickshire might support future growth and how this will be addressed in the borough. We think this needs a clearer understanding and encourage the Council to balance its desire to maintain the rural nature of North Warwickshire with the need for growth. In many of our conversations it was clear that, at present, this is viewed primarily as a defensive means of averting a perceived threat posed by economic growth and economic development.

We feel there is a need to review the priorities in the Corporate Plan. The number of priorities -(currently there are ten)- exposes the Council to a risk of lacking sufficient focus in what it is aiming to achieve at a time when it is important for the targeting of resources to be clearer. We question whether the number of priorities identified is sustainable going forward.

It was clear from our time in North Warwickshire that the Council is highly regarded externally as a good partner. You have developed good and productive partnerships with a number of neighbouring authorities based on both need and opportunity (such as the effective partnership with Nuneaton and Bedworth Council across a number of different themes). Another example is the refurbishment Council offices to enable closer working with organisations such as Warwickshire County Council (Adult Social Care Services) and Jobcentre Plus. This will also provide a community police base and space for the Careers Service. This project is clearly supporting your aspiration to retain local delivery of services.

Your partnership working with the voluntary and community sectors appears very strong. We were impressed with the many examples we heard about. In particular the BOB Community Hubs delivered through voluntary sector partners are using resources innovatively to ensure that residents have better local access to a range of services. In essence BOB is a model of working with the voluntary and community sectors to allow people in different areas to access a wide range of services from their own village or locality. It is clear this initiative is geared towards achieving the Council's aspiration to 'support people in difficult times'. We felt that the reduction of the seven themes to three key priorities for the borough is a positive move. The focus is now on (i) Health Improvement, (ii) Raising Educational Attainment, Aspirations and Skills and (iii) Access to Services. It is positive that the LSP has adapted over time in order to remain relevant to achieving the overall vision for the borough. It is doing so by identifying priorities which are complementary to the Council's corporate plan.

There are, we think, clear opportunities for the borough to build on the presence in North Warwickshire of major companies such as BMW, Volkswagen and 3M. A more focussed and resourced approach to leading economic development may be required in light of High Speed Link 2 (HS2) which will run through the borough and the proposed expansion of Birmingham Airport into the borough. Currently two senior managers along with the Chief Executive are the only resource deployed for this function. Given the number of complex issues the borough is dealing with and the resource-intensive context of the LEP and City Deal in which the Council has to operate we questioned whether this is a sufficiently resourced area of priority work.

One challenge the borough faces is a shortage of the skills required by the major companies amongst local communities. You have identified an attainment gap in technical disciplines which also appears to be contributing to the fact that approximately fifty per cent of jobs created are benefiting non-residents of North Warwickshire. We recognise that some of these companies will choose to bring existing expertise from elsewhere with them when they set up new operations. Nonetheless we think there is an opportunity for North Warwickshire to better articulate its ambitions and 'promote' the local 'offer' more effectively to maximise opportunities for local people. We observed that the borough is surrounded by universities and wonder if there is opportunity to further exploit this capacity more positively in future. Currently this appears to be under-utilised.

There is an opportunity, we suggest, for the narrative about North Warwickshire to articulate more of a forward-looking strategy in terms of selling and promoting the district. This does not in any way seek to devalue the importance of the borough's mining legacy and heritage. However we think more can be done to focus on exploiting opportunities with new investors by putting a future focus at the front and centre of all communications. This is about seizing the opportunity for North Warwickshire to renew its image and positively transform external perception of the area. There is an opportunity to communicate a clear narrative which makes the link between all elements of regeneration (including access to services, housing, education, employment and health) and how together these contribute to future aspirations for the area. With this we feel you will be able to align the expectations, and self-image, of your communities as much to the future as to the past.

There is also a key role for housing market development within this narrative however this element has not yet been clearly defined. Both housing and population growth are low.

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) for the borough is due for publication in 2013 and is thought likely to show a reduced overall requirement for new housing. Notwithstanding this, it will be important for the impact of a more vibrant housing market as an integral part of economic growth to be strongly articulated. You may wish to give greater consideration in this as to how the borough might address the opportunity for higher value executive housing within the context of an appropriate mix of housing as a means of capitalising on new investment in jobs.

A significant degree of concern about poor public transport links was shared with the peer team by a range of stakeholders. This is not however reflected proportionately in the corporate plan. We think it may be important that the corporate plan ambitions and the developing core strategy vision are in alignment in addressing this.

In terms of the current corporate plan, we feel there is a need to review the number of priorities to ensure that sufficient focus, energy and capacity are directed to what the Council is aiming to achieve at a time when it is important for the targeting of resources to be clearer. We question whether the number of priorities identified could compromise the ability for North Warwick Borough Council to deliver the outcomes it seeks.

#### Financial planning and viability

The Council currently has a good level of reserves which should enable the authority to plan for and deliver the level of savings required over the next three years. You have a high level plan in place and are confident of achieving this. You have a good record of delivering savings and, moving forward, you have built in levels of tolerance to manage unexpected outcomes such as a small 'fighting fund' for HS2 within your current levels of reserves.

Nonetheless we stress the need to ensure that any plans you have are sustainable and realistic into a future which will be characterised by a need for all Councils to make further tough choices. There is of course a difficult balance to be struck between not being over-cautious and having the assurance that the necessary speed of change required for achieving cost reductions remains appropriate.

We would encourage you to continue to assure yourself that you are focussing spend where this is required most. For instance whilst the borough cites challenges around transport access as a key concern it was not clear how clearly this is reflected in your priorities for spend.

The influx of new businesses, such as Ocado, into the area provides opportunities for increased business rates to be utilised by North Warwickshire Borough Council. This is important of course in light of the demise of the Daw Mill mine which will have had a negative impact on the Council's business rate yield. We feel there are further examples of potential opportunities the Council can explore as regards income and revenue generation. These include consideration being given to the viability of charging for long stay parking and whether the Borough Care model (as currently configured) remains financially stable, sustainable into the future and remains the appropriate model. You have recently established a cross party task group to consider the Borough Care model. We recognise that partnering can be difficult for a small authority such as North Warwickshire. You have already demonstrated your understanding of the value in



'growing' activity through services to schools and exploring opportunities for shared services or providing services on behalf of other Councils. There may be opportunities to build in further resilience around sports and leisure services utilising your learning from your work with schools.

We also encourage you to ensure you have an appropriately robust approach to both reactive and proactive use of the Council's property assets. There are opportunities for joint working on potential investment opportunities and we encourage you to progress with embedding a more a proactive approach to asset management and utilisation of both the Council's land holdings and other redundant public assets as part of your financial strategy moving forward. There may value in utilising external professional support to help in your progress with this.

You are receptive to sharing services as a means by which to reduce spend and achieve value for money and have a track record of doing so. There are a range of shared services activities such as sharing Building Control, Joint Heritage and Conservation and Home Improvement Consortium with Nuneaton and Bedworth. There are a number of examples of shared sporting facilities with Polesworth School, Coleshill School and the Queen Elizabeth School and Sports College in Atherstone. There are joint elections systems with Rugby Borough Council and Stratford District Council whilst North Warwickshire shares its performance management systems with Warwickshire County Council. The sharing of Warwickshire County Council's depot for refuse and recycling is also regarded as a positive move in value for money and wider efficiency terms.

Sharing services or outsourcing are not of course the only delivery models the Council utilises. On the Council's recycling service, consideration was given to a joint procurement between North Warwickshire, Nuneaton and Hinkley. Ultimately the decision you took was to tender on your own and, based on cost considerations, this service has subsequently been brought in-house. There may be an opportunity for income generation by undertaking this refuse and recycling function on behalf of other Councils and we would encourage you to give some consideration to this.

It is clear that your current arrangements are yielding benefits on a number of fronts and that you are testing the appropriateness of such arrangements in future. You do this through your decision-making matrix which is founded on seven key criteria which must be satisfied ahead of investing in any shared service arrangements. This is clearly bringing robustness to the way in which you assess opportunities. However we feel that you should keep these criteria under review in order to assure yourselves that your matrix allows you to take advantage of all opportunities to innovate and be more entrepreneurial in future. There may be other (or additional) criteria which allow you to do this and we encourage you to consider these in any review.

You recognise that in the past you could have applied more robust project management practice to delivering larger capital projects. It is clear however that you are taking a proactive approach to working with external partners to give greater capacity and resilience to current schemes. This is exemplified by your work in appointing a Waste Manager as well as the Waterloo Housing Development Team. You have also worked closely with Coventry City Council in ensuring that there is appropriate project management capacity for both the Accommodation and Coleshill Leisure Centre projects. We would encourage the Council to continue to develop this good practice and continue

to learn from the lessons of the past as you are clearly doing. We encourage you to maintain your desire to continuously improve your current arrangements and achieve an even more focussed approach. You may wish to consider, for example, how you can influence the use of the top-sliced elements of New Homes Bonus to make a real difference within the borough.

### Political and Managerial leadership

Senior councillors and managers are clearly committed to making a positive difference to the communities of the borough. Members are confident in officers' ability to deliver their agenda and savings. They consider the organisation to have forward-looking officers who play an integral part in North Warwickshire delivering effective services. The Chief Executive is highly respected among his peers across the county and he is viewed as someone who represents the borough well.

The Council's management structure is leaner than it once was and reductions to the middle manager numbers have been achieved without the Council encountering as large a level of pay-offs as might have been the case. It is important however that you remain mindful of any potential capacity issues as regards these reductions in numbers. Members feel that their model of the fourth option governance arrangements and utilisation of committee structures is supporting a robust task and finish approach in how the Council uses its various leadership groups. The politics of the Council appear to be mature with priorities formed around a broad consensus which allows for smoother delivery of these.

As regards communication, there is a will to allow public speaking at committees whilst effective use of social media such as Twitter and Facebook are being increasingly utilised. There is support for all Councillors being allowed to speak at Committee meetings including at the Planning Committee.

The Council is positive about utilising opportunities to add value through partnership working and you are working well under the duty to cooperate with many adjoining authorities. There is strong member commitment to this approach exemplified by the willingness to share resources related to health improvement with partners. Your appetite at a corporate leadership level for utilising future opportunities to work together with partners remains strong, demonstrated by numerous examples we heard about – including the focus on delivering accessible services to communities through the BOB Hubs, strong collaboration with the voluntary and community sectors and utilisation of a 'one stop shop' approach to administering bus passes and blue badges for Warwickshire County Council.

Your focus on social inclusion is demonstrated through the 'Have your cake and eat it' initiative where North Warwickshire Borough Council is collaborating with the local NHS, schools and JobCentre Plus. Your work on Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) is an excellent example of joint working via an integrated team drawn from the County and District Councils. The model was rolled out on the back of North Warwickshire and Nuneaton and Bedworth piloting this approach.

We were impressed by the Council's appetite for learning as well as its willingness to challenge itself. It is clear that this was a major reason for seeking the peer challenge. It

was also made clear to us that the leadership of the Council (both political and managerial) is committed to continuous improvement. We are assured that the authority is very open to reflecting on its performance in order that it can identify where it could do things better or differently if necessary. The Leader and Chief Executive are committed to leading by example in challenging the staff at the Council to deliver as effectively as possible in all areas of the council's business.

### Governance and Decision making

The Council operates an improved Committee system as a 'fourth option' Council. There are four main Boards – (Executive, Resources, Community and Environment and Planning and Development) - together with a Licensing Committee. In addition to these there are four sub-committees with extensive delegated powers covering principally Housing, Safer Communities, Local Development Framework and Human Resources. There is a Standards Committee and four Area Fora. The latter are chaired jointly with Warwickshire County Council and these perform a major consultative role on policing issues for instance. You feel these committees give you the focus across the areas on which you wish to concentrate and provide a means by which the consensual politics in the borough can best be utilised in delivering.

There is also a Scrutiny Committee. You know that on occasion this has struggled to provide a robust means of challenge. This is primarily due to the extensive involvement of all Councillors in the decision-making process. You may wish to consider further how this committee's operation can add greater value to the Council's overall governance and decision-making functions.

The Leaders Group and Extended Management Team (EMT) work closely together to jointly consider future plans for the borough. EMT has worked together for a significant period of time and is regarded as a good team which works well across various services. It was clear to us that it is a 'can do' team which is nimble and facilitates speedy decision making. An annual presentation to the leading group on key issues together with regular meetings between the Management Team (MT) and Leader's Group provides an opportunity for a focus on strategic matters. This interface provides an opportunity for these arrangements to drive the direction of the organisation and we would encourage you to ensure the focus remains on using this forum for that purpose.

The Chief Executive meets regularly with the Leader of the Opposition and MT makes an Annual Presentation to the Opposition Group. The Opposition group has appointed a Shadow Chairs group which provides a further opportunity for input into the Council's overall policy direction. The 'Task and Finish' working groups deployed by the Council also feed into the various Boards which in turn facilitate input from outside organisations and partners. All in all there seem to be appropriate opportunities for members to inform and influence decision making and policy development.

You have a Strategic Risk Register which operates on a Red Amber Green (RAG) system. This is updated on an annual basis and describes the risks identified against the Council's activity, the consequences of these risks being realised and identifies responsible officers for each of these. A gross risk rating is arrived at through a consideration of the relationship between 'likelihood' and 'impact' of the risks outlined. Furthermore it includes a consideration of how existing control procedures are mitigating

and reducing the risk described. Whilst the process looked clear, robust and relevant we felt there is an opportunity for the Council to strengthen the strategic use of the register by considering whether the review cycle could be undertaken more regularly than on an annual basis by both members and officers.

Whilst existing control procedures are listed, how qualitative an assessment is being undertaken of the success (or otherwise) of remedial activity? How clearly are the risks listed assessed for their impact on outcomes? Are the risks listed primarily focussed on operational considerations? Overall we would encourage the Council to assure itself that the current approach is affording you a systematic and robust approach to learning, and retaining understanding, of the lessons learnt as part of the Council's 'corporate memory'.

It was not clear to us how proactive a role the Executive Board plays in managing corporate risk through your current processes. We feel it important that you are satisfied that members are kept informed in a way which allows them to take a more active role in managing corporate risk. It may be that you explore whether further training to help them discharge this role is required and how this might help them further in undertaking a leadership role in this part of the Council's business. We learned that audit training for members has been offered but not taken up in the past and you may wish to revisit this. Members undertaking this function more robustly would have the impact of building greater resilience into the Council's service delivery.

We were made aware that a shared service for audit had been considered in the past with limited success in quality and resilience terms.

### Organisational Capacity

There is a culture of willingness to learn from other organisations at North Warwickshire. Having done this you add your own innovation to such models. As mentioned already the BOB Hub services model is one such example of the Council taking a delivery model which worked in another authority, building upon it and ultimately developing an even better service than the original. These along with the Food Bank, Fareshare, Second chance furniture, 'Have your Cake and eat it' and 'Bite back begins' initiatives provide a suite of excellent good practice examples of North Warwickshire innovating to address social issues. It is clear that your approach to partnership and community development is fully embedded in all that you do. In particular your Community Development Service was well ahead of its time at the time of its inception and provided the strong foundation on which you are currently delivering.

Through a mature approach to partnership, you are well placed to supplement your internal capacity through shared services and partnering arrangements. External partners describe the Council as a 'robust critical friend' who will work with their partners to identify best ways of delivering efficiently. This includes learning equally the lessons from successes as well as lessons on what could work better. You have a reputation for using data available to you in a range of ways in order to ensure that services are targeted. You are also skilled at utilising the knowledge and expertise of partner organisations to ensure that the best possible service is delivered.

The Building Control service you share with Nuneaton and Bedworth is considered to be a success. This is mainly due to a loss-making enterprise being turned around to where it

is now likely to make a profit. The relationship between the two authorities is a product of the history of collaboration between the two and would seem to provide opportunities to work jointly on areas such as economic growth through the sub-LEP arrangements.

The morale, commitment and motivation of staff at North Warwickshire Borough Council is very good. It has helped you to deliver on your priorities. However in much the same way that capacity at the top of organisation relating to economic growth should be considered, it is important that the Council is aware of how stretched the workforce as a whole can become. It is important that the Council is clear about where and when any potential service vulnerability and 'tipping points' might occur. In a wider sense it is also important for the Council to focus clearly on what its approach to succession planning is in terms of developing staff who could be promoted to vacant positions when they arise.

For a relatively small borough, North Warwickshire has a significant number of complex strategic issues to contend with. As mentioned the HS2 delivery and Birmingham Airport proposed new runway brings a combination of challenge and, potentially, opportunity for the area. Leadership of this agenda has by default been taken up by the Chief Executive and two officers who are also expected to managed a wide-ranging portfolio of other activity. On the economic growth front alone these two areas are competing for priority with City Deal and the LEP both of which require a voice from North Warwickshire and other districts in the north if this agenda is to not be dominated by the south of the county.

There is additional capacity required for effective engagement with business and relationship management of private sector bodies. It was clear to us that the Council does not currently have the capacity to maximise the full benefits of influencing this situation as it might want to and we encourage you to give further consideration to how this might be addressed going forward.

North Warwickshire has TNT based in the borough which should represent a real opportunity for job growth but they too found apprenticeships difficult to recruit to. The Chief Executive has made arrangements for the County Apprenticeships Officer to work directly with TNT to resolve this. This may represent an example of the value of more proactive and positive communication and myth-busting campaigns to put forward the message about the borough's aspirations. The team also believes you should continue to build on your previous efforts to maximise the impact of having businesses such as Ocado and the Belfry based in the borough. Better use could be made of case studies from Ocado to demonstrate that job opportunities are in fact gateways into successful, highly-skilled careers. However the lack of capacity may be compromising the Council's ability to engage effectively in promoting a confident and positive image of the opportunities which exist. This is an area which needs to be supported on an on-going basis as there is rarely a reduction in demand for effective marketing. It is clear that officer capacity is extremely stretched and that this activity is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain.

There is a risk for the Council that you will not only fail to effectively influence agendas with a profound impact on the borough's future but that the 'corporate intelligence' around this area could easily be lost as it resides in a very small number of your very senior individuals. If any or all of these officers departed the Council you would have no capacity or professional expertise to engage with these crucial agendas. This could lead to a

dependence on external resources such as consultants. We feel that there is an urgent need to address this area of the Council's delivery.

You need to be clearer on how you will achieve your objective of delivering employment growth particularly as there is no dedicated economic growth resource within the Council at the present time. You have identified economic growth as a Council priority which means you should give further thought to how effective delivery will be supported. We are aware that the Council took a conscious decision to remove a dedicated Economic Development team from the Council's structure. Whilst we are not advocating that this be reinstated necessarily, we identify that a clearer assessment of what capacity is now needed to deliver on this priority would benefit you. This will be important if the Council is to proactively influence the opportunities you have as a strategic location for logistics and a strong base for the automotive industry.

### **Moving forward - suggestions for consideration**

Based on what we saw, heard and read we suggest you consider the following actions to build on the Council's undoubted successes. These are things we think will help you improve and develop the effectiveness and capacity to deliver your future ambitions and plans. These are linked to the five areas you asked us to focus on:

(i) Capacity and capability overall to deliver your ambitions and

(ii) Use of your senior management capacity

1. Review the Council's overall approach to resourcing the delivery of economic growth. This includes identifying how relationships with key businesses will be resourced and how you will further develop relationships with private sector investors.
2. Identify more clearly how you will resource the Council's input into strategically important high profile complex issues (e.g. HS2, Birmingham Airport, City Deal and the LEP).
3. Assure yourself that your alignment of spend to priorities is clear and robustly appraised.
4. Identify a proactive, strategic approach to communicating the Council's ambitions for the borough through effective promotion and branding of North Warwickshire.

(iii) Building more effective resilience into your services

5. Review service groupings to ensure a good fit in supporting the delivery of the corporate priorities. This includes risk assessment of all service areas in order to identify potential vulnerabilities and developing a strategy which enables you to maintain a cohesive approach to service delivery.
6. Utilise opportunities for the Leadership programme in the workforce strategy to be given a higher priority.
7. Continue to develop a more embedded approach to asset management and utilisation both of the Council's land holdings and other redundant public assets.

- (iv) Opportunities for greater shared working and
- (v) Partnership working

8. Keep under review your current criteria for taking forward decisions on shared services. This is to ensure that you are able to take full advantage of all opportunities to innovate through a range of options such as shared services, strategic alliance(s), shared management, commissioning, trading, insourcing and outsourcing.

We have made available to you a set of slides that summarise the above feedback. The slides are the ones used by the peer team to present its feedback at the end of the onsite visit.

### **Next steps**

You will undoubtedly wish to reflect on these findings, and suggestions made, with your senior managerial and political leadership before determining how the Council wishes to take things forward. As part of the peer challenge process, there is an offer of continued activity to support this. In the meantime we are keen to continue the relationship we have formed with you and colleagues through the peer challenge to date. We will endeavour to signpost you to other sources of information and examples of practice and thinking.

I thought it helpful to provide contact details for Howard Davis who, as you know, is our Principal Adviser (West Midlands). Howard can be contacted via email at [howard.davis@local.gov.uk](mailto:howard.davis@local.gov.uk) (or tel. 07920 061197). He is the main contact between your authority and the Local Government Association. Hopefully this provides you with a convenient route of access to the Local Government Association, its resources and any further support.

All of us connected with the peer challenge would like to wish you every success going forward. Once again, many thanks to you and your colleagues for inviting the peer challenge and to everyone involved for their participation.

Yours sincerely

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On behalf of the peer challenge team:

1. Ray Harding (Chief Executive, King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council)
2. Councillor Caitlin Bisknell (Leader, High Peak Borough Council)
3. Steve Blatch (Corporate Director, North Norfolk District Council)
4. Paul Shackley (Corporate Director, Allerdale Borough Council)
5. Ernest Opuni (Peer Challenge Manager, LGA)
6. Ged Perkins (Peer Support Team, LGA)

**Agenda Item No 12**

**Executive Board**

**25 November 2013**

**Report of the Assistant Chief Executive  
and Solicitor to the Council**

**Federation of Small Businesses  
Procurement Charter**

**1 Summary**

- 1.1 This report seeks Member approval to adopt the Federation of Small Businesses' Procurement Charter

<p><b>Recommendation to the Council</b></p> <p><b>That the Charter is adopted.</b></p>
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**2 Consultation**

- 2.1 The report has implications for the whole Borough and no specific consultation has therefore taken place

**3 Report**

- 3.1 As part of its economic development work the Council, together with other Councils in the Coventry and Warwickshire area, has been working with the Federation for Small Businesses ("FSB") to develop steps to help local enterprises.
- 3.2 One measure would be to help local small businesses, as far as is possible, to gain work from the Council. Members will be aware that we are not able to simply give the work to these businesses but there are a number of measures we can take to remove barriers.
- 3.3 One example is the joint procurement website, or portal, that has been developed with a number of other authorities. The aim is to significantly simplify the process which will have a greater benefit for small businesses who do not often have the resources to devote to complicated procurement processes.
- 3.4 The FSB have drawn up a Charter to capture a number of these issues and this is attached as the Appendix. It is recommended that this be adopted by this Council.



## **4. Report Implications**

### **4.1 Equality Implications**

4.1.1 There are specific duties within the Equality Act in meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty which are relevant to procurement. The guidance prepared by the Equality and Human Rights Commission for procurement "Buying Better Outcomes" highlights the support of small medium enterprises as being consistent with meeting corporate equality objectives and economic development aims. Compliance with the guidance is planned to be a part of the Council's revised Procurement Strategy.

### **4.2 Safer Communities Implications**

4.2.1 The Council is currently working with Warwickshire Police to consider extending the Town Safe Scheme which provides access to digital radio communications and offender information to help make the local businesses in Atherstone, Coleshill, Dordon and Polesworth safer. Most of the business in the local high streets are small medium enterprises. This work will be consistent with the aims of the charter.

### **4.3 Sustainability implications**

4.3.1 The Council promotes the development of a sustainable local economy that meets peoples needs locally whilst increasing the circulation of wealth within the area. By adopting the Federation of small businesses charter the Council will significantly simplify the process which will have a greater benefit for small businesses who do not often have the resources to devote to complicated procurement processes.

The Contact Officer for this report is Steve Maxey (719438).



**Federation of Small Businesses**  
The UK's Leading Business Organisation



**Warwickshire**  
County Council



North Warwickshire  
Borough Council

**KEEP TRADE  
LOCAL**

## Small Business Friendly Procurement Charter Declaration of Support

This charter is designed to promote positive procurement between small businesses and local authorities. Following an FSB report '**Local procurement: making the most of small businesses**' the FSB identified the barriers that small businesses face when accessing local and national procurement. This charter makes 15 best practice recommendations to encourage a better procurement process for local small firms.

### Strategy and Policy

- Adopt a procurement strategy that explicitly recognises the significant benefits of procuring from local small businesses, without compromising your legal stipulations.
- Have a local, or work in-line with a sub-regional, economic development strategy that takes into account the needs of the existing local economy, and a procurement strategy that is based on a comprehensive analysis of spend.
- Actively consider how much of each procurement decision should be assigned to social value considerations.
- Within your procurement strategy set out how you will ensure best practice is followed and how you will monitor progress.
- Break down contracts into smaller lots wherever practical.

### Spend Analysis

- Ensure you have initiatives that support local SMEs with the tender process (i.e. training opportunities and supplier pre-engagement activity) and develop the potential of a local small business supplier base.
- Where possible, consider the local economic impact of your key spending decisions.

### Process Simplification

- Use a relevant national, regional and sub-regional portal to advertise your procurement opportunities wherever appropriate to do so.
- Ensure the use of selection requirements is proportionate and based purely on the needs of the contract.

### SME Engagement

- Ensure you have initiatives that support local SMEs with the tender process and develop the potential of a local small business supplier base.
- Provide detailed, specific and timely feedback to all businesses that request it, under the provisions of the Remedies Directive 2009, in order to improve a business's bidding capabilities.
- Ensure that regular training opportunities and supplier pre-engagement activity is available for small businesses in their area.

### Payment Practices

- Pledge to pay suppliers on time to agreed terms and actively seek opportunities to reduce the payment time.
- Use contract clauses to ensure that prime contractors pass on the council's payment terms to their subcontracted suppliers, and that the subcontracted suppliers likewise pass on terms throughout the supply chain.

Local Authority: .....

FSB Region: .....

Position: .....

FSB Chairman: .....

Signed: .....

Signed: .....

**Agenda Item No 13**

**Executive Board**

**25 November 2013**

**Report of the Chief Executive**

**Conservative Group**

**1 Summary**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek authorisation for any possible amendments to representation on Boards resulting from the impending change in the leadership of the Conservative Group.

**Recommendation to the Council**

**That any possible amendments to representation on Boards resulting from the impending change to the Leader of the Conservative Group be tabled at the Full Council meeting to be held on 11 December 2013.**

**2 Report**

- 2.1 As Members will be aware at the last Council meeting Councillor Hayfield declared his intention to stand down as Leader of the Conservative Group.
- 2.2 Elections to the position are to be held in early December and, depending on the outcome, the new Leader of the Conservative Group may wish to make amendments to the current representation on Boards.
- 2.3 If any amendments are to be made to the Conservative Group representation on Boards these will be tabled by the new Leader of that Group at the Full Council meeting to be held on 11 December 2013.

**3 Report Implications**

**3.1 Financial Implications**

- 3.1.1 The Leader and Deputy Leader of the Opposition Group are entitled to an allowance as recognised in the Members' Allowance Scheme.

The Contact Officer for this report is David Harris (719222).

**Background Papers**

Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D, as substituted by the Local Government Act, 2000 Section 97

<b>Background Paper No</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Nature of Background Paper</b>	<b>Date</b>
None			

**Agenda Item No 14**

**Executive Board**

**25 November 2013**

**Report of the Chief Executive**

**Calendar of Meetings 2014/15**

**1 Summary**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to approve a calendar of meetings for 2014/15.

**Recommendation to the Council**

**That the draft calendar of meetings for 2014/15 as submitted at Appendix A to the Chief Executive's report be approved.**

**2 Report**

... 2.1 A draft calendar of meetings for 2014/15 is submitted as Appendix A. The draft has been based on a four cycle calendar of meetings.

2.2 As with the current calendar of meetings the May Full Council meeting will be a ceremonial meeting with Mayor making and the appointment of Boards as the main business. The four cycles would then be

- July to September
- September to December
- December to February
- February to June

2.3 Other points to note on the calendar are as follows:-

- a The majority of all main Board meetings will meet on a Monday. Meetings of the Full Council continue to be held on Wednesdays;
- b Planning and Development Board to meet once each month;
- c The Housing Sub-Committee and Resources Board to meet at least once a cycle;
- d Community and Environment Board to meet at least once a cycle;
- e Generally Executive Board meets towards the end of a cycle and is followed a week later by Scrutiny Board;

- f A meeting of the Licensing Committee has been set for the end of January and additional meetings will be arranged on an ad hoc basis;
- g Up to the end of 2014 a monthly meeting of the Special Sub-Group has been scheduled and other meetings of the Sub-Group and the Safer Communities Sub-Committee will be arranged on an ad-hoc basis;
- h Where possible no meetings have been arranged during the bank holiday weeks; and
- i The 4 years of this Council concludes in May 2015. On the 29 April 2015 the Full Council will meet prior to the all out elections on 7 May 2015.

### 3 Report Implications

3.1 There are no report implications.

The Contact Officer for this report is David Harris (719222).

#### Background Papers

Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D, as substituted by the Local Government Act, 2000 Section 97

Background Paper No	Author	Nature of Background Paper	Date
None			

**NORTH WARWICKSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL  
DRAFT MEETINGS TIMETABLE – 2014/15**

	May-14	Jun-14	Jul-14	Aug-14	Sep-14	Oct-14	Nov-14	Dec-14	Jan-15	Feb-15	Mar-15	Apr-15	May-15	Jun-15
1					RES	COUNCIL		SB	B HOL					RES
2		RES												
3												B HOL		
4													B HOL	
5	B HOL								HSC					
6						HSC						B HOL		
7			HSC									ELECTIONS		
8					PLAN									SB
9		SB					PLAN	COUNCIL		PLAN				
10										EXB				
11				PLAN					PLAN					
12														
13						PLAN						PLAN	COUNCIL	
14	COUNCIL		PLAN					SSG/PLAN						PLAN
15					SSG/SB					SB	CEB			EXB
16		PLAN					SSG/RES							
17		EXB												
18				SSG									PLAN	
19	PLAN								CEB				CEB	
20	CEB					SSG/CEB						HSC		
21			SSG/CEB											
22					EXB									
23														
24							EXB							COUNCIL
25		COUNCIL		B HOL				B HOL	LIC/RES	COUNCIL			B HOL	
26	B HOL							B HOL						
27														
28														
29												COUNCIL		
30														
31														

EXB - Executive Board RES - Resources Board CEB - Community and Environment Board PLAN - Planning and Development Board	AF (N) - Area Forum North AF (S) - Area Forum South AF (E) - Area Forum East AF (W) - Area Forum West
SB - Scrutiny Board HSC - Housing Sub-Committee LIC - Licensing Committee SAC - Safer Communities Sub-Committee SSG - Special Sub-Group	SB - Scrutiny Board HSC - Housing Sub-Committee LIC - Licensing Committee SAC - Safer Communities Sub-Committee SSG - Special Sub-Group

## **Agenda Item No 15**

### **Executive Board**

**25 November 2013**

#### **Report of the Assistant Director (Finance and Human Resources)**

#### **2013/14 Capital Programme**

### **1 Summary**

- 1.1 This report informs Members of action taken by the Chief Executive, using his urgent business powers, in respect of an amendment to the approved 2013/14 capital programme, in order that suitable plant could be ordered for delivery in time for the commencement of the new carriageway sweeping service.

#### **Recommendation to the Council**

**That the Council notes the action taken to increase the approved capital programme by £105,875 to enable the purchase of suitable plant for the delivery of the new carriageway sweeping service.**

### **2 Introduction**

- 2.1 The 2013/14 capital programme was originally approved in February. The Community and Environment Board considered a report of the Assistant Director (Streetscape) on 3 September 2013 and resolved to undertake carriageway sweeping in-house from 1 December 2013.

### **3 Background**

- 3.1 The mechanical carriageway sweeping service is currently undertaken by a private contractor on behalf of the Borough Council under a contract which comes to an end on 30 November 2013. The Community and Environment Board considered a report which recommended that the service be brought back in-house from 1 December 2013. It is anticipated that bringing the service back in-house would save the Council in excess of £35,000 per annum and bring about a number of additional benefits including greater service flexibility and improved resilience.
- 3.2 The Community and Environment Board resolved to bring the service in-house and officers are working to implement the new service from 1 December, 2013. However, in order that a suitable sweeper could be purchased and delivered in time for that start date and thereby avoid service delays, additional hire charges or both, it was agreed, in consultation with the

Leader of the Council, that the order for the sweeper should be placed immediately and that the capital programme should be amended accordingly using the Chief Executive's urgent business powers.

#### **4 Report Implications**

##### **4.1 Finance and Value for Money Implications**

4.1.1 The approved capital programme has been increased by £105,875 in line with the decision taken under the Chief Executive's urgent business powers. Additional funding has been identified or secured to match the increase required.

##### **4.2 Environment and Sustainability Implications**

4.2.1 Delivery of this service contributes directly to environmental improvements. They will also help to maintain sustainable communities.

##### **4.3 Links to Council's Priorities**

4.3.1 Delivery of these projects will contribute to protecting and improving the local Environment whilst maintaining a balanced budget.

The Contact Officer for this report is Sue Garner (719374).

#### **Background Papers**

Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D, as substituted by the Local Government Act, 2000 Section 97

Background Paper No	Author	Nature of Background Paper	Date



**Agenda Item No 16**

**Executive Board**

**25 November 2013**

**Report of the Chief Executive**

**Implementing Individual Electoral  
Registration**

**1 Summary**

- 1.1 To inform the Board of the progress being made towards the implementation of Individual Electoral Registration (IER).

<p><b>Recommendation to the Council</b></p> <p><b>That the report be noted.</b></p>
---

**2 Background**

- 2.1 As Members are aware there will be a major change to the system of electoral registration from June 2014 with the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration (IER).
- 2.2 The final canvass using the household form is currently underway and will conclude in February 2014.

**3 Under the New Registration System**

- 3.1 Electors will register individually rather than through heads of household.
- 3.2 Data matching will be used to verify applications and during the transition phase will be used to confirm existing entries in registers. The primary data base will be the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). Individuals who do not match during the data matching process will need to provide personal information including their National Insurance number to verify their application.
- 3.3 A modernised electoral registration system based on IT will be introduced, opening up the way for digital applications, principally by using the Council's website.
- 3.4 Once registered, individuals will need only to confirm annually that their details have not changed. The annual household canvass will continue to check the register is complete. Individuals not on the register will themselves be responsible for applying to register.

3.5 From 2014 IER will be a requirement for any new registrations and for anyone who wants to vote by post or proxy. After 1 December 2015 everyone on the electoral register will be registered under the new system.

#### 4 Making the transition

4.1 Managing the transition to the new system of registration will be a challenge. The Council is expected to support the process by planning resources and organisational change, as well as playing a key role in promoting public awareness.

4.2 The following table sets out the transitional arrangements

SUMMARY TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS	
2013	Planning and implementation at local level from January onwards. The Confirmation Dry Run took place in July 2013
2014	Preparation for provision and roll out of the new registration service. In February publication of the register from the final old style canvass prior to May European elections.
June-Dec 2014	Following European elections, transitional phase begins with the confirmation of existing electors through data matching against information held by DWP and letters sent to those not confirmed by data-matching inviting applications for registration.
Dec 2014	New register comprises all electors confirmed by data matching, all those who have made successful individual applications, and those on February 2014 register who have not yet reapplied.
To March 2015	Completion of the transition, with targeted activity prior to March inviting further missing electors and encouraging applications. May 2015 General Election/Borough and Parish Elections.
Autumn 2015	Full household canvass. Every household confirms who lives there, anyone new invited to register individually. Re-canvass of electors carried forward from February 2014 canvas who were not confirmed by data-matching and have not self-registered – names removed from register in December 2015 of those who do not then re-apply.
2016	New system in place – all new electors and those moving home will be required to register individually. There will be an annual household canvass to ensure the register is up to date.

#### 5 Public information

5.1 The Electoral Commission will have primary responsibility for public information but the Council will play its part with local publicity including the Council's website, social media, the one stop shop and hubs.

## **6 Data Matching**

- 6.1 In July this year as part of the preparations for IER, all local authorities took part in a confirmation dry run of data. This involved sending securely an extract of the Council's data (names, addresses and property reference numbers) to the DWP for matching against its database. The results were then returned to the Council in the form of a Red, Amber or Green status. The results for North Warwickshire were

Red – 7,416 electors

Amber – 1516 electors

Green – 41090 electors

The 82% (Green status) match rate for North Warwickshire compares favourably with the national average of 78%. However, whilst the figures are encouraging, just under 9,000 electors will need follow up forms and canvassing as part of the IER transition. In addition the 41,000 Green status electors will require confirmation letters.

## **7 Funding the transition and beyond.**

- 7.1 The Government has allocated funding for IER through to 2015 to meet local authorities' costs over and above the current cost of electoral registration. The Cabinet Office has recently written giving an indicative funding allocation for North Warwickshire for 2014/15 of £11,965.
- 7.2 In the long term concerns remain beyond 2015. No guarantees of support have been given at a time when local government will be facing further reductions in funding.

## **8 Observations**

- 8.1 IER will clearly present challenges for all involved. In terms of the administration a number of issues (IT infrastructure, the online digital service and form design) are still to be resolved. The Cabinet Office has made a number of assurances that these issues will be sorted but with time passing there is little room for any delay or testing of the system.

## **9 Report Implications**

### **9.1 Finance and Value for Money Implications**

- 9.1.1 Details are set out in paragraph 7 above.

### **9.2 Risk Implications**

- 9.2.1 As set out in paragraph 8.1 above a number significant issues are still to be resolved. If any of these issues are not satisfactorily resolved before implementation it may have an impact on the Council's staffing and financial resources.

The Contact Officer for this report is David Harris (719222).

### **Background Papers**

Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D, as substituted by the Local Government Act, 2000 Section 97

<b>Background Paper No</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Nature of Background Paper</b>	<b>Date</b>
1	Cabinet Office	Letter	29 10 13

## Agenda Item No 17

### Executive Board

25 November 2013

#### Report of the Assistant Director (Finance and Human Resources)

#### Budgetary Control Report 2013/14 Period Ended 31 October 2013

### 1 Summary

- 1.1 The report covers revenue expenditure and income for the period from 1 April 2013 to 31 October 2013. The 2013/2014 budget and the actual position for the period, compared with the estimate at that date, are given, together with an estimate of the out-turn position for services reporting to this Board.

#### **Recommendation to Council**

**That the report be noted.**

### 2 Consultation

- 2.1 Councillors N Dirveiks, Moore and Smith have been sent an advanced copy of this report for comment. Any comments received will be reported verbally at the meeting.

### 3 Introduction

- 3.1 Under the Service Reporting Code of Practice (SeRCOP), services should be charged with the total cost of providing the service, which not only includes costs and income directly incurred, but also support costs relating to such areas as finance, office accommodation, telephone costs and IT services.

### 4 Overall Position

- 4.1 Net controllable expenditure for those services that report to the Executive Board as at 31 October 2013 is £391,766 compared with a profiled budgetary position of £392,735; an under spend of £969. Appendix A to this report provides details of the profiled and actual position for each service reporting to this Board, together with the variance for the period.

- 4.2 Where possible, the budget to date figure has been calculated with some allowance for seasonal variations, in order to give a better comparison with actual figures.

### 5 Risks to the Budget

- 5.1 The key risks to the budgetary position of the Council from services under the control of this Board are:
- The current level of budget within Emergency Planning is sufficient to carry

out the anticipated workload; however any major local emergency would require additional expenditure.

- Budget provision does not currently exist for production of and delivery of a third edition of 'North Talk' and currently depends on finding external funding each year.

## 6 Estimated Out-turn

6.1 Members have requested that Budgetary Control Reports provide details on the likely out-turn position for each of the services reporting to this Board. There is insufficient information at this point to warrant any change in the original estimate of £619,070.

6.2 The figures provided above are based on information available at this time of the year and are the best available estimates for this board, and may change as the financial year progresses. Members will be updated in future reports of any changes to the forecast out turn.

## 7 Report Implications

### 7.1 Finance and Value for Money Implications

7.1.1 The Council's budgeted contribution from General Fund balances for the 2013/14 financial year is £458,470. Income and Expenditure will continue to be closely managed and any issues that arise will be reported to this Board for comment.

### 7.2 Environment and Sustainability Implications

7.2.1 The Council has to ensure that it adopts and implements robust and comprehensive budgetary monitoring and control, to ensure not only the availability of services within the current financial year, but in future years.

The Contact Officer for this report is Nigel Lane (719371).

## Background Papers

Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D, as substituted by the Local Government Act, 2000 Section 97

Background Paper No	Author	Nature of Background Paper	Date

## North Warwickshire Borough Council

## Executive Board

## Budgetary Control Report 2013/2014 as at 31 October 2013

Description	Approved Budget 2013/2014 £	Profiled Budget October 2013 £	Actual October 2013 £	Variance £	Comments
Housing Strategic Service Review	33,880	19,157	19,157	0	
Outreach and Access to Services	116,090	67,813	66,994	(819)	
Corporate Communications	77,080	42,269	42,416	147	
Community Strategy	141,500	80,088	80,963	875	
Communication Group	1,820	1,153	88	(1,066)	
Emergency Planning	52,410	30,262	30,278	16	
N.Warks Local Development Framework	195,090	151,288	151,165	(122)	
Support to Parishes	1,200	705	705	0	
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>619,070</b>	<b>392,735</b>	<b>391,766</b>	<b>(969)</b>	

**Agenda Item No 18**

**Executive Board**

**25 November 2013**

**Report of the Chief Executive and the Deputy Chief Executive**

**Progress Report on Achievement of Corporate Plan and Performance Indicator Targets April – September 2013**

**1 Summary**

- 1.1 This report informs Members of the progress with the achievement of the Corporate Plan and Performance Indicator targets relevant to the Executive Board for April to September 2013.

<p><b>Recommendation to Council</b></p> <p><b>That Members consider the performance achieved and highlight any areas for further investigation.</b></p>
---

**2 Consultation**

- 2.1 Consultation has taken place with the relevant Members and any comments received will be reported at the meeting.

**3 Background**

- 3.1 This report shows the second quarter position with the achievement of the Corporate Plan and Performance Indicator targets for 2013/14. This is the second report showing the progress achieved so far during 2013/14.

**4 Progress achieved during 2013/14**

- ... 4.1 Attached at Appendices A and B are reports outlining the progress achieved for all the Corporate Plan targets and the performance with the national and local performance indicators during April to September 2013/14 for the Executive Board.
- 4.2 Members will recall the use of a traffic light indicator for the monitoring of the performance achieved.

Red – target not achieved (shown as a red triangle)

Amber – target currently behind schedule and requires remedial action to be achieved (shown as an amber circle)

Green – target currently on schedule to be achieved (shown as a green star)



**5 Performance Indicators**

5.1 The current performance indicators have been reviewed by each division and Management Team for monitoring for the 2013/14 year.

**6 Overall Performance**

6.1 The Corporate Plan performance report shows that 94% of the Corporate Plan targets and 80% of the performance indicator targets are currently on schedule to be achieved. The report shows that individual targets that have been classified as red, amber or green. Individual comments from the relevant division have been included where appropriate. The table below shows the following status in terms of the traffic light indicator status:

**Corporate Plan**

<b>Status</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Green	17	94%
Amber	1	6%
Red	0	0%
Total	18	100%

**Performance Indicators**

<b>Status</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Green	4	80%
Amber	1	20%
Red	0	0%
Total	5	100%

**7 Summary**

7.1 Members may wish to identify any areas that require further consideration where targets are not currently being achieved.

**8 Report Implications**

**8.1 Safer Communities Implications**

8.1.1 The community safety performance indicators are included in the report.

## 8.2 Legal and Human Rights Implications

8.2.1 The national indicators were specified by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. They have now been ended and replaced by a single list of data returns to Central Government from April 2011.

## 8.3 Environment and Sustainability Implications

8.3.1 Improvements in the performance and quality of services will contribute to improving the quality of life within the community. There are a number of targets and indicators included which contribute towards the priorities of the sustainable community strategy including financial inclusion, core strategy, community safety and affordable housing,

## 8.4 Risk Management Implications

8.4.1 Effective performance monitoring will enable the Council to minimise associated risks with the failure to achieve targets and deliver services at the required performance level.

## 8.5 Equalities

8.5.1 There are a number of equality related targets and indicators including achieving the equality framework, domestic abuse, race equality, hate crime, and financial inclusion highlighted in the report.

## 8.6 Links to Council's Priorities

8.6.1 There are a number of targets and performance indicators contributing towards the priorities of enhancing community involvement and access to services, protecting and improving our environment, defending and improving our countryside and rural heritage, to tackle crime, improving housing and making best use of our resources.







The Contact Officer for this report is Robert Beggs (719238).

### Background Papers

Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D, as substituted by the Local Government Act, 2000 Section 97

Background Paper No	Author	Nature of Background Paper	Date
National Indicators for Local Authorities and Local Authority Partnerships	Department for Communities and Local Government	Statutory Guidance	February 2008

	Action	Priority	Reporting Officer	Update	Status	Direction
NWCP 001	To ensure that we assess the impact of our services on, and actively engage with, all sections of our communities and to implement key actions agreed in the Consultation Action Plans relating to consultation and the provision of services and report by Jul	Consultation and Communication	Maxey, Steve	All Board reports and major initiatives are review by the Assistant Chief Executive and Policy Support Manager to ensure the Council's equality duties are discharged. The Council has an adopted consultation strategy, designed to ensure a range of views are heard	★ Green	➔
NWCP 002	To continue to work with partners in the Coventry & Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership and with Hinckley and Nuneaton to maximise opportunities to gather feedback to develop the economy of the Borough and to report on progress by October in each ye	Local Employment	Barratt, Dorothy	Work is progressing with various strands - two key strands are skills and access to employment and training.	★ Green	➔
NWCP 003 11/12(1)	To report annually in March on the work of the local Financial Inclusion Partnership including for 2013/14 activity with the CAB and Warwickshire Welfare Rights Activity and the local impact of the Welfare Reform programme	Access to Services	Trahern, Bob	Work is ongoing in relation to this area of work with regular monitoring meetings taking place with Housing colleagues and our Financial Inclusion Partners. The Council was successful in winning the IRRV Excellence in Social Inclusion award in October 2013 and two silver awards recognising excellence in its partnership working and B.O.B Hub projects indicating the Council is being recognised for its approach and delivery of this challenging agenda	★ Green	➔
NWCP 004	To report the outcome of the public inquiry into the Core Strategy and recommend an adopted Strategy by December 2013 (subject to the Inspector's reporting timescale). To consult on a revised Site Allocation Plan and submit the same for consideration by t	Countryside and Heritage	Barratt, Dorothy	Legal compliance with the Duty to Cooperate has been passed. The Inspector is awaiting a progress report and possible implications on the Core Strategy as a result of further work on housing, employment land and Gypsy & Travellers. The Site Allocations work is progressing and a revised timetable for it and the other documents will be considered by the LDF Sub-committee in due course.	● Amber	➔

NWCP 005	<p>To continue to oppose a) the HS2 proposal, in partnership with other affected Councils and community action groups and press for the maximum mitigation and other benefits for the Borough and b) the principle of Opencast Mining to be reported annually</p>	Countryside and Heritage	Barratt, Dorothy	<p>Work is continuing which includes: continuing to work with 51m; developing a Mitigation Plan with the County and other Warwickshire Districts; preparing for the Hybrid Bill process; sending comments on the Draft Environmental Statement. In addition there is currently the consultation on Phase 2 and discussions are taking place with HS2 on this part of the route. There has been no opencast mining proposals.</p> <p><b>WORK on the Warwickshire Flood</b></p> <p>Pathfinder project has started. Meetings have been held with Polesworth and Nether Whitacre Parish Councils to seek their support and assistance in developing local flood action groups. The Business Continuity risks associated with the current office accommodation works are continuing to be considered. Discussions have been held with each division to ensure service based continuity plans are in place to respond to disruptions to our normal business operations. Meeting held with newly appointed Local Resilience Forum Co-ordinator and Chair of the Warwickshire LRF regarding the future direction for emergency preparedness and resilience</p>	 Green	
NWCP 008 11/12(1)	<p>To ensure that the Council is prepared for emergencies and has suitable emergency and business continuity plans, as required by the Civil Contingencies Act, and to review both the emergency and business continuity plans annually in March</p>	Public Services & Council Tax	Beggs, Robert	<p>Pathfinder project has started. Meetings have been held with Polesworth and Nether Whitacre Parish Councils to seek their support and assistance in developing local flood action groups. The Business Continuity risks associated with the current office accommodation works are continuing to be considered. Discussions have been held with each division to ensure service based continuity plans are in place to respond to disruptions to our normal business operations. Meeting held with newly appointed Local Resilience Forum Co-ordinator and Chair of the Warwickshire LRF regarding the future direction for emergency preparedness and resilience</p>	 Green	
NWCP 009	<p>To achieve the savings required by the budget strategy including the commitment to keep Council Tax increases lower than inflation and to update the strategy to reflect future developments by October 2013</p>	Public Services & Council Tax	Brewer, Chris	<p>Updated financial strategy taken to September Executive Board.</p>	 Green	

NWCP 010	To carry out reviews of systems in line with the Council's review plan and explore any opportunities for shared working that may arise, with a view to achieving savings and/or increasing capacity, to be reported quarterly	Public Services and Council Tax	Brewer, Chris	Planning system review due to start in January 14	★ Green	➔
NWCP 038 11/12(1)	To implement the identified improvement works to the Council's main offices in accordance with the Project Plan to ensure the ongoing provision of services to the local community while safeguarding the safety and security of all residents, staff and visit	Public Services and Council Tax	Dobbs, Richard	The works are underway and Phase 1 completed end of October. Project is on schedule and on budget	★ Green	➔
NWCP 042	To continue to look for ways of narrowing the Council's capital funding gap and report annually in February	Public Services & Council Tax	Garner, Sue	Work on updating the capital programme and resources will commence shortly.	★ Green	➔
NWCP 048 11/12(1)	To carry out a review of Area Forum Funding by April 2013	Public Services & Council Tax	Powell, Simon	Task complete. The introduction of a new Local Community Projects Fund has been approved by Members and implemented accordingly.	★ Green	➔
NWCP 072(1)	To maintain the existing level of core funding for arts and welfare organisations	Public Services & Council Tax	Powell, Simon	Live and Local continues to be funded by the Authority. Other community arts organisations are able to apply for grants through the Local Community Projects Fund, three of which have done so in the first round of applications for this new source of financial support.	★ Green	➔
NWCP 075	To implement the Council Tax Support Scheme 2013/14 and carry out a review to enable a scheme to be set for 2014/15	Public Services and Council Tax	Trahern, Bob	Members will consider a report at the November Resources Board that will seek to recommend "no change" to the Council Tax Support scheme for 2014/15 based on benchmarking undertaken with other Councils and a review of the impact of the Councils current CTS scheme	★ Green	➔
NWCP 076	To update the Medium Term Financial Strategy to take account of external funding changes relating to Business Rates and report by September 2013	Public Services & Council Tax	Brewer, Chris	Updated financial strategy taken to September Executive Board.	★ Green	➔
NWCP 077	To review the Council's membership of the Coventry and Warwickshire Business Rates Pool by December 2013	Public Services & Council Tax	Brewer, Chris	Report taken to Sept Executive Board.	★ Green	➔

NWCP 078	To continue to work with partner organisations in Coventry, Warwickshire and Hinckley to develop a City Deal with central government, if this proves beneficial to the local economy, to report as necessary	Local Employment	Maxey, Steve	Officers and Members continue to engage with this process which is likely now to be considered by Government in September/October	★ Green	▲
NWCP 079	To work with the retailers in Atherstone, Polesworth and Coleshill to develop action plans for the use of the Portas monies and to help implement the plans	Local Employment	Maxey, Steve	Work continues in the three market towns to get the shop owners in these areas to agree a list of projects to improve the retail performance of these areas.	★ Green	▲
NWCP 080	To investigate options with Warwickshire County Council and the Environment Agency for flood mitigation and flood protection measures at locations susceptible to flooding and to review the existing Fillongley Property Protection measures	Environment	Dobbs, Richard	NWBC continues to work on local issues and support residents and communities during flooding events. Work on pathfinder initiatives with WCC and EA has begun recently which will support local flood action groups in Polesworth and Whitacre Heath . Some resilience work through the Natuionl Flood Forum has been requested for Fillongley via the pathfinder project.	★ Green	▲

Ref	Description	Section	Priority	Year End Target	Performance	Traffic Light	Direction of Travel	Comments
NWLPI 158	To respond to all complaints and requests for service within three working days	Env Health (C, L & HP)	Public Services and Council Tax	99	99	★ Green	➔	
NWLPI 153	Number of domestic burglaries detected in the Local Authority area	Policy Support	Crime and Disorder	120	113	★ Green	➔	The number of domestic burglaries of 113 during the first two quarters is showing a small increase in July and August. The levels are still within the range of the reduction target for the year. Recent analysis has highlighted the wards of Fillongley and Coleshill South as key locations during June and August. Further work with Neighbourhood Watch is planned to ensure that appropriate crime prevention measures are promoted. Be Safe burglary packs are being distributed to all victims of domestic burglary.
NWLPI 154	Number of violent crimes in the local authority area	Policy Support	Crime and Disorder	258	257	● Amber	➔	The numbers of Violent crimes is within the range of achieving the reduction target level. The second quarter shows a small increase of 3 compared to same period in 2012/13. No significant emerging issues have been identified during this period.

Ref	Description	Section	Priority	Year End Target	Performance	Traffic Light	Direction of Travel	Comments
NWLPI 155	The number of vehicle crimes in the local authority area	Policy Support	Crime and Disorder	282	227	☆ Green	➡	Vehicle crimes are continuing to fall during the second quarter. The most recent analysis shows Fillongley and Atherstone wards having the most vehicle crime offences between June and August 13. The offences in Fillongley ward are spread across the area with no specific hot spot locations. The follow up work with Neighbourhood Watch on domestic burglary will also cover risks of vehicle crimes.
@NW:NI032	Violent Crime Offences related to Domestic Violence	Policy Support	Crime and Disorder	56				Quarter 2 figure not available
@NW:NI047	People killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents	Policy Support	Crime and Disorder	22	22	☆ Green	➡	Figures only available for April and May 13 so far. Confirmation of the final figure for 2012/13 is still to be provided.



## NORTH WARWICKSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL SUB-GROUP

16 September 2013

Present: Councillor M Stanley in the Chair

Councillors Phillips, Smith and Sweet

Councillor Moore was also in attendance.

### 1 **Disclosable Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interest**

None were declared at the meeting.

### 2 **Proposed Replacement of Indoor Leisure Facilities in Coleshill**

The Assistant Director (Leisure and Community Development) updated Members on progress in respect of the proposed development of new indoor leisure facilities in Coleshill. In particular he made reference to on-going discussions with Sport England in respect of changes to the drainage scheme proposals as part of the value engineering process.

**Resolved:**

**That the progress made in respect of the proposed development of new indoor leisure facilities in Coleshill be noted.**

### 3 **Accommodation Project**

The Assistant Director (Streetscape) reported on the progress of the accommodation project. At the conclusion of the meeting, members of the Sub-Group undertook an inspection of the work taken place so far.

**Resolved:**

**That the report be noted.**

M Stanley  
Chairman

## NORTH WARWICKSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL SUB-GROUP

21 October 2013

Present: Councillor M Stanley in the Chair

Councillors Humphreys, Phillips, Smith and Sweet

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Hayfield (substitute Councillor Humphreys)

### 1 Disclosable Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interest

None were declared at the meeting.

### 2 Accommodation Project

The Assistant Director (Streetscape) reported on the progress of the accommodation project. At the conclusion of the meeting, members of the Sub-Group were invited to undertake an inspection of the work taken place so far.

**Resolved:**

**That the report be noted.**

### 3 Proposed Replacement of Indoor Leisure Facilities in Coleshill

The Assistant Director (Leisure and Community Development) updated Members on progress in respect of the proposed development of new indoor leisure facilities in Coleshill. In particular the Assistant Director highlighted the progress on the S77 process, the underlease and the user agreement.

**Resolved:**

**That the progress made in respect of the proposed development of new indoor leisure facilities in Coleshill be noted.**

### 4 2014/15 Budget Consultation

The Deputy Chief Executive presented a draft questionnaire for use in consulting on the Council's budget for 2014/15. It was proposed to include the questionnaire in the forthcoming edition of North Talk.

A letter from UNISON providing comments in response to the questionnaire was circulated at the meeting.

**Resolved:**

- a **That the Deputy Chief Executive be asked to circulate the draft questionnaire to all Members for comment; and**

- b That, subject to any observations from Members, the draft questionnaire be approved for inclusion in North Talk.**

M Stanley  
Chairman