

**To: Members of the Special Sub-Group**

**Councillors D Clews, Farrow, Hayfield, Jenns, Parsons and Smith**

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

For general enquiries please contact Democratic Services on 01827 719221/719226 or via email – [democraticservices@northwarks.gov.uk](mailto:democraticservices@northwarks.gov.uk)

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

This document can be made available in large print and electronic accessible formats if requested.

## **SPECIAL SUB-GROUP**

**12 January 2021**

The Special Sub-Group will meet on Tuesday, 12 January 2021 at 6.30 pm via Teams. An email invite will be sent to all Members and the meeting will be live streamed on the Council's YouTube channel, accessible from the home page of the Council's website or at <https://www.youtube.com/user/northwarks>

## **AGENDA**

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

### **3 Public Participation**

Up to twenty minutes will be set aside for members of the public to put questions to elected Members. Questions should be submitted by 9.30am two working days prior to the meeting. Participants are restricted to five minutes each.

**PLEASE BE AWARE THAT THIS MEETING WILL BE TAKING PLACE REMOTELY.**

Members of the public wishing to address the Board must register their intention to do so by 9:30am two working days prior to the meeting. Participants are restricted to five minutes each.

If you wish to put a question to the meeting, please register by email to [democraticservices@northwarks.gov.uk](mailto:democraticservices@northwarks.gov.uk) or telephone 01827 719221/719226.

Once registered to speak, an invitation will be sent to join the Teams video conferencing for this meeting. Those registered to speak should dial the telephone number and ID number (provided on their invitation) when joining the meeting to ask their question. However, whilst waiting they will be able to hear what is being said at the meeting. They will also be able to view the meeting using the YouTube link provided (if so they made need to mute the sound on YouTube when they speak on the phone to prevent feedback).

### **4 Update Report on Human Resources Issues – Report of the Corporate Director Resources**

#### **Summary**

This report summarises work done by the Human Resources team in 2020/21. It provides details of the sickness levels for the period of April 2020 to September 2020 and provides some further information on action taken in managing absence.

The Contact Officer for this report is Kerry Drakeley (719300)

### **5 Structure of the Internal Audit Section – Report of the Corporate Director Resources**

#### **Summary**

The report proposes an amendment to the structure of the Internal Audit section.

The Contact Officer for this report is Linda Downes (01827 719416).

**6      Exclusion of the Public and Press**

**Recommendation:**

**To consider whether, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business, on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by Schedule 12A to the Act.**

**7      Staffing Matter - Report of the Director of Housing**

The Contact Officer for this report is Angela Coates (719369).

**8      Staffing Matter – Report of the Chief Executive**

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

STEVE MAXEY  
Chief Executive

**Agenda Item No 4**

**Special Sub-Group**

**12 January 2021**

**Report of the Corporate Director -  
Resources**

**Update Report on  
Human Resources Issues**

**1      Summary**

- 1.1 This report summarises work done by the Human Resources Team in 2020/21. It provides details of the sickness levels for the period of April 2020 to September 2020 and provides some further information on action taken in managing absence.

**Recommendation to the Board**

**That the report be noted.**

**2      Introduction**

- 2.1 This report provides an update on Human Resources issues and the position on sickness for 2020/21.

**3      Coronavirus (Covid-19) work**

- 3.1 In March 2020, a Public Health emergency relating to Coronavirus (Covid-19) began. The employee issues relating to this meant that 2020/21 has been an exceptional year and consequently the work programme for the Human Resources Team had to be amended.

- 3.2 The Human Resources Team has undertaken a considerable amount of work since March 2020 in response to the current pandemic, including:-

- Reviewing the Government guidance and providing regular updates to employees on the current guidance and advising them of any changes.
- Providing information to employees on Mental Health & Wellbeing support. Emails/leaflets have been issued to employees, providing useful links and contact numbers of relevant support services, both locally and nationally.

- Giving advice to employees and Managers on self-isolation, testing and quarantine procedures.
- Keeping records on cases of self-isolation and testing and reporting on figures.
- Risk assessments and health and safety advice.
- Working with the IT Division in co-ordinating the Coronavirus (Covid-19) staff survey, which was sent to all employees in July 2020 and involved analysing the results.

#### **4.1 Summary of Sickness Absence 2020/21 (April 2020 – September 2020)**

4.1.1 Absence Management is recorded for all employees and is then analysed into short and long term absence. Comparing the same time period in 2019/20 to 2020/21 there is a decrease of 1.12 days in short term sickness absence per full time equivalent (FTE) and an increase of 1.26 days in long term sickness. The position is summarised in the table below, with additional detail given at Appendix A.

| Type         | 2019/20                  | 2020/21                  |
|--------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Short Term   | 2.30 days per FTE        | 1.18 days per FTE        |
| Long Term    | 3.52 days per FTE        | 4.78 days per FTE        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>5.83 days per FTE</b> | <b>5.96 days per FTE</b> |

4.1.2 The long term sickness absence is being managed either by getting staff back to work or them exiting the organisation either on ill-health retirement, dismissal or by resignation. Those with significant long term absence equates to 12 employees having lost a total of 843.54 days. 5 of these employees have successfully returned to work, 4 are still absent and 3 left the Council (1 ill-health retirement, 1 dismissal and 1 retirement).

4.1.3 Appendix B shows the reasons for the number of days lost per FTE. The main reasons for absence relate to mental ill health and muscular-skeletal.

#### **5 Recruitment, Retention and Selection**

5.1 There were a number of starters and leavers between April 2020 to September 2020. There were 21 new starters. There were 23 leavers, including 5 retirements, 1 ill health retirement, 1 dismissal due to ill health, 12 resignations and 4 individuals who left due to the expiry of their temporary contracts. This equates to a labour turnover of 7.42% (7.10% voluntary leavers).

5.2 The Council has continued with the strategy of reviewing all posts that become vacant. Those posts that need to be filled are recruited to internally, where possible. During the current year, 10 posts have been filled internally; this supports the Council's ability in succession planning.

- 5.3 The Human Resources Team had two new starters this year; a Human Resources Officer who started on 31 March 2020 and a Human Resources Assistant who started on 1 April 2020. Both team members have had to be inducted and trained with adapted training methods due to the restrictions currently in place due to Covid-19. In addition, the Human Resources Team's Health & Safety Officer retired on 5 November 2020. A recruitment campaign was undertaken and the new Health & Safety Officer has been appointed and is due to start in January 2021.

## 6 Employee Relations

- 6.1 The Human Resources Team provides advice and support to Managers on all Human Resources issues. The Human Resources Manager and the Human Resources Officers provide support to Managers and lead, where appropriate, on investigations, disciplinary, grievance and capability relating to performance or attendance. There were 3 disciplinary investigations undertaken between April 2020 and September 2020.
- 6.2 The Human Resources Manager and Human Resources Officers also provide considerable support in the actions up to and including hearings and appeals (if required). Out of the 3 investigations, one employee resigned during the investigation, one investigation resulted in a final written warning and one investigation is due to go to hearing in January 2021. In addition, there was an appeal from 2019/20, which had been delayed due to Covid-19, which took place in December 2020; the original decision to dismiss was upheld.

## 7 Pay & Benefits

- 7.1 The Pay Policy Statement was updated for 2019/20 and published on the Council's website. The pay award for 2020/21 was agreed as 2.75%.

## 8 Learning, Training & Development

- 8.1 Due to Covid-19, the planned training courses due to be held in March and April 2020 had to be cancelled and a formal corporate training plan for 2020/2021 was not established. The Human Resources Team is arranging some virtual Risk Assessment training to be held in February and March 2021.
- 8.2 Our eLearning programme covers Health & Safety, Fraud Awareness, Fire Awareness, Equality & Diversity, Customer Service, Data Protection, GDPR & Cyber Awareness, Freedom of Information, Bribery Act 2010 and Staff Reviews (Appraisals). Additional eLearning modules have been made accessible to employees during the pandemic to further support staff, including remote working, aimed at both employees and Managers.
- 8.3 The mandatory eLearning modules should be refreshed every 3 years. The Human Resources Team is currently reviewing this and will send out emails to all employees to ensure that refreshers take place, in accordance with the timescales.

- 8.4 The Human Resources Manager continues to work with the Administrator of the eLearning platform, Staffordshire County Council (SCC), on the services received under the contract. SCC is currently in the process of moving the online learning platform to Accipio from the Learning Pool. They were due to have the new contract signed off by the end of 2020 and the new site will be available to employees in early 2021. It is hoped that this will provide individuals with a more engaging and user-friendly learning experience.

## 9 **Safety Management**

- 9.1 The Health & Safety Officer continues to work with managers and Directors in all the service areas of the Council, to provide health and safety advice and support during the current pandemic and this will be carried forward into the new year.
- 9.2 The Health & Safety Officer and the Human Resources Manager carried out a lot of work in making the Council buildings Covid secure. Risk assessments were completed and control measures include signage, one-way systems, provision of hand sanitiser and wipes, installation of 'touchless proximity reader' door security in The Council House and Old Bank House, etc. The Human Resources Team has issued regular reminders on the Government's guidance on hand hygiene and social distancing.
- 9.3 In order to manage occupancy levels within The Council House and Old Bank House, a booking-in system has been put in place for employees who need to undertake essential work in the office. This ensures that employees can work safely and maintain social distancing whilst working in the offices.

## 10 **Policies, Procedures & Processes**

- 10.1 The Human Resources work plan for 2020/21 included an updated timetable for policy review, to ensure that progress is made in this area. However, progress has been delayed due to the current pandemic.

## 11 **Report Implications**

### 11.1 **Finance & Value for Money Implications**

11.1.1 These will depend on whether additional resources are used to cover periods of absence. Most short term absence is absorbed within sections. However, if sickness is long term and the service could potentially fail as a result of staff shortages, then there would be additional costs to maintain services, either through buying in extra resources or acting-up arrangements.

### 11.2 **Human Resources Implications**

11.2.1 As detailed in the report.

### **11.3 Equality Implications**

11.3.1 Under the Equality Act, there are specific responsibilities specified under the public sector equality duty to ensure that local authorities meet the general equality duty. In terms of Human Resources, there are specific codes of practice for employment and for equal pay.

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

11.4.1 Effective recruitment and management of the workforce contributes to the Council's priority of making the best use of our resources.

The Contact Officer for this report is Kerry Drakeley (719300)

#### **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> |
|----------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------------|-------------|
|                            |               |                                   |             |

APPENDIX A

**ALL SICKNESS**

|                      | 2019/20                  | 2020/21                  | 2019/20          | 2020/21          | 2019/20          | 2020/21          |
|----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Division             | Average FTE per Division | Average FTE per Division | Days Lost by FTE | Days Lost by FTE | Sickness per FTE | Sickness per FTE |
| Assistant Chief Exec | 29.26                    | 28.55                    | 201.28           | 57.99            | 6.88             | 2.03             |
| Corporate Services   | 24.56                    | 22.34                    | 99.91            | 7.00             | 4.07             | 0.31             |
| Streetscape          | 70.22                    | 72.88                    | 451.50           | 861.84           | 6.43             | 11.83            |
| Leisure & Comm Dev   | 46.54                    | 49.73                    | 323.98           | 311.12           | 6.96             | 6.26             |
| Community Services   | 36.94                    | 33.12                    | 166.88           | 210.81           | 4.52             | 6.37             |
| Finance,HR & Audit   | 17.66                    | 16.39                    | 75.10            | 13.00            | 4.25             | 0.79             |
| Housing              | 74.20                    | 79.02                    | 461.52           | 383.11           | 6.22             | 4.85             |
| Chief Exec           | 8.80                     | 7.80                     | 15.20            | 0.80             | 1.73             | 0.10             |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>308.18</b>            | <b>309.83</b>            | <b>1,795.37</b>  | <b>1,845.67</b>  | <b>5.83</b>      | <b>5.96</b>      |

**SHORT TERM SICKNESS**

|                      | 2019/20                  | 2020/21                  | 2019/20          | 2020/21          | 2019/20          | 2020/21          |
|----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Division             | Average FTE per Division | Average FTE per Division | Days Lost by FTE | Days Lost by FTE | Sickness per FTE | Sickness per FTE |
| Assistant Chief Exec | 29.26                    | 28.55                    | 39.53            | 7.99             | 1.35             | 0.28             |
| Corporate Services   | 24.56                    | 22.34                    | 51.34            | 7.00             | 2.09             | 0.31             |
| Streetscape          | 70.22                    | 72.88                    | 203.50           | 176.61           | 2.90             | 2.42             |
| Leisure & Comm Dev   | 46.54                    | 49.73                    | 91.03            | 59.27            | 1.96             | 1.19             |
| Community Services   | 36.94                    | 33.12                    | 100.42           | 23.61            | 2.72             | 0.71             |
| Finance & HR         | 17.66                    | 16.39                    | 31.90            | 13.00            | 1.81             | 0.79             |
| Housing              | 74.20                    | 79.02                    | 176.31           | 77.11            | 2.38             | 0.98             |
| Chief Exec           | 8.80                     | 7.80                     | 15.20            | 0.80             | 1.73             | 0.10             |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>308.18</b>            | <b>309.83</b>            | <b>709.23</b>    | <b>365.39</b>    | <b>2.30</b>      | <b>1.18</b>      |

**LONG TERM SICKNESS**

|                      | 2019/20                  | 2020/21                  | 2019/20          | 2020/21          | 2019/20          | 2020/21          |
|----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Division             | Average FTE per Division | Average FTE per Division | Days Lost by FTE | Days Lost by FTE | Sickness per FTE | Sickness per FTE |
| Assistant Chief Exec | 29.26                    | 28.55                    | 161.75           | 50.00            | 5.53             | 1.75             |
| Corporate Services   | 24.56                    | 22.34                    | 48.57            | 0.00             | 1.98             | 0.00             |
| Streetscape          | 70.22                    | 72.88                    | 248.00           | 685.23           | 3.53             | 9.40             |
| Leisure & Comm Dev   | 46.54                    | 49.73                    | 232.95           | 251.85           | 5.01             | 5.06             |
| Community Services   | 36.94                    | 33.12                    | 66.46            | 187.20           | 1.80             | 5.65             |
| Finance & HR         | 17.66                    | 16.39                    | 43.20            | 0.00             | 2.45             | 0.00             |
| Housing              | 74.20                    | 79.02                    | 285.21           | 306.00           | 3.84             | 3.87             |
| Chief Exec           | 8.80                     | 7.80                     | 0.00             | 0.00             | 0.00             | 0.00             |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>308.18</b>            | <b>309.83</b>            | <b>1,086.14</b>  | <b>1,480.28</b>  | <b>3.52</b>      | <b>4.78</b>      |

Reasons for Sickness

## APPENDIX B

|      | Accident at Work | Back/ Neck | Chest  | Cold/ Flu/ Infections | ENT / Mouth | Endocrine | Geni-Urin | Heart | Mental III Health | Muscular/Skeletal | Neurological | Pregnancy | Skin Conditions | Stomach | Coronavirus | Total    |
|------|------------------|------------|--------|-----------------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|-------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------|-----------|-----------------|---------|-------------|----------|
| NWBC | 0.00             | 113.30     | 175.08 | 21.62                 | 14.78       | 1.59      | 125.96    | 0.00  | 546.67            | 525.76            | 13.89        | 9.59      | 8.00            | 197.02  | 92.42       | 1,845.67 |

Sickness Code      Description

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Accident at Work        | Accident at Work (Accident Form must be completed)              |
| Back / Neck             | Back & Neck problems  |
| Chest                   | Chest / Respiratory: to include Chest infections                |
| Cold / Flu / infections | Cold / Flu symptoms / Infections ( <u>not</u> chest)            |
| ENT / Mouth             | Ear / Eye / Nose / Mouth including dental and sinusitis         |
| Endocrine               | Thyroid / Diabetes and other Endocrine related conditions       |
| Genito-Urinary          | Genito-urinary: including menstrual conditions                  |
| Heart                   | Heart / Blood pressure & circulation                            |
| Mental III Health       | Anxiety, Depression / Stress / Mental Fatigue                   |
| Muscular-Skeletal       | Musculo-Skeletal Problems                                       |
| Neurological            | Neurological; including headaches and migraine                  |
| Pregancy                | Pregnancy related   |
| Skin Conditions         | Skin Related Conditions   |
| Stomach                 | Stomach, Liver, Kidney & Digestion; to include gastro-enteritis |

**Agenda Item No 5**

**Special Sub-Group**

**12 January 2020**

**Report of the  
Corporate Director - Resources**

**Structure of the  
Internal Audit Section**

**1 Summary**

- 1.1 The report proposes an amendment to the structure of the Internal Audit Section.

**Recommendation to the Board**

**To approve the revised structure, subject to the cost being  
within the available budget.**

**2 Introduction**

- ... 2.1 The current structure of the Internal Audit Section is set out in Appendix A and includes one full time and four part time posts. There are currently two vacancies within the team, following the retirement of one member of the team and the move to the Financial Services Team of another member. This has given the opportunity to carry out a mini review of the structure.

**3 Proposed Change to the Structure**

- 3.1 The current part time posts were the result of team members requesting fewer hours and the streamlining of the service in order to reduce costs. The vacant posts are two of the part time posts; those of Auditor and Audit Assistant and the proposal is to replace these two posts with one full time Auditor post.
- 3.2 The current Audit Assistant post carries out some administrative duties for the section and completes some low level audits, under supervision. The current Auditor post carries out audits with minimal supervision. Given the limited management resources within the section, it would be helpful to reduce the need for close supervision. Having reviewed the work of the section, it is felt that pitching the level of work required in between the two current posts would be beneficial.
- 3.3 Whilst the Senior Auditor in the team would continue to carry out the more complex audits, this post would be responsible for carrying out a range of less complex audits, with only limited guidance. The post would also be required to carry out some administrative duties previously carried out by the Audit Assistant, around liaison with the National Fraud Initiative (NFI).

- 3.4 It is anticipated that this will allow greater flexibility to react to changes in audit work, whilst ensuring that the day to day tasks are still completed.
- 3.5 A revised job description and person specification has been produced, which is currently subject to evaluation. It is anticipated that the grade will be in between the level of the two current posts.

## 4 Report Implications

### 4.1 Finance and Value for Money Implications

- 4.1.1 Budget provision from the two part time posts is currently available for the proposed post. In the event that the costs of the proposed post exceed the budget provision available, the proposal will be reconsidered.

### 4.2 Legal Implications

- 4.2.1 Since both posts are currently vacant and any new post would undertake the work of those vacant posts without any significant impact on those other employees performing audit work, no redundancy situation arises. Accordingly, restructuring the Audit Section as proposed would not impose any further employment or consultation duties upon the Council.

The Contact Officer for this report is Linda Downes (719416).

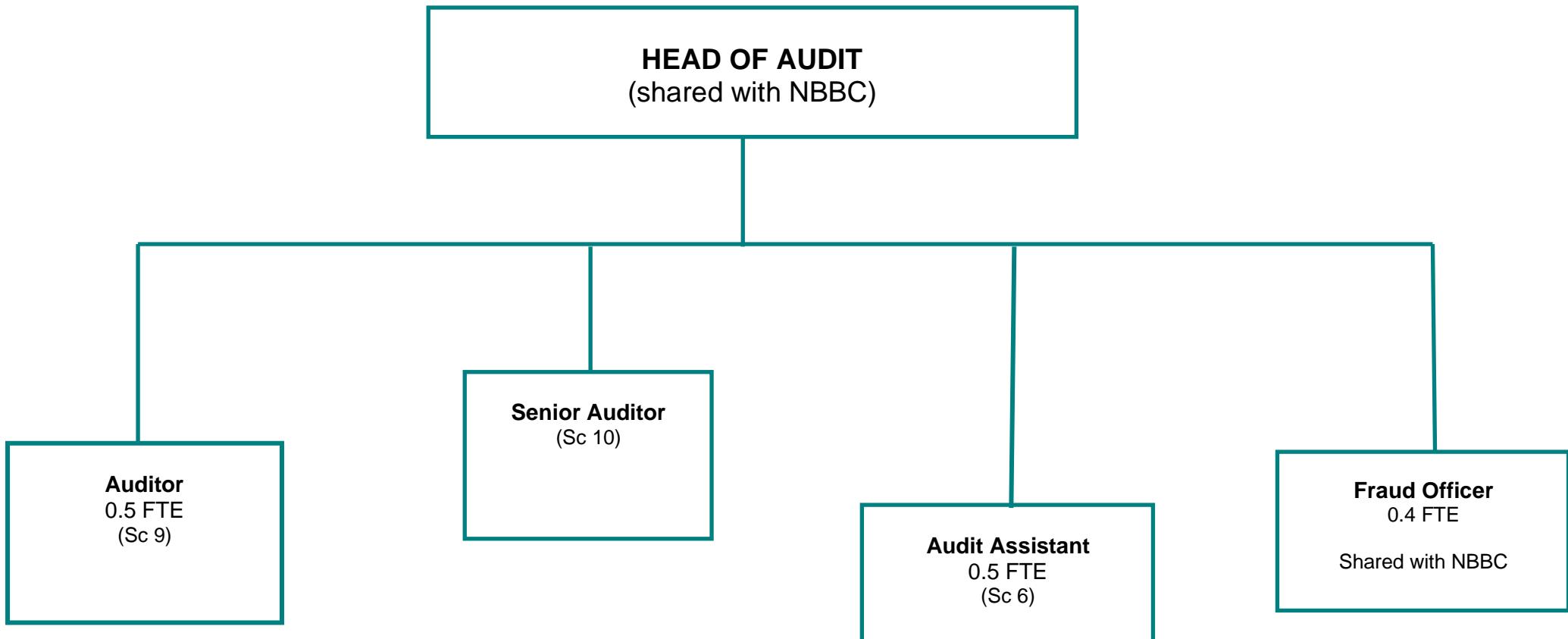
## Background Papers

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 |
|---------------------|--------|----------------------------|------|
|                     |        |                            |      |

## INTERNAL AUDIT – CURRENT STRUCTURE

## APPENDIX A



**Agenda Item No 6**

**Special Sub-Group**

**12 January 2021**

**Report of the  
Chief Executive**

**Exclusion of the Public and Press**

**Recommendation to the Board**

**To consider whether, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business, on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by Schedule 12A to the Act.**

**Agenda Item No 7**

**Staffing Matter**

Paragraph 1 – Information relating to an individual.

**Agenda Item No 8**

**Staffing Matter**

Paragraph 1 – Information relating to an individual.

The Contact Officer for this report is Amanda Tonks (719221).