

**To: Deputy Leader and Members of the Resources Board  
Councillors D Wright, Chambers, Davey, Davis,  
N Dirveiks, Henney, Lea, Moss, Simpson and Waters**

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

**For general enquiries please contact Emma Humphreys/Amanda Tonks on 01827 719221 or via email – emmahumphreys@northwarks.gov.uk or amandatonks@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.**

## **RESOURCES BOARD AGENDA**

**19 MARCH 2018**

The Resources Board will meet in the Committee Room at The Council House, South Street, Atherstone, Warwickshire on Monday, 19 March 2018 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 **Minutes of the Resources Board held on 29 January 2018** – copy herewith, to be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5 **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. If you wish to put a question to the meeting please contact Amanda Tonks or Emma Humphreys on 01827 719222 or email [democraticservices@northwarks.gov.uk](mailto:democraticservices@northwarks.gov.uk).

**ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND DECISION  
(WHITE PAPERS)**

6 **Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan 2018** – Report of the Assistant Director (Housing)

**Summary**

The Council is required to have a Homelessness Strategy which reflects on a review of homelessness in its area. The Strategy must set out the Council's position with regard to preventing homelessness, securing sufficient accommodation for people who are or may become homeless and securing support for people who are homeless. The Council's Homelessness Strategy is submitted to the Councillors for consideration. The action plan identifies the priority work to be undertaken to deliver the Strategy.

The Contact Officer for this report is Helen Hughes (719494).

7 **Financial Inclusion Update** – Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Community Services)

**Summary**

This report provides Members with an update of the Financial Inclusion activity undertaken by the Council.

The Contact Officer for this report is Bob Trahern (719378).

- 8 **Asset Management Plan – Council Stock** – Report of the Assistant Director (Housing)

**Summary**

This report submits a revised Asset Management Plan to the Resources Board for their consideration and comment.

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

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

**Recommendation:**

**That under Section 110A(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.**

**EXEMPT INFORMATION  
(GOLD PAPERS)**

- 10 **Irrecoverable Local Taxation Debts** – Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Community Services)

The Contact Officer for this report is Bob Trahern (719378)

JERRY HUTCHINSON  
Chief Executive

## NORTH WARWICKSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE RESOURCES BOARD

29 January 2018

Present: Councillor D Wright in the Chair

Councillors Chambers, Davey, N Dirveiks, Henney, Lea, Simpson, Symonds and Waters

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Davis (Substitute Councillor Symonds) and Moss.

Councillors Bell, Clews, Hanratty, Humphreys and Smith were also in attendance. With the Chairman's permission Councillor Bell spoke on Minute No 80 (Request for Disabled Facilities Grant to provide for a Housing Adaptation).

#### 56 **Disclosable Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests**

Councillor D Wright declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute No 75 (CCTV Service for Atherstone) by reason of being a member of Atherstone Town Council.

#### 57 **Minutes of the Resources Board held on 13 November 2017**

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 13 November 2017, copies having previously been circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### 58 **Corporate Plan 2018-19**

The Chief Executive sought the Board's approval for the Corporate Plan Targets for which it was responsible and the 2018-19 Service Plans for the Housing, Finance and Human Resources, Community Services and Corporate Services Divisions.

#### **Recommendation to the Executive Board:**

- a **That those Corporate Plan Targets as set out in Appendix A to the report of the Chief Executive, for which the Board is responsible, be agreed; and**

**Resolved:**

- b That those elements of the Service Plans that are the responsibility of this Board, as set out in Appendix B to the report of the Chief Executive, be agreed.**

**59 Management of the Internal Audit Team**

The Deputy Chief Executive set out the arrangements that had been made for the management of the Internal Audit team following the retirement of the Head of Internal Audit.

**Resolved:**

**That the action taken be noted.**

**60 Internal Audit – Performance for Third Quarter 2017-18**

The Deputy Chief Executive reported on the progress of the Council's Internal Audit function against the agreed plan of work for the year.

**Resolved:**

**That the report be noted.**

**61 General Fund Fees and Charges 2018/19**

The Assistant Chief Executive and Solicitor to the Council, Assistant Director (Streetscape), Assistant Chief Executive (Community Services) and Assistant Director (Housing) reported on the fees and charges for 2017/18 and the proposed fees and charges for 2018/19.

**Resolved:**

**That the schedule of fees and charges for 2018/19, as set out in the report of the Assistant Chief Executive and Solicitor to the Council, Assistant Director (Streetscape), Assistant Chief Executive (Community Services) and Assistant Director (Housing) be approved.**

**62 General Fund Revenue Estimates 2018/19 – Services Recharged Across All Boards**

The Deputy Chief Executive reported on the revised budget for 2017/18 and gave an estimate of expenditure for 2018/19, together with forward commitments for 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22.

**Resolved:**

- a That the revised budget for 2017/18 be accepted; and**

**Recommendation to the Executive Board:**

- b That the Estimates of Expenditure for 2018/19, as submitted in the report of the Deputy Chief Executive, be included in the budget to be brought before the meeting of the Executive Board on 12 February 2018.**

**63 General Fund Revenue Estimates 2018/19 – Services Remaining within the Board**

The Deputy Chief Executive reported on the revised budget for 2017/18 and gave an estimate of expenditure for 2018/19, together with forward commitments for 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22.

**Resolved:**

- a That the revised budget for 2017/18 be accepted;**

- b That the saving of £2,570, as set out in section 6 of the report of the Deputy Chief Executive, be accepted; and**

**Recommendation to the Executive Board:**

- c That the Estimates of Expenditure for 2018/19, as submitted in the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and amended for the saving agreed in recommendation (b), be included in the budget to be brought before the meeting of the Executive Board on 12 February 2018.**

**64 General Fund Revenue Estimates 2018/19 - Summary**

The Deputy Chief Executive reported on the revised budget for 2017/18 and gave an estimate of expenditure for 2018/19, together with forward commitments for 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22.

**Recommendation to Executive Board:**

**That the following items be recommended to the Executive Board for consideration in setting the Council Tax of the Borough Council:**

- a The revised budget for 2017/18; and**
- b The schedule of expenditure requirements totalling £8,159,060 for 2018/2019.**

**65 Housing Revenue Account Estimates 2018/19 and Rent Review**

The Deputy Chief Executive reported on the revised budget for 2017/18 and gave an estimate of expenditure for 2018/19, together with forward commitments for 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22.

**Resolved:**

- a That the revised estimates for 2017/18 be accepted;**
- b That rent decreases of minus 1%, as required by the Government, be adopted;**
- c That the proposed fees and charges for 2018/19, as set out in Appendix D to the report of the Deputy Chief Executive, be approved;**
- d That the service charges for the cleaning of communal areas, as detailed in Appendix E to the report of the Deputy Chief Executive, be approved from April 2018;**
- e That the service charges for window cleaning, as detailed in Appendix F to the report of the Deputy Chief Executive, be approved from April 2018;**
- f That the proposed increase in garage rents of 50 pence per week from £6.08 to £6.58 per week be approved; and**
- f That the Estimates of Expenditure for 2018/19, as submitted, be approved.**

**66 Capital Programme 2017/18 to 2020/21**

The Assistant Director (Finance and Human Resources) identified changes to the Council's 2017/18 capital programme and detailed proposals for schemes to be included within the Council's capital programme over the next three years.

**Recommendation to the Executive Board:**

- a That the changes to the 2017/18 revised capital programme be approved;**
- b That the schemes shown in Appendix A to the report of the Assistant Director (Finance and Human Resources), previously approved within the Council's three-year capital programme, including any 2020/21 additions relating to previously approved schemes be approved;**
- c That the growth bid included within the capital programme be approved;**
- d That the schemes which will not be included within the capital programme, as shown in Appendix B to the report of the Assistant Director (Finance and Human Resources), be noted; and**
- e That the proposed vehicle replacement schedule, as shown in Appendix C to the report of the Assistant Director (Finance and Human Resources), be approved.**

**67 Treasury Management Strategy Statement, Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy for 2018/19**

The Deputy Chief Executive outlined the Treasury Management Strategy, Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement and Investment Strategy for 2018/19.

**Resolved:**

- a That the revised four clauses, as set out in paragraph 4.1 of the report of the Deputy Chief Executive, be approved; and**
- b That the proposed strategies for 2018/19 be approved.**



68 **Information and Communications Technology Strategy 2015-2019 – Progress Report**

The Assistant Director (Corporate Services) provided an update on the progress made during 2017/18 towards implementing the approved Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Strategy for 2015 – 2019.

**Resolved:**

**That the contents of the report be noted.**

69 **Procurement and Commissioning Strategy 2017 – 2021 : Progress Report**

The Assistant Director (Corporate Services) provided an update on the progress made during 2017/18 towards implementing the approved Procurement and Commissioning Strategy 2017 – 2021.

**Resolved:**

**That the contents of the report be noted.**

70 **Progress Report on Achievement of Corporate Plan and Performance Indicator Targets April – December 2017**

The Chief Executive and the Deputy Chief Executive informed Members of the progress with the achievement of the Corporate Plan and Performance Indicator targets relevant to the Board for April to December 2017.

**Resolved:**

**That the report be noted.**

71 **Animal Wardens Service - Proposal**

The Assistant Director (Housing) detailed a proposal to change how the Council's stray dog service was provided.

**Resolved:**

**That the revised approach to the Council's stray dog service, as set out in the report of the Assistant Director (Housing), be approved.**

**72 Homelessness Reduction Act 2017**

The Assistant Director (Housing) outlined the main changes to the Homelessness Reduction Bill that would come into effect on Tuesday, 3 April 2018, and the new duties that the Council would be required to work to from that date. An overview of the expected implications and the work the Council was currently undertaking so that it would be ready to meet the new requirements was also provided.

**Resolved:**

- a That the new legal duties being brought in by the Homelessness Reduction Act on 3 April 2018, be noted; and**
- b That the implications and the work the Council is currently undertaking to ensure it meets the new requirements be noted.**

**73 Broadband Update Report**

The Assistant Director (Corporate Services) provided an update on the progress made so far and the future plans to improve broadband coverage and speeds in the Borough.

**Resolved:**

**That the report be noted.**

**74 Borough Care Service**

The Assistant Director (Housing) provided the Board with information about the Council's Borough Care service and proposed extending it into a neighbouring borough.

**Resolved:**

- a That the continued accreditation of the Borough Care Service by the Telecare Services Authority be noted;**
- b That a small pilot project to test the viability of introducing a mobile network alarm service be supported;**
- c That, subject to the final arrangements being confirmed with the Chair of the Resources Board, the proposal to extend the Borough Care Service into the Nuneaton and Bedworth area be agreed;**

- d That the policy statement for non-payment charges, as set out in Appendix A to the report of the Assistant Director (Housing), be agreed; and**
- e That the extension of the employment of the Borough Care Promotional Officer until March 2019, be agreed.**

**75 CCTV Service for Atherstone**

The Assistant Director (Housing) provided information for the Board about the Council's CCTV service and proposed the purchase of new equipment to provide for an upgrade from an analogue to a digital system.

- a That the contents of the report be noted;**
- b That the replacement of the CCTV equipment that NWBC is responsible for, with digital IP equipment that is able to fully integrate with digital IP CCTV cameras to be purchased by Atherstone Town Council, be approved; and**
- c That the proposal that a joint tender exercise is undertaken to procure the control room equipment and the new cameras required by Atherstone Town Council to ensure compatibility, be approved.**

**76 Exclusion of the Public and Press**

**Resolved:**

**That under 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.**

**77 Review of Tenancy Service and Neighbourhoods Team**

That Assistant Director (Housing) proposed changes to the Tenancy Services and Neighbourhoods Team in order to anticipate challenges from the roll out of Universal Credit and to ensure that there was compliance with health and safety regulations for communal areas and that properties were closely managed.

**Resolved:**

- a That the proposals set out in the report of the Assistant Director (Housing) to change the structure of the Tenancy Services and Neighbourhoods Team be agreed; and**

**Recommendation to Special Sub-Group:**

- b That the changes to the Structure of the Tenancy Services and Neighbourhoods Team be considered.**

**78 Land Adjacent to 54 Elm Tree Close, Kingsbury**

The Assistant Director (Streetscape) and Assistant Director (Leisure and Community Development) asked the Board to consider an application that had been received to purchase a 2m wide strip of designated public open space, adjacent to 54 Elm Tree Close, Kingsbury, which was currently owned by the Council, in order to allow the erection of privacy screening to the neighbouring property.

**Recommended:**

- a That the 2m offset strip of Borough Council owned land, as identified in Appendix C of the report of the Assistant Director (Streetscape) and Assistant Director (Leisure and Community Development) be declared as surplus to requirements; and**
- b That the sale of a 2m offset strip of Borough Council owned land to the owners of 54 Elm Tree Close, Kingsbury, on the terms set out in paragraph 5.3 of the report of the Assistant Director (Streetscape) and the Assistant Director (Leisure and Community Development), exclusive of legal fees, be approved.**

**79 Irrecoverable Local Taxation Debts**

The Assistant Chief Executive (Community Services) detailed the amounts recommended for write-offs in accordance with the write-off policy agreed by the Resources Board on 23 May 2016.

**Resolved:**

- a That the write off of a balance over £5,500 totalling £12,678.03 in respect of unpaid Non Domestic Rates and £9,371.08 in respect of Housing Benefit Overpayments, as outlined in Appendix A of the report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Community Services), be noted; and**
- b That the total amount of write-offs in the year to date and over the last 5 years, including those written off by the Assistant Chief Executive (Community Services) under delegated powers, as detailed in Appendix B to the report, be noted.**

80 **Request for Disabled Facilities Grant to provide for a Housing Adaptation**

The Assistant Director (Housing) reported on a request for a Disabled Facilities Grant and the Board were requested to agree a suggested course of action.

**Resolved:**

**That the Assistant Director (Housing) be given delegated authority to commit funds to provide for a Disabled Facilities Grant for the application referred to in her report if an application was received and it met the relevant criteria.**

81 **Partnering Contract – Electrical Inspections and Works**

The Assistant Director (Housing) informed the Board about a proposal to use an established partnering framework agreement to deliver electrical works required following an Electrical Installation Condition Report.

**Resolved:**

**That the Assistant Director (Housing) be authorised to enter a partnering contract for a maximum of four years for electrical repair and maintenance provision for the Council's own social housing stock.**

D Wright  
CHAIRMAN

## **Agenda Item No 6**

### **Resources Board**

**19 March 2018**

#### **Report of the Assistant Director (Housing)**

#### **Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan 2018**

### **1 Summary**

- 1.1 The Council is required to have a Homelessness Strategy which reflects on a review of homelessness in its area. The Strategy must set out the Council's position with regard to preventing homelessness, securing sufficient accommodation for people who are or may become homeless and securing support for people who are homeless. The Council's Homelessness Strategy is submitted to the Councillors for consideration. The action plan identifies the priority work to be undertaken to deliver the Strategy.

#### **Recommendation to the Resources Board**

**That the Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan 2018 considered and approved; and**

**The staffing proposals set out in the report be submitted to the Special Sub Group for consideration and approval**

### **2 Consultation**

- 2.1 Following consideration by the Resources Board key partners will be consulted on the content of the Strategy and asked to contribute to delivering the action plan objectives.
- 2.2 Unions and staff will be consulted about human resources proposals set out in the report.

### **3 Introduction**

- 3.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities to carry out a review of all forms of homelessness in their district area and to formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based upon the results of a review.
- 3.2 In conducting a review of homelessness and to formulate a new strategy, housing authorities need to take into account the additional duties introduced in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and are encouraged to take the opportunity to involve all relevant partners in developing a strategy that involves them in earlier identification and intervention to prevent homelessness. Housing authorities should

ensure that it is consistent with other local plans and is developed with, and has support of, all relevant local authority departments and partners.

3.3 The review should include:

- (a) the levels, and likely future levels, of homelessness in the district;
- (b) the activities which are carried out for any of the following purposes (or which contribute to achieving any of them):
  - i. preventing homelessness in the housing authority's district;
  - ii. securing that accommodation is or will be available for people in the district who are or may become homeless; and
  - iii. providing support for people in the district who are homeless or who may become at risk of homelessness; or who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again; and
  - iv. the resources that are available to the housing authority and other agencies

3.4 Housing authorities should consider the needs of all groups of people in their district who are homeless or likely to become homeless, including Gypsies and Travellers.

3.5 Under section 3(1) of the 2002 Act a homelessness strategy means a strategy for:

- (a) preventing homelessness in the district
- (b) securing that sufficient accommodation is and will be available for people in the district who are or may become homeless; and
- (c) securing the satisfactory provision of support for people in the district who are or may become homeless or who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again

## 4 Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan 2018

4.1 The North Warwickshire Homelessness Strategy has been formulated following a review of homelessness and housing needs data, nationally, county-wide and within the North Warwickshire Borough. The data shows that homelessness is increasing. In North Warwickshire Borough Council during 2016/17, the Council received 142 homelessness applications, compared with 131 the previous year. For the year April 2017 to the end of January 2018 there were 128 applications and 83 acceptances.

4.2. The main causes of homelessness continue to be households being asked to leave by family/friends (40%), termination of an Assured Tenancy (AST) (30%) and fleeing domestic abuse (24%). This is a trend across all 5 districts in Warwickshire.

4.3 The Strategy aim to meet the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which were reported to the Resources Board on 29 January 2018 and identifies a number of challenges apparent in North Warwickshire:

- Demand for affordable housing in North Warwickshire outstrips supply.
- Deprivation and associated poverty/low incomes are key barriers for accessing social housing and maintaining stable and financially sustainable tenancies. Poor financial management and a failure to maximise household income also limits people's ability to access and sustain family homes

- North Warwickshire has a growing population which is putting increasing pressure of the existing housing stock.
- Increasing difficulties experienced by people under 35 to secure affordable, independent accommodation – particularly for low-income and unemployed people due to benefit restrictions
- There needs to be more focus on preventing future homelessness by addressing the underlying causes of people’s experience and assisting people with a variety of housing solutions
- There has been an increase in the level of families who are homeless and/or require temporary accommodation. This affects social bonding, school performance as well as linked to disadvantage in future generations

4.4 The Strategy recognises the work that has taken place to prevent homelessness by the Housing Options Team and other partner agencies operating in North Warwickshire and that this work needs to be developed further and broadened to include all client groups.

4.5 The Strategy states the vision for the service as being “To prevent homelessness and meet the housing needs of vulnerable households through the provision of high quality and accessible accommodation, support, information and advice. The key priorities are aligned to the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act and have been identified as:

- To ensure people are well informed about their housing options
- To prevent people from becoming homeless
- To assist people as soon as possible if they do become homeless so that their homelessness can be relieved by securing sufficient accommodation and support
- To support people to recover from their experience and maintain their accommodation so that do not become homeless again
- To enable people to secure homes that they can afford and maintain

4.6 The Strategy outlines the work already undertaken to achieve these priorities and the further work that is required. The Homelessness Strategy Action Plan is provided at Appendix 1 and details the actions needed to achieve the key priorities. The Strategy and action plan will be monitored annually to ensure that our outcomes meet local needs and Government policy. These annual reviews will be carried out in partnership with the relevant partner agencies.

4.7 The Strategy covers a 5 year period and will run until the end of 2023. In order to ensure that it continues to be relevant and up to date, additional actions may be developed and implemented and existing actions changed or updated following a review. It will be reviewed formally in March 2019 to ensure the Council is meeting the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.



## **5 Report Implications**

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

- 5.1.1 Government has been providing grant funding to support Local Authorities to meet statutory requirements for homelessness for some years. The Council receives a homelessness prevention grant from the Government which assists us to deliver our homelessness services. Funding during 2017-2018 is £44,790 and is expected to be in the region of £46,000 for the next three years. However, in the face of an increasing demand on homelessness services, the Government has also recently redirected funding from the Department of Work and Pensions to Local Authorities to help them meet service requirements. North Warwickshire Borough Council will receive just over £63K for the next two years. The funding is ring fenced for homelessness services. This additional funding was subject to a report to the Resources Board in May 2017 when the recommendation to appoint a Homeless Persons Officer was supported.
- 5.1.2 In order to help Local Authorities deliver the new legislation new burdens money has been provided. This will add in the region of £14,000 annually to the grant funding already committed by Government.
- 5.1.3 Meeting homelessness duties are a statutory requirement on the Council. The Human Resources implications of this report are set out below. There will be additional costs to the General Fund of £27,000 to amend the job duties of the Housing Options Officers and increase the working hours of the job share posts by 1 day per week. This can be funded from the additional grant expected and by utilising the earmarked reserve. Charging more of the Housing Options Officers time to the General Fund, will reduce costs in the Housing Revenue Account. If it is agreed that an apprentice can be appointed to support the work of the Options and Lettings Team it is expected that this can be funded from the savings in the Housing Revenue Account.
- 5.1.4 The service is mainly funded with Government grant. It is expected that the grant revenue will continue given the pressure on Government to reduce homelessness. However there is a proposal to link grant to performance to prevent homelessness in the future. It is proposed that increasing the capacity of the team to deal with the new legislation is funded from Government grant until mid way through 2021-2022. It is expected that grant funding will continue to fund the proposal from this date but if it does not there will be an implication for the General Fund. This would relate to the temporary posts made permanent and additional resource highlighted in 6.1.3, which could amount to £49,700. The position will be kept under review.

### **5.2 Safer Communities Implications**

- 5.2.1 An important part of the role of the Housing Management Team is to help create nice neighbourhoods where people choose and like to live. Successful prevention strategies will assist with reducing homelessness and safer communities as a consequence.

### 5.3 **Legal, Data Protection and Human Rights Implications**

5.3.1 The Council is required to conform to the housing regulator's Regulatory Framework and Standards. Our statutory obligations are set out in the Housing and Homelessness Acts.

5.3.2 Any revisions to the Council's procedures and processes arising from the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRAct) will need to be compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation. This is currently subject to a draft Data Protection Bill being prepared by the Government. Work is in hand currently to help prepare for compliance with the regulation.

### 5.4 **Environment and Sustainability Implications**

5.4.1 The Governments focus continues to be on preventing homelessness. Achieving this will have a positive effect on communities.

### 5.5 **Equalities Implications**

5.5.1 An enhanced homelessness service will assist with improved accessibility of the service to our customers. It will also assist with achieving more cohesive communities by focusing on enabling people to stay in their homes.

5.5.2 The Homelessness Strategy aims to ensure that homelessness and support services are accessible to all client groups and do not discriminate against any particular client group. The Council is required to ensure that policies and decisions relating to homelessness and threatened with homelessness do not amount to unlawful conduct under the Equality Act 2010 and must also comply with the public sector equality duty.

### 5.6 **Human Resources Implications**

5.6.1 There are two fundamental changes that are going to impact on staff resources when the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 come into force on 3 April 2017:

- We have to take a homeless application from applicants who have no priority need or local connection with the Borough. Now we are able to give general advice and assistance. From 3 April we **have** to take a homeless application when they are homeless or threatened with homelessness in 56 days (currently 28 days). Linked to this duty are duties to prevent or relieve homelessness.
- We have to take the application in a prescribed form set out in the legislation. We have to do a needs assessment and provide a personal housing plan. When we have done these we have to keep them under review until matters are resolved.

These two factors mean that caseloads will increase and will be managed for longer.

5.6.2 Currently the resource we have available to deal with homelessness applications is 1.5 full time equivalents. The full time post is a temporary appointment. These officers are already working at capacity to deal with the current level of homeless applications. There are no other officers in the Options Team that have dealing with homelessness

applications in their job description. This means that more resource will be required to meet the requirements of the new Act.

5.6.3 It is proposed that the grant funding which has been made available to support Councils deal with homelessness be used to increase the capacity in the Housing Options Team so that the new level of homelessness applications can be managed. Proposals will be made to the Special Sub Group to make the temporary posts in the team permanent in order to sustain current capacity, change the job descriptions of the Housing Options Officers so that it includes dealing with homelessness applications, increasing the working hours of the two job share posts by half a day each and appoint an Apprentice post to support the work of the team.

5.6.4 These proposals can be funded from current and expected grant levels up until mid way through 2021-22.

5.6.5 The proposal to change the job description of the Housing Options Officers will be subject to consultation with staff and the Unions. This will be done before the submission of the proposals to the Special Sub Group.

5.6.6 If the Options Officers are occupied with homelessness applications we will need to support the team to assess housing applications from applicants who are not threatened with homelessness. It is proposed that an apprentice post is developed to support the work of the team.

The Contact Officer for this report is Helen Hughes (719494)

### **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>
Homelessness Reduction Act 2017	Crown copyright 2017	Sets out the new homelessness legislation.	2017
Draft Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities	Department for Communities and Local Government	Provides a summary of the homelessness legislation and the duties, powers and obligations on housing authorities and others towards people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.	October 2017

# Homelessness Strategy

2018 - 2023

*Our vision is to prevent homelessness and meet the housing support needs of vulnerable households through the provision of high quality and accessible accommodation, support, information and advice*

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## Forward

The prevention of homelessness in North Warwickshire continues to be a key priority for the Council and its partners. We recognise the negative impacts that homelessness has upon the health and wellbeing of affected households who are often trapped in cycles of deprivation.

The Homelessness Strategy 2018 sets out how the Council, alongside its partners, intends to meet the challenge of preventing homelessness over the next 5 years, ensuring support is available to help people avoid being without a home and sustain their existing accommodation. With demand upon our services likely to increase over the next few years, based on current trends, the form this support takes will vary with an emphasis on identifying people at risk as early as possible. The Council's existing partnership networks will need to be developed and widened to ensure that this is achieved.

Since the publication of North Warwickshire Borough Council's last Homelessness Strategy in 2012 the Housing Options Team has endeavoured to deal with the causes of homelessness within the Borough. This has included increasing the supply of affordable homes; work with private sector landlords to remove potential barriers to the private rented sector, making more efficient and better use of the housing stock and offering a more sustainable service.

Preventing homelessness has always been a key priority by using a variety of prevention tools and we continually look to identify new prevention initiatives that will help to address homelessness in North Warwickshire. We recognise that homelessness is a cross cutting issue which cannot be tackled by one agency alone. North Warwickshire has a strong history of working in partnership to tackle homelessness. This includes work with statutory and voluntary agencies, housing related support providers, money advice and domestic abuse services. We are one of the partners of the PHIL (Preventing Homelessness Improving Lives) trailblazer project which is piloting ways of assisting households at a very early stage by offering enhanced housing options.

Our new Strategy aims to continue to work in this spirit by having a focus on preventing people from becoming homeless in the first place and supporting those who are homeless to build a more positive future in good health, sustainable accommodation and offering pathways into employment and financial inclusion. To achieve this we will be looking more and more to work collaboratively with our key partners.

Thank you to all partners who have contributed to this document.

## Chapter 1 Aims of the Homelessness Strategy

### 1. Purpose

This Strategy introduces a fresh approach to tackling homelessness in North Warwickshire and incorporates the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. It provides the necessary framework for effective partnership working and for the delivery of efficiently managed and co-ordinated advice, housing and support services for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

The overall aim of this Strategy is to detail how the Council will work to reduce both the causes of homelessness in North Warwickshire and provide a quality response to those affected by homelessness, offering a range of solutions where possible.

The overall aims of the Strategy are therefore to outline how the Council will:

- Continue to prevent homelessness by early intervention
- Ensure that homeless people have access to quality services to assist them when faced with or when facing homelessness.
- Proactively work with all relevant local organisations to provide a co-ordinated approach to tackling and preventing homelessness.
- Meet the Government's expectations, aims and outcomes relating to tackling and preventing homelessness.

Delivery of the priorities as outlined in Chapter 3 will ensure that North Warwickshire Borough Council is able to offer a range of quality services to meet the needs of those people that are in housing need.

This Strategy supports the Corporate Plan, Asset Management Plan Local Investment Plan, Local Development Framework and Tenancy Strategy.

It is essential that North Warwickshire Borough Council do not work in isolation to meet the needs of people who may have multiple complex needs that extend beyond the basic need for a home. This is when partnership working can really help to look at preventing homelessness and offer housing options that are sustainable. Therefore, this Strategy should be seen as a multi agency document focused on prevention work.

It is intended that the Strategy is inclusive in its approach and partner agencies continue to work closely with the council to assist in the delivery of its objectives and priorities.

### 2. Profile of North Warwickshire Borough

North Warwickshire has a number of characteristics which impact on the ability of households to afford a home and to manage a home independently and/or to access advice or support to help them to do so or to find a new home when circumstances change.

The majority of North Warwickshire is rural, with three market towns and no natural centre. North Warwickshire neighbours major urban areas including Birmingham and Solihull, Coventry, Tamworth and Nuneaton.

People living in rural areas face a number of challenges when they have housing or related support needs:

- Services mainly exist in the market towns or outside the Borough altogether and transport links are poor
- Housing in these areas is attractive to people moving into the Borough particularly commuters from neighbouring urban areas
- House prices are high compared to household income and in some cases, would warrant 8 times their income to afford to purchase a property

Many residents in North Warwickshire have a strong connection to where they live. Communities tend to try to support their families more in times of crisis.

The strong sense of community can have implications for people who find themselves in need of help:

- Their family, friends and neighbours may try to assist them and this may mean signposting to people who can help, or in a crisis situation providing somewhere to stay
- A number of problems can escalate to result in homelessness, for example, debt or health. These are not necessarily problems that people will want to share with their community, resulting in leaving it too late to resolve; the person may lose their home and have to leave the area altogether
- The households that stay with family and friends may hide the extent of true housing difficulty and homelessness in the Borough, which makes tracking and demonstrating need difficult.

Although **there are floating support services** that will involve visits to someone in their home, there is only a small amount of schemes with support on-site. This can result in someone having to leave North Warwickshire in order to access support services which defeats the object of preventing homelessness and enabling independence and can lead to feelings of isolation.



## Map of North Warwickshire



### 3. National and Local Challenges

Nationally homelessness is increasing. The financial year 2010/11 saw a 10% increase in homelessness acceptances by local authorities, representing the first financial year increase since 2003/4. Homelessness acceptances continued to rise over the next three years but fell by 3% between 2012/13 and 2013/14. The 2014/15 financial year recorded a further increase, with acceptances 36% higher than in 2009/10. The 2015/16 financial year saw acceptances increase by a further 6% on 2014/15 and this is a continuing trend.

Research into the causes of homelessness has identified a number of factors, some of which relate to the wider state of the economy and the housing market and others which are personal to the individual or family.

Structural factors contributing to homelessness include:

- A lack of affordable housing supply in England which is more acute in some areas than others. Research conducted by Centrepoin in 2013 for Cambridge University concluded that by 2021, at current rates of construction, there could be a shortfall of submarket rented homes of over 900,000.
- The social housing sector has declined as a proportion of all housing in recent years. This reflects sales under the Right to Buy, when the discount levels were increased in 2011 and reduced investment in the development of social housing.
- The affordability of home ownership has been impacted by tighter mortgage regulation and the requirement for higher deposits from first time buyers. Even in areas where house prices are relatively affordable, mortgage regulation can act as a barrier to access.

Personal factors that trigger homelessness include relationship breakdown, mental illness and addiction issues, discharge from prison and leaving the care system. The immediate causes of homelessness have remained fairly constant over the years. The circumstances in which families become homeless tend to differ from those of single homeless individuals; with the latter experiencing more chaotic lifestyles.

Two specific areas which are felt to be contributing to the increase in homelessness are the ending of an assured shorthold tenancy and changes to Housing Benefit entitlement. Our experience suggests that private landlords are increasingly unwilling to let to claimants in receipt of Local Housing Allowance (LHA). A further challenge for most single people under the age of 35 is that since January 2012 they have been restricted to the LHA rate for a room in a shared house (the Shared Accommodation Rate).

There are a number challenges particularly apparent in North Warwickshire:

Increasingly, people are presenting as statutory homeless because an assured tenancy has ended. Domestic abuse and parental exclusion are also significant reasons for why people become homeless in North Warwickshire.

Deprivation and associated poverty/low incomes are key barriers for accessing social housing and maintaining stable and financially sustainable tenancies. Access to employment is a key mechanism for preventing homelessness. Poor financial management and a failure to maximise household income also limits people's ability to access and sustain housing.

North Warwickshire has a growing population, which is putting increasing pressure on the existing housing stock. Whilst there has been a steady flow of affordable new build homes over recent years there is a need for this to continue particularly in the provision of 2 bedroom family homes.

Increasing difficulties experienced by people under 35 to secure affordable, independent accommodation – particularly for low-income and unemployed young people. Whilst there is a relatively good supply of accommodation of this type, it is often not affordable for this

group. People who are subject to benefit restrictions face additional difficulties. This contributes to a need for additional larger homes as young people are living with their family for longer representing a new and growing housing need in the Borough, as well as an affordable housing offer for young people, including young workers. Young people are the most disadvantaged in the housing market because they are likely to have a low income and are viewed by Landlords as potentially high risk. 43% of those applying to the Council as homeless are young people. 40% have been asked to leave by a family member or friend.

There needs to be more focus on preventing future homelessness by addressing the underlying causes of people's experience and assisting people with a variety of housing solutions.

There is an increasing number of families who are homeless and/or in temporary accommodation. This affects social bonding, school performance as well as linked to disadvantage in future generations. Almost half of applicants applying as homeless have children – either with a lone parent, or as dependants of a couple. The difficulties that people experience trying to find and secure suitable housing has a direct impact on their health and well being; this places increased pressure on health services, family doctors and mental health services in the local area.

#### **4. Homelessness and Housing Need in North Warwickshire**

During 2016/17, the Council received 142 homelessness applications, compared with 131 the previous year. The most common causes of homelessness were:

- Asked to leave by family/friends (59) – 40%
- NTQ private rented accommodation (52) – 36%
- Domestic Abuse (24) – 16%
- Relationship breakdown (5) – 3%
- Illegal Eviction (1) – 0.68%
- Repossession/Eviction (2) – 1%
- Loss of tied accommodation (1) – 0.68%
- Discharge from prison (2) – 1%

The main causes of homelessness continue to be households being asked to leave by family/friends, termination of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST) and domestic abuse. This is a trend across all 5 districts in Warwickshire.

Warwickshire is a two tier rural county with five districts and boroughs – North Warwickshire, Nuneaton and Bedworth, Rugby, Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick. All districts have noticed increasing numbers approaching housing advice services at crisis point, creating fewer opportunities for homelessness prevention. There is an increasing cohort of clients with complex needs including issues from traumatic life events, periods in care/prison, domestic abuse, mental and physical health issues, learning difficulties, substance misuse and offending. There were 300 households accepted as homeless in Warwickshire in 2015/16.

Table 1 below shows the top three reasons for homelessness in Warwickshire. Analysis of the 2016/17 year shows a growth in the proportion of AST/Parents no longer willing to accommodate. Further research into 40 precarious deposit guarantee scheme ASTs revealed issues around disrupted Housing Benefit (45%), rent arrears (32%) and affordability issues (20%) as causes of instability. Further wider analysis identified triggers including; landlords selling/moving (43%) and where reasons for homelessness related to tenant behaviours/circumstances, affordability issues accounted for 10% and 7% involved rent arrears. Triggers for these issues were pregnancy, substance misuse, health issues, relationship breakdown and loss of employment, leading to reduction in income and affordability issues or rent arrears. A failure to claim benefits or get benefits reassessed was also identified as issues.

**Table 1: Reasons for homelessness in Warwickshire**

<b>Reason for homelessness</b>	<b>14/15</b>	<b>15/16</b>
Termination of Assured Shorthold tenancy	232 households (32%)	209 households (33%)
Violent relationship breakdown, involving partner	109 households (15%)	118 households (18%)
Parents no longer willing to accommodate	108 households (15%)	108 households (17%)

Source: Warwickshire trailblazer bid

Table 2 below shows the breakdown of all homelessness applications received in North Warwickshire over the last 3 years. There has been an increase in both the total number of homelessness applications received and the number accepted by the local authority as owing a full duty.

**Table 2: Breakdown of homelessness applications for North Warwickshire**

	<b>15/16</b>	<b>16/17</b>	<b>17/18 up to Dec 17</b>
Total number of homelessness applications received	131	142	128
Accepted	74	85	83
Intentional	3	2	2
Non Priority	50	50	36
Not homeless	4	5	6

Source: NWBC P1E returns

Single people (43%) are the largest group applying as homeless, single parents with dependent children account for 33%, couples 3%, couples with dependant children (16%).

Where a household is homeless and in priority need the Council has a duty to provide interim accommodation. There has been an increase in the number of households placed in temporary accommodation with 38 placements made during 2017/18 (up to February

2018) compared with 24 for the whole of the previous year. The Council provides hostel accommodation on a licence agreement and its own stock (non secure tenancies). Bed and Breakfast is used only where there are no other options available.

**Table 3: Households in temporary accommodation**

	<b>15/16</b>	<b>16/17</b>	<b>17/18 (up to Feb 18)</b>
Number of households	45	24	38
Average time spent in temporary accommodation	47 days	104 days	109 days

Source: NWBC Performance indicator reporting

## Chapter 2 Outcomes from previous action plan

The Council will seek to prevent homelessness where ever possible. The number of preventions has decreased over the last 2 years. More work is required to develop existing and new prevention initiatives.

**Figure 1: Statutory homeless and prevention statistics**

	15/16	16/17	17/18 (up to Feb 18)
<b>Number of households accepted as statutory homeless</b>	74	85	98
<b>Number of households prevented from becoming homeless, or had their homelessness relieved</b>	50	38	22

Source: NWBC Performance indicator reporting

**Figure 2: Summary of homelessness prevention cases 2016/17**

Prevention Tool	Number of cases
Withdrawn Notice to Quit	15 (39%)
Found alternative accommodation	14 (37%)
Accessed Supported Accommodation	4 (10%)
Illegal Eviction	2 (5%)
Prevention of Eviction	1 (3%)
Returned Home	1 (3%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>38</b>

### 1. Outcomes from prevention work

- We have assisted people to access the private rented sector where this has been possible as part of our Housing Options Service and the Revenues and Benefits Section have been proactive in assisting with Discretionary Housing Payments to prevent homelessness.
- Long standing and effective partnership networks have assisted customers with a variety of needs to deal with their housing issue. These include North Warwickshire Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB), Housing Benefit, Probation Service, North Warwickshire Children's Team and Doorway Young Persons Service.

- Housing related support services were reviewed in 2016 by Warwickshire County Council in conjunction with the district councils. These services ensure that customers receive housing related support appropriate to their needs that will help them to sustain their accommodation and aim to break the cycle of homelessness.
- Drop in services are available for young people between 16 – 25, both at the Council's One Stop Shop and in other areas of the Borough. Young people are offered support to enable them to sustain their tenancies.
- Drop in services are also held in the Council's One Stop Shop for other client groups that are homeless or threatened with homelessness. P3 hold drop in's and provide generic floating support for people aged 25+ and there are drop ins for veterans to receive advice and assistance.
- Support and advice is available to support victims of domestic abuse to remain in their home or access a place of safety. The Council also facilitates and chairs the Northern Warwickshire Domestic Abuse Forum, which brings together relevant partners who need to work together, to ensure that a robust and comprehensive service is provided.
- Liaising with Private Landlord's to enable tenants to sustain their tenancies.
- Close working with the Council's Housing Options Team to give housing options advice including assessment for social housing and access to the Councils Housing Register.
- Legal advice provided to prevent homelessness due to illegal evictions and invalid notice to quit
- 4 households were referred to supported accommodation projects in 2016/17 and 4 in 2017/18
- Mediation services are available and have been used to enable a household or applicant to return to their home. For example, the Council has contacted a parent to see if they are willing for their child to return home, whilst alternative accommodation is being sought.
- Referrals are made to the CAB for debt advice and the Council has a Tenancy Sustainment Officer who provides financial and other advice that will enable people to maintain their existing accommodation.
- The Tenancy Sustainment Officer provides support to households placed in temporary accommodation to assist them to address their housing issue and prepare them to take on a new tenancy.

## **2. Strengthening Partnership Working**

We have worked hard to engage with our partners and examples of strong partnership working include:

- Working in partnership with our Registered Social Landlord partners (RSL's) to provide more affordable housing within the Borough. North Warwickshire Borough Council has built 105 new homes over the last 3 years throughout the Borough by obtaining funding from the Homes and Communities Agency. We have reviewed our existing nomination agreements with partner RSL's to ensure opportunities are maximised for applicants on the Council's Housing Register.
- We are part of the Preventing Homelessness Improving Lives (PHIL) trailblazer project funded by DCLG. The project aims to first identify and then offer support to households at risk of homelessness by using innovative new methods including data matching, enhanced partnership working, lightning referrals and community mentors.

- Provision of financial inclusion initiatives. North Warwickshire Financial Inclusion Partnership is a joint forum attended by a variety of organisations across both North Warwickshire and Nuneaton and Bedworth local authority areas with the objective of providing coordinated financial advice services to people living in the area.
- We are representatives of the Housing Related Support Steering Group that is attended by our district partners and HRS providers which helps ensure that services are co-ordinated to provide the best possible response.
- Working in partnership with support providers to ensure the use of floating support is maximised to assist vulnerable households to remain and sustain their tenancies. This includes the supported housing project within North Warwickshire which is managed by SAHA (formerly Chapter One) at Meadow House, Atherstone to assist young families in learning how to sustain their tenancies before move on.
- Working in Partnership with North Warwickshire Children's & Young Families Services. We work closely with the Intake and Leaving Care Teams to address the particular needs of children, young people and families and this helped in managing and preventing homelessness.
- Working in partnership with North Warwickshire Citizens Advice Bureau to provide detailed debt and benefit advice to customers who are facing homelessness through financial difficulties.
- Working with organisations that provide services to young people who give support and advice to young people facing homelessness.
- Working in partnership with providers of Domestic Abuse Support Services to enable the victims of domestic abuse to have the choice to stay in their home without experiencing fear.
- Working in partnership with Warwickshire Police and Probation with the exchange of information and the Information Sharing Protocol to help facilitate the best options for the customer as well as the service provider.



## Chapter 3 Key Priorities and Objectives

### 1. Vision

Our vision is:

**To prevent homelessness and meet the housing support needs of vulnerable households through the provision of high quality and accessible accommodation, support, information and advice.**

### 2. Key Priorities

Following consultation with our stakeholders and an analysis of local needs by reviewing our homelessness data and having regard to the impact of external factors such as the economic downturn, limited employment opportunities and the welfare benefit reforms, the key priorities have been identified as:

- Ensure people are well informed about their housing options
- Prevent people from becoming homeless
- Assist people as soon as possible if they do become homeless so that their homelessness can be relieved by securing sufficient accommodation and support
- Support people to recover from their experience and maintain their accommodation so they do not become homeless again
- Enable people to secure homes that they can afford and maintain

### 3. Priorities and Objectives 2018-2023

#### Summary of Key Priorities and Objectives

##### Priority 1 – Ensure people are well informed about their housing options

###### Objectives

- To raise awareness and promote the homelessness and housing options service with the public and partner agencies
- To ensure there is easy access to high quality information about the services provided and where to get help
- To improve customer service, involvement and satisfaction

##### Priority 2 – Prevent people from becoming homeless

###### Objectives

- To further develop and improve the prevention tools to assist households in different situations and to meet local need
- To actively support, promote and develop partnership networks to ensure a coordinated and multi agency approach to homelessness prevention
- To develop strong protocols for multi-agency working to support and appropriately refer individuals and families at risk linking into the work of PHIL

- To design and implement early and targeted interventions for groups identified as higher risk of homelessness linking into the work of PHIL

**Priority 3 – Assist people as soon as possible if they do become homeless so that homelessness can be relieved by securing sufficient accommodation and support**

**Objectives**

- To review systems and processes to ensure the Homelessness Reduction Act requirements are fully implemented
- Strengthen partnerships with local housing related support providers and other organisations who provide accommodation and support to homeless persons
- Review temporary accommodation provision and ensure it is adequate to meet local need
- Reinforce commitments to minimise the use of bed and breakfast provision particularly for families with children and maintain zero usage for 16-17 year olds

**Priority 4 – Support people to recover from their experience and stay out of homelessness**

**Objectives**

- To review the effectiveness of the tenancy sustainment service provided by the Council and ensure those most at risk of becoming homeless or losing their accommodation are assisted
- To maximise referrals to housing related support providers to assist people to sustain their accommodation and receive the support they require
- To develop financial inclusion services in conjunction with the North Warwickshire Financial Inclusion partnership ensuring a coordinated approach to offering advice on housing benefit, debt and welfare benefit

**Priority 5 – Enable people to secure homes they can afford and maintain**

**Objectives**

- To ensure adequate provision of housing to meet housing need in the Borough to include more supported housing
- To increase the supply of affordable housing through existing and new partnerships
- To review and monitor the Council's Lettings Scheme to ensure best use of stock and that social housing properties are let to those most in need
- To develop work with private landlords and initiatives that will improve access to the private rented market locally
- To ensure those ready to move on from supported accommodation can do so in a timely way

#### **4.1 Ensure people are well informed about their housing options**

Meeting the overall aims and objectives of the Strategy and the delivery of key actions will lead to service improvements for customers. Specific areas need to be addressed in improving services to customers. These include:

- Improving the quality of housing options information available to customers and raising awareness of the range of services available, offering earlier advice and assistance to all potentially homeless households
- Ensuring that all literature and information is accessible and tailored to meet the needs of the customer
- Providing appropriate support and assistance tailored to meet individual needs to all homeless and potentially homeless households. A housing options wizard will provide self help information based on individual circumstances
- Improving communication with customers, monitoring customer satisfaction with the services provided and by shaping the services to the needs of the customer
- Developing and monitoring housing options for customers with identified vulnerability and ensuring that they are provided with the relevant support to engage in the process
- Raising awareness and promoting the homelessness and housing options service with partner agencies ensuring they are aware of referral pathways and the services offered

#### **4.2 Invest in early intervention and effective homelessness prevention**

The aim of homelessness prevention is to help people to stay in their current home wherever possible and where this is not possible, to assist them to make a planned move to alternative accommodation, preventing the need for them to make an application as homeless. In addition, providing support at an early enough stage ensuring that households are placed in the most appropriate accommodation with the right level of support, will prevent either homelessness occurring in the first place, or where it has already occurred, will prevent repeat homelessness. This can be particularly relevant to younger and/or vulnerable people.

Investment in homelessness prevention services can produce direct cost savings for Local Authorities, such as a reduced use of temporary accommodation and long term pressures on wider services.

Sustaining and developing further homelessness prevention measures is key to providing a more flexible and responsive service to all homeless and potentially homeless households.

A diverse range of services contributes directly and indirectly to the prevention of homelessness through information, signposting and advice. There is a need to ensure the provision of these services meets the need of all customers.

The Council will be undertaking a full review of the prevention tools it currently offers to ensure that these are adequate to meet the needs of applicants. We will look to ensure that all opportunities are made to secure funding to facilitate this prevention work. This will

include maintaining current funding for rent deposits and bonds for private rented accommodation and to explore options for utilising Discretionary Housing Payments.

The Council recognises that working in partnership with other agencies is fundamentally important to preventing homelessness. We will continue to work with our partner agencies to ensure there are robust referral pathways in place to enable applicants to secure appropriate accommodation and support. The PHIL project seeks to work with other agencies and use data that will identify those households most at risk of becoming homeless. Their primary aim is to prevent homelessness at an early stage by asking agencies to contact them if they identify a household at risk. The Council support this approach and will promote the work of PHIL with other agencies and the public.

The voluntary sector also plays a key role in providing housing related information and advice for example, Citizen's Advice Bureau and Age Concern. The Council will work with the voluntary sector as part of its homelessness prevention work and has a Financial Inclusion Forum which is represented by many organisations who contribute to the delivery of financial inclusion initiatives. This work has included the set up Community Hubs in semi rural locations where customers can talk to the Council via Skype or a hot line telephone where they can access services. The Branch Out Bus provided by the Council is equipped with technology that enables clients to access information and services. P3 offer a similar service using Mobile Advice Van Information Support (MAVIS) providing tenancy and benefits advice. The Council supports this approach which is important given the geographical wide spread of the Borough and the challenges of accessing services in a rural area. The Council operates a foodbank and furniture scheme. These types of initiatives all link to the Council's homelessness prevention work and help people to sustain their accommodation.

There are good links & robust systems, established between the Tenancy Services Officers and the Homelessness & Advice Officer, to deal with any Council tenants that may be facing eviction due to rent arrears, anti social behaviour or breaches of their tenancy conditions. The objective of this is to advise the tenant and see if the eviction can be prevented and if not, to ensure that they have the appropriate advice to be able to move on.

The Tenancy Sustainment Officer works in conjunction with both teams. The aim of the service is to assist people to maintain their existing accommodation whether they are Council tenants or are struggling to pay their rent in the private rented accommodation. The service is flexible depending on the issue of the client and includes money and debt advice, help with claiming benefits, financial advice and other work that will enable the client to stay in their accommodation.

One of the 3 main reasons for homelessness in the Borough is private tenants being served a Notice to Quit (NTQ) by their Landlord. Engaging with private landlords has traditionally been difficult however, we will work to develop the relationships that we do have and seek to develop new ones. We will link into the work that PHIL are undertaking in this respect, by raising awareness with Private Landlords and asking them to contact PHIL if a tenant is struggling in their tenancy. We will seek to engage with Landlords at the Nuneaton Private Landlord's Forum as many of these landlords operate across both Nuneaton and Bedworth and North Warwickshire Council areas. We will seek to develop models that will encourage private landlords to provide housing to those in housing need. We will develop our rent deposit and bond schemes so that they are accessible to those that need them. We will

offer assistance to private tenants who may be struggling to pay their rent by providing money, debt and benefits advice.

Another main reason for homelessness is people being asked to leave their accommodation by family and friends, many of these are parental evictions. Young people are particularly affected and therefore the Council will work with organisations such as St Basils and Doorway Young Persons services that specialise in this area and provide additional support.

There is a Warwickshire Protocol with Children's Services that looks at joint assessments for 16 and 17 year olds which North Warwickshire Borough Council are signed up to. This is in line with Chapter 3 of the Department of Health's Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families - 2000.

However, we have a lack of emergency accommodation for this age group and therefore, we will be looking at ways of increasing future provision including the provision of an emergency crash pad facility.

Effective joint working with Children Services is crucial in assessing and dealing with the often complex needs of young people. We have arranged joint training to promote partnership working and raise awareness of the joint protocol with housing and Children Services teams. We will continue to develop these joint working relationships.

#### **4.3 Assist people as soon as possible if they do become homeless so that their homelessness can be relieved by securing sufficient accommodation and support**

Whilst we will seek to shift the balance to a more proactive, preventative approach, we will also ensure that there is an effective response for those who present as homeless in an emergency or crisis situation. Groups that are recognised as predominantly affected in this area are private rented sector tenants, families with dependent children, people experiencing domestic abuse, young people experiencing parental exclusion, under 35 year olds, people with multiple and complex needs, people with drug and/or alcohol addiction and street homeless people.

Crisis prevention and relief is defined as a range of responses that support prevention and relief of homeless crisis. We will aim to respond at the point of crisis, where the threat of homelessness is imminent or has occurred. A range of interventions that seek to resolve the homelessness or threat of homelessness will be considered and include:

- Homeless prevention services, housing options and advice
- Outreach services that make contact with the street homeless population. Whilst street homelessness is not a big issue in this Borough, where someone is identified as sleeping rough, we will utilise outreach services knowledgeable in engaging with this client group.
- Support and intervention for adults and children affected by domestic abuse including the provision of specialist accommodation such as refuges
- Immediate and direct hostel provision
- Bed and Breakfast and temporary accommodation where this is appropriate and no other options are available

- Fast path into supported accommodation or young persons crash pad

As a result homelessness is prevented through intervention at the point of crisis; emergency accommodation is secured for those without other housing options and there is coordinated action to prevent street homeless by moving people into accommodation. Some of these services are provided by other agencies so a multi agency approach is required.

There is a need to both minimise the use of temporary accommodation and at the same time ensure that the accommodation that is provided to homeless households in emergency situations, for which there is always likely to be a need, is of a high standard and suited to the needs of those placed there.

Preventing homelessness in as many cases as possible will help to ease the pressure on temporary accommodation, as will the provision of new units of social rented accommodation.

North Warwickshire has doubled its hostel provision in the last 2 years to meet an increasing need. We have also used vacant properties to accommodate homeless families on a short term basis. We avoid using bed and breakfast accommodation. It is only used when the temporary accommodation referred to above, is either full, unsuitable or it is an 'out of hours' emergency placement, which is usually for 1 or 2 nights only. We will seek to provide more temporary accommodation if this is required and will explore the possibility of adopting the 'Housing First' model of delivery if this is feasible.

#### **4.4 Support people to recover from their experience and stay out of homelessness**

People who have experienced homelessness are more likely to have additional needs around their mental, physical and emotional health and may need extra support to make a sustained recovery into stable housing and onward to a positive future. This is particularly true for children, young people and vulnerable adults. Providing this extra support is critical to limiting the impact of homelessness as well as preventing homelessness reoccurring.

Homelessness recovery means key agencies work together to support people to ensure they have access to a range of support that will improve their physical and mental health and wellbeing, access education or training, enter or maintain employment, stabilise the family income and strengthen social networks. Warwickshire County Council has commissioned housing related support providers who aim to support people to sustain their accommodation. The providers specialise in dealing with particular client groups:

- P3 (People Potential Possibilities) – Generic Floating Support (Ages 25+)
- Home Group Homeless and ex-offenders (Ages 25+)
- Salvation Army Housing Association (SAHA) - Young people (Ages 16 – 25)
- St Basils & Doorway – Young People (Ages 16 – 25)
- Together – People with disabilities (aged 16+)

The Council recognises the importance of the support provided by these support agencies and will work in partnership to ensure these services are directed to those most in need. The providers work with some of the most vulnerable people often with multiple and

complex needs. Their work is essential in ensuring that these people are supported to sustain their accommodation and to acquire the skills they need that will prevent them from becoming homeless again. The Council will seek to maximise the number of referrals to these services.

The Council also operates a tenancy sustainment service. People who are at risk of becoming homeless or who are struggling to maintain their tenancy will be referred to the service. An action plan is developed that will assist the tenant to retain their accommodation. Additional support is given to households in temporary accommodation and preparing them to move into a new tenancy. The Council will undertake a review of the service to ensure that it is working effectively and assisting those most in need.

#### 4.5 Enabling people to secure homes they can afford and maintain

Affordable Housing: The Council has been working with its Registered Social Landlords and developers to increase the supply of affordable housing within the Borough.

**Figure 3: Affordable Housing in North Warwickshire**

Year	Number of affordable homes built	Social Rented	Shared Ownership
2012/13	19	15	4
2013/14	35	27	8
2014/15	76	56	20
2015/16	31	26	5
2016/17	120	102	18
2017/18	88	79	9

#### Social Rented Sector:

The Council has managed to increase its stock of Council Housing by a further 105 homes in the last 3 financial years. This has included much needed family homes although there has been a mix of properties for families, older persons and young people.

We continue to work with our Registered Social Landlord Partners to increase the level of Social Housing within the Borough, but all new properties that are being built with grant funding from the Homes and Communities Agency are now subject to the affordable rents regime which can go up to 80% of current market rent. This is still classed as affordable housing within North Warwickshire as the rents still come within the levels indicated within our 4 Broad Market Rental Areas (BMRA). The provision has included an Extra Care Scheme in Mancetter which has helped to free up larger much needed family accommodation.

The provision of new social rented housing and other affordable options has helped to reduce the length of time that homeless households have to wait for permanent, settled accommodation.

At the same time, however, recognising that demand continues to increase at a faster rate than supply and that as a result the number of new social housing units is unlikely to match the level of need. It is equally important to make the best use of existing social stock by addressing under occupation with the offer of incentives to move and to introduce the re-designation of sheltered schemes for use by younger people. We have made good progress with both of these initiatives following the introduction of the Tenants Incentive Scheme in 2013 which has assisted 88 households to move to more suitable accommodation and freeing up much needed family accommodation. The re-designation of sheltered ground floor flats in some areas has helped to address the need of younger single people some of whom required ground floor accommodation for medical reasons.

The Council introduced a separate Housing Transfer Register following the introduction of the Localism Act in 2012 which has assisted to aid mobility. We also subscribe to Home Swapper mutual exchange scheme which assist our tenants to move to more suitable homes.

#### Supported Accommodation:

There is a lack of supported accommodation within North Warwickshire, with only 1 scheme at Meadow House, Atherstone. This has 6 units for young families to receive support with tenancy sustainment, before moving on. This project was officially opened in November 2011 and is currently managed by Salvation Army Housing Association (SAHA). It has proved to be invaluable in accommodating young families and has provided a gateway into independent accommodation. Doorway, Home Group and SAHA are all looking to increase the provision of supported housing in North Warwickshire however; this is likely to be limited.

In regards to other supported accommodation, we have to look outside of the Borough to satisfy these needs and this can often be traumatic for the customer as they will have most of their support networks (formal and informal) within North Warwickshire.

The areas that North Warwickshire tends to use supported accommodation is Nuneaton, which is the neighbouring urban authority to ourselves and Coventry which is further south and is difficult for customers within North Warwickshire to access at short notice and with very little money and poor transport links.

#### Move on provisions:

We established a need for a Move-on Protocol through Supporting People, to cover the whole of Warwickshire. This involved partnership working between the 5 districts to develop the protocol with our housing partners, to ensure effective move on and prevent bed blocking. The Lettings Scheme gives a high priority to applicants living in supported accommodation, to ensure that they are able to move on effectively into permanent accommodation. The Move-on Protocol was reviewed in 2017 following the commencement of the new housing related support contract and the appointment of new service providers.



### Review of the Lettings Scheme:

The Lettings Scheme was reviewed following the introduction of the Localism Act 2012; this included the introduction of a separate Housing Transfer List. A further review of the Scheme is planned during 2018/19 to assist us to achieve our strategy for meeting housing need and preventing homelessness.

### Private Rented Sector:

The Localism Act 2012 has enabled local authorities to discharge their duties towards households accepted as unintentionally homeless and in priority need, by offering a private rented tenancy. This is a relatively new power and the Government expects Council's to develop policies to allow them to exercise this duty and offers must also consider the individual needs of each household. Offers must also be suitable and the property must be decent but in making the offer, factors such as established links to doctors, education, social workers, key services and support should be considered. The Council has not discharged it's duty by making a private tenancy offer however, will under take a review of the potential of being able to should the need arise in the future.

## Chapter 4 Delivery of the Strategy

### 1. Risks to delivery of the Strategy

The key risks to the Council's ability to prevent homelessness and deliver the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan are any changes to the homelessness prevention grant which funds many of the homeless prevention initiatives. However, we are not aware of any reductions to the government grants currently received.

The risks also include the roll out of the Government's welfare reform plans including Universal Credit which is planned to move to the full service in Atherstone in September 2018 and other changes to the benefit system. The current economic climate together with the welfare benefit changes brings a potential increase in unemployment, failing tenancies and more demand for social housing.

The increasing complexity of the support needs amongst homeless people, which requires continued effective work with partners to highlight the need for housing related support.

### 2. Financial Constraints

As well as the government homelessness grants, the Council funds the majority of our revenue expenditure on homeless, prevention and related activities through its General Fund. This includes the cost of providing a comprehensive lettings, housing options and advice service; the tenancy sustainment service and grant funding to third sector organisations such as Doorway who provide services to homeless people. Following the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review it is anticipated that further cuts at local authority level may have to continue.

Although this may impact on local authority budgets, we are not expecting any proposals that would affect our ability to deliver the Homelessness Strategy.

### 3. Monitoring and Review

The actions detailed throughout the Strategy have been compiled into a detailed action plan (See Appendix 1). The Strategy and action plan will be monitored annually to ensure that our outcomes meet local needs and government policy. These annual reviews will be carried out in partnership with the agencies that have assisted in the development of both the Strategy and the action plan.

This Strategy covers a 5 year period and will run until the end of 2023. In order to ensure the continued relevance of the Strategy and action plan over the 5 years additional actions may be developed and implemented and existing actions changed or updated following a review.

**Figure 4: Homelessness Strategy Monitoring Mechanism**

Joint Partnership Group	Consideration to be given to establish a partnership group that will contribute to the delivery of the Homelessness Strategy and contribute to future reviews
National Performance Indicators and Statutory Returns	Performance will be monitored through quarterly HCLIC returns and will be reviewed regularly by the Council
Local Performance Indicators	The Housing Division will continue to monitor national and local indicators relating to homelessness as part of its performance indicator suite. Performance against targets is monitored on a monthly basis
Homelessness Team Meetings	The Homelessness Team Meetings review housing options and homelessness data on a monthly basis so that demand can be frequently reviewed and response strategies formulated
Action Plan Update	The action plan will be formally updated on an annual basis and will be made available on the Council's website as well as being circulated to key partners
Reporting to Resources Board	Resources Board will be updated on progress against the action plan annually and advised of any proposals to amend the Strategy or associated policies.

APPENDIX 1

Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2018-2023

Key Priority	Objectives	Strategic Actions	By when	Lead Officer
<b>1. Ensure people are well informed about their housing options</b>	To raise awareness and promote the homelessness and housing options service with the public and partner agencies	Attend team meetings and other networks and promote the work of the homelessness and housing options service	On going. Initial promotion by May 2018	Housing Services Manager/Housing Options & Lettings Team Leader
		Promote PHIL internally and externally	On going	Housing Services Manager/Assistant Director (Housing)/Housing Options & Lettings Team Leader
	To ensure there is easy access to high quality information about the services provided and where to get help	Develop the information provided on the website and self assessment tools	September 2018	Housing Services Manager
		Develop leaflets that can be issued by hand	September 2018	Housing Services Manager
	To improve customer service, involvement and satisfaction	Develop mechanisms for obtaining feedback from customers	September 2018	Housing Services Manager

<b>2. Prevent people from becoming homeless</b>	To further develop and improve the prevention tools to assist households in different situations and to meet local need	Develop prevention tools to ensure they are robust and accessible. This includes access to Discretionary Housing Payments, the availability of a prevention fund, rent deposits, mediation, home visits, joint working and access to specialist advice services	Initial review by April 2018. More comprehensive review on going	Assistant Director (Housing)/Housing Services Manager
	To actively support, promote and develop partnership networks to ensure a coordinated and multi agency approach to homelessness prevention	Linked to promotion of the service with all relevant partners, develop and promote a coordinated and multi agency approach to achieve buy in from all key agencies. This will include consideration of establishing a strategic homelessness coordination group that could oversee delivery of the action plan	Initial consultation by June 2018. Establishment of a strategic homelessness coordination group by September 2018.	Housing Services Manager
	To develop strong protocols for multi-agency working to support and appropriately refer	Review referral arrangements to other support agencies that may assist to prevent homelessness	September 2018	Housing Services Manager

	individuals and families at risk linking into the work of PHIL			
	To design and implement early and targeted interventions for groups identified as higher risk of homelessness linking into the work of PHIL	Identify and implement early interventions for high risk groups	September 2018	Housing Services Manager/Housing Options & Lettings Team Leader
<b>3. Assist people as soon as soon as possible if they do become homeless so that homelessness can be relieved by securing sufficient accommodation and support</b>	To review systems and processes to ensure the Homelessness Reduction Act requirements are fully implemented	Review processes to ensure we are meeting the HRAct requirements	Initially by April 2018 to meet requirement then on going review	Housing Services Manager
		Review what accommodation we have available to ensure we can achieve the relief duty for all eligible households	Initially by April 2018 then on going review	Assistant Director (Housing)/Housing Services Manager
	Strengthen partnerships with local housing related support providers and other organisations who provide accommodation and support to homeless persons	Review local provision, ensure robust referral and move on arrangements are in place. Consider how support services provided could be developed further	September 2018 and ongoing	Housing Services Manager/Housing Options & Lettings Team Leader
	Review temporary accommodation provision and ensure it is adequate to meet local need	Review temporary accommodation provision	On going review based on need.	Housing Services Manager/Housing Options & Lettings Team Leader

		Provide an additional hostel for use as temporary accommodation	April 2018	Housing Services Manager/Housing Options & Lettings Team Leader
	Reinforce commitments to minimise the use of bed and breakfast provision particularly for families with children and maintain zero usage for 16-17 year olds	Review of temporary accommodation provision should avoid the need to use bed and breakfast provision. On going work with statutory and non statutory agencies regarding accommodating 16-17 year olds	Re-enforce commitment and work to joint working protocols for young people – on going	Housing Services Manager
<b>4. Support people to recover from their experience and stay out of homelessness</b>	To review the effectiveness of the tenancy sustainment service provided by the Council and ensure those most at risk of becoming homeless or losing their accommodation are assisted	Review effectiveness of the tenancy sustainment service	June 2018 and on going	Housing Services Manager
	To maximise referrals to housing related support providers to assist people to sustain their accommodation and receive the support they require	Encourage referrals to providers and monitor outcomes. Promote services with Housing Options team	On going	Housing Services Manager/Housing Options & Lettings Team Leader

	To develop financial inclusion services in conjunction with the North Warwickshire Financial Inclusion Partnership ensuring a coordinated approach to offering advice on housing benefit, debt and welfare benefit	Contribute to the work of the Financial Inclusion Partnership to help ensure there are initiatives that will help support homeless persons or those at threat of becoming homeless	On going	Housing Services Manager
<b>5. Enable people to secure homes they can afford and maintain</b>	To ensure adequate provision of housing to meet housing need in the Borough to include more supported housing	Work in partnership with our Registered Social Landlords and other housing providers to increase supply throughout the Borough	On going	Assistant Director (Housing)/Strategy & Development Officer/ Housing Services Manager
	To increase the supply of affordable housing through existing and new partnerships	Work with developers to determine need for housing schemes coming forward to ensure that appropriate accommodation comes forward		
	To review and monitor the Council's Lettings Scheme to ensure best use of stock and that social housing properties are let to those in most need	Undertake a review of the Lettings Scheme	September 2018	Assistant Director (Housing)/Housing Services Manager



	To develop work with private landlords and initiatives that will improve access to the private rented market locally	Work alongside PHIL to develop models that will encourage private landlords to accommodate people in housing need	On going	Housing Services Manager/Housing Strategy & Development Officer
	To ensure those ready to move on from supported accommodation can do so in a timely way	Work closely with the support providers in making sure that the Move On Protocol is being used effectively and is reviewed on a regular basis	Start quarterly monitoring from April 2018 with an annual review of the protocol in April 2019	Housing Options and Lettings Team Leader/Housing Services Manager

**Agenda Item No 7**

**Resources Board**

**19 March 2018**

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

**Financial Inclusion Update**

**1 Summary**

- 1.1 This report provides Members with an update of the Financial Inclusion activity undertaken by the Council. The report will also be considered by the Community and Environment Board at its meeting on 12 March 2018.

**Recommendation to the Board**

**That the report be noted.**

**2 Report**

- ... 2.1 The report attached as Appendix A will also be considered by the Community and Environment Board and any comments will be verbally reported at this meeting.

- 2.2 This Board is invited to consider the report.

**3 Report Implications**

- 3.1 The report implications are set out in the report.

The Contact Officer for this report is Bob Trahern (719378).

**Agenda Item No 6**

**Community and Environment  
Board**

**12 March 2018**

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

**Financial Inclusion Update**

**1 Summary**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update of the Financial Inclusion activity undertaken by the Council, the majority with partners that has been delivered under the North Warwickshire Community Partnership “Tackling Poverty” commitment over the last twelve months. This report outlines the ongoing challenges faced by the Council and its residents and the attached appendices provide further background information on these challenges as well as the wide ranging activity undertaken in assisting residents of the Borough experiencing personal and financial difficulties to meet their commitments during what remain challenging times.
- 1.2 During a year when we have continued to support the most significant welfare reforms in sixty years, our approach remains key to ensuring support around debt advice, income maximisation, emergency help via providing food and promotion of health and well-being is available to help residents address their future challenges. The real positives of the work outlined in this report show how the Council are continuing to lead the way both countywide and in some circumstances Nationally in working with partners in implementing initiatives that are supporting people into or nearer work and helping them meet their financial obligations despite current budget constraints.

**Recommendation to the Board**

**That the report be noted.**

**2 Background**

- 2.1 For many years, the Council working with key local partners have been recognised for delivering help and support to customers to ensure they have maximised their benefits entitlement and have been able to access debt and other advice when they have experienced financial difficulty or personal problems. This has delivered on our corporate commitment of “Helping Others, Help Themselves”.
- 2.2 It is very pleasing to report that despite the considerable and ongoing challenges being faced by the Council, its partners and its residents that this commitment and approach continues to deliver very positive outcomes and

achievements that have again been recognised Nationally as being both innovative and ground breaking by our peers, awarding bodies and Government agencies. A summary of the current challenges facing the Council and its journey to date are highlighted in a presentation attached at Appendix A that was provided as an update prior to the expansion of the Councils Financial Inclusion Partnership in August 2017 on which there is member representation via Councillors Martin Davis and Brian Henney. This group has responsibility for overseeing and agreeing the activity to achieve the positive outcomes contained in this report and to better understand the future likely demands on our services going forward.

- 2.3 In addition, detailed reports providing information on all relevant activities are considered by the North Warwickshire Community Partnership under the theme of “Tackling Poverty” on which I am the lead officer which meets quarterly and is chaired by Councillor Colin Hayfield. An example of the most recent update considered in December 2017 is attached at Appendix B. These updates summarise the wide-ranging initiatives and outcomes delivered by the Council and its partners, and below I have summarised the most significant achievements during 2017/18.

### **3 Key Achievements in 2017/18**

- 3.1 The delivery of high and National upper quartile performance levels in the processing of benefits claims, both for new claims and change of circumstances meaning customers are being assisted promptly to the right level of support. However, maintaining this position is likely to be evermore difficult to maintain as we lose control over key parts of the application process as we move further into the adoption of Universal Credit.
- 3.2 We continue to deliver very high and upper quartile performance levels in all areas of collecting revenues due to the Council. In respect of Council Tax, it is particularly pleasing that this has been achieved despite issuing almost 60% less cases to our external civil enforcement agents (bailiffs) in 2017/18 compared to the corresponding period in 2016/17 (i.e.) 613 compared to 1469 cases . This is an indicator that more customers are engaging with the Council helped by the tailored approach we have adopted and are not incurring unnecessary further costs.
- 3.3 Reflecting this excellent position, we were made a finalist in 4 National Award categories in November 2017 at the Collection and Customer Service Awards. They were in the following categories; Best Public Sector Collections Team - Local collections; Best Vulnerable Customer Support Initiative (creditor); Best Customer Service Provider, and Charitable Initiative of the Year. It was very pleasing that we were successful in winning two awards; the Public Collections Team of the Year for the second year running and also the Charitable Initiative of the Year for our work with Ocado and Ediblelinks in respect of the food hub.
- 3.4 We have also been shortlisted for 2 Local Government Chronicle Awards for the Ediblelinks project in the categories; Best Public/Private Partnership &

Best Innovation that will be announced on 21 March 2018. The work of this project continues to exceed expectations delivering increasingly positive outcomes around financial help, promotion of wellbeing and community cohesion and is receiving significant National publicity.

- 3.5 We are to be included as a National best practice case study in a forthcoming Money Advice Service publication from which others will be encouraged to learn that recognises the outcomes of our holistic approach being delivered in a digital environment. This is because in August, we launched a “ground breaking” intuitive on line Customer Referral Form (CRF) developed in house that is enabling us to capture key customer data on an individuals finances, needs and required support and allowing the Council and its partners to better support and engage customers. Since it was launched, over 700 customers or their support agencies have completed the on line form that enables them to access an emergency food parcel as well as wider support and this has resulted in around 30% of applicants engaging with partner agencies as a result of the process:
- 3.6 As part of the shared service arrangements with Nuneaton and Bedworth BC (NBBC) where we share the Councils Financial Inclusion & Benefits Manager amongst others, this has resulted in the expansion of our Financial Inclusion Partnership to include both boroughs. The benefits of this change is already seeing us work ever closer on developing and delivering solutions as well as consistent messages / templates which is building on our best practice approach developed over the last ten years. This change will see us continue to promote awareness and signposting to a cross section of services, help and support as outlined in the 8 page pull out which was delivered to every household and incorporated in the December edition of North Talk. A copy is attached at Appendix C.
- 3.7 The roll out and support of Universal Credit for new benefit customers signing at 3 of our 4 job centres located outside the borough has been implemented and the Council are supporting impacted customers where necessary. Our main jobcentre in the Borough co-located with the One Stop Shop in Atherstone goes live in September 2018 and this should ensure the transition for these customers will be as smooth as possible in providing any support needed as we have developed good links with this team.
- 3.8 The ongoing successful delivery of ICT courses via the B.O.B Bus project has continued during 2017 via the volunteer centre although its activity has been considerably scaled back as a result of the external funding for this work which is aimed at getting customers digitally aware ending. It is anticipated that the B.O.B bus will continue to be used on an ad hoc basis at events across the borough by the Council and partners.
- 3.9 The Council have run 2 very successful jobs fairs in 2017 alongside Jobcentre Plus that demonstrated excellent opportunities to access local jobs and wider support. These were very well attended by both customers on work and disability related benefits and created some very positive outcomes in terms of

moving people into employment as well as accessing wellbeing / financial support from our partners who attended.

- 3.10 Throughout 2017, significant enhancements have been made to the food hub project by developing new partnership arrangements beyond the NWBC boundary and into NBBC and beyond under the adopted “Ediblelinks” brand. Ediblelinks is part of Nuneaton & Bedworth Healthy Living Network (HLN) who became our delivery partner in late 2016 as a result of their involvement in accessing support to promote health and wellbeing messages / activities and which is commissioned by the WCC Public Health partners.
- 3.11 This has allowed the project to be taken to new levels assisted by the expansion into being able to access chilled / fresh goods as well as additional supply on a daily basis from April 2017. This was made possible by the donation of two brand new vehicles donated by the Ocado Foundation. Since the HLN took over the food operation in late December 2016, the amount of surplus food collected has increased by 600% on 2016 levels and resulted in the following key outcomes and growth.
- 3.12 There are now over 150 groups registered to collect support from Ediblelinks enabling these groups to continue to exist and includes 38 school breakfast clubs across NWBC and NBBC that feed an estimated 400 children every day free of charge. This built on the very successful pilots and outcomes achieved by Queen Elizabeth School over a number of years. 70% of the registered “not for profit” groups that are supported are based in North Warwickshire ranging from very small volunteer led community groups tackling social isolation, family support and more, to large scale groups, hubs and children centres. Access to affordable, healthy food is being achieved via the running of honesty Shops; lunch clubs and is improving education and attainment through school cookery, breakfast and homework clubs. We estimate from the figures provided by the groups that over 9,000 North Warwickshire residents have benefited from Ediblelinks support over the past year.
- 3.13 The facility based at Innage Park, Atherstone issues an average 65 emergency food parcels per week (an increase of 45% on the same time last year) to both in work and out of work customers and unlike a traditional food bank is creating the opportunities for more positive engagement with customers to address in many cases complex issues that cut across debt, health and housing.
- 3.14 The service has a great opportunity to do more but remaining stable until it can secure external funds to grow is an ongoing challenge. The Council are supporting a Big Lottery bid which despite being subject of considerable delays beyond the projects control finally appears to be moving forward for a decision. At the same time, we have also continued dialogue with WCC who have been both a key beneficiary of the project and funder alongside the Council and NBBC in order to ensure the project could be supported post March 2018. This has resulted in an agreement being reached for ongoing funding being approved to December 2018 from both WCC and NBBC in addition to the financial support given in kind by the Council. I attach at

Appendix D, a copy of the last quarterly report issued to WCC in December 2017 who monitor outcomes from the project.

- 3.15 The only real disappointing outcome during the year has been the continuing ongoing difficulty in developing the role or need for community hubs and information points. These were originally set up over a two year period from 2012 to enable access to ICT for all and promote the need for digital skills. However, their use remains very low largely due to the rapid change in how residents are now able access the internet with wi fi being freely available in many public places as well as the trend to increased use of mobile technology via phones and i-pads which can easily be used to undertake everyday tasks. As a result, this has meant that the use of the hubs and information points has been a lot lower than anticipated and aligned with a lack of volunteers to support those without digital skills who are increasingly in the minority, this has seen a number of facilities close during the year where the facility has little or no other complimentary activities on offer.
- 3.16 As a result, the long term future of the hubs across the borough continues to be uncertain but we remain hopeful that because of interest from Public Health, the DWP, Ediblelinks as well as other county and borough divisions to run localised and targeted activities, that this may enable hubs to become better used and sustained by any activity paying towards costs or enabling income to be raised that will ensure that local provision of services can continue and be enhanced. The North Warwickshire Community Partnership continues to oversee and review these developments as shown in the document at Appendix B.
- 3.17 In summary, what the above achievements demonstrate is that the Councils proactive approach to promoting financial and social inclusion has continued to develop during 2017/18, and our commitment to this holistic approach continues to enable positive outcomes both in terms of revenue collection and a better ability to support those residents, impacted by ongoing welfare changes to be achieved.

#### **4 Key Priorities in 2018/19**

- 4.1 In terms of setting priority actions going forward in 2018/19, the future will continue to remain financially uncertain, both externally and internally, and the challenges to the Council and its partners will continue to centre on delivering support around the following priorities:
1. The ongoing economic situation and its link to austerity measures.
  2. Supporting customers impacted by the ongoing Welfare Reform changes and in particular, planning for the introduction of Universal Credit at our main Jobcentre in Atherstone in September 2018 for all claimant types This will have a significant impact on both the Housing and Community Services divisions in delivering the support needed by our customers in the future to ensure they can complete their application forms on line in a timely way and also clearly understand the expectations being placed on

them once direct payments are made to pay their rent and other priority bills. We know from the experiences of Rugby BC and NBBC as well as others nationally who have already implemented these changes that this will be a very challenging time in supporting residents manage their benefits and ensuring they pay their priority bills, most notably their rent and Council Tax to avoid the negative consequential impact of not doing so as both have seen significant increases in the level of rent arrears from Council Tenants.

3. Identifying how best to continue working together internally and with partners to make best use of existing funds and finite resources as well as improved ways of working to better support customers going forward.

4.2 I have attached at Appendix E, an extract of the key commitments from the Community Services Division service plan for 2018/19 in the area of financial inclusion that in summary will see:

- A comprehensive review of the current Council Tax Support Scheme;
- The ongoing review of the viability and purpose of Community Hubs;
- Developing closer working with the Department of Work and Pensions in preparation for the ongoing implementation of Universal Credit, the better support of Employment Support Allowance customers, homeless people under the increased responsibilities being introduced in April 2018 and older people in tandem with a range of internal and external partners;
- Implementation of the new requirements of the enhanced General Data Protection Regulation.(GDPR). This new legislation being introduced in May 2018 will require a significant review of our data sharing protocols to ensure we can continue to work effectively with partners to legally exchanging information on residents so we can continue to realise the benefits of the CRF developed that is starting to prove so useful;
- Continuing to develop our shared service approach with NBBC by adopting a common back office ICT platform by December 2018 as well as aligning more work on the financial inclusion agenda. This will also see us seek to align work priorities with the Countywide FIP on which we are a lead partner wherever possible.
- Promoting the digital agenda and take up of on-line services; and
- The ongoing review and development of the Ediblelinks project. This will be influenced significantly by whether bids for external funding are successful.

4.3 The importance of building holistic solutions and how we better support customers needing help is increasingly being built into our standard practices and procedures. This is making it the responsibility of an increasing number of



officers to take more ownership in helping customers break dependency cycles wherever possible. Restructures of the Community Services and Housing divisions in recent years have all addressed this as part of their reviews and reflected these expectations in revised job descriptions and structures and we anticipate this will continue to be undertaken and help with ever closer collaborative working with our partners going forward.

## **5 Report Implications**

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

5.1.1 As a measure of our success, it is pleasing to report that in terms of in year and arrears collection performance in respect of NDR, Housing Rent and Council Tax, these have again improved on our already hugely impressive 2016/17 levels. This is in part due to the proactive work being undertaken by the Council as well as its decision to maintain a local Council Tax Support Scheme that has limited benefit cuts to only 8.5% since its introduction in 2013/14. This will continue for a sixth fifth year in 2018/19.

5.1.2 However, the worrying trend nationally which supports our own data and which will be further compounded in 2018 by the roll out of Universal Credit, rising costs above inflation and an anticipated rise in interest rates is that those in difficulty have got significant debts and are ignoring them until the situation gets more serious and costly. As a consequence, their resulting needs and requirements are more complex and time consuming to address. The numbers presenting themselves as homeless to the Council are at their highest recorded levels ever with the trend expected to increase significantly as a result of further changes being introduced in April 2018. As such, we are increasingly seeing cases where residents are appearing not to be able to meet all their financial obligations as opposed to “won’t pay” them, all indications that access to help and advice is vital. This was why we again made the money matters information the focus of the December North Talk to alert residents to ways of taking personal responsibility for improving their circumstances which is an essential expectation going forward..

5.1.3 In addition, we also need to have regard to the fact that the Council meet the full cost of recovering Council Tax debts whilst only retaining 13% of the income collected. This may make a significant number of the outstanding debts due to the Council unrealistic to pursue at this time, if ever. It is an issue that is currently being discussed with WCC to identify if they can assist in sharing the very high and often disproportionate costs that could be involved in pursuing these doubtful debts where the debtor “can’t”, as opposed to “won’t” pay monies due. In all these cases, it is expected that extensive support will need to be provided to support these residents both by ourselves and via our financial inclusion partners to improve their circumstances which will continue to be undertaken in line with the Councils corporate debt framework adopted by the Resources Board in May 2016

5.1.4 To put the expected level of write offs into context, it should be noted that these remain a very small proportion of the total monies due to the Council for

which an increasing provision has been made in the future. This is because the level of write offs are expected to increase going forward in respect of Council Tax, Former Tenant Arrears and Housing Benefit Overpayments as we see the roll out of Universal Credit in addition to other welfare changes take effect.

- 5.1.5 It also needs to be noted that funding to undertake the wider financial inclusion work undertaken in recent years has been resourced by utilising external grants to deliver the new burdens being placed on Councils to prepare customers for change. These have been provided by both Central Government as one off payments and also by making funding bids with partners coupled with creating capacity by internal restructuring to free up capacity from areas of less priority. However, with reducing and ongoing reductions in Central DWP grant being passed down as part of the austerity measures year on year, the pressures on securing adequate funding to support all current activities remains a constant challenge under constant review.
- 5.1.6 In summary, our good and improving collection rates of Council Tax and Housing Rent aligned with the year on year reductions in Council Tax Support and Housing Benefit caseloads helped by good local employment opportunities indicates that the Councils approach is working. However, underlying concerns remain around the number of customers with whom getting regular payment and positive engagement will continue to prove difficult and it is our belief that an increasing number will be unable to cope with the impacts and expectations of the welfare reforms and economic changes which will impact on cash flow expectations in the future.

## **5.2 Legal, Data Protection and Human Rights Implications**

- 5.2.1 The new requirements of the enhanced General Data Policy Regulation,(GDPR being introduced in May 2018 will require a significant review of our data sharing protocols to ensure we can continue to work effectively with partners in legally exchanging information on residents and so we can continue to realise the benefits of the CRF developed that is proving so useful .

## **5.3 Safer Communities Implications**

- 5.3.1 Better access to advice and assistance has many direct and indirect benefits that contribute to a greater feeling of wellbeing and community cohesiveness. This can only have a positive impact on the communities we serve.

## **5.4 Environment and Sustainability Implications**

- 5.4.1 The Councils ongoing commitment to assist in helping people address or improve their financial circumstances or well-being has positive impacts. It is hoped that by providing this level of support, it will ensure that residents can learn new skills to enable them to rely less on our help going forward and help keep collection rates in terms of rent, Council Tax and housing benefit

overpayments as high as possible by providing the correct levels of help and support.

## **5.5 Human Resources Implications**

5.5.1 Ascertaining the right level and type of resources needed to deliver financial inclusion is under regular review, most notably by the Assistant Chief Executive (Community Services) and the Assistant Director (Housing) working closely with other internal colleagues. This has resulted in regular and ongoing restructuring of services and the decision to set up more formal shared / partnership arrangements wherever possible to deliver future challenges.

5.5.2 Overall, the Council's investment in staff and in developing effective partnerships has seen very positive outcomes being achieved but the complexity and challenges faced by staff in dealing with customers in these difficult circumstances cannot be understated.

## **5.6 Risk Management Implications**

5.6.1 Failure to provide appropriate levels of customer support could have a detrimental impact on many areas on Council activity and lead to an increase in costs of collection or support being incurred. The Councils current approach enables us to be proactive as opposed to reactive in our response to issues or circumstances.

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

5.7.1 The wide ranging activities undertaken under the overall Financial Inclusion approach cuts across virtually all Council priorities and in particular supports the three key corporate priorities of tackling poverty, improving health and well-being and promoting education, skills and employment.

## **5.8 Equalities Implications**

5.8.1 The various methods and mediums used to promote financial inclusion activity ensure no group or individual is denied access to help or advice in respect of both Council and other complimentary services.

The Contact Officer for this report is Bob Trahern (719378).

## The New Improved North Warwickshire FIP

Bob Trahern IRRV(Hons)  
Assistant Chief Executive,  
North Warwickshire BC



# Summary of the Day

- > Why the need for a New Improved FIP
  - > An updated “Terms of Reference”
  - > Taking Us to New Levels
- > Our Journey to Date
- > The Building Blocks For Future Action
- > Universal Credit Update
- > The Launch of the “Multi Agency Customer Referral Form”
- > Food Hub Update
- > An Opportunity to Network

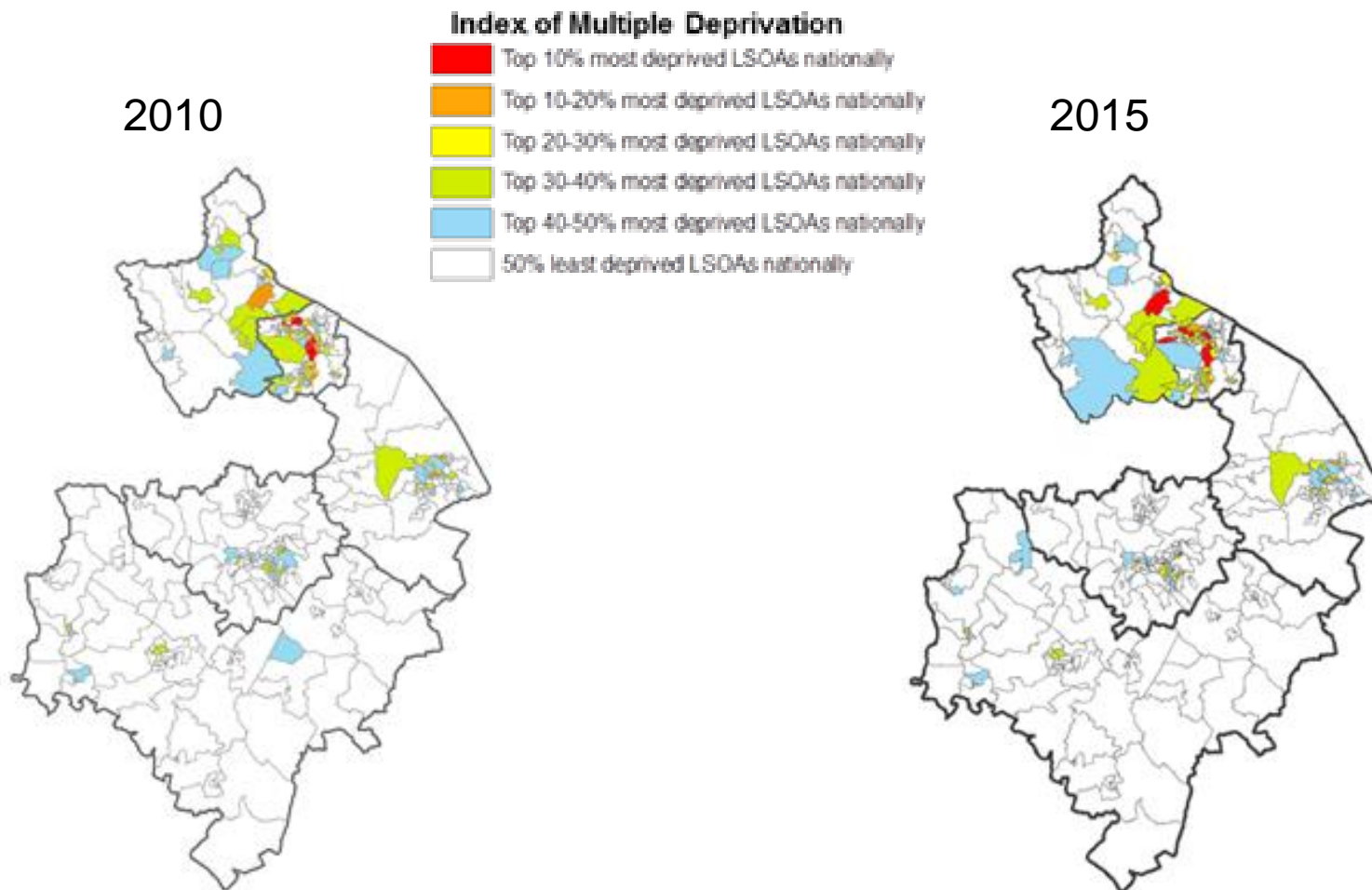
# So What Are The Key Challenges ?

Ensuring our customers are fully aware of their responsibilities & the impact of changes to their lives as early as possible to equip them to deal with them

- Maximising income to the Council whilst having regard to ability to pay - the need for a clear Corporate approach
- Evaluating and helping them through the ongoing Welfare Reform programme & introduction of Universal Credit
- Supporting them back into, nearer or into better paid work
- Embracing the Digital Inclusion agenda
- Joining up service delivery to meet the increasing “Speed and Complexity of Life”
- Improving our residents and life chances

BUT delivered against a backdrop of falling Government Grants, Welfare Changes, localisation of funding and rising costs

# Deprivation Challenges – A Warwickshire View



# Mosaic Descriptors 2016

Mosaic Group	North Warwickshire		Nuneaton & Bedworth		Warwickshire
	Number	%	Number	%	%
<b>A</b> Country Living	3,359	12.3%	74	0.1%	10.6%
<b>B</b> Prestige Positions	1,336	4.9%	2,627	4.7%	9.7%
<b>C</b> City Prosperity	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0.8%
<b>D</b> Domestic Success	1,559	5.7%	3,330	6.0%	8.6%
<b>E</b> Suburban Stability	3,811	13.9%	7,632	13.7%	9.8%
<b>F</b> Senior Security	2,509	9.2%	6,672	12.0%	9.9%
<b>G</b> Rural Reality	3,982	14.5%	112	0.2%	7.1%
<b>H</b> Aspiring Homemakers	3,029	11.0%	7,779	14.0%	10.7%
<b>I</b> Urban Cohesion	12	0.0%	665	1.2%	1.7%
<b>J</b> Rental Hubs	299	1.1%	567	1.0%	5.7%
<b>K</b> Modest Traditions	2,492	9.1%	6,670	12.0%	5.8%
<b>L</b> Transient Renters	1,555	5.7%	5,568	10.0%	5.4%
<b>M</b> Family Basics	1,683	6.1%	6,515	11.7%	6.3%
<b>N</b> Vintage Value	1,354	4.9%	4,747	8.5%	5.8%
<b>O</b> Municipal Challenge	432	1.6%	2,598	4.7%	2.2%

Key : Purple –NWBC; Red – Both; Green - NBBC



# NBBC and NWBC “Stronger Together”

- > Ongoing reviews of staffing structures have increased capacity whilst saving money
  - > Adoption of a formal Shared Service with NBBC since 2015
  - > Sharing of management resources and FI expertise
  - > Currently undertaking a major system review to potentially take arrangements to a new level
  - > Delivering in an ever changing world incorporating ever greater use of technology, data sharing and social media
- > Consistently Good and in some cases Exceptional Performance across all areas of the service (Cash Collected, Benefits, and Customer Contact)
  - > Increased adoption of localised schemes across all areas
  - > NWBC – Highest Collection Performer in Warwickshire
  - > NBBC – Best Benefits Performer in Warwickshire



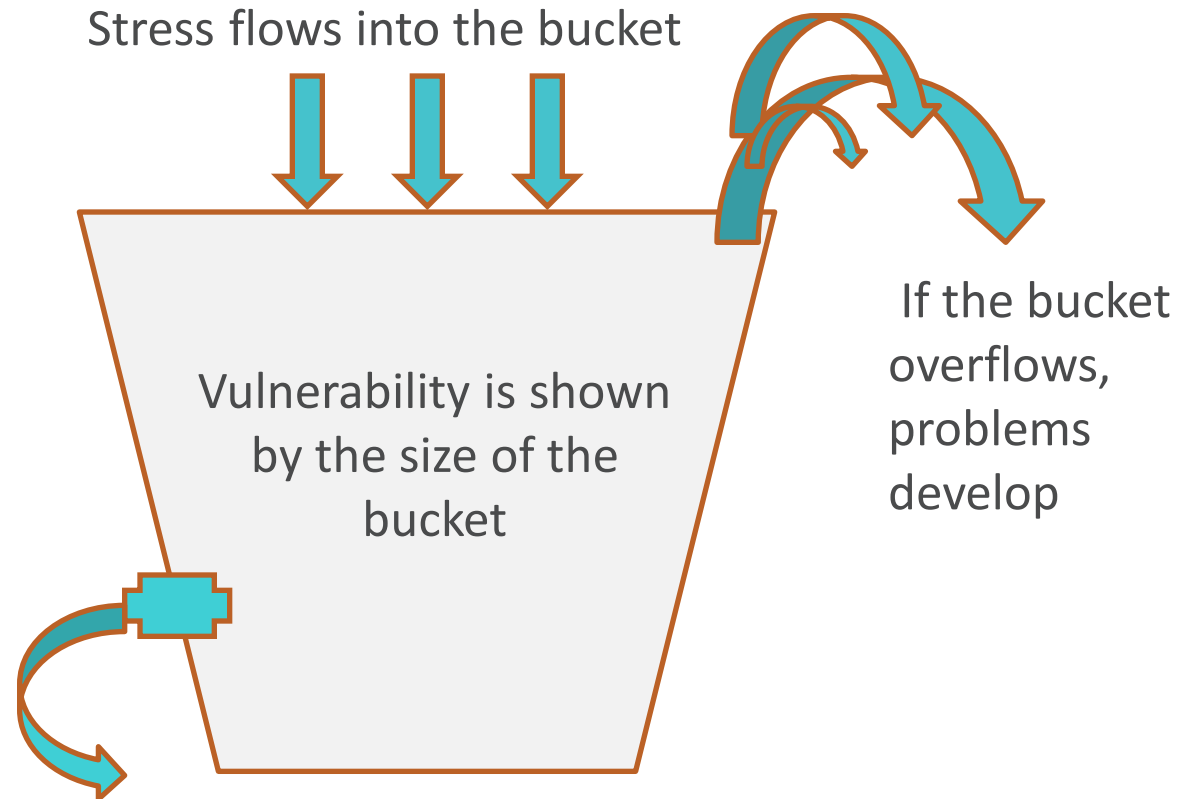
But whilst the  
headline figures  
look very  
promising, those  
finding things hard  
are likely to see  
things get ever  
harder

# Debt is Debilitating !



# The Customers stress bucket?

(Source: Brabban & Turkington 2002)



**Good coping** = tap working lets the stress out

**Bad coping** = tap not working so water fills bucket and overflows



# Estimated annual financial loss in Warwickshire by 2020/21 from pre and post-2015 reforms

Financial loss per working age adult  
£ per year

	Pre-2015	Post-2015	Total
Nuneaton and Bedworth	400	330	730
<b>North Warwickshire</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>570</b>
Rugby	310	260	570
Stratford-on-Avon	260	200	460
Warwick	250	180	430
<b>Warwickshire</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>540</b>
<b>West Midlands</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>660</b>
<b>Great Britain</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>730</b>

<sup>(1)</sup> Additional post-2015-16 impact of pre-2015 reform

Sources: HM Treasury, Impact Assessments and Sheffield Hallam estimates based on official data

# Hot off the Press

- > Due to Welfare Cuts , Rent Rises and Inflation – 7m households will be an average £40.62 p/w worse off by 2020 - mainly impacting single parents or couples
- > The biggest cuts - 2m over £50 per week - More children in rented property means bigger cuts !
- > UC will see an average income loss of £11.18 per week and the likely significant further rent arrears increase
- > Rise in temporary accommodation and homelessness as the LHA gap ever growing
- > DHP inadequate (185m in 2017/18 to help offset 4bn rises)
- > CA amongst others calling for UC roll out to be halted over growing debt fears & a system not delivering on expectations
- > LGA Public in Practice Report – September 2017

# A Changing Landscape

- UK Debt Landscape is changing – Local / National Government debt has doubled between 2005/06 to 2014/15 whilst credit card and personal loans have halved

Based on 1,000 clients with Council Tax arrears surveyed by Step Change in 2015

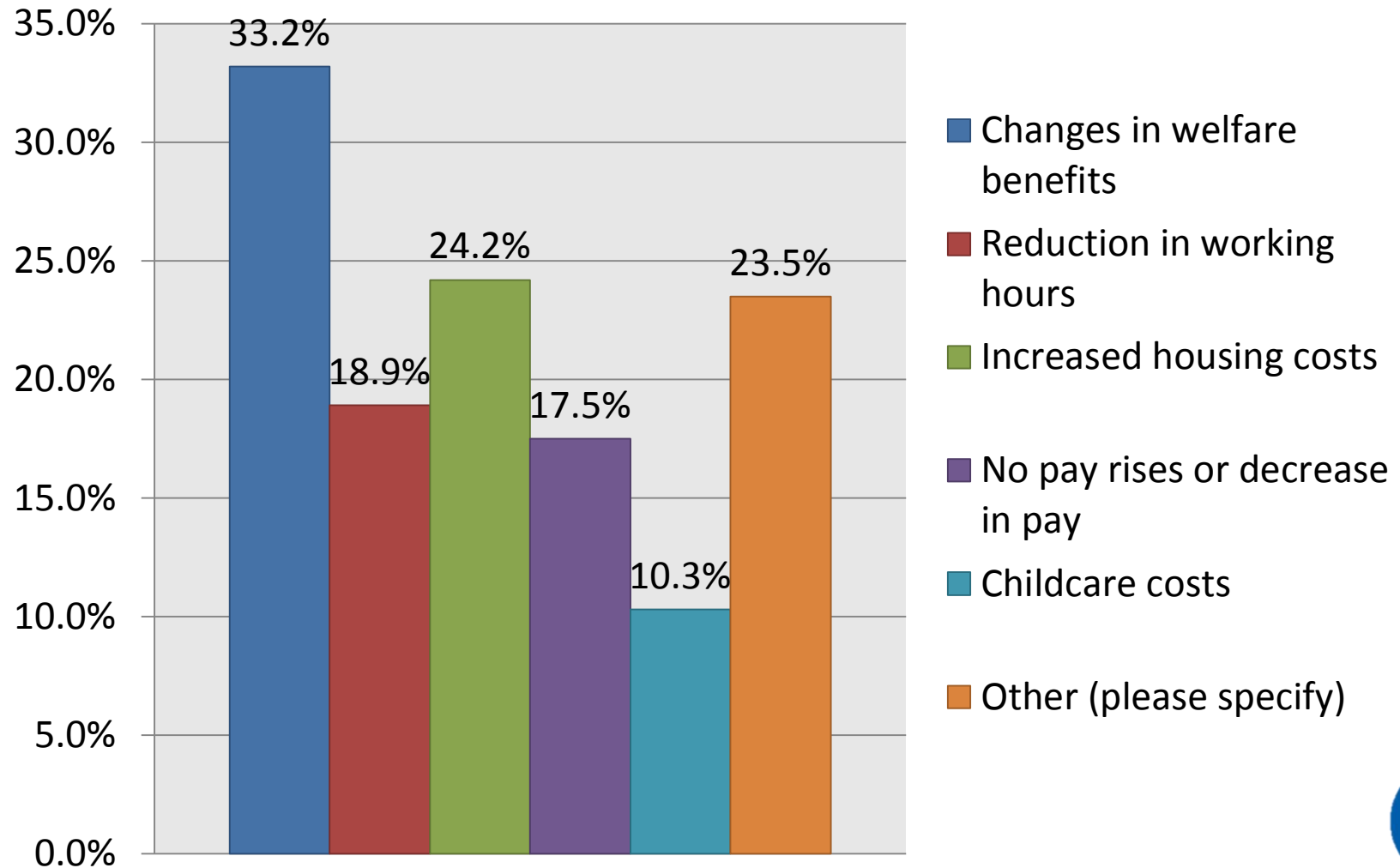
- Those with arrears on their Council Tax owed £961, up from £717 in 2011, an increase of 25%.
- In 2011, just 14% of the charity's clients had Council Tax arrears, but in 2014 this figure had increased to 30% - the impact of CTS which is likely to have grown ?
- 62% of people struggling with arrears who contacted their council for assistance were still threatened with court action.
- 51% were threatened with bailiff action
- Only 13% were encouraged to seek debt advice.

# Even Hotter Off The Press

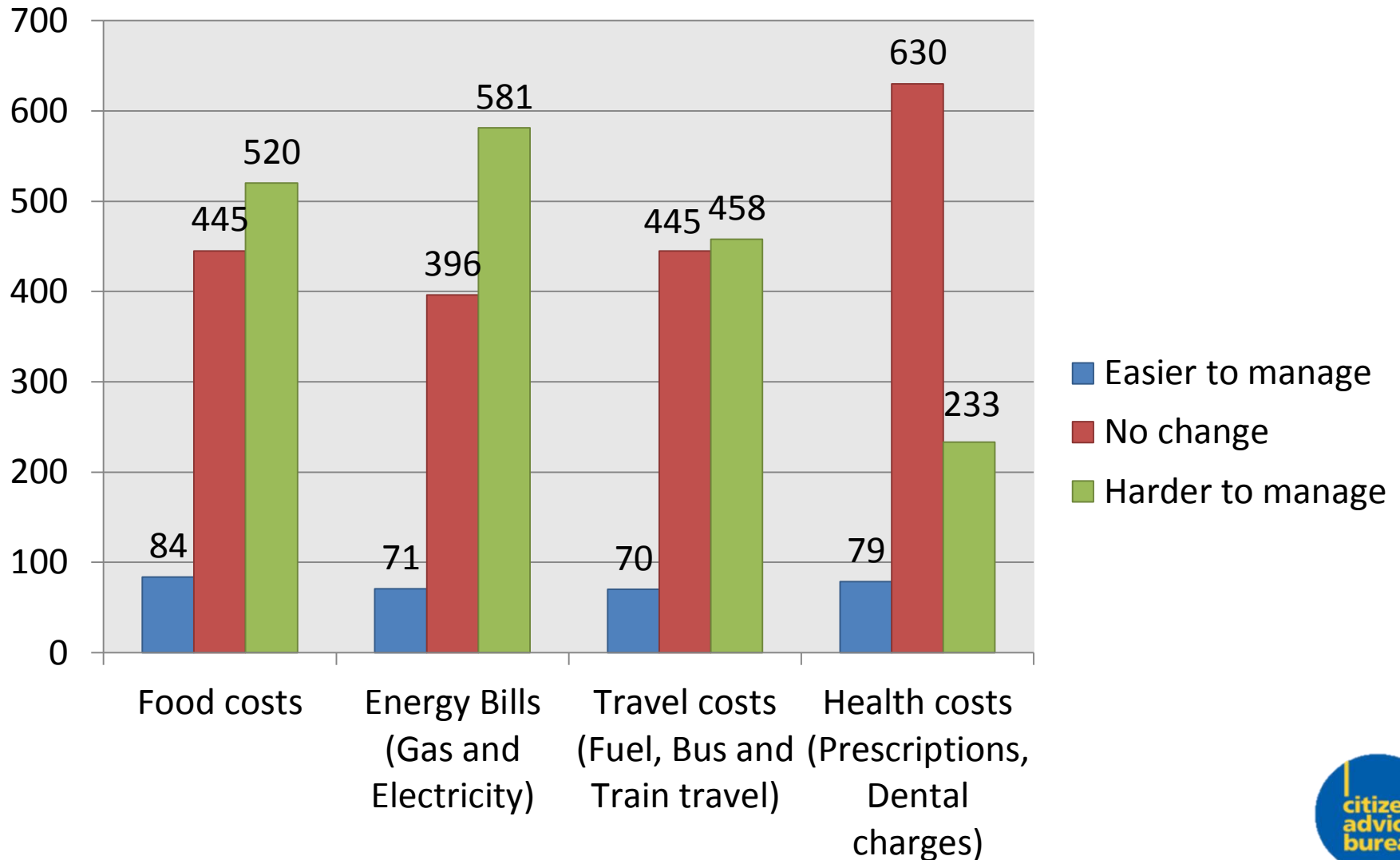
- > Growing Debt Problem centred on essentials
- > The Under 40's and Renters particularly vulnerable needing to borrow to cover bills
- > “The Gig Economy” – workers often with no guaranteed hours living off credit to smooth income
- > Increase in rent to own and PCP schemes
- > Average CT arrears now up to £1012 (£756 in 2013) and electric bills (£668 from £521)
- > 43% of £65bn on 0% balances and 50% of balances at same level as when offer began



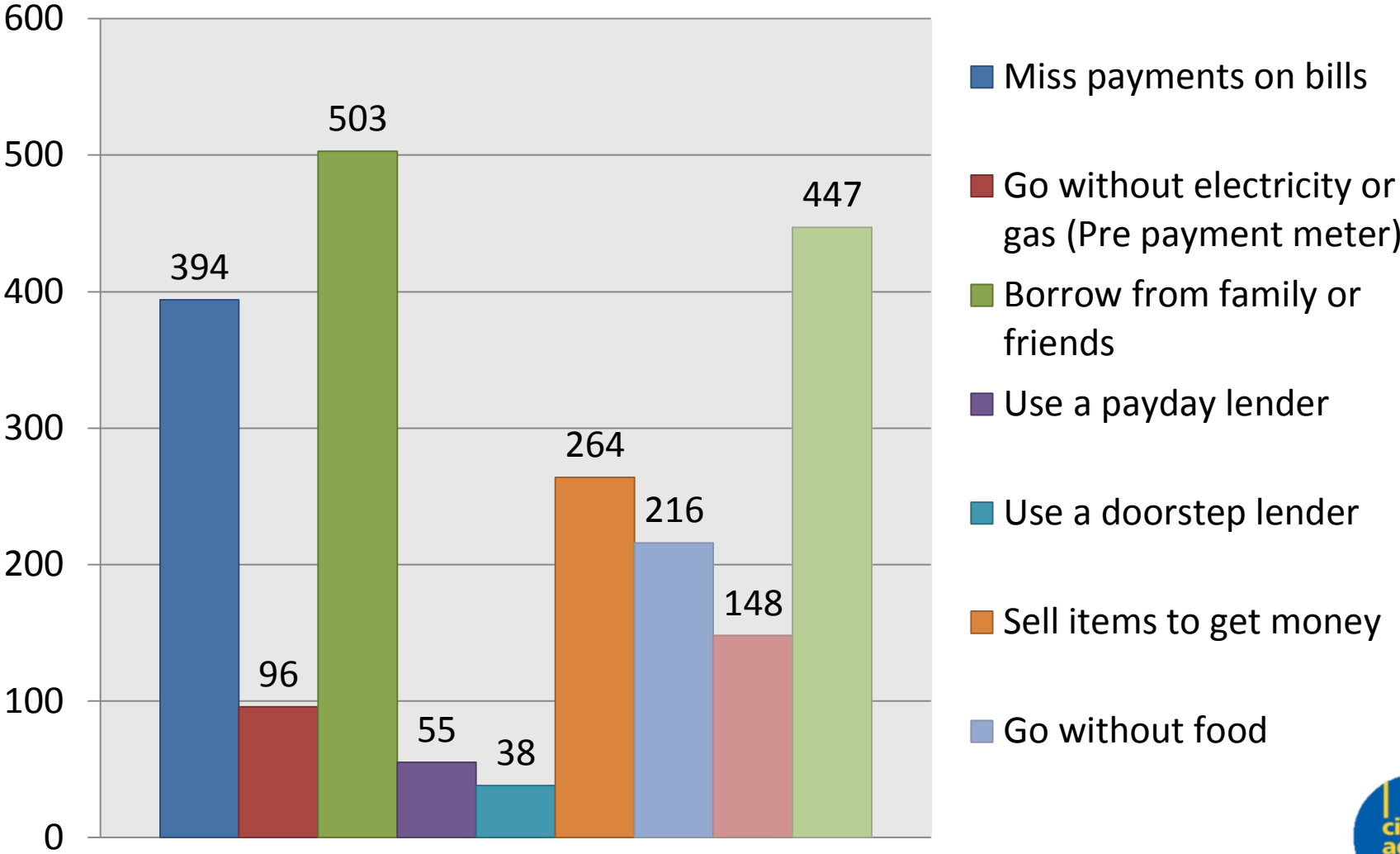
# If you are struggling to manage on your income, have any of the below external factors had an impact on this?



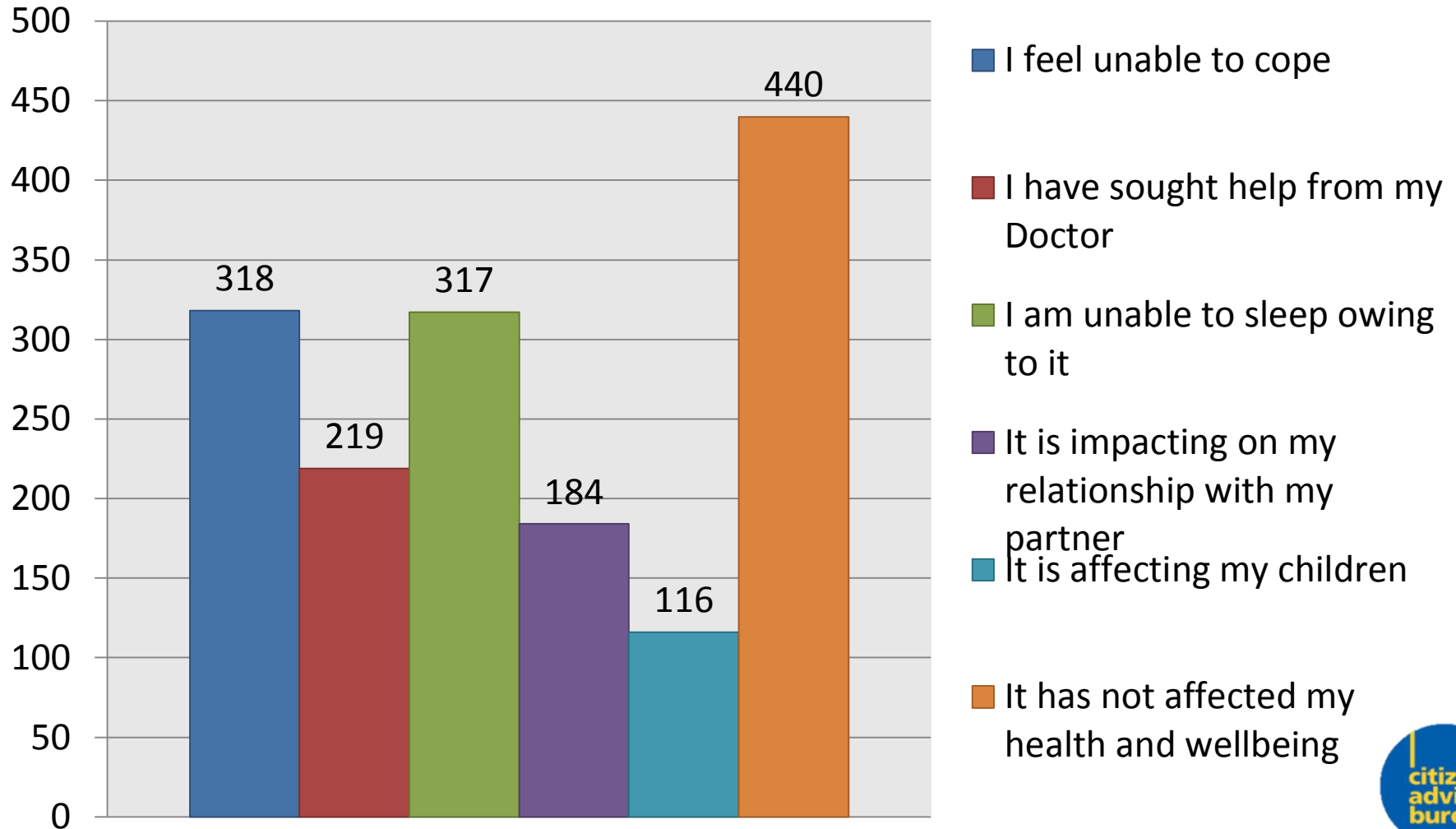
There have been well reported changes in the cost of living. From the list below please indicate how you feel these changes have affected your household?



# Have you had to do any of the following in the last 6 months to make ends meet?



# Has your financial situation affected your health and wellbeing? If so please indicate any of the below that describe your situation.



# An Increasing Focus on Supporting the Customer



**Apply for it:**

- **Housing benefit, council tax support and e billing**  
[www.northwarks.gov.uk/benefits](http://www.northwarks.gov.uk/benefits)
- **Reduce your council tax bill**  
[www.northwarks.gov.uk/counciltax](http://www.northwarks.gov.uk/counciltax)
- **Register to vote**  
[www.northwarks.gov.uk/register-to-vote](http://www.northwarks.gov.uk/register-to-vote)
- **Homes in North Warwickshire**  
[www.northwarks.gov.uk/homes](http://www.northwarks.gov.uk/homes)

**Help with it:**

- Getting online
  - Sorting money matters
  - Keeping active
  - Searching for a job
  - Living independently
  - Finding a Food Bank
- [www.northwarks.gov.uk/help](http://www.northwarks.gov.uk/help)

**1**  
**CHAPTER**  
Changing lives one by one



**North Warks online**

**Inside Business**  
Nuneaton News  
PAGE SPONSORED BY Willsons Solicitors

**Food delivery giant's festive hamper gift**

A WEEKLY FOCUS ON THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY IN THE AREA.

Willsons Solicitors  
100-102, 104, 106, 108, 110, 112, 114, 116, 118, 120, 122, 124, 126, 128, 130, 132, 134, 136, 138, 140, 142, 144, 146, 148, 150, 152, 154, 156, 158, 160, 162, 164, 166, 168, 170, 172, 174, 176, 178, 180, 182, 184, 186, 188, 190, 192, 194, 196, 198, 200, 202, 204, 206, 208, 210, 212, 214, 216, 218, 220, 222, 224, 226, 228, 230, 232, 234, 236, 238, 240, 242, 244, 246, 248, 250, 252, 254, 256, 258, 260, 262, 264, 266, 268, 270, 272, 274, 276, 278, 280, 282, 284, 286, 288, 290, 292, 294, 296, 298, 300, 302, 304, 306, 308, 310, 312, 314, 316, 318, 320, 322, 324, 326, 328, 330, 332, 334, 336, 338, 340, 342, 344, 346, 348, 350, 352, 354, 356, 358, 360, 362, 364, 366, 368, 370, 372, 374, 376, 378, 380, 382, 384, 386, 388, 390, 392, 394, 396, 398, 400, 402, 404, 406, 408, 410, 412, 414, 416, 418, 420, 422, 424, 426, 428, 430, 432, 434, 436, 438, 440, 442, 444, 446, 448, 450, 452, 454, 456, 458, 460, 462, 464, 466, 468, 470, 472, 474, 476, 478, 480, 482, 484, 486, 488, 490, 492, 494, 496, 498, 500, 502, 504, 506, 508, 510, 512, 514, 516, 518, 520, 522, 524, 526, 528, 530, 532, 534, 536, 538, 540, 542, 544, 546, 548, 550, 552, 554, 556, 558, 560, 562, 564, 566, 568, 570, 572, 574, 576, 578, 580, 582, 584, 586, 588, 590, 592, 594, 596, 598, 600, 602, 604, 606, 608, 610, 612, 614, 616, 618, 620, 622, 624, 626, 628, 630, 632, 634, 636, 638, 640, 642, 644, 646, 648, 650, 652, 654, 656, 658, 660, 662, 664, 666, 668, 670, 672, 674, 676, 678, 680, 682, 684, 686, 688, 690, 692, 694, 696, 698, 700, 702, 704, 706, 708, 710, 712, 714, 716, 718, 720, 722, 724, 726, 728, 730, 732, 734, 736, 738, 740, 742, 744, 746, 748, 750, 752, 754, 756, 758, 760, 762, 764, 766, 768, 770, 772, 774, 776, 778, 780, 782, 784, 786, 788, 790, 792, 794, 796, 798, 800, 802, 804, 806, 808, 810, 812, 814, 816, 818, 820, 822, 824, 826, 828, 830, 832, 834, 836, 838, 840, 842, 844, 846, 848, 850, 852, 854, 856, 858, 860, 862, 864, 866, 868, 870, 872, 874, 876, 878, 880, 882, 884, 886, 888, 890, 892, 894, 896, 898, 900, 902, 904, 906, 908, 910, 912, 914, 916, 918, 920, 922, 924, 926, 928, 930, 932, 934, 936, 938, 940, 942, 944, 946, 948, 950, 952, 954, 956, 958, 960, 962, 964, 966, 968, 970, 972, 974, 976, 978, 980, 982, 984, 986, 988, 990, 992, 994, 996, 998, 1000



# Getting the Message Out There



## Money matters

The festive season is just around the corner but it will soon be New Year, when many will have to face the cost of Christmas – when credit card bills land and the debts start to mount up. Whatever your circumstances, but particularly if this is going to be a struggle for you, the next few pages should help. They will hopefully give you lots of information on how to increase your income or reduce your outgoings and allow you to get your budget in good shape during 2017.

You're not alone! The Borough Council and its partners are committed to helping you make your money go further. Being in debt costs both you and the Council money and time to sort out the problems and it can have a negative impact on your health and your family's. Now's the time to make a New Year's resolution to sort out your finances in 2017.

## Some facts and figures from 2015/16

The Borough Council collects nearly £76 million every year in Business/Non Domestic Rates (NDR), Council Tax, and Housing Benefit Overpayments from around 27,558 Council Tax properties and 2,200 NDR properties.

### In 2015/16, the Council collected

- **99.64%** of Business Rates owing making it the ninth best Council nationally of 326 Councils. In addition, arrears reduced by a massive **75.84%**, again one of the best nationally.
- **98.39%** of Council Tax due which placed the Council 63rd nationally. In addition, arrears were reduced by **48.64%** placing the Council 89th nationally.
- **84.85%** of Housing Benefit overpayments raised in a year, placing it in the top **25%** in the country.

Bob Trahern, Assistant Chief Executive: Community Services said:

*"Thank-you if you are one of the residents or businesses who helped the Council achieve these results. We do appreciate it and helps pay for the services we can deliver to you. If paying on time is proving more difficult or you need your memory jogging to pay on time, we want to help you help yourself and avoid paying more than you need to. This could be you getting more organised or simply getting in touch with us and not burying your head in the sand, which could save you lots of time and most importantly, money."*

### Direct Debit

If you tend to forget to pay on time, remember that over 75% of people choose to pay their Council Tax by Direct Debit. This is the easiest and cheapest way to pay and takes all the stress away. Simply sign up online today at [www.northwarks.gov.uk/accounts/online](http://www.northwarks.gov.uk/accounts/online). If you want to continue to pay it yourself, go online and pay by debit card or ring the 24/7 phone line 01827 715341. No more cheques or extra trips out to pay!

### Mounting costs

In 2015/16, the Council had to issue over 9,000 reminder notices to residents who hadn't paid their bills. This resulted in the Council having to apply for over 2,000 orders in the Magistrates Court to enforce payment at the cost of an extra £100 added to late payers' bills.

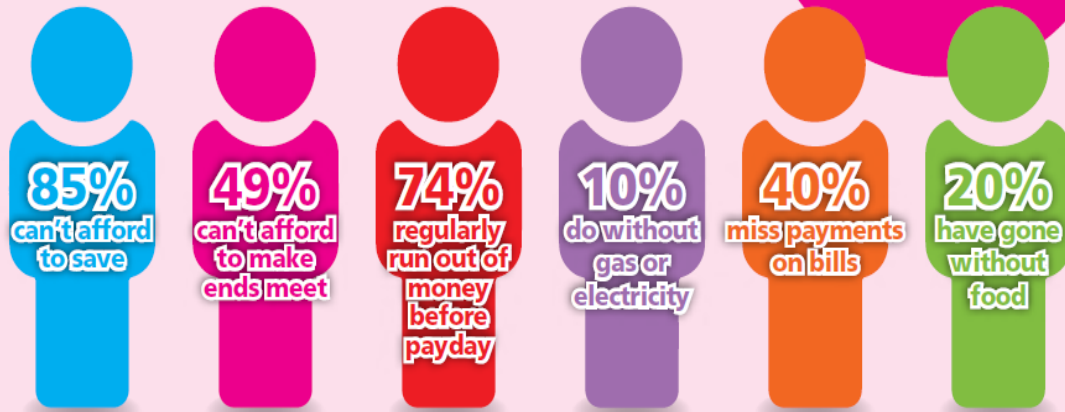
Of these orders, where debtors failed to contact the Council or didn't keep to their arrangements and didn't tell the Council why, over half were sent to the Council's bailiff, Bristow & Sutor. This action adds a further cost to the outstanding bill of £75 immediately and where a visit to the debtor is necessary, a further cost of £240. The Council has also contacted employers to deduct the money from wages. All these costs might have been avoided, if the person had contacted the Council as soon as they were having financial problems.

**So don't delay. If you owe the Council money, it won't go away and will only increase. Get in touch on 01827 715341, email [counciltax@northwarks.gov.uk](mailto:counciltax@northwarks.gov.uk) or call in and take the first steps to a more secure financial future.**

# Let People Know They Are Not Alone

**“Is it just me having financial difficulties? Can I get help?”**

The CAB recently did some research in North Warwickshire, which discovered that some residents are facing serious financial issues. Of the 389 people who replied to the survey:



## In 2015/16 the CAB

Helped **4,119** people  
Dealt with **13,261** issues

Gained **£525,000** in income for clients

## The results

**2 in every 3** people had their problem solved

**4 in 5** clients said the advice improved their lives

**90%** reported satisfaction with the overall service

Estimated savings of **£396,376** for the Department of Work and Pensions

Estimated savings of **£96,258** for the NHS

Estimated savings of **£143,803** for local housing providers

## Where to go for help and support about your money and debt

### Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

The CAB offers a range of free services and advice including information on your money, family and health issues and your legal rights.

Tel: Advice Line 0844 855 2322,  
Information line 01827 712852 or  
Visit [www.adviceguide.org.uk](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk)

### The Money Advice Service

For free, unbiased and independent advice on all money matters, visit [www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk](http://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk) or Tel: 0800 138 7777

### National Debtline

For free debt advice.  
Use My Money Steps to get free online debt help – visit [www.nationaldebtline.org](http://www.nationaldebtline.org) or Tel: 0808 808 4000 (Mon – Fri 9am to 8pm and Sat 9.30am to 1pm)

### StepChange

For free debt and money advice and a personal action plan. Visit [www.stepchange.org](http://www.stepchange.org) or Tel: 0800 138 1111

### Local Welfare Support Scheme

People in crisis who need emergency provision should call Warwickshire County Council. They may be able to help you with food parcels and emergency fuel costs. Tel 0800 408 1448 (freephone from landlines) or 01926 414124. Emergency food parcels may also be issued by the Borough Council if you get in touch or contact the CAB – don't skip meals to pay your debts! Help is there to tide you over for a short period of time.

### Age UK

For people aged 50+ needing information, advice and guidance about benefits, support services, activities and befriending services. Contact Age UK, Partnership Centre, Coleshill Rd, Atherstone, CV9 1BN or Tel: 01827 717172. See also the Borough Care article on p.3

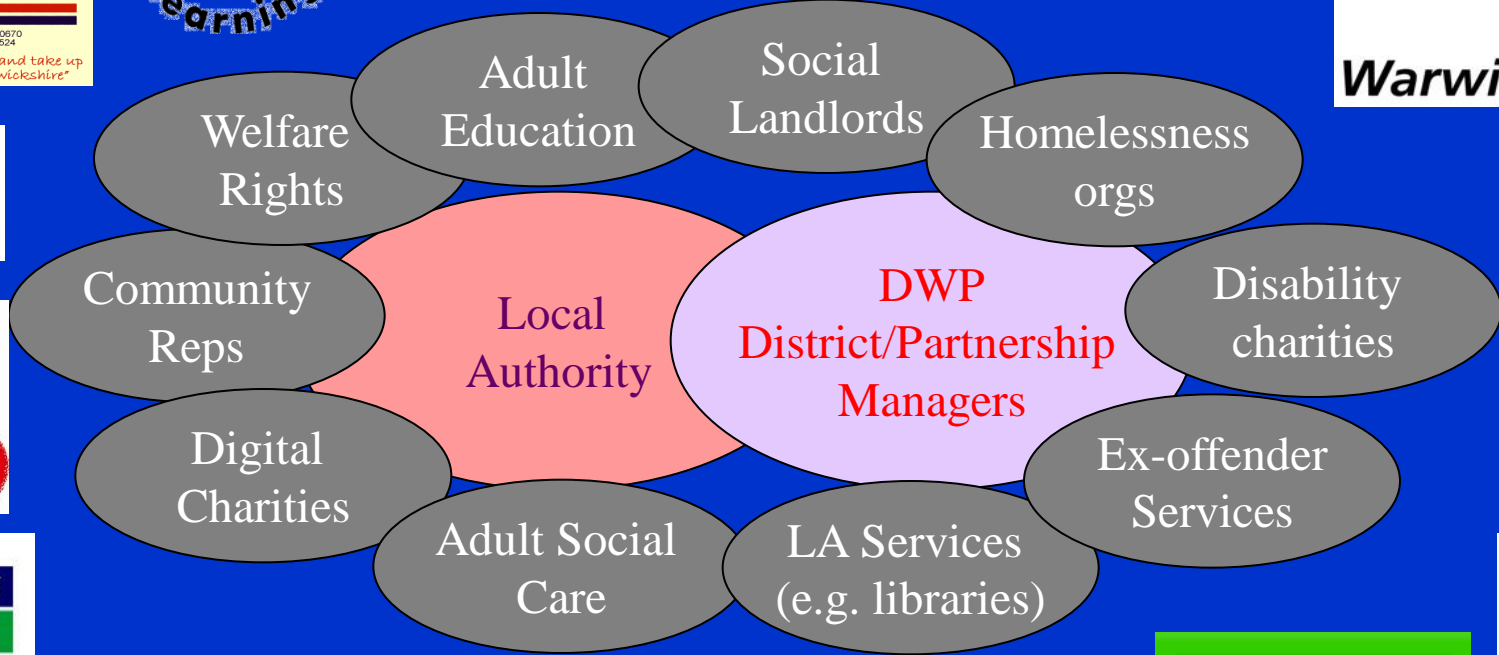
# Support via many common Front Doors

- > A Corporate Contact Centre that deals with all our telephone calls, web chat and social media
- > A Face to Face OSS facility for all borough, county services, police, JC+ and other “ad hoc” partner services
- > A developing interactive website including access to micro-sites, films and partner information
- > The B.O.B Bus (now used as a promotional vehicle and available for wider partner use)
- > Community Hubs or Info Points (13 in place, 6 with scanning facilities and all with free phones and access to laptops) – delivered with Community partners
- > The Food Hub – delivered in partnership with the Healthy Living Network)





# Our Key Partners


















# Helping Others to Help Themselves

- > In 2010 we led the development of the Frontline Worker Toolkit countywide
- > Created a commitment to a multi agency approach to assist people with multiple needs find the correct solutions
- > Meant working ever closer with F.I Partners - Debt Advice, Budgeting Support, Housing, Utility providers, Education and Careers providers, Children Centres and the Credit Union
- > The 2017 Version to be demonstrated
  - > On Line Referral via CRM and Internet
  - > Refresher training to Key Customer Contacts
  - > Now incorporates DHP, I&E and On-line referral all in one place (based on SFS)



contents



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page 19:	Consumer Advice	
page 21:	Energy	
page 27:	Housing	
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page 43:	Children and Young People	
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page 65:	Community	
page 70:	Health	
page 80:	Disability	

# B.O.B – the brand



- A Vehicle of Success since 2009
- Lots of Early Learning – a change in approach and culture – a brave decision
- The B.O.B brand gathered momentum, its own identity and was not associated with the Council or carries any stigma
- Hugely Successful in accessing our hard to reach customers
- Evolved from promoting financial awareness messages with CAB & CDA to also health, work & education messages
- Raising Awareness of Entitlements & Help by using targeted data via Experian to target and provide intelligence
- Now the focus of our “Get Online” commitment with Partners – if you want people to do something help them, incentivise them and make it easy

# The B.O.B Bus to Community Hubs

- > 13 hubs, many delivered in under 12 months during 2012/13 with access to laptops, free phones to contact 10 key partners & improved access to CAB, JC+ & Council the key objectives
- > Developed in partnership with Parish / Town Councils & Community Groups with Voluntary Sector support
- > Change of emphasis undertaken in 2016
  - > Usage and activity very patchy
  - > ICT more widely available now
  - > General Lack of Volunteers and the limited capacity of existing volunteers to do more
  - > Different local priorities and ambitions
- > Greater Links to the Food Hub Work and Public Health Agenda as well as likely WCC buy in going forward

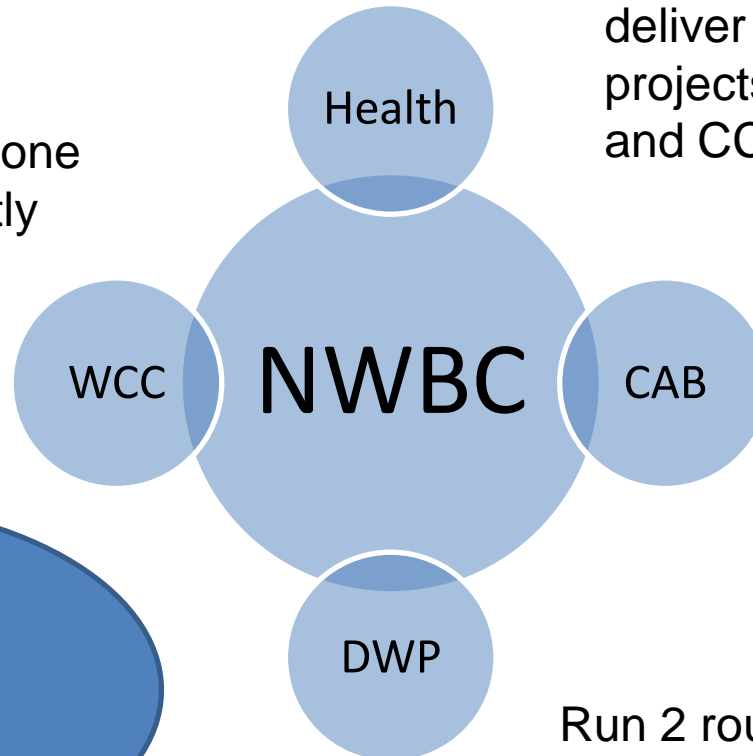


# Key Partners Needed to Ensure Sustainability and Use

We would hope that key partners would have regular contact with the hubs and would run regular drop ins/activities within the hubs

Looking to pilot a pop up  
Community Hub at Atherstone  
Children's Centre and jointly  
promote Dementia activity

Public Health seeking to  
deliver a number of targeted  
projects – both Ediblelinks  
and CCG commissioned



Drop In and Fuel  
Poverty related work

Key to success is  
Buy In, Funding &  
Resources

Run 2 rounds of successful ESA  
targeted events with FI partners  
– delivering targeted help

# Getting Online Commitments



**Struggling with the internet and want to learn more?**



Learn My Way computer courses help you to learn everything about computers – from turning the machine on and using a mouse, to shopping and banking online. You work at your own pace in your own environment and you can sign up at home or at a Hub.

Visit [www.learnmyway.com](http://www.learnmyway.com) for more information. If you have the internet at home, register using the code 3455824. To speak to the Learn My Way tutors, Bill or Leanne, call 01827 717 073.

- > Part of most Councils wider cost cutting and channel shift strategies
  - > E-Payments
  - > E-Benefits
  - > E-Forms
- > Links to Learn My Way commitments
- > Common website platforms and potentially ever more common systems

# Bringing Saving Money to Life

## Switched on Fridays 9.30am – 2.00pm

Research shows that almost one in ten households fell behind with an essential household bill over a twelve month period. Very often, it's a choice between heating and eating. Citizens' Advice in North Warwickshire has been helping people make savings by switching energy providers or negotiating with existing providers and making them large savings.

Margaret (see photo) saved £588.85 and commented that she'd never changed tariffs before:

"I went to an energy group session run by North Warwickshire CAB and thought I would book a session with an advisor. Thanks to the CAB, I've made a massive saving and I'm very happy. It was an excellent service."

Call in with your latest energy bills to North Warwickshire CAB,  
The Parish Rooms, Welcome Street, Atherstone, CV9 1DU or  
telephone 01827 712852 or email [SwitchedOn@nwcab.org.uk](mailto:SwitchedOn@nwcab.org.uk)  
Opening times: Monday, Tuesday and Friday 9.30am- 2pm  
and Wednesday 3.30-6.30pm.



Margaret receives her certificate from Mike Dixon of the CAB.

# Making Saving Money Easy

- > Proactive Campaigns run with our local water authority
- > Promoted via targeted letters (learning from our FSM work) and at ESA Events
- > A disproportionate and growing number of sign ups with significant savings per household

## Save on water bills...

Severn Trent Water is working to help people struggling to pay their water bills through The Big Difference Scheme. It's open to all Severn Trent Water customers, whatever your circumstances and you don't need to be on benefits. If you qualify, you could be eligible to get a reduction on your water bill and depending on your circumstances, this could range from anywhere between from 10-90%\* of your yearly bill. You'll remain on the scheme for 12 months, after which you'll need to reapply. **To apply, call 0800 917 6901.**



\*based on the average water bill for customers in the Severn Trent region.



# Helping People Back Into Work



## Accelerate... into employment

The Corporation Development Agency (CDA) is running a project across Merseyside, part funded by the Big Lottery and the European Social Fund. Further support is being given to a network of professional advisers that will help people find employment, so that you are not out of pocket. The project works with 25 other organisations to help advise the public that can help you when you are unemployed. The organisations can support people who have learning needs, disabilities, a social background, poor health, low literacy and people who are over 50. This service is available to all people in Merseyside, North Wirral and South Wirral. For more information, call 0151 253 2622 or email [merseyside@cdacda.org.uk](mailto:merseyside@cdacda.org.uk)

CDA will offer confidence building, IT skills, interview techniques, telephone techniques, application support, job search support and much more. There will be access to work experience placements, job fairs, housing support and childcare. Call the CDA team. Tel: 0151 253 2622 or email [merseyside@cdacda.org.uk](mailto:merseyside@cdacda.org.uk)



## Talent Match

Are you 18 to 24 years old and want to try something a bit different? If you have not had a long period of work in the last 12 months, then Talent Match may be able to help you. It's a flexible support programme, designed to address your needs and help you onto the right career path. Talent Match helps you overcome some of the barriers to work, helping you towards employment and training. You'll have your own personal mentor to support you through the programme, help you to achieve your goals and overcome any challenges. Talent Match is free of charge and will not affect your entitlement to benefits.

To find out more about the project or to book a meeting with one of the programme mentors, ring 01827 718080 or email: [talentmatch@wcava.org.uk](mailto:talentmatch@wcava.org.uk)

## Support events



The Borough Council, working in partnership with the DWP, held a number of Employment Support Allowance events at the Hubs. Over 100 people attended the events, which were open to everyone so that they could benefit from advice from the many organisations there.

Bill McCann, Community Projects Officer at the Council, recalls one customer, who seemed very anxious and tearful at the thought of sorting out her problems:

"This lady's long term partner had died suddenly in the last year. Her parents, who live by the coast, have health issues – one has early on-set of dementia and the other is blind. She is in debt, was recently turned down for Personal

Independent Payments (PIP) and felt unable to appeal against the decision.

I introduced her to Guideposts, who advise carers in the Borough and also to the CAB, who gave her advice about debt and will appeal for her regarding the Personal Independent Payments. She also expressed an interest in volunteering, as she wasn't ready to go back to work and hopefully this is progressing.

After a cup of tea, the lady left in a far more positive frame of mind. She looked as if a weight had been lifted from her shoulders and said she was really glad that she'd made the effort to come to the event."

- > Proactively targeted benefit customers to local Job opportunities, training and events and volunteering
- > Successfully targeted young mothers and other groups with specialist needs to engage and gain qualifications via cooking and ICT focussed activities
- > A particular focus on targeting our ESA Customers in NWBC and JSA customers with our JC+ colleagues is needed to signpost to the help and support available with Universal Credit very much in mind
- > Over 30 volunteers have been helped move into employment in the last 18 months significantly to Ocado as well as many others via Job Fairs . These followed support and information provided at community hubs and our food hub and were targeted at customers in partnership.
- > A plan to work closely with shared Armed Forces Officer, DWP and CAVA to address common goals

# To Ensure Our Successful Journey Continues

**CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE** The Government Standard



**DWP** Department for Work and Pensions



**bacs**

**I&DeA**  
improvement and development agency



**LGC AWARDS**

THE NATIONAL AWARDS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT 2007



**Irrv**  
INSTITUTE OF REVENUES RATING & VALUATION

**WINNER**  
**BEST PARTNERSHIP AWARD**  
The Branching out Bus Project North Warwickshire F... Council

**IMA** Institute of Money Advisers  
Performance Awards 2011  
In Association with **payplan**

Sponsored by **Money Advice Trust**



**ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS 2014**  
HIGHLY COMMENDED **MJ**

**msi** AWARDS 10 YEARS  
**2016 FINALIST**  
Public Sector Collections Team of the Year in Association with LACEF

**BENEFIT** Irrv  
Award winning teamwork

# The FIP Looking Forward

- > The only certainty is our workloads will become more complex & challenging, budgets get tighter and there will be ever more reliance on maximising income
- > A continued push to embed consistent and replicable solutions & support to enable customers break cycles of dependency and improve their life opportunities alongside partners
- > All we can do is keep pushing the boundaries to ensure we deliver services focused on the customer
  - > Proactive in identifying problems
  - > Promoting a positive Joined Up Approach
  - > Working with partners to create multiple front doors
  - > Working with Customers to Deliver Personalised Services
- > Joining Up Solutions for a Better Northern Warwickshire



## North Warwickshire Community Partnership Quarterly progress report – December 2017

**Champion: Report by Bob Trahern**

**Theme: Tackling Poverty (previously Access)**

### **Commentary on Project Progress – achievements to date (and any slippage)**

#### **Actions since last report in September 2017**

During the last 3 months we have continued to make good progress building on the written update provided in September in relation to the commitments in respect of the “Tackling Poverty” agenda. All activity has continued to focus on

- Reviewing enhancements to the Councils Food Operation
- Reviewing and understanding the size of the problems to address issues being faced by customers Impacted by the Welfare Reforms
- Consolidating and promoting the use of the Community Hubs & increasing volunteer activities
- Supporting the Councils Channel Shift and Digital Agenda ambitions

#### **Progress since the last report**

##### **Debt Project**

The Council continues to show strong performance in its collection of monies due in year plus arrears (which have just dropped below £1m) on which we will continue to have significant focus over the rest of this financial year. We currently remain on target to achieve the matching of last years very high performance in spite of the ongoing economic challenges faced by the Council and which is bucking the National trend

This very high performance and our inclusive approach has again received National recognition when in November we retained our title won in 2016 by winning the Public Collections Team of the Year 2017 announced at the Customer and Credit Services award. This is a fantastic achievement that continues to recognise the very proactive and innovative approach being taken by the Council to support customers and collect monies due. The Council were also finalists in the categories Best Customer Service Provider and the Best Creditor Support Initiative and despite not winning the ultimate prize against strong competition gain shows the Council in a very positive light and as a National leader in our field.

Our approach will feature in a case study to be undertaken by the Money Advice Service and it is also pleasing that the Council has been identified as an exemplar in

its reduced use of bailiffs services by the Money Advice Trust and its approach in pursuit of monies due to the Council which again are all very positive. See also the food hub update that highlights further award success and National recognition

In addition to excellent in year collection, we continue to make good progress since we last reported on the exercise which is looking at the likely propensity to collect old and large debts using credit rating records to inform this view and to pursue only those cases where there continues to be little or no engagement and which appear to provide the best potential for success via committal to prison proceedings, bankruptcy or serving charging orders where deemed appropriate.. We have instigated a number of actions after review of some of our bigger debts and over the next 6 to 12 months we will be continue to work across the Council and our partners to either recover or deliver support / remit some of the other debts that are currently outstanding prior to migrating onto a new Revenues and Benefits system in December 2018

As part of this exercise we have identified and flagged an issue we have previously flagged up with WCC regarding the cost effectiveness of pursuing many of these debts that are less than £2,000 (some 94% of debts of which about 44% are closed) due to the fact that whilst the Council picks up the full cost of recovering these monies it only retains 13% of the income generated. We are hoping that the proposal to help fund a proportion of the costs we incur to recover these monies on an “invest to save principle” will be supported by the County from available WLWS underspend and hope that these discussions can be progressed in the next couple of months to allow the more effective recovery of debts due.

In September, we also reported that we had re-launched with internal staff and then with partners on 21 September the on line referral form to be used for accessing appropriate help and advice. The new improved multi agency referral form which incorporates a Discretionary Housing Payment application form, income and expenditure form with hyper links to partner help and a self referral form for food and other support is now live and we already have seen some very good case studies demonstrating how it is delivering support in practice. If it continues to work as planned this will inform us better of residents' issues and circumstances to help better decision making going forward and will see us take decisions in a structured and informed way on those debts that “can't as opposed to won't” be paid. To date we have had in excess of 300 forms completed by staff and members of the public seeking help and support from a variety of our partners and will continue to develop our approach to make this approach an increasing and common feature of our approach.

Finally, the impact of welfare reforms on households continues to be a key issue that is being monitored. Whilst it is positive that overall collection rates are excellent, with further and more significant changes due to be implemented over the next 12 to 18 months including Universal Credit which has recently be deferred from starting in May 2018 to September 2018 in respect of those signing at Atherstone job centre these will make the Councils job in recovering money due in respect of rent and council tax ever more difficult as we move forward. This is evidenced by Rugby who have been a National pilot since 2014 who have seen a four fold increase in arrears and NBBC who having only been live for 4 months have seen rent arrears already increase by a third. This will mean our proactive approach will become ever more important in working closely with Housing and third sector partners to identify help and support needed to assist payment at the earliest opportunity.

Our approach and commitment to be proactive in identifying help and solutions saw

us repeat the very useful money matters 8 page spread we produced in the Winter edition of North Talk in 2016 again in the 2017 edition which is promoting our Financial Inclusion messages. Whilst difficult to evaluate the usefulness of this information in promoting action by individuals, we know that we are getting information communicated to every household whether it is acted upon or not.

It remains incredibly positive that the work of the Council and our Financial Inclusion Partnership stand as exemplars from which others are encouraged to learn. The local CAB recently won an award with others for its early adoption of a casebook approach and it is very positive that we have expanded the work of our FIP to incorporate NBBC so they can adopt similar methods to ourselves based on our ever closer shared working across Revenues and Benefits. This has also seen us get many of our partnership objectives raised as countywide priorities via the countywide FIP. We hope that this will see an improved understanding of issues and a more joined up approach being adopted with county services that continue despite having objectives around the reduction of child poverty and better support of customers often sees them operating in isolation of Districts.

In conclusion, it remains pleasing that this joined up approach which has been promoted and advocated by the Council for a number of years is becoming evermore widely accepted as being key to delivery of positive outcomes with the reduced resources available and been accepted as the way to deliver positive outcomes (see also the food hub update below).

### **Welfare Update**

We are now very much in the process of preparing ourselves for the impact of the full roll out of Universal Credit service across the whole of the borough despite some changes being announced in the Chancellors budget that will see our implementation of the service in Atherstone delayed from May to September 2018. The changes announced will also see us needing to implement a number of policy changes to assist customers deal with the transition period from legacy benefits or the loss of work to this new benefit in a different way that hopefully will mean that supporting customers impacted can be better managed to avoid them falling into arrears.

Based on the experiences of Nuneaton and others, we are also undertaking preparatory work that will see us adopting an approach to increasingly work with JCP colleagues to support people in need of personal budgeting support and wider ICT help as a key role for us going forward. The roll out of the new on line referral form will be key to delivering this objective and we expect to see an increase in the number of food parcels that will need to be issued due to delays created between application and the first payment. One of the key changes implemented as part of the budget is the removal of the very penal charge to access the DWP helpline which we have overcome locally for a number of years by offering such a facility from the community hubs. This is a pleasing development that will help people access help and advice without penalty

In view of these changes and further proposed tax credit changes, it has been agreed that the Council will again adopt a scheme with no change to its maximum 91.5% Council Tax Support scheme for 2018/19. This is the sixth consecutive year the scheme will be held at this level and mean the Council has the most supportive scheme in Warwickshire for those on low incomes). It is hoped this will maintain the Councils position in terms of its excellent collection record and best support customers impacted by these changes if agreed by members in 2018/19.

However, as part of discussions and to streamline / align the many benefit schemes now in operation, it is proposed that we will be working with NBBC and RBC on a more simplified banding scheme to replace the current CTS scheme from 2019/20 onwards. Full consultation and impact assessments will be undertaken before any changes are proposed

### **Food Projects**

Since the last report, I am pleased that things continue to gain real momentum under the Ediblelinks brand that is now fully being coordinated by the Healthy Living Network

In summary;

At the CCS Awards in November, the project run with the Healthy Living Network and supported by Ocado won the Charitable Initiative of the Year meaning that we were the only double winner on the night

In addition, the Ediblelinks project which is delivering ground breaking work in supporting communities, schools and individuals. have also recently been made finalists in two categories at the biggest Local Government Awards of the year run by the Local Government Chronicle to be announced in March 2018.

The categories are Best Public/Private Partnership and Best Innovation and we will keep our fingers crossed for those and against mainly unitary Councils, AND London Boroughs is a huge feather in our cap to even be recognised.

In spite of these accolades, the highest priority continues to be is to secure income. The application made to the Big Lottery Help through Crisis fund for 3 years funding, which will provide enough time to test a sustainable model of working by charging community groups for membership continues to be dogged by delays and setbacks as various funds that were available have been pulled at short notice despite very positive comments being made regarding the need and innovative approach of the work being done. However, we remain hopeful via ongoing work with lottery staff that a solution can be found and proactive steps continue to be taken.

The project has also been subject of an independent review by WCC who have provided some of the funding from the WLWS monies provided by Central Government to help the project over the last 4 years. This fund remains underspent and has over £700,000 still available to be allocated and it is hoped that if the discussions to access funding from an external fund provider remain unsuccessful or are delayed further that this project should be given access to utilise further funds from this underspent budget to continue based on the excellent work it is delivering across predominantly NBBC and NWBC but increasingly the rest of the County. This is both in terms of health and educational benefits as well as welfare support which the project was initially set up to address.

During the 12 months since the Healthy Living Network took over the project they have doubled the number of community groups benefitting from its work, linked it closely to health message, increased significantly the volumes and collections of food stuffs, set up a network of honesty shops and linked its outputs to many health and wider benefits We are also planning the current Xmas Eve Turkey Run that again will support many individuals and groups support many activities in the run up and over the Christmas period which this year will involve both the Mayors from NWBC and NBBC in promoting its good work.

The project also continues to recruit, train and support volunteers and has become evermore proactive with their use of social media to promote messages which is showing how valued the project is in the area

There are so many positives from the work undertaken that it will be key to find a solution to ensure the ongoing work of the project that currently remains subsidised by the Council, NWBC and WCC in 2017/18 to hopefully see the food hub continue to develop and grow in its support of so many residents across the borough and beyond in what is seen as a totally unique project.

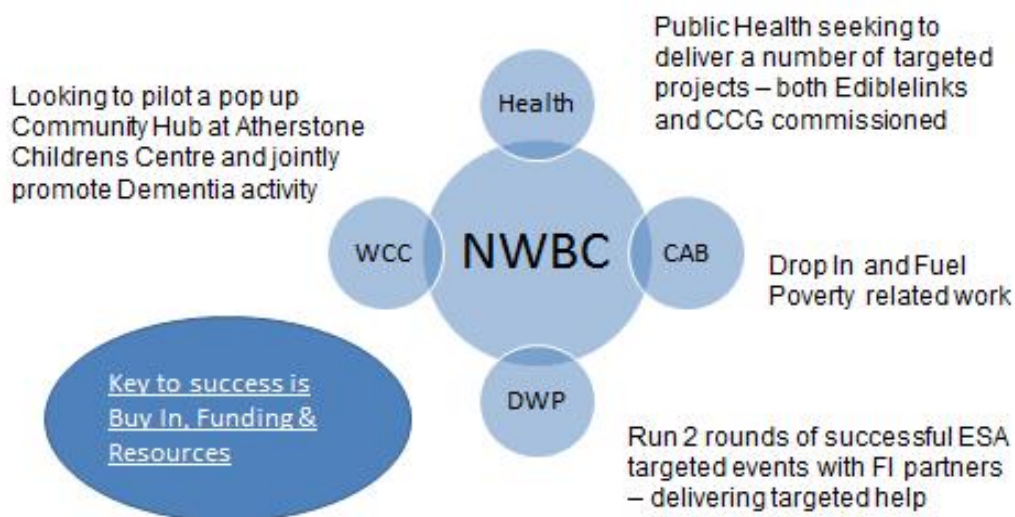
**Community Hubs**

The work on supporting the community hubs continues but the different ambitions and nature of the 6 hubs is making this task challenging and it is hoped that the hubs be aligned with the expectations of the ambitions of Public Health outlined in the Health report to ensure they can be sustained and made viable

Meetings have continued with Public Health and WCC to establish how we can better work together to deliver shared priorities and ambitions by utilising the best locations (these may be different to those currently supported) and that this needs to be achieved with paid resource and activities that will help fund room hire. These discussions will hopefully progress well over the next 3 months otherwise it may be necessary to review if the community hub project should continue beyond 2018/19

**Key Partners Needed  
to Ensure Sustainability and Use**

We would hope that key partners would have regular contact with the hubs and would run regular drop ins/activities within the hubs



As part of the wider commitment to promote digital services and channel shift we will continue to promote accessibility to ICT in community hubs and the BOB Bus but we have accepted that this need which was the key reason for setting up the hubs in 2012 when access to technology was much more restrictive is no longer a major hook in encouraging the use of hubs due to the widespread use of mobiles and access to cheaper broadband or free wi fi.



<b>Changes to the action plan</b>		
<p>Making progress is largely dependent on being able to access internal / external resources and funding and is being delivered against the backdrop of the ever challenging environment in which we work. As such, we will continue to review our ability to continue to deliver on the many fronts we are currently engaged in what amounts to a very small team. The need to work in partnership with internal colleagues (e.g.) Housing, Community Development, DWP, WCC and other third sector partners is integral to us continuing to be successful and maintaining momentum on the wide ranging, proactive and innovative work undertaken to date and is something we are working on and trying to align actions and priorities.</p>		
<b>Expected Outcomes</b>		
<p>Positive engagement with a wide variety of customers and improved access to a wide range of services and information are being delivered in partnership and innovatively. This has seen us be flagged up as a site of excellence by our peers and has seen us be very successful in bidding for external funding. Our approach has built on our member and officer commitment to these agendas and the positive results that continue to be delivered many in partnership and despite the difficult financial and economic climate are testament to this.</p>		
<b>Expenditure (SCS Funding)</b>		
	<b>Predicted Expenditure</b>	<b>Actual Expenditure</b>
No allocated budget remains. The corporate access to services budget that is funding ongoing hub costs are the only funds available		
We have been allocated monies to support customers migrating to universal credit although at this time it is considered that it is unlikely to be sufficient based on our experiences on the SMART project. We will be reviewing how we are best using this money on a regular basis and will monitor this position		
<b>Publicity</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We continue to attend a significant number of internal and external officer and partner meetings to raise awareness, review better partnership working and plan future activity of all related activities.</li> <li>• Proposals on how we continue to promote our work as outlined in this report continues to be key to ensuring residents in the borough are aware of what support, help and opportunities are available. .</li> </ul>		
<b>Lessons learnt</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relying on volunteers and third sector partners who have limited capacity and resources to develop new projects and support ongoing initiatives is hugely challenging and means significant demands on limited officer time continues to be needed.</li> <li>• Ongoing difficulties with recruiting volunteers remain because of employment opportunities in the area and the general lack of numbers coming forward locally</li> </ul>		

despite ongoing promotion

- Making progress in these difficult times and partnership working continues to get ever harder and our ambitions are not always met by our available resources

**Sustainability of project**

This is a key requirement and aim of all work being carried out to date and a key feature of any activity agreed to see how it can be supported long term by changing working practices to free up resources or identifying a suitable revenue stream where a need arises. There are clear examples that this is demonstrated in all parts of this report as to how we are seeking to make the work we are doing possible at a time of reducing resources.

In essence the work being promoted by the partnership around tackling poverty has become embedded into the Councils corporate and service plans making the activities undertaken part of the “way we do business” as opposed to a separate strand of activity.

Whatever happens, our work in this area is now about consolidation and utilising the resources we have and arrangements set up to help support customers improve their life chances and circumstances by providing access to the most appropriate tools and help available.

# Money matters



The festive season is just around the corner but it will be New Year when many will have to face the cost of Christmas – when credit card bills land and the debts start to mount up. On the next few pages, you'll hopefully find lots of information on improving your finances and making your budget clean and lean in 2018.

## Some facts and figures from 2016/17

**The Borough Council collects upwards of £76,000,000 in Non Domestic Rates (NDR), Council Tax, and Housing Benefit Overpayments from around 27,558 Council Tax properties and 2,200 NDR properties.**

### In 2016/17, the Council collected

- **99.58%** of Business Rates owing making it the ninth best (same as last year) Council nationally of **325** Councils. In addition, arrears reduced by a massive **75.85%**, again one of the best nationally.
- **98.59%** of Council Tax due which placed the Council **56th** nationally. In addition arrears were reduced by **39.02%**.
- **99.57%** of Housing Benefit overpayments raised in a year.
- **98.77%** of housing rents - of all rent due plus arrears brought forward.

These figures demonstrate the Council has an excellent record for collecting monies. It was successful in its nomination for Public Sector Collections Team of the Year in 2016. This year it has again been shortlisted as finalists in four categories: Best Public Sector Collections Team, Vulnerable Customer Support Initiative (creditor), Charitable Initiative of the Year, Best Customer Service Provider. This recognises the Council's excellent and unique work to support its residents

The Council with its partners wants to help you make your money go further and help everyone to pay their bills on time. Being in debt costs you money and time and can also affect your health and well-being.

### Direct Debit

Over 75% of people choose to pay money their Council Tax by Direct Debit. This is the easiest and cheapest way to pay and takes all the stress away. Simply sign up online today at [www.northwarks.gov.uk](http://www.northwarks.gov.uk)

However, of the nearly 7,000 non Direct Debit households, the Council had to issue over 10,000 reminder notices. It also needed to get 1,930 orders in the Court to enforce payment at the cost of an extra £100 added to debtors' bills. Of these orders, where debtors failed to contact the Council or broke payment arrangements and didn't tell the Council why or their circumstances, nearly two thirds were sent to the Council's bailiff, Bristow & Sutor. This action adds a further cost to the debtor of £75 immediately and where a visit to the debtor is necessary, a further cost of £235.

**"If you do not pay your rent there are serious consequences. The Borough Council successfully evicted 18 people last year due to non-payment of rent. If you experience financial difficulties, get in touch with the housing team as soon as possible to discuss your rent payments and avoid getting into arrears."**

All these costs could potentially be avoided if you contact the Council as soon as you are having financial problems. There are many ways to help you make your money go further or increase your income. You are not alone and the local Citizens' Advice team is there to support you along with the Council's other partners.

**Don't bury your head in the sand. Make a New Year's resolution to sort your finances out in 2018. Don't delay if you owe the Council money – get in touch by telephone, e-mail or in person and take the first steps to having a more secure financial future.**

# Some facts and figures from the CAB

The CAB has provided some information from research in North Warwickshire, showing that some residents still face serious financial issues.



## In 2016/17 the CAB

Dealt with <b>11,687</b> issues raised	Gained <b>581,180</b> in income for clients	Wrote off debts of <b>£94,396</b>	Handled <b>111</b> emergency food parcel referrals.	Rescheduled repayments of <b>£68,637</b>
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## The results

<b>2 in every 3 people</b> had their problem solved	<b>4 in 5 clients</b> said the advice improved their lives	<b>90%</b> reported satisfaction with the overall service	Estimated savings of <b>£210,365</b> for the Department of Work and Pensions	Estimated savings of <b>£113,449</b> for the NHS	Estimated savings of <b>£186,522</b> for local housing providers	Estimated savings of <b>£8,608</b> for the Criminal Justice System
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## UC Universal Credit

On 25th October, the new Universal Credit (UC) Full Service system was rolled out in the Nuneaton and Bedworth Job Centre offices. This will affect some people in North Warwickshire who live in certain post code areas – you can check here at [www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/universal-credit/before-you-apply/Check-if-youre-eligible-for-Universal-Credit/](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/universal-credit/before-you-apply/Check-if-youre-eligible-for-Universal-Credit/)

UC is the Government's new benefit for people under pension age and the rollout will affect all new benefit claimants. The change means that single people, couples and families making a new benefits claim may be asked to claim UC instead. Benefits include Income Support, the income-based elements of Jobseeker's or Employment and Support Allowances, Housing Benefit, and the Child and Working Tax Credits.

All new claims will need to be made online and all changes and updates will need to be done through a personal online portal. UC is paid calendar monthly in arrears, which may be different to the way your current benefits are paid. It's important to note that it may take up to six weeks for the first UC payment to come through. UC doesn't just affect people out of work. It incorporates Working Tax Credits which are claimed by people in work. To get UC, you must sign up to a Claimant Commitment which is an agreement with Jobcentre Plus in return for the benefit. This might mean agreeing to look for work or better paid work or taking up an offer of training to improve prospects. What you agree to will depend on your circumstances.

For more information, contact the Benefits Team on 01827 715341, or go to [www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk/en/categories/universal-credit](http://www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk/en/categories/universal-credit)

## New Council Tax payer?

Moving into your first home is an exciting and busy time. There are many things you will become aware of that you've never encountered before. Where is the water stop tap or utility meter? How do you send meter readings to the utility companies? And Council Tax....? You'll need to make sure you are registered for Council Tax at [www.northwarks.gov.uk/ctaxreg](http://www.northwarks.gov.uk/ctaxreg) You may qualify for a discount or exemption based on your circumstances. Find out more at [www.northwarks.gov.uk/ctxreductions](http://www.northwarks.gov.uk/ctxreductions)

The Council Tax reminders don't work in the same way as other reminders - so don't wait until the reminder arrives, before you pay your Council Tax bill. If you fail to pay your Council Tax, this could result in additional charges to your account, liability orders, court summonses, bailiffs and potentially imprisonment.



## Go paperless, sign up for an e-bill!



Save time, paper and hassle by going paperless. You can now manage your bill securely online for free by signing up to electronic billing for Council Tax or Business Rates. When a bill is ready for you to view online on our secure website, you'll receive an email with a link to your new bill. All you need is an email address and your reference number, which is on your bill or statement. You can also choose to view your bills, statements or account details online but still receive paper copies in the post.

For example if you register for Council Tax Accounts Online you can see your bill and any amendments; your balance, when payments have been made and are due; direct debit confirmation letters and any correspondence. Sign up at [www.northwarks.gov.uk](http://www.northwarks.gov.uk)

## All the help you need in one form – helping you to help yourself

The Borough Council has developed a new online Customer Referral Form. It will enable you to make applications and also let you refer yourself for information, help and support from a variety of organisations. You can apply for any of the following from just one form:

- An Emergency Food parcel.
- A Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP)
- Or ask for Help and Support from a support organisation

If you already have an online account, or if you set one up, you will be able to 'save' the Customer Referral Form during completion and return at a later date to finish it. To see the list of partner support organisations or to fill in the online Customer Referral Form visit [www.northwarks.gov.uk/crf](http://www.northwarks.gov.uk/crf)

## Do you receive Housing Benefit or help with your Council Tax?

### Have you had a change in your circumstances?

If you receive help towards your Council Tax or Housing Benefit for your rent, you should tell the Borough Council about any change in your circumstances. You must tell the Benefits team at the Council - it's not enough to tell your landlord. If you are overpaid, you may have to pay it back.

Things you should tell the Council about: Is your to let us know have changed.

- You stop or start work.
- Changes in the amount of income i.e. your wages go up.
- Someone in your household moves out or someone moves in.
- The letter to calculate your benefit is incorrect e.g. if your income is less than you are receiving

Most of the changes can be sorted out over the phone and you usually won't have to fill in a form. Ring the Borough Council on **01827 715341** or email [benefits@northwarks.gov.uk](mailto:benefits@northwarks.gov.uk)

# The Food Hub continues to grow...



The North Warwickshire Food Hub was established in 2013. It was initially run in partnership with a homelessness charity until June 2016 and for the last year The Healthy Living Network charity, under the Ediblelinks brand. The project expanded further in March 2017 when Ocado donated two refrigerated vehicles to the project, funded through the plastic bag tax. The supplies are used to issue emergency food parcels to residents who may need support during difficult financial times and to support community groups and schools. The food used would otherwise have been sent to landfill.

Ediblelinks also supports 128 community groups and 16 school breakfast clubs feeding up to 400 children a day. This has produced amazing results in schools and helped communities establish new groups and build community spirit. On 2nd August 2017 the first Ediblelinks Open Day was held. Approximately 120 people were welcomed - from people who may have had a food parcel to partner organisations. A behind the scenes tour highlighted how the operation worked and what support is available.

The roll out of 'honesty shops' across North Warwickshire and Nuneaton and Bedworth Councils was recently featured on the local BBC news. It also highlighted other development initiatives with Ocado, which will help to deliver road safety advice and community sports activities. It is hoped that the Food Hub will grow and continue to support residents and more community groups. This is a totally unique project and is a model of excellence as brilliant public, private and Third Sector collaboration.

**Ediblelinks always needs volunteers - there are a variety of roles for all abilities, so if you have a few hours to spare contact Bill McCann on 01827 719 220 or email [billmccann@northwarks.gov.uk](mailto:billmccann@northwarks.gov.uk)**

# Get ready for winter



With winter on the way, the CAB wants people to keep warm and healthy as the weather gets colder and says:

**"Think about changing your energy supplier to save money. The average saving is around £200. If you find the prospect daunting, come and speak to our energy team at Citizens' Advice for assistance."**

Claire went see the CAB's energy adviser when she was struggling to keep up with her energy bills. She has a young family and due to a low income and poor health, she had fallen behind on payments. The energy adviser helped her apply to her energy supplier's trust fund which awarded her over £1000 to clear her arrears. The CAB also found a charitable grant to replace her old cooker with a more energy efficient model. Staff helped her save money by applying for the Warm Home Discount scheme of £140. They also applied to Severn Trent's Big Difference Scheme which meant a saving of 90% off her annual water bill. To help her while her finances were stabilising, the Borough Council provided a food voucher for two weeks.

Claire has since said that she is now up to date with all her bills and is managing really well.

## In the last 12 months ...



**Call in with your latest energy bills to the CAB, The Parish Rooms, Welcome Street, Atherstone, CV9 1DU. Ring 01827 712852 or email [SwitchedOn@nwcab.org.uk](mailto:SwitchedOn@nwcab.org.uk) Opening times: Monday, Tuesday and Friday 9.30am- 2pm and Wednesday 3.30-6.30pm.**



## Managing your money

Taking the time to manage your money better can really pay off. It can help you stay on top of your bills and save £1,000s each year. You can use these extra savings to pay off any debts, put them towards your pension or spend them on your next car or holiday. Start by doing a weekly budget and sticking to it to help get your finances back on track.

Start your budget now at [www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk/en/tools/budget-planner](http://www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk/en/tools/budget-planner)

## Are you getting enough?

With the recent changes to benefits, are you sure you are getting all of the benefits you are entitled to? Perhaps you are starting work and need to find out what other benefits you may be able to claim? Why not visit [www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators](http://www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators) and try one of the free and easy to use online benefit calculators.

## Save on water bills...

Severn Trent Water is working to help people who struggle the most with their water bills through The Big Difference Scheme. It's open to all Severn Trent Water customers, whatever your circumstances. If you qualify you could get a reduction on your water bill from 10-90%\*. You'll remain on the scheme for 12 months, after which you'll need to reapply.

**To apply for the scheme, call 0121 355 7766 or visit <http://www.sttf.org.uk/getting-help/the-big-difference/>**



\*based on the average water bill for customers in the Severn Trent region.

# Where to go for help and support about your money and debt

### Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

The CAB offers a range of free services and advice including information on your money, family and health issues and your legal rights.

**Tel: Advice Line 0844 855 2322, Information line 01827 712852 or Visit [www.adviceguide.org.uk](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk)**

### The Money Advice Service

For free, unbiased and independent advice on all money matters

**visit [www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk](http://www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk) or Tel: 0800 138 7777**

### National Debtline

For free debt advice.

Use My Money Steps to get free online debt help – **visit [www.nationaldebtline.org](http://www.nationaldebtline.org) or Tel: 0808 808 4000 (Mon – Fri 9am to 8pm and Sat 9.30am to 1pm)**

### StepChange

For free debt and money advice and a personal action plan

**Visit [www.stepchange.org](http://www.stepchange.org) or Tel: 0800 138 1111**

### Local Welfare Support Scheme

People in crisis who need emergency provision should call Warwickshire County Council. They may be able to help you with food parcels and emergency fuel costs. **Tel 0800 408 1448 (Freephone from landlines) or 01926 414124**

### Age UK

If you're 50 and over and need information, advice and guidance about benefits, support services available to you, details of activities near to you and befriending services then **Contact Age UK, Partnership Centre, Coleshill Rd, Atherstone, CV9 1BN or Tel: 01827 717172**

# Jobs Fair

Royal Mail, National Express, TNT and Ocado were amongst the employers at the October Jobs Fair at Atherstone's Memorial Hall. The event was open to everyone – so whether people were looking for employment, wanting to start up a business, needing advice about benefits or help with writing a CV, it had the lot. Other organisations, such as Groundwork, Talent Match, Prospects and LearnMyWay were there to help people build up their skills and confidence ready to enter the jobs market.

One young man at the Jobs Fair seemed particularly nervous and unsure of himself. It turned out that he had recently left a job that hadn't worked out for him but it had knocked his self-confidence. The young man was introduced to an adviser from the Accelerate Programme, which he said had been very helpful. They will help him towards his goal of a part-time retail position until he can set up his own business. He will also receive help in updating his skills and



qualifications, compiling a CV, looking for and applying for jobs and interview techniques.

There was a great turn out with around 200 people attending. The Fair also attracted more exhibitors than previous years with 41 stands including 26 businesses and 15 support organisations.

Bob Trahern, Assistant Chief Executive: Community Services said: "The event was a great opportunity for people to meet local employers and find out about the jobs on offer – ranging from production and warehouse work to caring for vulnerable people. It's good to hear that potential employers found the event very useful as they were able to speak with a wide variety of people who were interested in their vacancies and services. "

The employers said ...

**"A very well run event that ensures stand holders are looked after and advertised well, ensuring foot fall on the day"**

Julie Finch, Avon.

**"The event was very well attended by motivated and well informed individuals"**

Andrew Marlow, Chapter 1.

**"Very good fair, well organised."**

Yvette Austin & Erika Szatmari, Reed /Angard

**"Very engaged and interested customers both for financial advice on lowering their bills and also with employment."**

Debbie Gardner, Severn Trent.

## Accelerate... into employment

CDA is running a project across Warwickshire part funded by the Big Lottery and the European Social Fund. It offers support to anyone who is currently unemployed, including travel expenses, to attend the sessions so that you are not out of pocket! The project works with 25 other organisations helping to remove the barriers that people face when trying to get employment. The organisations can support people who have learning needs, disabilities, a visual impairment, prison leavers, lone parents and people over 50. This enables these client groups to gain qualifications, learn IT and help with looking for a job.

CDA will provide confidence building, IT skills, interview techniques, telephone techniques, application support, job search support and much more. There will be access to work experience placements, debt help, housing support, childcare support to name just a few.



Call the CDA Team on Tel: 02476 346209 or email: [marie@cheers-cda.co.uk](mailto:marie@cheers-cda.co.uk)



# Prospects

Prospects provides tailored education, employment, training services for people to develop their potential and transform their lives. There are services for those in the earliest stages of education, engaging with education establishments across the country.

For young people, Prospects provides targeted support helping young people who are: not in education, employment or training; vulnerable and/or have learning difficulties and disabilities, including Pathway services to care leavers. For adults, there is advice on learning and work through the National Careers Service.

**For more information email:  
info@prospects.co.uk**

# Talent Match

## Are you 18 to 24 years old and want to try something a bit different?

If you have not had a long period of work in the last 12 months, then Talent Match may be able to help you. Talent Match is a flexible support programme, designed to address your individual needs and help you onto the right career path. Talent Match helps you overcome some of the barriers to work, helping you towards employment and training. All young people are given a personal mentor, who will support you all the way through the programme, help you to achieve your goals and overcome any challenges. Talent Match is free of charge and will not affect your entitlement to benefits.

**To find out more about the project or to book a meeting with one of the programme mentors, ring 01827 718080 or email: talentmatch@wcava.org.uk**

# The BOB Bus



The BOB Bus is owned by the Borough Council and staffed in partnership with the North Warwickshire Volunteer Centre. The aim is to register and deliver basic online skills through the Learn My Way training programme. BOB is funded for one year to develop people's skills so they become confident and at ease with technology. It also aims to attract and engage more socially and digitally excluded people and enable them to access online government services.

New learners with internet access and the ability to learn by themselves can go to **www.learnmyway.com** and create an account by entering their details. The centre code required is 3455824 for the Volunteer Centre North Warwickshire.

**For more information, contact  
Bill McIntosh on 0781 760 6125 or  
email: bill.mcintosh@vcnw.org.uk**

# Rethink

If you are motivated to work, but have a mental health condition and need help to find work or stay in work, then **Rethink** can help you with their Individual Placement Support –  
**Tel: 02476 673938 or email: mhess@rethink.org**

# Your Hubs



<b>Atherstone Hub</b>	St Mary's Church
<b>Arley Hub</b>	Arley & St Michael's Church and Community Centre
<b>Baddesley Hub</b>	Baddesley Village Hall
<b>Coleshill Hub</b>	Coleshill Town Hall
<b>Dordon Hub</b>	Dordon Village Hall
<b>Hartshill Hub</b>	Hartshill Community Centre

Visit your local Hub to use a range of free services including getting online, free WIFI and free use of laptops and tablets. You can also use the free Hub phone to contact services such as the Borough Council, Severn Trent and Age UK.

Visit your local Information Point for access to free WIFI and IT facilities at: Age UK/CAB Atherstone, Birchmoor Mission Hall, Coleshill Library, Derek Avenue – Dordon, Mancetter Memorial Hall, Polesworth Library, Water Orton Library and Wood End Village Hall.

**For more information, go to [www.northwarks.gov.uk/hubs](http://www.northwarks.gov.uk/hubs) or email [hubs@northwarks.gov.uk](mailto:hubs@northwarks.gov.uk)**

# The Armed Forces Covenant

The Armed Forces Covenant is a commitment to the men and women who serve this nation at home and abroad. North Warwickshire is home to over 6,000 veterans. Many local families also have loved ones who are currently still in service. The Borough Council recognises the importance of ensuring the needs of the local Armed Forces Community are understood.

In partnership with Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council, the two councils obtained funding from the "Armed Forces Covenant Fund" for two years to help the local authorities' deliver the Covenant.

## The funding will focus on:

- Establishing local Armed Forces Covenant Champions.
- Raising awareness and providing training about the Armed Forces Covenant, the needs of veterans and those serving and their families to frontline employees, policy makers, community groups and organisations, volunteers and Elected Members.
- Helping strengthen the link between the two councils, the local community and the Armed Forces community.

There's lots of support available for veterans, serving personnel and their families – go to the new website at [www.veteransgateway.org.uk](http://www.veteransgateway.org.uk).



Faheem Sheikh, Armed Forces Covenant Development Officer said:

"The Covenant actively promotes the moral obligation of organisations to current and former members of the armed forces and their families. Over the coming months I'll be working closely with members of the armed

forces community to find out how we can best help them to access council services. We need to 'Ask the Question' about military service, to find out where needs exist and do our best to meet those needs. For this reason when military personnel, veterans and their families get in touch with their local council for any reason, I'd encourage them to mention their service, no matter how short. It will allow the Council to consider the best way to help and support them".



North Warwickshire  
& Hinckley College

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## North Warwickshire Community Partnership Quarterly progress report – March 2018

**Champion: Report by Bob Trahern**

**Theme: Tackling Poverty (previously Access)**

### **Commentary on Project Progress – achievements to date (and any slippage)**

#### **Actions since last report in December 2017**

During the last 3 months we have continued to make good progress building on the written update provided in December in relation to the commitments in respect of the “Tackling Poverty” agenda. All activity has continued to focus on

- Reviewing enhancements to the Councils Food Operation
- Reviewing and understanding the size of the problems to address issues being faced by customers Impacted by the Welfare Reforms
- Consolidating and promoting the use of the Community Hubs & increasing volunteer activities
- Supporting the Councils Channel Shift and Digital Agenda ambitions

#### **Progress since the last report**

##### **Debt Project**

The Council continues to show strong performance in its collection of monies due in year plus arrears (currently up on last years in year collection and arrears stand at approximately £900k as at February 2018) on which we will continue to have significant focus. We currently remain on target to achieve the matching of last years very high performance in spite of the ongoing economic challenges faced by the Council and which is bucking the National trend

Our approach will feature in a case study being promoted by the National Money Advice Service whom we are advising which I attach at the end of this report and it is also pleasing that the Council has been identified as an exemplar in its reduced use of bailiffs services. See also the food hub update that highlights further award success and National recognition

In addition to excellent in year collection, we continue to make good progress since we last reported on the exercise which is looking at the likely propensity to collect old and large debts using credit rating records to inform this view and to pursue only those cases where there continues to be little or no engagement and which appear to provide the best potential for success via committal to prison proceedings, bankruptcy or serving charging orders where deemed appropriate.. We have

instigated a number of actions after review of some of our bigger debts and over the next 6 to 12 months we will be continue to work across the Council and our partners to either recover or deliver support / remit some of the other debts that are currently outstanding prior to migrating onto a new Revenues and Benefits system in December 2018. A formal paper will also shortly be reviewed that was presented to WCC to seek their help with covering some of the costs associated with recovering arrears which is seeking to address the perverse issues as highlighted in previous reports about the potential disincentives to pursue arrears. We are hoping that the proposal for them to help fund a proportion of the costs we incur to recover these monies on an “invest to save principle” will be supported by the County from available WLWS underspend and hope that these discussions can be progressed by the end of May at the very latest.

In September, we also reported that we had re-launched with internal staff and then with partners on 21 September the on line referral form to be used for accessing appropriate help and advice. The new improved multi agency referral form which incorporates a Discretionary Housing Payment application form, income and expenditure form with hyper links to partner help and a self referral form for food and other support is now live and we have already had in excess of 700 forms completed as outlined in the case study at the end of this report. The approach has identified some initial issues but the positive case studies it is flagging up suggest this approach will help us significantly going forward as we adopt Universal Credit across the whole borough later this year. This will also help with dealing with the outstanding Council Tax issues, an increased level of Housing Benefit Overpayments that is as a result of ever better data matching with HMRC and also to address issues relating to the extension of homelessness responsibilities from April 2018.

The ongoing impact of welfare reforms on households continues to be a key issue that is being monitored as is the impact of inflation busting rises in bills above wage levels and with a potential increase in interest rates these are major concerns that the Council will need to address with partners going forward. Whilst it is positive that overall collection rates are excellent, with further and more significant changes due to be implemented over the next 12 months including Universal Credit which has been deferred from starting in May 2018 to September 2018 in respect of those signing at Atherstone job centre these will make the Councils job in recovering money due in respect of rent and council tax ever more difficult. This is evidenced by Rugby who have been a National pilot since 2014 who have seen a four fold increase in arrears and NBBC who having only been live for 4 months have seen rent arrears already increase by a third. This will mean our proactive approach will become ever more important in working closely with Housing and third sector partners to identify help and support needed to assist payment at the earliest opportunity.

It remains incredibly positive that the work of the Council and our Financial Inclusion Partnership stand as exemplars from which others are encouraged to learn and a report was considered by both the C&E Board and Resources Board in March outlining the work on this very important agenda and that is predominantly overseen by this partnership. There has been a second meeting of the improved Northern FIP where we have adopted consistent themes on which to work together and we are attempting with WCC and the other Warwickshire Districts to align partnership objectives at a county level with the hope that the group will be given the authority to commit the available £685,0008 underspent WLWS fund to progress this work.

In conclusion, it remains pleasing that this joined up approach which has been promoted and advocated by the Council for a number of years is becoming evermore widely accepted as being key to delivery of positive outcomes with the reduced

resources available and has been accepted as the way to deliver positive outcomes (see also the food hub update below).

### **Welfare Update**

There is little to add to last quarters report. We are now very much in the process of preparing ourselves for the impact of the full roll out of Universal Credit service across the whole of the borough in September 2018. The changes announced will also see us needing to implement a number of policy changes to assist customers deal with the transition period from legacy benefits or the loss of work to this new benefit in a different way that hopefully will mean that supporting customers impacted can be better managed to avoid them falling into arrears.

In addition to UC, we are also working with Housing on the new homelessness responsibilities as well as how we best use limited discretionary budgets provided by Central Government to their maximum potential to meet housing cost shortfalls. What is becoming very clear is that we are needing to continually review how we manage our finite resources to address the most immediate challenges which will not be helped by the increased responsibilities of GDPR (increased expectations around the sharing of personal data) being introduced at the end of May.

In addition what is very noticeable is how the Housing Benefit Overpayment position is getting worse as bigger backdated debts are needing to be raised against those on the lowest incomes due to their failure to advise of changes in their circumstances that they should have reported to the Council or DWP. These are being identified by increasingly sophisticated data matching exercises with HMRC. All this is contributing to increased debt on many of our residents on lower incomes that will be challenging to collect

However, as part of discussions and to streamline / align the many benefit schemes now in operation, it is proposed that we will be working with NBBC and RBC on a more simplified banding scheme to replace the current CTS scheme from 2019/20 onwards. Full consultation and impact assessments will be undertaken before any changes are proposed which will also be helped by a move onto the same Revenues and Benefits system as Nuneaton & Rugby which should be live by January 2019

### **Food Projects**

Since the last report, I am pleased that things continue to gain momentum under the Ediblelinks brand that is now fully being coordinated by the Healthy Living Network

In summary;

We presented the work of the Ediblelinks project which is delivering ground breaking work in supporting communities, schools and individuals. to 2 judging panels in two categories (Best Innovation and Best Public Private Partnership at the biggest Local Government Awards of the year run by the Local Government Chronicle to be announced in March 2018. Whilst we don't expect to win as we are up against mainly unitary Councils and London Boroughs, it is great that the project has received such National Recognition. I attach the slides as an appendix that were used at the recent judging panels that highlight the key achievements and arrangements that continue to see the project grow under the Ediblelinks brand.

It is hoped that this acknowledgment will help us secure lottery funding for the project which continues to be evaluated by the Big Lottery but it is very pleasing to report

that WCC, NBBC and ourselves have recently committed the necessary funding to keep the project going between April to December 2018 with a £4k contribution from the partnership albeit on a 4 day per week arrangement, with one less units and a reduction in paid staff.

If the application made to the Big Lottery Help through Crisis fund for 3 years funding is successful, this will provide enough time to test a sustainable model of working by charging community groups, schools and other councils for the fantastic level of support provided.

The project also continues to recruit, train and support volunteers and has become evermore proactive with their use of social media to promote messages which is showing how valued the project is in the area and has involved an increase in the number of honesty shops and community health events. The project has just taken delivery of a donated fridge that will be used to pilot a community fridge project where the public can donate excess food.

There are so many positives from the work undertaken in its support of so many residents across the borough and beyond in what is seen as a totally unique project including a delegation from Birmingham CC who would like to replicate what we have done in one of their most deprived wards. Whilst it is disappointing that the service is needing to issue a significant increase in emergency support it is increasingly pleasing to know that this is helping us deliver on our corporate commitment of "Helping Others Help Themselves" and is in [part caused by staff and partners being more proactive in their use of the food available to support residents

### **Community Hubs**

The work on supporting the community hubs continues but the different ambitions and nature of the 6 hubs is making this task very challenging. Meetings have continued where it is hoped that the hubs be aligned with the ambitions of Public Health and others outlined in the Health report to see if they can be sustained and made viable using these outlets

Unfortunately Dordon advised us in December that they are no longer able to provide use of the facility free so this facility has been temporarily closed, and the Information Point at Wood End has now ended after the Section 106 funding it was receiving has come to the end in March. Both facilities were only supporting a small number of residents largely access to ICT which was the key driver behind creating hubs has been massively impacted by the rapid change in how residents are now able access the internet with wi fi being freely available in many public places as well as the trend to increased use of mobile technology via phones and i-pads which can easily be used to undertake everyday tasks. This aligned with a lack of volunteers to support those without digital skills who are increasingly in the minority means that the emphasis of the hub programme needs to be changed in line with the ongoing discussions taking place that will focus more on promoting health and well being messages via the Edibellinks brand and other complimentary activities on offer from Public Health, the DWP as well as other county and borough divisions. It is hoped that this may enable hubs to become better used and sustained with any activity paying towards costs or enabling income to be raised that will ensure that local provision of services can continue and be enhanced.

As part of the wider commitment to promote digital services and channel shift we will continue to promote accessibility to ICT by internal Council staff working with those residents who come to our attention who do not have the skills to apply for their

benefits as well as regular articles in North Talk to signpost to online and other help and support available. The B.O.B bus will be used on an hoc basis across the borough at targeted events following the loss of external funding that was supporting its costs.

### **Changes to the action plan**

Making progress is largely dependent on being able to access internal / external resources and funding and is being delivered against the backdrop of the ever challenging environment in which we work. As such, we will continue to review our ability to continue to deliver on the many fronts we are currently engaged in what amounts to a very small team. The need to work in partnership with internal colleagues (e.g.) Housing, Community Development, DWP, WCC and other third sector partners is integral to us continuing to be successful and maintaining momentum on the wide ranging, proactive and innovative work undertaken to date and promoted in the December edition of North Talk and is something we are working on and trying to align actions and priorities.

### **Key Priorities in 2018/19**

In terms of setting priority actions going forward in 2018/19, the future will continue to remain financially uncertain, both externally and internally, and the challenges to the Council and its partners will continue to centre on delivering support around the following priorities:

- The ongoing economic situation and its link to austerity measures.
- Supporting customers impacted by the ongoing Welfare Reform changes and in particular, planning for the introduction of Universal Credit at our main Jobcentre in Atherstone in September 2018 for all claimant types
- Identifying how best to continue working together internally and with partners to make best use of existing funds and finite resources as well as improved ways of working to better support customers going forward.

As part of the service plan for 2018/19, the following commitments in the area of financial inclusion have been made. In summary, they are to undertake :

A comprehensive review of the current Council Tax Support Scheme;

The ongoing review of the viability and purpose of Community Hubs;

Developing closer working with the Department of Work and Pensions in preparation for the ongoing implementation of Universal Credit, the better support of Employment Support Allowance customers, homeless people under the increased responsibilities being introduced in April 2018 and older people in tandem with a range of internal and external partners;

Implementation of the new requirements of the enhanced General Data Policy Regulation.(GDPR). This new legislation being introduced in May 2018 will require a significant review of our data sharing protocols to ensure we can continue to work effectively with partners to legally exchanging information on residents so we can continue to realise the benefits of the CRF developed that is starting to prove so useful;

Continuing to develop our shared service approach with NBBC by adopting a common back office ICT platform by December 2018 as well as aligning more work on the financial inclusion agenda. This will also see us seek to align work priorities with the Countywide FIP on which we are a lead partner wherever possible.

Promoting the digital agenda and take up of on-line services; and

The ongoing review and development of the Ediblelinks project. This will be influenced significantly by whether bids for external funding are successful.

The importance of building holistic solutions and how we better support customers needing help is increasingly being built into our standard practices and procedures. This is making it the responsibility of an increasing number of officers to take more ownership in helping customers break dependency cycles wherever possible. Restructures of the Community Services and Housing divisions in recent years have all addressed this as part of their reviews and reflected these expectations in revised job descriptions and structures and we anticipate this will continue to be undertaken and help with ever closer collaborative working with our partners going forward.

**Expected Outcomes**

Positive engagement with a wide variety of customers and improved access to a wide range of services and information are being delivered in partnership and innovatively. This has seen us be flagged up as a site of excellence by our peers and has seen us be very successful in bidding for external funding. Our approach has built on our member and officer commitment to these agendas and the positive results that continue to be delivered many in partnership and despite the difficult financial and economic climate are testament to this.

**Expenditure (SCS Funding)**

	<b>Predicted Expenditure</b>	<b>Actual Expenditure</b>
No allocated budget remains. The corporate access to services budget that is funding ongoing hub costs are the only funds available		
We have been allocated monies to support customers migrating to universal credit although at this time it is considered that it is unlikely to be sufficient based on our experiences on the SMART project. We will be reviewing how we are best using this money on a regular basis and will monitor this position		

**Publicity**

- We continue to attend a significant number of internal and external officer and partner meetings to raise awareness, review better partnership working and plan future activity of all related activities.
- Proposals on how we continue to promote our work as outlined in this report continues to be key to ensuring residents in the borough are aware of what support, help and opportunities are available. .



**Lessons learnt**

- Relying on volunteers and third sector partners who have limited capacity and resources to develop new projects and support ongoing initiatives is hugely challenging and means significant demands on limited officer time continues to be needed.
- Ongoing difficulties with recruiting volunteers remain because of employment opportunities in the area and the general lack of numbers coming forward locally despite ongoing promotion
- Making progress in these difficult times and partnership working continues to get ever harder and our ambitions are not always met by our available resources

**Sustainability of project**

This is a key requirement and aim of all work being carried out to date and a key feature of any activity agreed to see how it can be supported long term by changing working practices to free up resources or identifying a suitable revenue stream where a need arises. There are clear examples that this is demonstrated in all parts of this report as to how we are seeking to make the work we are doing possible at a time of reducing resources.

In essence the work being promoted by the partnership around tackling poverty has become embedded into the Councils corporate and service plans making the activities undertaken part of the “way we do business” as opposed to a separate strand of activity.

Whatever happens, our work in this area is now about consolidation and utilising the resources we have and arrangements set up to help support customers improve their life chances and circumstances by providing access to the most appropriate tools and help available.

## **Appendix A- Money Advice Service Case study**

### **North Warwickshire Financial Inclusion Partnership – ‘Helping Others to Help Themselves’**

North Warwickshire Borough Council (NW) is an authority of above average deprivation. The largest town is Atherstone and the area is mostly rural, deriving from several former mining communities but is now home to some of the largest logistic operations in the country

Money Advice Service statistics estimate that North Warwickshire has a circa population of **63,000** with **14.2 %** considered to be over indebted.

Despite these challenges, in 2016-2017 the council collected **98.6%** of Council Tax due whilst reducing arrears for previous years by **39%**. The council has also collected **98.7%** of housing rents due. These results were achieved by collecting monies with a supportive approach that actively involves promoting financial inclusion, and third sector partnerships. The Council has been acknowledged for its progressive approach by retaining the Public-Sector Collections Team of the Year award at the Collection and Customer Service awards for a second year running in November and at the same ceremony its Food Hub delivered in partnership with Ocado and a local charity won the Charitable Initiative of the year.

An key outcome achieved by this progressive approach has seen the NW issuing almost 60% less cases to its external civil enforcement agents (bailiffs) in 2017/18 compared to the corresponding period in 2016/17 as well as less summonses for non payment overall

#### **The NW Food Hub via ‘The Healthy Living Network’**

A particular feature of the NW approach is its development of a Food Hub to support its work that went live in 2013 as an alternative provision to former social fund payments. A local partnership was established with Ocado, the on-line supermarket which has grown steadily. In April 2017 the success of the partnership saw then donate two refrigerated vehicles to the project funded through the plastic bag tax. The vehicles is is not only allowing ever better quality emergency food parcels to made up for residents in financial difficulty but has allowed 233 tonnes of support to be provided to t up to 150 community groups and schools in the area using food that otherwise may have been sent to landfill.

Operating under the collective name of ‘Ediblelinks’, the operation supports the Councils most hard to reach residents and has had the very positive outcome of increasing engagement with the council. People in financial difficulty are supported in their own community or provided with emergency food parcels as a way of delivering corporate ambitions of helping others help themselves. In return residents are encouraged to engage with support such as:

- Debt and welfare advice,
- Employment advice
- Mental health and wellbeing support

- Programmes to improve confidence in digital skills which enables residents to save money on utility bills and increase their income.

This support is widely promoted in the Councils residents magazine delivered to every household which also provides information on how to access help and support directly or via trusted partner made easy using a locally developed common referral form (CRF) accessible on line

### **Help and support from ‘Partner agencies’**

Residents can access third party support via several different ways. They can complete the ‘Help with Money and debt’ CRF at home, at ICT hubs in the community or via their mobile phone. Completion of the form authorises a seven-day food supply with no further obligations but further support requires more information. Residents can select appropriate issues and remove irrelevant fields. The questionnaire includes the option of a basic income and expenditure form, a Discretionary Housing Payment form and the ability to refer residents to over 20 partner organisations via one simple form.

The electronic forms are picked up by NW council’s triage team who electronically refer the resident to an appropriate partner agencies including NW Citizens Advice, Coventry Mind and Rethink Mental Illness amongst others. Referral partners will then receive the details, telephone the resident and offer appropriate support.

Since the CRF went live in August 2017, **33%** of those helped by the food hub have also engaged with support from partner organisations and case studies show positive outcomes with people improving their life chances.

### **Resident affordability**

NW Council support financial statements from the advice sector including those based on the new Standard Financial Statement (SFS). The council is also exploring aligning all internal income and expenditure forms, (including the I&E used in the electronic questionnaire) to match the spending categories of the SFS.

As a key partner, Carol Musgrave, Chief Executive of North Warwickshire Citizens Advice said ‘We have been part of North Warwickshire’s vibrant and innovative Financial Inclusion Partnership since its inception. We are all committed to joining up our efforts to achieve the best outcomes for clients who are often in very difficult circumstances. We have good access to council colleagues and speedy access to food support and work together to solve problems and promote our preventative messages.’

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# LGC Awards 2018: Public/Private Partnership

Ediblelinks

North Warwickshire Borough Council, Healthy Living  
Network and Ocado, the online supermarket



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# Ediblelinks - a Partnership With A Difference

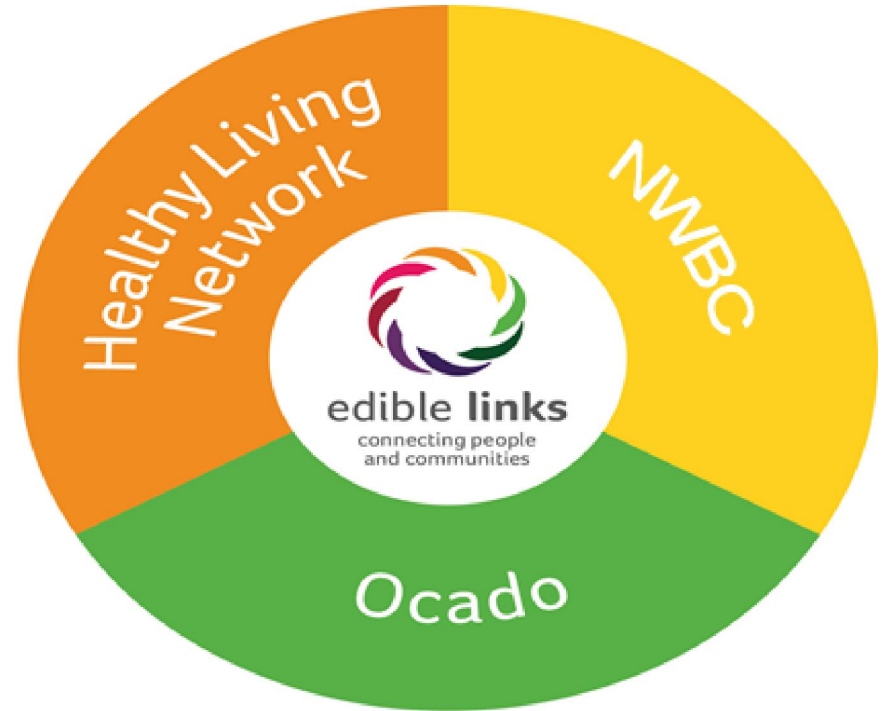
Ediblelinks is a ground breaking cross-sector partnership, joining up public, private and not for profit organisations that cuts across traditional and geographical boundaries

*“Addressing the wider impacts of Welfare Reforms whilst demand and expectations on public services are on the increase.”*

*“Food waste on an industrial scale.”*

*“Public Health – addressing well being by changing hearts and minds”*

*“A Partnership successfully bridging the gap in communities that austerity measures have created”*



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# Reason #1 Achieving Against The Odds

A “Can Do” partnership built on respect, trust, commitment and shared values

Combining our expertise, resources and skills to create unique opportunities, solve problems and find solutions to everyday and difficult challenges.

Community at its heart in everything we do and deliver



# Reason #2 A Massive Return on a Small Investment

Over 220 tonnes of food waste redistributed to 135 active community groups, 38 free breakfast and after school clubs and 3,000 emergency parcels / Christmas hamper beneficiaries in 2017 alone.... And increasing !

Outstanding, and in some cases, life-changing and unexpected outcomes being achieved.

Social and Financial benefits being realised by "Helping Others, Help Themselves"



# Honesty shop to help the needy

By Helen Manton  
Chief Reporter

HONESTY could prove to be the best policy when it comes to helping those in need in North Warwickshire, as a new pilot scheme demonstrated this week.

Atherton was the venue for the town's first ever 'pop-up shop' with school uniforms, supplies, food and drinks all on offer at a pop-up shop in Atherton Way yesterday (Wednesday).

Nothing was priced, with all customers being told to 'put out what they could afford to buy'.



## Rob's story

"I can't thank the Foodbank enough - I wouldn't be where I am without this place," says Rob White from Hinze Park. Rob, aged 20, had been struggling to find work when the Job Centre suggested that he try volunteering down at Atherton's Foodbank on Inze Park. This was set up a year ago as a joint venture between the Borough Council, Chapter 1, 2nd Chance Furniture and Furniture, a national charity dealing with food waste. It also receives massive support from Ocado, the online supermarket based at Birch Coppice Business Park in Dordon.

Initially, Rob was extremely shy and used to sit on his own, reluctant to speak to anyone. However, with the encouragement of the other staff and volunteers, he gradually came out of his shell and began to build up his confidence. Rob says he had never heard of Ocado, although he'd made the connection when he had been up to Birch Coppice to collect goods for the Foodbank. So when he was asked to visit the jobs fair at Atherton Memorial Hall in July 2013, Rob made a beeline for the Ocado stand, who were looking to recruit as the operation expanded.

"It was because I knew about Ocado through my voluntary work that I went over to speak to their staff, got an application form, an interview and a job!" says Rob. He has now been at Ocado for six months where his colleagues are all similar ages and he's made lots of friends. They all work hard but have a laugh together and are pretty 'chilled-out' - which is appropriate, as Rob works in the 'Tweezer Area' and says he never feels the cold!

Thanks to his regular income, Rob was able to buy himself a moped to travel to Dordon, which he has now traded in for a more powerful bike. And this young 'biker' is even planning to take to the road with his brother in the summer to explore Scotland!

Liam O'Mahon, Senior Operations Manager at Ocado said: "Rob is a great example of someone who has become a valued member of our Ocado team through hard work and persistence. We are committed to creating employment opportunities for local people to support our exciting growth plans. We continue to forge strong links with the local community, the Borough Council and support great initiatives like the foodbank scheme and community cooking projects."

Rob with his... and some of the foodbank volunteers.

## Foodbank facts

- Atherton's Foodbank was set up in 13 weeks and opened on 2nd April 2013.
- The Borough Council has provided three units at Inze Park rent and business rates free.
- North Warwickshire has issued over 800 food parcels between April 2013 and January 2014 and supplied food to community cafes and school breakfast clubs.
- This means over 8,000 local people have benefited from the project to date.
- Ocado donates a variety of supplies every week - including a wide range of food, toiletries, cleaning items and nappies.
- On Christmas Eve, Ocado donated over 250 bankings and other meals, as well as groceries and other supplies. These went to local homeless projects, people in need, colleges and charities to ensure they had a Very Happy Christmas.
- The Bishop of Warwick, John Stoen, visited the Foodbank in January and had the chance to support the volunteers and put a food parcel together. See photo above.
- Rob is one of six volunteers who have moved into paid employment, thanks to the support, training and experience they received at the Foodbank project.

## Welcome to Ocado

"The Foodbank scheme provides a very valuable service to those in need locally and we are pleased to be able to support it by working in partnership with the Borough Council and 2nd Chance Furniture."

Simon Morrison, Services Manager, Ocado.

Simon Morrison with Bob Tatham, Assistant Chief Executive Community Services at the Borough Council.

## Be a volunteer and you will

- Join a team and meet new people
- Build up your skills and experience
- Add work experience to your CV
- Have more confidence when applying for jobs
- Do something worthwhile for your community

Find out more about volunteer vacancies - contact the Volunteer Centre on 01827 717073 or email adam.farrell@vcnw.org.uk



# Reason #3

## A Proven Model That Works

What began with singular ambitions has grown into something special, unique and ground breaking.

A shared “can do” identity recognised for making the difference in supporting schools, communities, the third sector, and other Councils.

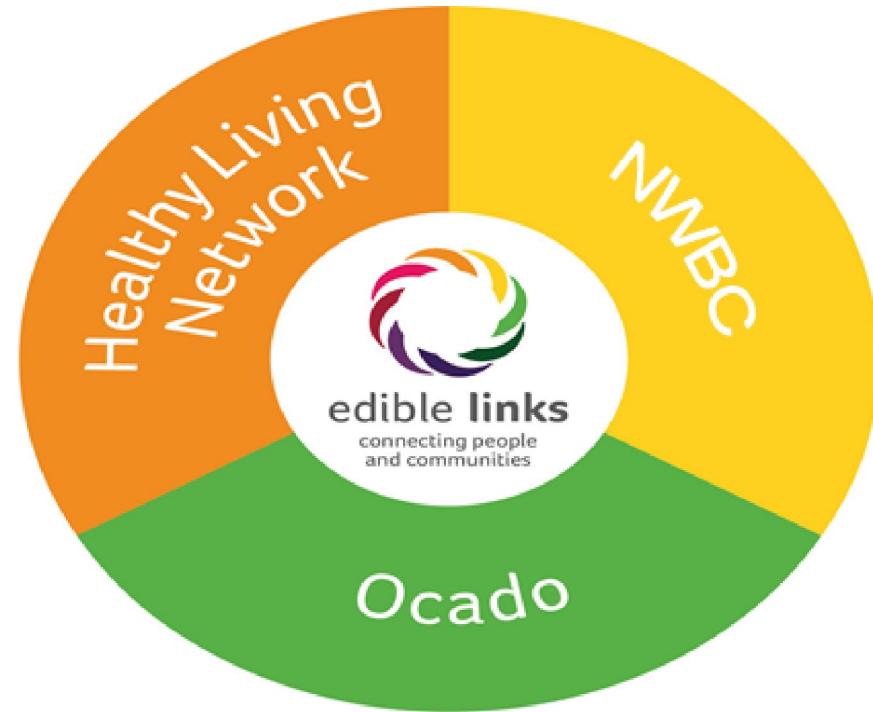
Ediblelinks is the catalyst for delivering cross cutting opportunities and added value with sustainability at its heart.





# “Ediblelinks” - A Winning Combination

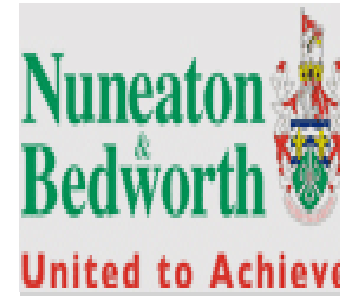
- A Unique and Ground Breaking Partnership
- Proactive in identifying solutions to problems
- Promoting Joined Up delivery across Sectors via multiple front doors
- Working with customers to deliver personalised solutions to change lives
- Delivering Unprecedented Results on a Shoestring





North Warwickshire  
Borough Council

Working in Partnership With



# Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Service Plan 2018/19

*“Striving to deliver Modern, Accessible Quality Services”*

jobcentreplus    Warwickshire POLICE    ocado    Citizens Advice the charity for your community    THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION    WARWICKSHIRE WELFARE RIGHTS ADVICE SERVICE    Volunteer Centre North Warwickshire    ALDI    SEVERN TRENT    citizens advice    BRANCAB    ageUK

Warwickshire County Council    Warwickshire Direct North Warwickshire working together for you    Bristow Sutor Civil Enforcement Agents    CAPITA LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES

CCS WINNERS 2017

Public Collections Team of the Year 2017



**ediblelinks**  
connecting people and communities

CCS WINNERS 2017

Charitable Initiative of the Year 2017

## **This is an extract of the relevant Service Plan Ambitions and Commitments**

### **Future Issues and Priorities**

- Ongoing review of the impact of the wider Welfare Reforms and Comprehensive Spending Review
- The impact of the ongoing migration to Universal Credit and other ongoing welfare reforms particularly when aligned with the ongoing uncertainty on funding and reducing administration subsidy. Due to the current climate, additional ad hoc grants are being paid to undertake new burdens but what we will receive and managing this is proving very difficult
- The ongoing support of the Community Hubs and the Food bank (reliant on ongoing demand and funding) – identifying funding from external sources, attracting volunteers and working with communities is a key threat to the sustainability of both initiatives
- The challenge of getting people on line and improving our online offer to customers as part of the delivery of the Customer Access Strategy
- The ongoing need for a more corporate prioritisation of debt approach; and the need to have regard to the financial implications of recovering Council Tax, Housing Rent, Housing Benefit Overpayment & NDR Tax debts
- The need to maximise New Homes Bonus and NDR growth and reduce losses from rates avoidance and evasion / mitigate the impact of HS2
- Identifying any further changes that will make the shared service arrangement with NBBC even better

### **Challenges and Concerns**

- The Level of Government Funding continues to reduce – administration subsidy has fallen as a result of ongoing CSR requirements, & the will reduce further in line with the planned transfer of Housing Benefit into Universal Credit. as well as the requirements of the Council to deliver ongoing saving. This is against a backdrop of increasing demands from our impacted customers as they look to the Council to provide help and support.
- Staff retention and motivation and its impact on performance, sickness levels and overall morale within the service
- Relationship with partners, in particular WCC and JC+ – evermore work is needed to maintain positive relationships and deliver on joint Government and Member agendas / priorities around the long term unemployed and our most vulnerable customers health and well being

Action	Corporate Objective	Lead Officer	Start Date	End Date	Priority	Measurement of Success	Resources
Implement and review the impact of GDPR changes (Data Protection Changes) that go live in May 2018 on service forms and operation	Customer Access Strategy Quality Service Provision VFM	ACE (CS) R&B Mgr CCM	April 2018	March 2019	H	An efficient and legal system A system that makes reporting changes easier and quicker	None other than existing resources.
Implement legislative and operational changes, produce promotional & consultation materials and undertake specific testing and impact reviews of the following <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Localised Council Tax Support scheme for 2019/20. This will likely see adoption of a banded scheme to reflect the impact of the introduction of UC</li> <li>The ongoing roll out of the Universal Credit – our full service for all new claimant types is planned to take place by September 2018</li> <li>The ongoing transition from ESA to the new Personal Independence Payments</li> <li>A review of the implemented Business Rates schemes plus any new ones proposed</li> </ul>	Quality Service Provision New Legislation	ACE (CS), R&B Mgr B & FI Manager, SSO AD (F & HR) AD (H)	May 2018	December 2018	H	Implemented on time and affected customers notified  Reports and briefings completed for Members and other interested groups as appropriate	Existing Internal Resources to complete exercises in with on occasion temporary resources recruited with specific New Burdens funding provided
			April 2018	March 2019	H	In order to achieve what is as yet an unknown amount of work – success of other service plan commitments may need to be cancelled or deferred to accommodate the amount of “known and as yet unknown” work necessary to introduce changes effectively	Working with ;- Housing Division ICT Division
			April 2018	March 2019	H		Other Warwickshire Councils Warwickshire CC Job Centre Plus Other Public Sector and Third Sector Partner Organisations
			April 2018	March 2019	H		

Action	Corporate Objective	Lead Officer	Start Date	End Date	Priority	Measurement of Success	Resources
<b>Partnership and Financial Inclusion Commitments</b>							
Oversee the operation of the NW FIP to deliver and coordinate Financial Inclusion (F.I) activity in the borough	Health and Well Being Theme Quality Service Provision	ACE (CS) B & FI Manager	April 2018	March 2019	H	Regular meetings and Action Points implemented	Activity of the CAB, Credit Union and Warwickshire Welfare Rights continues to be reviewed as part of the wider borough wide and countywide commissioning of advice services by WCC
Work with the Countywide FIP as well as NBBC via our shared work on this agenda to determine the best approach around the commissioning and funding of advice services and complimentary activity. This will focus on being party to ESIF, Lottery and WLWS bids coordinated regionally where possible	Customer Access  WCC Priority	ACE (CS) R&B Mgr B & FI Mr AD (CD) Policy  AD (CS) Policy Support	April 2018	March 2019	H	An approach is agreed for advice activity to be undertaken internally and with partners	Internal F.I. support will continue to be delivered by R&B and Housing staff
Continue to develop effective operational & liaison arrangements with the DWP to determine an agreed role for the Council in delivering the Universal Support – Delivered Locally agenda. This will be based on having a financial and political mandate to undertake this work	Customer Access Strategy Quality Service Provision VFM	ACE (CS) R&B Mgr CCM B & FI M	April 2018	March 2019	H	New working practices agreed	None other than those already identified  New burdens funding has been provided in 2017/18 and we await future funding proposals from 2018 onwards by the DWP
Continue to look for funding and other joint working opportunities to prepare people for UC and mitigate the outcomes from other welfare reforms		ACE (CS) B & FI Manager R & B Mgr	April 2018	March 2019	M	Successful Funding Bids	Additional support will be available from Jobcentre plus staff

Action	Community Plan Obj Corporate Objective	Lead Officer	Start Date	End Date	T/L Priority	Measurement of Success	Resources
<p>Continue to work alongside, and support the CAB and our CEA's. This will be undertaken by promoting the awareness of their service, agreeing activities to be followed and making proactive referrals. These will include but are not limited to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determining the best approach for dealing with customers in debt in a corporate way</li> <li>• Implementing and reviewing alternative enforcement remedies to be used</li> <li>• Promoting budgeting support available</li> <li>• Reviewing ongoing funding</li> </ul> <p>Enter "IRRV awards and other peer awards if our performance and partnership continues to be successful and deliver excellent outcomes</p>	<p>Quality Service Provision Health and Well Being Customer Access Strategy VFM The Local Economy</p> <p>WCC Priority</p>	<p>ACE (CS) R&amp;B M R Mgr B &amp; FI Manager AD (H) AD (CD)</p>	<p>April 2018</p>	<p>March 2019</p>	<p>H</p>	<p>A customer focused debt advice and information service being delivered and accessible to all residents</p> <p>Ongoing high collection rates</p> <p>Cost effective and realistic enforcement methods deployed</p> <p>Write offs approved in appropriate cases</p> <p>Shortlisted for the award following submission</p>	<p>The Councils main funding to support the CAB is coordinated via the Community Development Division and Housing Division.</p> <p>New burdens funding has been provided in 2017/18 and we await future funding proposals from 2018 onwards by the DWP that will help inform current activity</p> <p>If any changes are proposed and approved, the existing budget will need reviewing and approving</p>

Action	Corporate Objective Divisional Objective	Lead Officer	Start Date	End Date	T/L Priority	Measurement of Success	Resources
Continue to work with other Councils and welfare agencies to promote awareness of ongoing Welfare Reforms and maximising entitlement/ access to help and support in a collaborative way where possible	Quality Service Provision The Local Economy Health and Well Being  WCC Priority	ACE (CS) R & B Mgr B & F.I Manager	April 2018	March 2019	H	Advice and Signposting being provided by a number of mediums in a coordinated way via <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Talk</li> <li>• Website</li> <li>• Targeted letters</li> </ul> Increased take up of benefits or schemes	Within existing resources  Any future activity will have to be subject of any successful ESIF / Lottery bids or utilising Government funding specifically provided to help promote awareness or take up campaigns
Continue to promote fuel poverty & water save messages with Public and Private Sector partners as well as the Housing Division / Public Health and CAB	Quality Service Provision, Health and Well Being	R & B Mgr B & F.I Manager AD (H) Policy	April 2018	March 2019	M	Incorporate joined up messages in any targeted campaigns on website and in North Talk  Action Plans agreed	None internally – funding to run the service is reliant on agreed funding being identified from, WCC
Continue to support FIP Partners in particular WCC, Public Health and JC Plus to promote and develop activities that support the better delivery of the Councils Community Partnership Agenda, Health and Well Being Action Plan & delivery of community hubs	Corporate themes of Health and Well Being  Better Access  Improving Skills and Aspirations	ACE (Solicitor to the Council) ACE (CS) AD (CD) AD (H) WCC Lead	April 2018	March 2019	H	Agreed projects being delivered  Outcome reports communicated to Members via the NWCP, C&E Reports and Task & Finish Group	None other than already committed  Explore opportunities for external funding. Any bids will need to be supported from existing resources

Action	Corporate Objective Divisional Objective	Lead Officer	Start Date	End Date	T/L Priority	Measurement of Success	Resources
If a business case can be approved for 2018/19, continue to work alongside Ediblelinks; NBBC and OCADO / ALDI to determine the future ongoing delivery model of the food bank and the ongoing viability of the operation	Health and Well Being Theme Quality Service Provision  Customer Access	ACE (CS) CP Officer	April 2018	January 2018	H	Food Banks operating successfully in support of the WLWS scheme and the Councils own referral process	Currently subject of a lottery bid and WCC Review into ongoing funding beyond March 2018
Assist in identifying future funding streams with WCC, Public Health and other external funding providers		ACE (CS) B & FI M AD (CD)	April 2018	January 2019	H	Complimentary support to our welfare and health commitments	If both are refused, discussions will be undertaken with members to fund locally for a further period and to determine ongoing local support to continue this initiative
An ongoing review of internal referral in terms of the provision of food as part of the Councils debt / welfare approach		R & B Mgr B & FI Mgr R Mgr AD (H)	April 2018	March 2019	H	Making a positive difference on welfare, health and well being grounds within the borough	This may involve seeking to get contributions from other agencies and organisations benefitting from these provisions, or stopping the operation in full or part in line with available resources.
Agree future partners and projects to utilise food supplied		ACE (CS) B & FI M	April 2018	March 2019	M	Shortlisted for the award following submission	
Undertake the OCADO Christmas Eve "Turkey Run" project		ACE (CS) CP Officer	October 2018	December 2018	M		
Enter appropriate awards for external recognition		ACE (CS)	April 2018	March 2019	M		



Action	Divisional Objective	Lead Officer	Start Date	End Date	T/L Priority	Measurement of Success	Resources
<p>Assist in supporting the ongoing development of the Community Hubs. This will involve promoting but not directly delivering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A variety of Community Focused Activities around health &amp; well being, job clubs, social eating, cooking etc alongside WCC and DWP</li> <li>Providing coordinated support to hub coordinators</li> <li>Promoting the facilities and the technology within them as information points</li> <li>Assist the hubs and CAVA identify volunteers to help resource the hubs deliver outcomes</li> </ul> <p>Review location of facilities in line with possible WCC and Public Health involvement</p>	<p>Customer Access Strategy Quality Service Provision</p> <p>Health and Well Being theme links</p> <p>Access theme links</p> <p>Improving Education and Aspiration Theme links</p>	<p>ACE (CS) / CCM AD (CD) B&amp; FI Mgr</p>	<p>April 2018</p>	<p>March 2019</p>	<p>H</p>	<p>Each hub open for over 15 hours per week (where agreed by the end of Year 3 of its operation) and support a variety of programmes to local communities</p> <p>Use of the facilities by communities and organisations making the hubs vibrant and engaging.</p> <p>Delivery of programmes with partners</p> <p>Effective alignment with the WCC One Public Estate Programme</p>	<p>None other than already committed</p> <p>Explore opportunities for external funding from other partners or elsewhere. Any bids will need to be supported from existing resources</p> <p>Carried Forward underspend on Access budget could be used for funding agreed key activities</p> <p>CAVA identifying monies for the hubs to thrive</p>
<p>Determine the appropriate ongoing use of the B.O.B Bus</p> <p>It is anticipated that this is most likely to be used at promotional events at events attended by our customers and for undertaking corporate consultation events</p>	<p>Customer Access Strategy Quality Service Provision</p> <p>Health and Well Being theme links</p>	<p>ACE (CS) / CCM AD (CD) B&amp; FI Mgr</p>	<p>April 2018</p>	<p>March 2019</p>	<p>M</p>	<p>Vehicles being used at appropriate events at least 20 days per year and by partners where appropriate</p>	<p>None other than already committed</p>

## **Agenda Item No 8**

### **Resources Board**

**19 March 2018**

**Report of the  
Assistant Director (Housing)**

**Asset Management Plan – Council  
Stock**

#### **1 Summary**

- 1.1 This report submits a revised Asset Management Plan to the Resources Board for consideration and comment.

#### **Recommendation to the Resources Board**

**That the Asset Management Plan for the Council's stock be considered and agreed.**

#### **2 Consultation**

- 2.1 The Borough Wide Tenants Forum will be consulted about the contents of the Plan.

#### **3 Background**

- 3.1 The Council's first Asset Management Plan for its own stock was agreed in 2008. It set out a direction of travel for its capital programme to achieve the Decent Homes Standard by 2010, the modernisation of its response repairs service and the development of community orientated tenancy services.
- 3.2 The Plan submitted in this report builds on the Asset Management Plan that was agreed by the Housing Sub Committee in 2013. The actions set out in the Plan have been achieved and its success is evidenced in both the good levels of satisfaction tenants show with the services the Housing Division provides and achievements in the following areas:

Much has been achieved since the last Asset Management Plan was published in 2013. The previous Plan set out some key objectives for the Housing Division. The achievement of these has set a firm foundation for the activities set out in this Plan. They include:

- New build schemes in Atherstone, Grendon and Polesworth to add to those in Fillongley, Arley, Kingsbury and Water Orton.
- Completing regeneration schemes in Atherstone & Mancetter
- Continuing to meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard
- Major works to the roofs of blocks of flats
- Extensive programme of works to provide energy efficient heating systems

- Robust arrangements for health and safety compliance
- Completion of condition surveys of properties & garages
- Restructuring the Housing Maintenance Service
- Developing a proactive Tenancy and Neighbourhoods service
- Achieving good levels of tenant satisfaction

#### **4 Asset Management Plan**

4.1 The first Asset Management Plan was developed at the insistence of the Audit Commission who viewed the production of a Plan specifically for the Council's stock as good practice. There is no necessity to produce an Asset Management Plan however as the Council no longer produces a Business Plan for its own stock it is a useful document to reflect activity and forward planning in one place. The social housing Regulator (Homes England) has set out particular standards that Registered Providers have to meet and a published Plan helps the Council set out clearly how it intends to meet the standards.

... 4.2 The draft Asset Management Plan is attached at Appendix A. It aims to provide a clear direction and purpose in asset management for the Division.

4.3 The Action Plan compliments the tasks set out in the Council's Corporate Plan and Housing Division's Forward Work Plan and will be reviewed annually.

4.4 Ensuring the stock continues to meet the Decent Homes Standard has to be a central priority of the Asset Management Plan. However ensuring that the stock is in good condition is not just a matter for the Maintenance Section. The Asset Management Plan sets out clearly how the Housing Management Section also contributes to sound asset management practices.

#### **5 Report Implications**

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

5.1.1 The Action Plan reflects work which will be undertaken within agreed budget provision. However during the life of the Plan consideration will be given to options for some of the Council's blocks of flats which have extensive structural defects and may not be economic to repair. Proposals and financial implications for these premises will be reported to the Resources Board.

5.1.2 Other notable budget provision for the capital programme (including building new homes), delivery of the response repairs service and neighbourhood and tenancy management has already been agreed by the Resources Board.

5.1.3 All of the services delivered as part of the Plan are paid for out of tenant rent income. The Housing Division has a good track record of collection. Actions will be required to sustain this in the face of Welfare Reforms.

5.1.4 Achieving value for money for tenants dictates that we need to deliver services which receive good satisfaction feedback, are cost effective and are

comparatively good performing when benchmarked with other social landlords. The Plan shows that our current position is sound however the Action Plan ensures that this continues to be the case.

## **5.2 Safer Communities Implications**

5.2.1 The Council owns properties on estates in most areas of the Borough. If its' stock of homes and garages is not kept in good order and are empty for long periods blight can be caused to estates. The Asset Management Plan actions set out to ensure this does not happen and that the Council's assets are also an asset to the community.

## **5.3 Environment and Sustainability Implications**

5.3.1 The Plan provides information about the work that has been undertaken to date to ensure Council properties are energy efficient. It also sets out future work which will be carried out.

5.3.2 The Council's stock contributes to the provision of affordable housing. The provision of affordable housing is a key contribution towards ensuring sustainable communities and preventing homelessness.

## **5.4 Equality Implications**

5.4.1 The provision of affordable housing is a positive contribution towards equality objectives by providing opportunities particularly for younger people and families to access affordable housing in the borough. The Council's services for its tenants aim to provide equal access for all and to be able to tailor services to meet particular needs.

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

5.5.1 The Council has a corporate priority to provide more affordable homes in the Borough to address housing need.

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

**NORTH WARWICKSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**HOUSING DIVISION**

**ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN**

**2018 - 2022**

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## **Executive Summary**

### **1 Introduction and Context**

#### **1.1 Context**

Much has been achieved since the last Asset Management Plan was published in 2013. The previous Plan set out some key objectives for the Housing Division. The achievement of these has set a firm foundation for the activities set out in this Plan. They include:

- New build schemes in Atherstone, Grendon and Polesworth to add to those in Fillongley, Arley, Kingsbury and Water Orton.
- Completing regeneration schemes in Atherstone & Mancetter
- Continuing to meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard
- Major works to the roofs of blocks of flats
- Extensive programme of works to provide energy efficient heating systems
- Robust arrangements for health and safety compliance
- Completion of condition surveys of properties & garages
- Restructuring the Housing Maintenance Service
- Developing a proactive Tenancy and Neighbourhoods service
- Achieving good levels of tenant satisfaction

#### **1.2 Scope**

The Housing Division Asset Management Plan covers all of the housing stock owned and managed by North Warwickshire Borough Council and includes garages and sheltered scheme communal rooms.

#### **1.3 Definition and Purpose**

This Asset Management Plan provides a framework to enable us to manage the stock proactively and support the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan objectives. It is important that the Council's housing assets continue to meet housing needs. It helps to ensure that resources for maintaining the assets in good condition and investments made are clearly focussed.

#### **1.4 Corporate Goals and Objectives**

The objectives for the Asset Management Plan support the strategic objectives set out for the housing service in the Corporate Plan. These include sustaining the decent homes standard as a minimum throughout the stock, building new homes, ensuring the efficient and effective management of the Authority's asset, involving tenants in the service and ensuring we tailor our services our customers needs.

#### **1.5 Lifespan and review process**

This plan reflects the changes in the social housing sector as well as progress made locally over the last few years. Since the last Plan was agreed there has been renewed emphasis on the safety of social housing tenants, the reform to the housing subsidy system has allowed for funding for new build to meet the needs for affordable housing, Homes England is now the regulator for social housing and changes have been made to how we deliver services locally. This includes developing a Maintenance Service which provides for an effective balance between improvement programmes and reactive responsive repairs. Tenancy services are focussed on rent collection following the introduction and roll out of Universal Credit and

neighbourhood services have a focus on good housekeeping and safety in flats and sheltered schemes.

This Plan offers a position statement with regard to the Council's housing assets and looks to the future as we build on the firm foundations over the last two years. The action plan covers 3 years with a view to fully revising the Plan from 2021.

## **1.6 Data Sources**

The Asset Management Plan links strategic and operational drivers for the Housing Division's services. In order to achieve this link this plan considers:

- the profile of the stock and its condition
- the priorities identified by tenants
- performance and benchmarking information
- Corporate Plan objectives and Government direction on housing

## **2 Current Position**

This section outlines the Council's current position with regard to its stock, meeting housing need and understanding tenant priorities.

The housing stock totals 2,690 as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2017. The stock condition survey information has been updated.

## **3 Use of Resources**

The Council's 30 Year Business Plan is directed at ensuring its property assets remain in good condition and, when funding is available, building new homes. Government policy has meant that rents have been reduced year on year since 2016/2017. The policy has been revised to allow for rent increases from 2020. The policy introduced in the Housing and Planning Act 2015 which allows for an assessment of and levy against high cost voids to pay for a Private Registered Provider Right to Buy scheme remains in place although Government has not yet claimed any payment. Consultation has been undertaken about appointing a stand alone, new regulator for the social housing sector.

## **4 Future Direction**

This Asset Management Plan sets out the Council's current position with regard to the management of its stock. The Plan also looks forward. There are a number of steps which need to be undertaken to ensure the sound development of that 3 to 5 year plan. A broad outline of the work required to progress our Asset Management Plan is set out in the Plan and this includes work to be undertaken to:

- Meet Housing Needs
- Involve tenants and understand and meet their priorities
- Retain the stock in good condition
- Ensure health and safety requirements are met in full
- Provide a service which is value for money
- Understand risks to delivering the Plan

The Government has stated its intention to set out a direction for social housing in a forthcoming Green Paper. Future plans will reflect on Government policy and set out the Council's response.



## 1. Introduction and Context

### 1.1 Context

North Warwickshire is a rural Borough with the largest centres of population in the market towns of Atherstone, Coleshill and Polesworth.

The Council's stock is spread over a rural area with a significant amount of its properties in Atherstone (598), Arley (164), Dordon (128), Mancetter (166) Polesworth (303), Kingsbury (164), Baddesley (154), Hartshill (130) and Coleshill (137).

The previous Plan set out some key objectives for the Housing Division. The achievement of these has set a firm foundation for the activities set out in this Plan. They include:

- Works programmes to improve the energy efficiency of homes
- The review of systems of work to provide for robust arrangements for health and safety
- Building new homes to add to the Council's housing stock
- Undertaking regeneration schemes at Lister Road, Atherstone and Church Walk, Mancetter
- Completing a new stock condition survey
- An assessment of the demand for and condition of the stock of garages
- A review of the Lettings Scheme to ensure housing need is met
- Change of policy to allow for sheltered scheme flats to be let to younger applicants
- Incentive scheme to support tenants to downsize
- Providing for a Tenancy Services and Neighbourhoods Team able to achieve high rent collection rates and manage the Council's asset.
- Achieving good levels of tenant satisfaction

In addition to taking opportunities to bid for Social Housing Grant to build new homes, the Council has also successfully bid for properties which have become available as part of planning Section 106 Agreements. Buying from private developers has enabled us to sustain a supply of Council owned properties for social rent without the need to buy land because our own supply is limited.

This Asset Management Plan provides a revised focus for the Council in the context of the findings of the comprehensive stock condition survey which has been undertaken and the demand for its properties due to changes in the Private Rent Sector and welfare reforms. Since the last plan the Asset Management Team has been established to provide for programmes of work through tendering or partnering to keep the Council's stock in good condition and the Housing Direct Works Team has been reviewed to provide response repairs efficiently. In both teams the technical and health and safety expertise has been enhanced to meet regulations and expectations. As part of the Waterloo Housing Group consortium the Council continues to be a development partner with the Homes England and able to attract Social Housing Grant. Since the last plan this has seen two distinct phases. In 2015 the levels of Social Housing Grant reduced significantly. At this time Section 106 Agreement properties were bid for and delivered. Grant availability has increased again and there should be opportunities as part of this plan to access it and use it to meet local needs. The housing regulator has changed but the regulatory system has remained largely the same. The Government is consulting about its plans to have a stand alone regulator for social housing. Welfare arrangements using Universal Credit have been rolled out and will impact on the Council's tenants further from September 2018. Interest in the Right to Buy scheme remains strong.

Some of the changes offer opportunities whilst others pose risks which have to be addressed. The Housing Division develops an Asset Management Plan as a stand alone document because of the detail necessary to provide a clear direction for the management of the assets that the Housing Division manages. The Plan has been developed in a way that enables tenants to understand the current position of the Housing Division with regard to Asset Management and future direction. The Borough Wide Tenants Forum has been fully informed about the decisions which have been necessary to establish the foundations set out in the Plan and have been asked for their views.

This Asset Management Plan identifies the investment and maintenance needed to contribute to the Council's strategies. The Asset Management Plan supports and is informed by the Council's Corporate Plan.

The Asset Management Plan reflects the priorities set out in the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan. This 30 year plan has been agreed by the Council to reflect its position with regard to the Housing Revenue Account now that there is no subsidy

system. It has been adjusted to reflect the reduction in rents that the Government introduced in 2016/2017. The budget set out in the Business Plan takes into account the stated Government policy to levy funds for the sale of “high cost voids” to pay for a Right to Buy Scheme for Private Registered Providers.

The outcome of the Council’ Stock Options Appraisal was a commitment to stock retention which is also a commitment to providing homes in sustainable communities into the future. This has not changed. The financial information set out in the 30 year Business Plan underpins this commitment. However it is noted that there are risks to the Business Plan. These include collecting rent income in the face of the welfare reform agenda, the possibility of increased ‘Right to Buy’ sales following the criteria changes and the “high costs voids” levy.

## **1.2 Scope of the Asset Management Plan**

The Housing Division Asset Management Plan covers all of the housing stock owned and managed by North Warwickshire Borough Council and includes garages and sheltered scheme communal rooms.

North Warwickshire Borough Council is responsible for the management of 2690 properties (at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2017). The breakdown of the Council stock by location is set out in appendix 1. The Council has of stock of 1093 garages and 22 sheltered scheme communal rooms. It manages 105 blocks of medium rise flats.

The Housing Division’s vision is:

“To provide customer focussed services by well trained knowledgeable staff with tenants fully involved at a level suitable for them at both strategic and operational levels.”

The focus of the whole team delivering management and maintenance services is to manage a very important asset for the Council corporately and most importantly for the tenants who live in the Council’s properties and on estates that the Housing Division manages. Both the Management and Maintenance Sections work together to provide services which are aimed at maintaining and improving the Council’s asset to ensure we provide homes and estates where people choose to and want to continue living. This is the case whether we are carrying out day to day repairs, bringing homes up to modern standards, managing tenancies so that they remain in good condition or providing neighbourhood services to keep estates to a high standard and free from anti social behaviour.

### **1.3 Definition and Purpose of the Asset Management Plan**

This Asset Management Plan provides a framework to enable us to manage the stock proactively and support the 30 year Business Plan. It helps to ensure that resources for maintaining the assets in good condition and investments made are clearly focussed on meeting current and future customers' housing needs in terms of type of properties available, location, facilities and standards.

### **1.4 Corporate Goals and Objectives**

The objectives for the Asset Management Plan support the strategic objectives set out for the housing service in the Corporate Plan. These include sustaining the decent homes standard as a minimum throughout the stock, building new homes, ensuring efficient and effective management of the Authority's asset (including collecting rent due), involving tenants in the service and ensuring we tailor what we do to our customers needs. The aims of this plan also need to support the actions set out in the Council's Homelessness Strategy to ensure we can meet housing need.

### **1.5 Objectives for the Asset Management Plan**

The objectives for the Asset Management Plan support the strategic objectives set out for the housing service in the Corporate Plan this includes ensuring that the Authority takes a strategic and proactive role in meeting the housing needs and associated issues across all tenures and that housing plays a fully integrated role in corporate initiatives. The plan therefore aims to:

- Set out the role of the Council's stock in meeting housing need
- Set out the resources required to keep the asset in good condition, sustain the Decent Homes Standard as a minimum for the whole of the stock, improve its energy efficiency and as funding allows building new homes.
- Ensure the service offers best value for the rents tenants pay
- State how high standards of health and safety for customers and the workforce will be sustained
- Deliver services which meet tenants priorities and encourage tenant involvement
- Assess the risks posed to achieving the aims of the Plan

### **1.5 Lifespan and Review Process**

This Asset Management Plan is a working document that drives decision-making in the management of the Council's housing stock of dwellings and garages and sheltered scheme communal rooms.

A considerable amount of work has been carried out since the last Asset Management Plan in to review and improve services provided by the Housing Division to manage the Council's assets. Firm foundations for Asset Management into

the future have been laid and provide a clear direction. We now need to work to mature the service and work with Councillors, tenants and other stakeholders to make decisions that enable us to tackle repair issues in the stock at the same time as meeting tenants expectations for modern homes.

This plan reflects achievements made to date but mainly looks forward. It aims to set a direction for the service in the new context it finds itself in.

This Plan offers a position statement with regard to the Council's housing assets and looks to the future as we build on the firm foundations developed over the last two years. The action plan covers 3 years with a view to fully revising the Plan from 2022.

## **1.6 Data Sources**

The Asset Management Plan links strategic and operational drivers for the Housing Division's services. In order to achieve this link this plan considers:

- the profile of the stock and it's condition, and
- the priorities identified by tenants
- services required to provide sustainable neighbourhoods

This information is then used to inform:

- the programmes of work
- the budget profile, and
- the methods of delivery
- future arrangements for tenancy and neighbourhood management services

The data used in the preparation of this plan are from:

- current information about responsive repairs and stock condition data as held on the IBS housing management system
- financial information in the 30 Year Business Plan
- performance data and customer satisfaction feedback

## **2 Current Position**

### **2.1 Overview**

As a social housing landlord the Council is a Registered Provider and as such is subject to regulations. In accordance with the Regulatory Framework for Social Housing the Council ensures it meets the national standards. The national standards underpin all aspects of the Council's landlord services from customer care and tenant involvement, rent collection, property maintenance, tenancy and neighbourhood management. The Regulator is particularly concerned with the safety of tenants and the last few years have seen action taken against landlords who have failed to meet gas safety requirements and do not have fire safety measures in place.

The Council's local commitments are set out in its 'Tenant Partnership Agreement' which is reviewed annually and submitted to the Resources Board for consideration. Understanding tenant priorities through their involvement and scrutiny arrangements is critical to the success of asset management planning.

In accordance with the regulations a report setting out our performance across all of the housing services delivered is published annually.

The Housing Division participates in a national benchmarking club and undertakes an annual satisfaction survey in order to measure performance. The most recent tenant satisfaction survey shows that 83% of respondents were satisfied with the overall condition of their home. 85% expressed satisfaction with their neighbourhood as a place to live.

## 2.2 Stock Profile and Condition

The housing stock totals 2,690 at 31 December 2017. In summary the stock comprises:

Property	Size	Number
Bedsit		24
Flat	1 Bed	459
	2 Bed	129
	3 Bed	11
Maisonette	1 and 2 Bed	27
Houses	1 Bed	8
	2 Bed	427
	3 Bed	928
	4 Bed	59
	5 Bed	1
Bungalows	1 Bed	311
	2 Bed	306
<b>Total</b>		<b>2690</b>

In the last Asset Management Plan we reported a stock of 2739 properties as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012. 82 properties have been sold since 2015. 73 of these were houses. Since the last plan enhanced 'Right to Buy' regulations which provide for up to £75,000 discount in some circumstances have been in place. Some of the sales have been new properties built by the Council to meet housing need.

During January and February 2018 we have let new houses and flats at Cadman Close and Joseph Cadman Close, Mancetter. We have also let new build houses and bungalows in Polesworth.

The table below sets out the new build properties developed by the Council since 2010. We have developed 129 new properties to date for our own stock.

Development	Number and types of property
Beavons Close, Water Orton	9 x 2 bed bungalows
Eastlang Road, Fillongley	2 x 2 bed houses and 2 x 3 bed houses
Laurel Close, New Arley	2 x 2 bed houses and 4 x 3 bed houses
Stanyers Close, Kingsbury	3 x 2 bed houses and 3 x 3 bed houses
Dragons Court, Atherstone	9 x 2 bed bungalows
Jenners Court, Atherstone	9 x 2 bed bungalows, 4 x 2 bed houses and 3 x 3 bed houses
Lister Road, Atherstone	3 x 2 bed flats, 1 x 1 bed flat, 4 x 3 bed houses
Princess Road, Atherstone	2 x 2 bed bungalows
Chetwynd Drive, Grendon	4 x 2 bed houses, 1 x 3bed house and 4 x 4 bed houses
Hastings Road, Grendon	2 x 2 bed houses and 2 x 3 bed houses
Wood View, Grendon	2 x 2 bed houses and 1 x 3 bed house
Cadman Close, Mancetter	4 X 2bed houses and 2 x 3 bed houses
Joseph Cadman Court, Mancetter	6 x 1 bed flats and 8 x 2bed flats
Byford Drive, Polesworth	1 x 2bed bungalow
Grinham Avenue, Polesworth	4 x 3 bed houses
Little Jims Close, Polesworth	5 x 2 bed houses and 5 x 2 bed bungalows
Thompson Way, Polesworth	8 x 1 bed houses, 1 x 2 bed bungalow, 9 x 2bed houses and 2 x 4 bed houses

The Council needs good data to inform its work programmes. Since the last plan was published the Housing Division has reviewed the software used to capture the data and an in house team of surveyors has proactively undertaken condition surveys of our stock. They have accessed and surveyed most of the stock and updated our Decent Homes database. In addition to undertaking surveys of individual properties technical surveys have been carried out at some of the Council's blocks of flats where the fabric of the building is showing signs of deterioration and to assess the condition of the flat roofs on blocks of flats.

The stock condition database is kept up to date as improvement programmes are completed to properties to ensure the information is accurate and up to date. Information is held on the Housing Division's housing management system and can be readily used and reports can be drawn from it to inform programmes of work. It includes dates when properties had improvement works and predicts when future improvement work will be required in accordance with the component life cycles set out in the Decent Homes Standard. Capital programmes are based on this

information and supplemented to ensure homes are energy efficient. The Decent Homes life cycles are set out in appendix 2. The development of the team delivering programmed works over the last two years will mean that this area of work retains the priority it requires to provide for good information about the Council's asset.

Where the stock is older we are starting to see the break down of the fabric of some buildings which can lead to problems of damp and disrepair. We have had to undertake extensive, major works to a number of vacant properties over the last two years and we are experiencing an increase in reports of damp from tenants. In addition some of our blocks of flats are in need of significant remedial work. Addressing these issues is captured in the 'Future Direction' section of the Plan.

The condition of some of our properties that become vacant is poor. There are a variety of reasons for this. For some the fabric of the building has been found to be poor with extensive, major works required to floors and walls. In others older tenants have refused improvement works and they are in need of modernisation. Unfortunately some properties are returned in a poor condition because of the behaviour of the tenants. Whatever the reason if a vacancy needs more work than would normally be expected there is a cost to the Housing Revenue Account both for the remedial work and loss of rent.

Future planned works programmes are based on information held in the housing management system about the expected lifespan of component types with consideration for age and condition as well as energy efficiency and the provision of modern facilities. The Council does not have a published local policy with regard to addressing the needs of its stock. Its main reference point is the Government's Decent Homes Standard. However its continuing ambition for its asset is to sustain it in good condition and ensure it remains in demand.

The Regulatory Framework sets out its expectations with regard to the stock of Registered Providers in the 'Home Standard Section'. This requires Providers to maintain their homes to at least the Decent Homes Standard, have a prudent approach to repairs and maintenance of homes and communal areas with an appropriate balance of planned and responsive repairs and be able to show value for money in all aspects of its maintenance service. An adaptations service has to be provided and statutory requirements have to be complied with for health and safety.



The investment priorities to ensure resources are available to support the management and maintenance of the Council's stock is set out in appendix 3. The Council's housing stock is in demand and continues to benefit from good levels of investment. There was a period after the Decent Homes Programme ended in 2011 when investment was driven by information from responsive repairs information and requests. Over the last two years Councillors have agreed to move back to a more traditional way of working and the Asset Management Team has been developed to be able to deliver the level of work programmes required to keep the stock in good condition.

The work programmes which have been developed are to provide consistent programmes of work to ensure that properties continue to meet the Decent Homes Standard however we have also started a stream of bespoke works to flats and to individual properties with serious structural defects.

The Council has a stock of 1093 lock up garages for rent. A survey of the Council's garages was undertaken during 2016. The survey is detailed and splits the stock into three main categories. There are blocks which are at the end of their useful life, would not be economical to repair and should be demolished. There are blocks that would benefit from significant investment to bring them back to a good standard. There are other blocks that are generally in good repair but would benefit from minor repairs and a painting programme. Many garages have asbestos roofs and care will have to be taken to deal with those to safeguard health and safety.

There are currently 62 long term vacant Council garages across the Borough (38 less than reported in the last Plan). Four underused garage sites were used to provide new affordable rural homes for rent in 2010. Other sites will be considered to provide for development but access issues are making them less attractive than those already used.

The Housing Division manages 22 communal rooms as part of its sheltered schemes. Two have had conversion works since the last Plan was published. At Rowland Court, Arley the local Pharmacy undertook works to provide for a pharmacy premises in the room and in doing so they developed new facilities for the communal room using the old boiler house. At Eastlang Road, Fillongley the large, underused communal room was divided to give a smaller communal space for the sheltered scheme in order to allow for a one bedroom flat to be developed for letting. The

rooms are all in good condition and do not need any major works however some are under utilised and will be reviewed as part of this Plan.

### 2.3 Meeting Housing Needs

The Council's stock plays a critical role in the local housing market to meet the need for affordable homes. Whilst owner occupation remains a clear aspiration for many and the Government has provided for schemes to assist first time buyers affordability is still an issue for some families and single people can be an issue. The private rented sector remains relatively small in this area with rent levels and the need to provide a deposit being prohibitive for some households. Access is also restricted due to welfare benefit changes. Universal Credit criteria mean that rent payments are paid direct to the tenant and not the landlord and Local Housing Allowance rates have bedroom restrictions in accordance with household size. As access to home ownership and private sector housing has been squeezed over the last three years there has been an increase in the need to find accommodation for applicants who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The most prevalent shortfall to meet demand is for two bedroom homes.

Our biggest demand is for Atherstone and Mancetter and Polesworth and Dordon. Demand for family homes generally outstrips supply in Coleshill, Water Orton and Kingsbury.

The Council's own stock turnover continues to be relatively low at around 6%. This is an indicator of sustainable communities however it also means there is pressure to meet housing demand. The Council's ability to provide new homes and to work in partnership with Registered Provider partners to develop more affordable homes in the Borough remains a priority. Nonetheless it should be noted that the Council's ability to provide for new affordable homes to rent direct and its partnership with Waterloo Housing Group are the main contributors to increasing the supply as other Private Registered Providers have limited interest in developing in the Borough.

The type of properties which become vacant does change however profiling indicates that around 40% of vacancies are houses 20% bungalows and 40% flats. This means that as well as ensuring focussed services for our older tenants we also need to consider services for younger tenants who may be moving into their first home to live independently and as well as support to settle in and deal with financial issues or life skills may also require assistance to ensure that they are able to manage their obligations with regard to maintaining their home in good condition and repairing

responsibilities. The introduction of Introductory Tenancies since the last Plan was published is helping the Tenancy Service Team manage tenancies closely in the first 12 months.

Our contribution is important as the largest stockholder of affordable rent homes in the Borough. We recognise that for the Council to continue to provide properties where people choose to live our asset management must provide properties which meet modern standards and are part of estates which are in good condition and free from anti social behaviour. Currently we have a low refusal rate and we intend to work to sustain that.

The Council recognises the importance of making the best use of its own stock. Whilst it has no hard to let properties data collected as part of the lettings process indicates that some properties are less in demand than others. Following decisions by the Resources Board to change our policy sheltered schemes of flats have been allocated to younger applicants over the last two years and this has largely addressed areas where there was a consistent issue of no waiting list for these areas. Nonetheless there remain some areas where properties can be more difficult to let.

In order to improve the occupancy levels of its current stock the Council should continue building properties which offer older people a positive choice to move out of their larger family homes and by giving tenants applying to downsize high priority in the Allocations Scheme. The support scheme provided to tenants' downsizing which was developed following the last Asset Management Plan has worked well and remains in place. We will continue to use our customer information to discover how many properties are under occupied in order to encourage transfers to smaller homes in order to make better use of the stock.

The Housing Division is realistic with regard to the extent that its own properties can help to meet housing need. The changes to the Letting Scheme since the last Asset Management Plan has created an housing register which is based on housing need and the Council's ability to meet the need of individual applicants. Qualifying criteria were agreed when the Scheme was overhauled in 2013. Since then the waiting list has had a rolling average of 300 applicants registered. The majority are family households. The scheme is concerned with addressing housing need and reduced the number of applicants who registered an application as a 'safety' measure for future plans and the number of tenants registering a speculative request to move not

linked to housing need. The Council lets around 160 properties a year from current stock. The average waiting time is 3 to 4 months.

## 2.4 Modern and Energy Efficient Homes

The Council has prioritised providing modern and energy efficient homes to meet the expectations of both current and future tenants. Its wide range of modernisation schemes over the past few years reflected the priorities of tenants. These included:

- Modernising kitchens and bathrooms
- Roof replacement programme (including soffit and fascia replacement)
- Flat to pitched roof conversions for blocks of flats
- Providing energy efficient gas boilers
- Providing heating choices in flats
- External installation

These works have been carried out to high levels of customer satisfaction. To date these schemes have sustained the Decent Homes Standard including taking the opportunity to work with tenants to ensure their homes are brought up to standards for modern living. All of this work will assist to ensure our properties meet customers' expectations in the future.

The Asset Management Team is now undertaking a range of different capital programme works. There are our traditional programmes that are now re-established again but there is also bespoke work. The annual programmes are to upgrade kitchens and bathrooms, window replacement schemes, new roofing, external installation and to provide efficient gas central heating boilers and carrying out electrical upgrades. In addition flat to pitch roof schemes have been completed at Arden Forest Estate and Chancery Court and the major refurbishment scheme at Alder and Heather Court is underway. Planning permission has now been received for the works proposed at Welcome Street and Long Street Atherstone. Works to renew the roofs of the flats at Water Orton are underway. These are being carried out by a contractor because they are working at height. Complimentary work is being undertaken by Housing Direct Works to replace the fascia boards on the bungalows.

Future years will see a similar range of programmed works. Some meet tenant expectations as well as the Decent Homes Standard. Others are more concerned with addressing structural issues in buildings.

In addition to traditional capital works programmes since 2010 the Housing Division has been delivering new affordable homes for the Borough. We have delivered schemes on garage sites, on our own land as part of regeneration schemes and by buying properties from developers. Developing our own schemes is resource intensive. There is a consultation process, scheme design, planning requirements, procurement of contractors, rehousing needs to address and the building development to oversee. To take a development from design to completion is more resource intensive for the Council but we are able to direct the size and layout of these schemes. The opportunity to buy properties off a developer is helpful in adding to our stock and being able to use Right to Buy receipt but the downside is that the Council has no influence over the property design or the products installed and fittings.

In our most recent survey 83% of tenants who responded said they were satisfied or very satisfied with the overall quality of their home.

Programmes of works have largely been procured using traditional tendering methods. However other methods are considered if they are suitable such as making use of frameworks or partnering contracts. Processing tenders is resource intensive and the mobilisation periods are necessary but create a hiatus in delivering works. Contracts are generally awarded for two years with the possibility of extending them for a further two years if they are cost effective and delivering. Tenants are fully involved in evaluating and overseeing the programme of works for major investments as part of the work of the work of the Borough Wide Tenants Forum.

The capital programme is driven by stock condition information kept and utilised from the Division's housing management software. It is also influenced by common response repairs reports and information from technical officers' site visits. Business planning and capital programmes are driven by the expected life cycle of components set out in the Decent Homes Standard. There are also legal requirements which need to be met. Required funding is assessed over a 30 year business planning period with the Maintenance Service working on a 3 year capital programme with a rolling tender process. The capital programme priorities for the next 3 years is shown in appendix 3. For 2018/2019 there is a continuation of current works and for the following two years the priority areas for the budgets start to change. Tenders are based on a 60:40 price/ quality split and contracts awarded in accordance with the Council's Contract Standing Orders.

As well as modernisation schemes the Housing Division is developing new programmes for cyclical repairs and minor planned works to properties and garages. To date these schemes have been provided by the in house team. This will continue to be the case for low level premises. Work to properties above one storey will be undertaken by external contractors. Some of the work required in future cyclical programmes will reduce due to the installation of low maintenance products such as PVCu fascias.

Fuel poverty is being addressed as part of our improvement programmes with the installation of new gas boilers, external wall insulation, new double glazed windows and new doors. There has also been a programme of loft insulation as part of the roofing programme. The Council's new properties are built to good levels of energy efficiency with some having solar panels to provide very energy efficient and low cost homes.

The Council's investment programme for its own stock has improved energy efficiency measures. The work programme includes work to improve the insulation of dwellings through:

- External insulation
- Loft insulation
- Re-roofing (including increasing insulation)
- Fuel swaps (with a choice to move from electric to gas)
- Replacement of windows and doors

The average SAP (Standard Assessment Procedure) rating for the measurement of the energy efficiency of our dwellings is 65. This is above the national average but below the benchmarking upper quartile which is 72. Programmes of work to provide external insulation and roofing programmes with loft insulation are addressing this. Work is underway to capture the relevant Energy Performance Certificate information on the database to have an accurate reflection of the energy rating of our stock. It will be an action from this Plan to update the database we use to capture the SAP ratings from the Energy Performance Certificates.

As part of our most recent Tenant Satisfaction Survey we asked Tenants to prioritise the top three services we provide in order of importance. 75% of those replying said repairs and maintenance was a priority and 63% said the overall quality of their home was a priority. 35% prioritised their neighbourhood as a place to live. The Council

recognises that how we deliver our maintenance services is critical with regard to keeping properties in good condition. Tenant satisfaction with the repairs and maintenance service is currently 78%. The restructure of the service which was completed at the end of 2017 is intended to improve this position.

We want a comprehensive, prompt, efficient and customer friendly service for our tenants. Tenants have consistently told us that they prefer the response repair services to be delivered by the in-house team – with 92% of them judging the tradesmen as having a positive attitude to customers.

In February 2018 we concluded the review of the Housing Direct Works Team. The in house team is important to tenants. 84% of those surveyed said they were satisfied with the quality of work undertaken. It needs to be organised to meet expectations about quality and efficiency. Changes include how the appointments system is managed and how we plan and schedule the work to avoid delays. The satisfaction information indicates that 82% of those surveyed were content with the time taken before work started, that 84% were satisfied with the speed of completion of the work but only 78% were satisfied that the repair was done right first time. Having multiple appointments to complete works is an inconvenience to tenants.

Central to new systems of work are right first time principles. This means that the organisation of work has to be able to deliver the right tradesman, with the right materials by appointment to the property requiring a repair.

The work that the Housing Direct Works Team carries out critically links with the improvement work being carried out by the Housing Division and ensures properties remain in good condition once the work has been completed. The response repairs team and the programmed works team are now linked by the combined roles of the Gas Compliance Supervisor and Electrical Compliance Supervisor as well as the Support Team Leader. Practical matters such as ensuring materials used in the improvement programmes link to the response repairs service are agreed between the teams.

## **2.5 Safe and Accessible Homes**

The Housing Division carries out around 90 adaptations every year – stair lifts, level access showers and ramps as well as extensions when moving home is not possible. Whatever the adaptation a speedy response makes a significant difference to tenants. The HEART shared partnership assesses the needs of the tenant and

makes a recommendation to the Housing Division to meet it. The time scale for delivering a bathroom adaptation has reduced from an average of 6 months to an average 3 months over the last 3 years. Further improvement on this time scale is expected over the life of this Plan. The team also deal with requests for minor adaptations that do not need a HEART referral.

The Housing Division has a clear and robust stance to asbestos management. There are clear regulations in place about asbestos management which we adhere to and our policy is set out in our Asbestos Management Plan for the Division. The principles are concerned with having good information about asbestos in common areas and individual properties and having robust procedures in place to share that information with tenants, staff and contractors. Training is provided annually. Since the last Plan we have undertaken management surveys in over 85% of our properties to provide information for responsive works. We continue to provide intrusive refurbishment and demolition surveys before any work is undertaken in our properties to fully inform contractors about the materials found and to enable us to arrange for its removal before work begins if required. Decisions about removal are made on a risk basis and specialist contractors are used to remove the materials when required. We have tendered contracts to provide for surveys and removal during 2017 and have two new contractors in place. We expect them to continue for the period of this Plan.

Providing prompt and robust services for gas installations is an important area for customer safety. The annual gas service visit is a legal requirement. To deal with resilience issues in the in house team on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018 the repair work and annual gas service programme became part of a contract with an external supplier. We have been consistently performing at 0% outstanding and expect that to continue. The new contract will be in place for the period of this Plan.

Since the last Plan was agreed we have appointed a new contractor to support our management of our water supplies in our premises. New risk assessments have been provided and we are acting in accordance with their findings. Generally this is to continue, with a regular testing programme for Legionella bacteria undertaken to ensure water tanks in flats and supplies in sheltered scheme communal rooms are safe. Work has been undertaken to renew the water tanks in two areas where their use could not be eliminated completely to provide for modern designs and ensure there is safe access for monitoring. We are currently assessing two other areas to understand whether the water tanks can be eradicated.



New fire risk assessments were delivered by an external fire safety specialist company in April 2017. They provided a basis to review all fire safety measures in our common areas of flats and for sheltered schemes. An action plan to deal with the risk assessment recommendations was drafted and the priority actions dealt with. Actions included improving on housekeeping to keep common areas clear of combustible items, removing bin stores from common areas, recording fire alarm and safety lighting testing, dealing with compartmentation issues and providing tenants with information about how they can help the Council keep them safe. The action plan will be revised annually and the fire risk assessments undertaken bi-annually. The implementation of the recent review of the Neighbourhood Services Team will underpin the work required to keep common areas safe from fire risks.

## **2.6 Sustainable Neighbourhoods**

An important part of our Asset Management is concerned with ensuring that we are delivering the right services in the right way to our customers. A good source of information is what customers tell us about our service. We undertake an annual satisfaction survey and have regular local meetings with tenants as well as a monthly meeting with the Borough Wide Tenants Forum.

Sustainable neighbourhoods are about estates and communities as well as properties which are in good condition and have modern standards.

Introductory Tenancies have been used since 2014. This introduction to a Secure Tenancy is for 12 months initially and can be extended if there are concerns about the tenants' behaviour. These tenancies have helped the Tenancy Services Officers manage new tenancies closely in the initial stages.

In general the Housing Division has little serious anti social behaviour on its estates – with an average of 1 or 2 cases a year where a Notice of Seeking Possession or other legal enforcement action has to be taken. When it does occur it is difficult for tenants and resource intensive for the team to address however we work with partner agencies to address issues promptly. Community Protection Warnings and Notices are now being used where action is required but we want to avoid possession proceedings or are dealing with a leaseholder. In our most recent satisfaction survey 85% of tenants stated that they were happy with their neighbourhood as a place to

live. They were also asked to give us feedback about serious problems that they experienced on their estates.

A fifth of respondents to our recent survey said that their neighbourhood had improved in the last three years. However 67 % thought that parking was a major or minor problem which is the highest level since this question was asked in the survey in 2011. Proposals to improve parking on estates will be considered as part of future programmes of capital works however budget provision is likely to be limited.

Following a pilot project to provide an enhanced grounds maintenance service to some of the Council's sheltered schemes a formal service level agreement was agreed with the Streetscape Division in 2016. The agreement sets out the enhanced standard that is provided for all of the sheltered schemes and for other areas of open space that are maintained from tenants rent payments.

The enhanced capacity of the Tenancy and Neighbourhoods Team which will be introduced by the recently agreed new structure will provide for a fresh focus on priority areas. The Council's landlord services are paid for entirely from the rent that the team collects. If the rent collection rates drop there will be a consequence for service delivery. From May 2018 the Tenancy Services Officers will have a smaller patch to manage and this should enable them to be more proactive in managing the condition of tenancies, address the challenges presented by the roll out of Universal Credit to rent collection and be proactive in dealing with tenancy fraud. The Neighbourhood Wardens will have a clear focus for a designated area of flats and sheltered schemes to ensure they are in good repair, free from signs of anti social behaviour and safe. The team will continue to troubleshoot on estates if problems are reported.

Over the last year we have improved our systems of work to let vacant properties. Critically there is closer liaison between the tenancy management and maintenance teams. Our average turn around time at the end of the third quarter of 2017/2018 is 31 days. It is 27 days if properties which required capital works are excluded. We continue to have issues of extensive repairs being required in vacancies from an ageing stock and where tenants have not maintained their tenancy in the manner we would expect. This is a cost to the service not only because of the extent of the repair work but also the rent loss. The Tenancy Services Officers are proactive in dealing with the condition of properties where a tenant requests a transfer but those which become vacant because of a death or notice are more difficult to address. The

condition in which a property is kept has to be addressed during the life of the tenancy not at the end of it and smaller patch sizes should assist with this. We continue to ensure that properties are not routinely left empty for long periods of time causing blight to estates and compromising rent income levels.

To create sustainable tenancies our Lettings Scheme ensures applicants choose the area in which they want to live. We also work to ensure that new Tenants have good information about our service and the property and area they are moving to as well as access to support if appropriate. The Tenancy Services Officers meet the new tenant when they accept the tenancy and set out the tenancy conditions. There is a further opportunity to do so at the six week settling in visit.

A large part of the work of the Tenancy Services and Neighbourhood Services Teams is to engage with Tenants. They do this as part of their mainstream work as well as our specific Tenant Led Community Panels and local meetings. As part of their objectives the Panels agree to:

- Find out what the important issues are in their local area and represent those views
- Promote awareness of the Community Panel in their area
- Get involved with visits and events taking place in their local area and beyond

To ensure the Panels can pro-actively take remedial action on estate issues within their area, constituted Tenant Led Community Panels can bid for monies from the Housing Revenue Account to cover small scale environmental improvement issues such as installing gates, erecting additional fencing, installing security lighting, providing additional gardening services, removing or pruning bushes, erecting signage. It is envisaged that these environmental improvements are not currently covered by spending priorities but are important to the local Tenant community. A sum of £20,000 is set aside for the work the Panels request.

Listening to what Tenants tell us and acting on their feedback is at the heart of our asset management. We understand that most of our customers cannot readily take their 'custom' elsewhere and therefore we must have easily accessible ways for them to be able to voice their opinions about our services. We want to encourage communities to work with us. Tenant participation is established in the Borough and we have a well established, strong and experienced Borough Wide Tenants Forum

which provides clear and honest feedback on our services. There is also a Scrutiny Panel to consider particular areas of our service in detail.

### **3 Use of Resources**

The Council is expected to meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard as a minimum. Resources are directed at sustaining the assets in good condition and where possible, to use surpluses to build new homes.

Currently the Housing Revenue Account is in a healthy position and we can ensure that services required to address the Council's landlord commitments are available. Government policy has meant that rents have been reduced year on year since 2016/2017 and this has caused an adjustment of the 30 Year Business Plan. There are risks to rent collection from the introduction of the Universal Credit welfare benefit arrangements and from the Government's stated intention to introduce a levy for high value voids to pay for a Private Registered Provider right to buy scheme.

The Housing Revenue Account Subsidy reform was implemented from April 2012. The terms of the reform dictated that the Council had to take on £60m in debt to buy itself out of the subsidy system. The financial business model underpinning the new financial arrangements offers both opportunities and challenges. The financial position is set out in the Housing Revenue Account 30 year business plan and the position is reported to the Resources Board. It can be noted that reform does not mean freedom. The Government's recent intervention in setting a policy for rent levels to reduce is an example of this and another is their stated intention to provide for a levy against Local Authority Housing Revenue Accounts to fund a Right to Buy Scheme for Private Registered Providers. The regulations state that the levy will be taken using a formula and not based on actual sales of high value vacancies.

A balanced approach has been taken with regard to spend expectations. In accordance with tenant priorities and the need to ensure the Council's asset is in good condition the Council has provided budget provision of just over £3.5m annually for the three years of this plan to meet the demands of its capital programme. The work programme is dictated by the need to retain stock at the Decent Homes Standard in line with regulatory expectation. Health and safety compliance with regard to gas and electrical installations, water supplies and Legionella, fire risks and asbestos management is a priority. Budget provision has been designated to ensure that compliance can be sustained and improved.

In addition to budget commitments for capital improvement works there is budget provision of just over £3.1m annually in the Response Repairs Fund which supports revenue spend and response repairs works. This includes funding the Housing Direct Works team as well as some specialist services (for example for asbestos removal, health and safety risk assessments and damp surveys) and planned repair programmes.

The budget provision for cyclical and minor planned works is important and is sustained for the forthcoming period to provide for a fascia replacement programme and works to garage sites.

Traditionally the maintenance service has targeted to spend 30% of its budget on responsive and cyclical and minor planned work and 70% on planned, capital improvement works. This is with the intention of planned works keeping the asset in good condition proactively so that there are less responsive repair requests made. We are not currently achieving this balance however changes to how the Maintenance Service is delivered should ensure the service gets closer to this target during the period of this Plan.

The Council has used its funding to improve the energy efficiency of tenants homes and reduce fuel poverty. Works include structural improvements including new windows and doors as well as the provision of more efficient heating and hot water systems. Over the last 3 years there has been significant investment in providing new energy efficient boilers and heating systems for tenants.

The Council is committed to providing more new homes as part of its own stock as funding allows. Since 2010 the Housing Division has consistently provided for a development programme to provide additional affordable homes for the Council's own stock. This is helping to provide much needed additional homes to rent to meet housing need in the Borough and provides a buffer against a reduction in stock and possible viability issues caused by a potential increase in 'Right to Buy' sales. Resources of just over £1m annually has been provided for within the capital programme which includes any surplus in the Housing Revenue Account combined with funding from 'Right to Buy' capital receipts received over and above those profiled in the Subsidy settlement. A legal agreement with Government has been

entered into in order to enable usage of additional receipts to provide for new build locally.

Spend on housing management services are in the region of £1.9m annually. This covers tenancy and neighbourhood management, including rent collection, as well as services to let the Council's properties.

Future spend is dependent on rent income collected. The experience across the social housing sector is that rent collection in the face of welfare reforms is challenging. Most landlords have experienced a dip in rent income where Universal Credit has been rolled out. There are challenges for tenants who have to decide whether they need to downsize because they are effected by the under occupation changes. There are also challenges for the Council as a landlord in collecting rent from tenants because for Universal Credit claimants there is a delay in payments being made and when they are made the housing benefit element is no longer paid direct to the Council.

A further challenge is to ensure vacant properties are let to a good standard quickly. Not to do so could result in significant loss of rent combined additional spend on Council Tax because of the change in liability locally. The risk to income cannot be underestimated. Historically the Council has let its properties in an average of 21 to 25 days. Recently older properties which are becoming vacant are presenting issues which require extensive, costly and time consuming work including asbestos removal. Action has been taken to reduce the amount of hard to let properties in the stock. This is important because long letting delays whilst prospective tenants are found is a drain on income and means that the stock is not being used to best effect to meet housing need.

Value for Money is central to our asset management. Specific issues pertinent to the Division's Asset Management Plan include:

- Ensuring the Council's properties continue to be in demand and neighbourhoods are places where people choose to live
- Let vacant properties to a good standard quickly
- High satisfaction levels with the services the Housing Division provides
- Evidence of comparatively good performance in key areas such as rent collection and delivering maintenance services
- Our approach to procuring works to deliver improvement programmes and planned maintenance
- Ensuring the Housing Direct Workforce is efficient and effective
- Improved effectiveness in providing disabled facility adaptations
- Working to improve grounds maintenance services

Procurement is a key area of business in managing our assets well. How we procure services to manage the assets is set out in the Council's Contract Standing Orders.

To accord with the provisions we need to:

- Ensure the Response Repairs service offers good value for tenants
- Ensure contractors offer best value
- Have a clear customer focus in all procurement decisions
- Ensure that all other housing objectives are achieved within or less than the revenue budgets
- Be able to prove value for money in all significant spending areas within the housing division
- Have arrangements in place to monitor the effectiveness of contracts and use the information improvements in future procurement
- Have consideration for sustainability and equality issues in procurement

Recent feedback from our annual tenant survey indicates that 86% of those asked think the Housing Division services offer value for money.

To assist the monitoring of the use of resources the Housing Division is a member of the national Housemark benchmarking club. This provides comparative information annually that enables the Council to assess its performance against its own targets as well as benchmarked with other social housing providers. The information we have is based on the data provided for 2016/2017. It included information provided from a specific piece of work to benchmark the in house response repairs service. The summary information about the costs of our services states that housing management costs are £295.14 per property and that this is £34.69 less than the median. The summary also states that response repairs and voids costs are £877.35 per property and that this is £72.65 more than the benchmark median. Benchmarking information has been used in the last 18 months to inform the service reviews of both the maintenance and management services which are intended to improve customer service and performance.

The structure of the Housing Direct Works team has been adjusted in order to continue to modernise the service, ensure that the team can be organised well, closely managed and developed, to provide flexibility to deliver the service and to ensure that legal duties are delivered. Designated Supervisors are now in place for gas and electrical installations. The gas installations works have been outsourced to improve resilience for this heavily regulated part of our service. We have provided for a Response Repairs Supervisor and two Charge Hands to ensure that we act to deliver the reactive repairs tenants expect a quick response to and are able to manage voids effectively. Calls are now handled by the Council's Customer Contact

Centre leaving the Maintenance Support Team focus on planning and scheduling works. The right first time principle defines the efficiency of the service and works alongside an appointments system which provides for good access rates and customer service. Currently response repairs jobs are completed in an average of 9 days.

The review of the Tenancy Services Team will create an increase in capacity in both the Tenancy Services Officers team and the Neighbourhood Wardens team. The proposals anticipate the roll out of Universal Credit for the whole of North Warwickshire, ensure we have sufficient capacity to manage tenancies (including their condition) and be proactive to protect the Council from tenancy fraud as well as to ensure that health and safety compliance for flats and communal rooms is a priority.

## **4 Future Direction**

### **4.1 Overview**

4.1.1 This Asset Management Plan sets out the Council's current position with regard to the management of its stock. It sets out the progress that has been made since the last Plan was developed and states how the Council will sustain the its stock in good condition and continue to deliver high levels of customer satisfaction. Of necessity the Plan is underpinned by the Regulatory Framework for social housing providers however its central concern is focussed on meeting local priorities.

4.1.2 The action plan attached at section 5 underpins the Asset Management Plan and sets out a number of steps which need to be undertaken to ensure the deliver of the Council's objectives for its stock.

### **4.2 Meeting Housing Needs**

4.2.1 It is crucial to the soundness of the Asset Management Plan that we understand the type and level of demand on our services and what is of value to our customers in order to ensure that properties and services are fit for purpose and tailored to demand.



- 4.2.2 Building new homes is now an important part of our Asset Management Plan however it is resource intensive and we need to ensure new developments are not prioritised over the good management of and investment in our current stock. We need to make sure current stock is fit for purpose and that best use is made of it. To do so we have already undertaken several regeneration schemes across the Borough. The most recent were in Atherstone and Mancetter. There are two blocks of flats in Atherstone that require extensive works because the fabric of the buildings has deteriorated. Options appraisals for these flats will be subject to separate reports to the Resources Board. As part of the actions to further this Plan options appraisals will be undertaken to other blocks of flats and garage stock to ensure they continue to be a valuable asset to the Council and if they are not what options are available.
- 4.2.3 When the Council undertakes works to common premises of flats which include leaseholders it has to follow the legislation for service charges. What we can charge a leaseholder for works depends on the consultation process being undertaken in accordance with the legislation, the type of work being carried out and the contents of the lease. A review of these arrangements will be one of the action plan objectives.
- 4.2.4 The Council's current 30 Year Business Plan provides funding annually for continuing the Council's commitment to fund new build for its own stock. This funding is subject to any Government legislative changes including their stated intention to introduce a levy for higher value voids to pay for Private Registered Provider Right to Buy scheme. The Council has very limited access to land which it owns for development purposes. Buying land adds to the cost of the development and access to grant funding is important in this circumstance.
- 4.2.5 The Council's Lettings Scheme and supporting procedures must be effective and efficient to ensure that housing need is met. The current scheme provides for a focus of resources on meeting housing need however consideration now needs to be given to how the Scheme can support the principles and legislative requirements set out in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. In face of possible rent loss and additional budget required for Council Tax payments for vacancies, performance is constantly monitored at a senior level to ensure properties are brought up to a letting standard quickly.
- 4.2.6 Everyone wants to live in a nice place. Our business planning relies on our homes being in demand. The Council's Tenancy and Neighbourhoods Team is a critical

resource in ensuring that its estates and properties are in good condition and that there is no anti social behaviour from our tenancies. Ensuring that anti social behaviour is kept to a minimum, the delivery of the Service Level Agreement for the grounds maintenance service and considering using some funding to improve parking on estates will help to meet tenants' reasonable expectation that the Council provides a nice place for them to live.

4.2.7 The Council has published a Tenancy Policy and a Flexible Tenancy Policy in accordance with regulatory requirements. The Tenancy Policy states the Council's commitment to continue to provide secure tenancies in order to promote sustainable communities however in grant funded new build schemes flexible tenancies have been offered. These tenancies are in place for five years and then reviewed in accordance with the agreed Policy. During the life of this plan we will consider whether more flexible tenancies should be used for new tenancies in order to promote best use of stock.

### **4.3 Tenants' Priorities and Involvement**

4.3.1 We find out about what services are priorities for tenants by asking them in satisfaction surveys and by talking to them. Partnership with the Borough Wide Tenants Forum is critical to the latter.

4.3.1 Over many years tenants have consistently told us that the quality of their home is the most important priority we should be achieving. We meet this priority mainly through the funding provided in the capital programme for improvement works. It remains a considerable commitment from the Housing Revenue Account. The most recent annual satisfaction survey indicates a satisfaction level at 85% with the overall service. However there continues to be an indication of disparity between older and younger tenants. Consideration of this will be an action from this Plan.

4.3.2 Tenants also consistently tell us that their neighbourhood is also a high priority. The Tenancy Services and Neighbourhood Warden team in conjunction with the Streetscape service is instrumental in keeping estates in good condition and being able to pick up on issues and actively troubleshoot. Most estates are in good order visually however there will be a renewed focus on blocks of flats where the behaviour of some tenants can be detrimental to the community and the area. In the annual satisfaction surveys it is issues with parking that is continually stated as a significant problem rather than neighbour nuisance. The consideration of an annual scheme to

improve parking on estates will be considered, as budget allows, to address tenant feedback.

4.3.4 Every business which serves customers must have an understanding of their priorities and have a high level of customer care at its heart if it does not it will fail. Surveys indicate good levels of satisfaction with the Housing Division's services but there can be no room for complacency. All complaints are monitored and responded to positively. We need to build on recent improvements which include making appointments for all repair requests standard, putting prospective tenants at the centre of the lettings procedures and providing good information and support services for welfare benefits changes. How we promise to act is set out in our 'Empowerment Promise'. This covers access to services, feedback, challenge and our aim to provide cost effective services.

4.3.5 Ensuring our services are focussed will also depend on how we are able to engage with tenants. The Borough Wide Tenants Forum is recognised and provides a focus for involvement and challenge. How this is affected is set out in the Tenant Partnership Agreement which is revised annually.

4.3.6 The requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 is likely to increase the demand for temporary accommodation for housing applicants that are homeless. Some provision for this will be made in the Council's own stock depending on availability and suitability. Rent will be payable but occupants will be given a short term licence agreement rather than a tenancy.

#### **4.4 Stock Management**

4.4.1 Its stock of properties is an important asset for the Council. The services delivered by the Housing Division are expected to act to ensure it is retained in good condition. The Housing Management Team collect the rent which pays for the services and acts to manage tenancies to ensure tenants adhere to their conditions of tenancy. The Housing Maintenance Team acts proactively to provide capital programmes of work in accordance with stock condition information and reactively to respond to tenants telling us there is a repair problem in their home.

4.4.2 The stock condition information is up to date following the extensive programmes of work recently undertaken. This information is used to develop the three to five year capital improvement programmes. As part of the actions undertaken for this Plan the stock condition information will be validated, an appropriate depreciation scheme will be agreed, timely annual programmes of work will be undertaken based on detailed specifications and the most appropriate procurement path will be taken to provide for a good balance of cost and quality. Consideration will be given to how the application of the Decent Homes Standard to the capital programme will ensure that the Council has modern homes which continue to be in demand. Information about improvement schemes will be published annually so that tenants know if their home will be affected. Leaseholders will be kept informed in accordance with legal requirements, regulations and best practice.

4.4.3 The stock condition information, regulatory requirements and technical knowledge of the team have directed the programme of works that we are setting out in this Plan for the next four years. Priority work includes:

- Consideration of options for blocks of flats with structural defects
- Rolling programme of improvement works for blocks of flats
- Inspection reports and works for electrical installations
- Providing energy efficient electric and gas heating systems
- Fire safety works
- Replacing windows due to their age and condition
- Replacement of door entry systems due to their age and condition
- New roof programme
- Programme for the provision of external wall insulation
- Rolling roofing programme and remedial works for the garage stock
- Kitchen and bathroom improvement programme to meet the Decent Homes Standard

4.4.4 Where the stock is older we are starting to see the break down of the fabric of some buildings which can lead to problems of damp and disrepair. We have had to undertake extensive works to a number of vacant properties over the last two years and we are experiencing an increase in reports of damp from tenants. In addition some of our blocks of flats are in need of significant remedial work. As part of our action plan we will build on the training we have recently provided for the team about damp and disrepair complaints in order to provide for proactive services to both provide good information for tenants and quick action where damp and disrepair is

reported. We need to be proactive in advising tenants how to avoid disrepair and mould growth caused by condensation.

- 4.4.5 Tenants expect the Council to act to ensure they are safe. To do this actions include:
- Management and Maintenance Teams acting together to gain access to carry out gas servicing
  - Refreshing the Asbestos Management Plan and acting to ensure information is readily available about the presence of asbestos containing materials
  - Having risk assessments in place and a specialist company to support the team to address Legionella bacteria risks
  - Management and Maintenance Teams acting together to minimise fire risks
  - Having a rolling programme in place to assess electrical installations and ensure that smoke alarms are working and in good repair

#### **4.5 Value for Money**

- 4.5.1 Reviews in the Housing Division have focussed resources on providing services based on what is of value to the customer and cutting out waste processes to provide more efficient systems of work. A right first time approach is critical. Tenants don't want multiple visits to resolve issues. They want timely action which gets the job done in the most effective way. The Division will continue to work to these principles to provide the value for money that tenants expect.

Our intention is to have good levels of customer care within our front line teams and to provide them with the sufficient flexibility in delivering services to enable them tailor services to meet their needs. 84% of survey respondents said that they think our staff are friendly and approachable. Information held within the housing management software helps to guide staff about what tenants have told us about their circumstances and how they can be best assisted.

- 4.5.2 Satisfaction with the service is regularly monitored by way of customer surveys and complaints and compliments. This will continue to inform our work. Performance against agreed measures is also monitored and reported to Councillors and tenants. Costs are benchmarked with other social housing providers.
- 4.5.3 There is a commitment to keep an in-house repairs workforce because of the level of flexibility and customer care it can deliver, however it needs to be efficient and effective. The team undertake works included in the Housing Repairs Fund for

planned revenue and cyclical works and allows for a number of trades as part of the team. Work streams include:

- Responding to tenant repair requests
- Replacement fascia programme
- Disabled adaptations
- Gas servicing and central heating repairs
- Electrical testing and remedial works
- Minor planned works

Following the implementation of the new structure in order to ensure the team is able to work efficiently actions for the forthcoming year will include monitoring access rates, materials purchase and right first time delivery of repairs. Consideration will also be given to the interaction between capital programmes and responsive work. We will use this information to inform and identify our work to find an appropriate balance between responsive and planned work.

#### **4.6 Risks**

A number of risks are identified as part of the Plan and will be addressed as objectives arising from the Action Plan, the Corporate Plan and the Housing Division's Forward Work Plan:

- Challenges to income revenue arising from Government policy reducing what rent can be charged and changes to welfare benefit arrangements
- Rent income loss and Council Tax liabilities when properties are vacant for over 7 days
- Increase in 'Right to Buy' sales to a level at which there is an impact on the Financial Business Plan
- The requirements of an ageing stock and the need to meet the Decent Homes Standard and sustaining the resource both in budget and staffing levels to keep premises in an acceptable standard
- Any reduction in the performance of Housing Direct Works which will put pressure on the Council to use external contractors and therefore impact on the level of expenditure available
- Costs of asbestos removal from properties to allow works to be undertaken are putting pressures on budgets
- The levy for high value voids if introduced would require a reduction in spending on services for tenants
- The Lettings Scheme priorities do not deliver mixed and sustainable communities

Section 5

Housing Division Asset Management Plan 2018-2022

Relevant Actions from Forward Work Plan that will assist to progress the Asset Management Plan & Supplementary Objectives

**Vision for the Service**

The provision of a customer focussed service by well-trained knowledgeable staff with tenants fully involved at a level suitable for them at both strategic and operational levels.

Action	Lead Officer	Start Date	End Date	Priority	Measurement of Success	Resources – including Value for Money (VFM) Implications
Ensure the databases we have for stock condition and safety information are kept up to date.	Geoff Joseph & Shirley Gilbert	April 2018	Ongoing	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Validation audit undertaken of data held for stock condition, gas &amp; electrical installations, asbestos materials and energy performance</li> <li>Gaps in information identified and action proposed to find out information</li> <li>Agree procedures and responsibilities for keeping data current</li> <li>Information fit for purpose to inform Financial Business Plan and works programmes</li> <li>Evaluate the basis for agreed programmes of work and make information available for tenants</li> </ul>	<p>Staff time to input and collate information.</p> <p>Having accurate and current stock information will ensure the Council's resources are well directed.</p> <p>Better information will ensure we can improve how we manage our information to Tenants</p>
Procurement of capital works programmes annually in accordance with stock condition information	Geoff Joseph	April 2018	Ongoing	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capital programme agreed by Resources Board</li> <li>Information about programme published</li> <li>Contractors appointed to provide programmes of work at a keen cost, good quality and high standards of customer care</li> <li>Borough Wide Tenants Forum involved in quality assessment of contractors</li> </ul>	<p>Staff Time</p> <p>Budgets which support the capital programme provide an average of just over £3.5m annually</p>
Undertake options appraisals for	Angela Coates	June 2018	March 2019	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Options appraisals presented to Resources Board for consideration</li> </ul>	Some budget provision is provided as part of the capital programme. If

Action	Lead Officer	Start Date	End Date	Priority	Measurement of Success	Resources – including Value for Money (VFM) Implications
blocks of flats that require extensive structural repairs					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation with residents and tenants and schemes of work agreed and</li> </ul>	<p>decisions are made to regenerate an area consideration will be given to accessing external grant funding.</p> <p>Staff Time.</p>
Ensure efficient and effective systems of work within Housing Direct Works	Martyn Juggins	April 2018	Ongoing	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver and then evaluate new systems of work and make improvements necessary to ensure the workforce can be productive and cost effective</li> <li>• Evaluate materials procurement to ensure it meets the needs of the service</li> <li>• Ensure that principles of customer care are at the heart of the service</li> <li>• Evaluation of the performance of the gas installations contractor</li> </ul>	<p>Part of the Repairs Fund provides funding for the Housing Direct Works Service. The budget is for the responsive repairs service, voids repairs and cyclical maintenance contracts</p>
Develop an action plan to keep under review arrangements for safe systems of work for health and safety.	Angela Coates	April 2018	Annual review of plan	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Action plan developed annually and monitored regularly for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Asbestos management</li> <li>➢ Electrical installation inspections</li> <li>➢ Annual gas services</li> <li>➢ Management of water supplies</li> <li>➢ Fire safety arrangements</li> <li>➢ Health and safety risk assessments</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Funding to sustain the employment of a designated health and safety officer for the Maintenance Service</p> <p>The capital programme and Repair Fund budget support the actions required.</p>
To develop procedures and information for tenants to address issues of damp in properties	Angela Coates	May 2018	July 2018	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procedure developed and disseminated to staff</li> <li>• Information for tenants developed and distributed to provide advice about condensation</li> <li>• Monitoring process in place to assess complaints of damp</li> </ul>	<p>Staff time to develop a procedure and tenant information.</p>



Action	Lead Officer	Start Date	End Date	Priority	Measurement of Success	Resources – including Value for Money (VFM) Implications
Act on garage survey condition information	Angela Coates & Geoff Josepeh	June 2018	Ongoing	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>received from tenants and action taken</li> <li>Agree remedial action for each garage site</li> <li>Report to Resources Board sites which are not economical to repair</li> <li>Evaluate garage sites for possible redevelopment</li> <li>Agree a programme of remedial works</li> </ul>	The capital programme and Repair Fund budget support the actions required.
Build new homes to add to the Council's stock to meet expressed housing needs	Angela Coates	April 2018	Ongoing	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Options considered to use Housing Revenue Account funds and land to build new affordable homes or take up opportunities to buy properties from developers.</li> </ul>	The first call on the Council's Housing Revenue Account is sustaining its current assets. However funding is identified in the Business Plan subject to other constraints.
Review Lettings Scheme & Ensure Systems of work to re-let vacancies are effective	Angela Coates & Helen Hughes	May 2018	September 2018	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revised Lettings Scheme in place which ensures preventing homelessness is a priority, meets housing need and is customer focussed</li> <li>Lettings scheme to provide for temporary accommodation to comply with new Relief Duty</li> <li>Customer centred lettings procedures in place with properties brought up to letting standard quickly</li> </ul>	This work can be done with current resources

Action	Lead Officer	Start Date	End Date	Priority	Measurement of Success	Resources – including Value for Money (VFM) Implications
Have actions and resources in place to deal with challenges to rent collection posed by welfare benefit changes	Helen Hughes & Caroline Morris	May 2018	Ongoing	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff capacity in place and officers fully informed to deal with welfare changes</li> <li>Actions in place to fully inform and support customers</li> <li>Partnership working on a sound basis to provide necessary services for customers</li> <li>Rent collection rate sustained at over 98%</li> </ul>	Funding has been made available for additional staff resource.
Deliver proactive tenancy and neighbourhood	Helen Hughes & Caroline Morris	April 2018	March 2019	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review tenancy management procedures and working practices to ensure that the condition of tenancies is managed proactively and effectively</li> <li>Review the procedures and working practices of the Neighbourhood Wardens Team to provide effective services to flats and sheltered schemes and ensure that they are safe</li> <li>Keep under review and monitor the service level agreement for grounds maintenance services</li> <li>Proactive work with Tenant Led Community Panels to meet their priorities for action</li> <li>Undertake a survey of estates to understand issues with parking and propose schemes of work</li> </ul>	The Tenancy Services Team and Neighbourhood Services Team have both been reviewed recently to provide for these actions.
Keep under review the Tenant Partnership Agreement and support the scrutiny role of the Borough Wide Tenants Forum	Helen Hughes	Annually in March		High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Production of a revised and agreed Tenant Partnership Agreement</li> <li>Support for two scrutiny exercises annually to provide detailed feedback on specific services in provided for tenants</li> </ul>	Once the survey is undertaken an options appraisal will be required to set out priority areas and resources required  Resource is available to support this work and there is a designated Neighbourhoods and Tenant Involvement Officer in post to support the Forum and local Panels.

Action	Lead Officer	Start Date	End Date	Priority	Measurement of Success	Resources – including Value for Money (VFM) Implications
Review arrangements for leaseholder management and procedures for service charges	Angela Coates	September 2018	May 2019	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Procedures agreed for raising charges for leaseholders</li> <li>Review of current lease and changes made as agreed</li> </ul>	This review should improve the Council's ability to raise service charges for work undertaken and to be reimbursed
Review our response to the Regulator's requirements to ensure compliance	Angela Coates	July 2018	July 2019	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete and audit of the Housing Division's position against the requirements set out in the published standards.</li> <li>Action plan agreed for tasks required to meet the standards</li> </ul>	The audit can be completed within current resources. Actions required are likely to be funded from current budgets.

TOTAL PROPERTIES HELD BY NORTH WARWICKSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL

As at 8 August 2017	BEDSIT		Flat		Maisonette		Maisonette		House		House		Bungalow		Grand Total
	Total	1 BED	2 BED	3 BED	1 BED	2 BED	3 BED	2 BED	3 BED	4+ BED	1 BED	2 BED	1 BED	2 BED	
Ansley									33	19			20	2	74
Ansley Common		6	1						1	24	3		4		39
Arley		8	8						18	57	5		48	20	164
Atherstone	14	128	21	1	8			1	127	228	18		30	20	596
Austrey										9			7	5	21
Baddesley Ensor		1		1					46	43	1		56	6	154
Baxterley									2	3	2			12	19
Birchley Heath									1	1					2
Chapel End														24	24
Coleshill		47	1	7					12	31	1		26	12	137
Corley									1	1				6	8
Curdworth										5				2	7
Dordon		34	9		6				13	42			9	14	127
Fillongley		26		1					7	8	2		6		50
Grendon		2	2						16	14	5		8		47
Hartshill	1	29	37						17	43	3				130
Hurley	1		4						5	7			13	1	31
Kingsbury		35			13				11	38			4	13	114
Lea Marston										1					1
Mancetter	8	19							16	56	4		8	55	166
Maxtoke									1	3				4	8
Middleton									1	4	2				7
Nether Whitacre									2	4	1				7
Newton Regis										20			6		26
No Mans Heath										4					4
Over Whitacre										1					1
Piccadilly										39			10	2	51
Polesworth		32	14	1					54	106	2		36	48	293
Ridge Lane		30	15							7					52
Shustoke		5							8	10	1			2	26
Shuttington			1						3	18	2		3	2	29
Warton									8	22	1		4	2	37
Water Orton		35							16	23	1		9	15	99
Wishaw										3					3
Witherley										2	2				4
Wood End		18	8							38	2		4	34	104
Grand Total	24	455	121	11	27	1	419	934	58	311	301				2662

## ANNEX A

## Component lifetimes and definition of 'in poor condition' used in the national measurement of the disrepair criterion

1. Table 1 shows the component lifetimes within the disrepair criterion to assess whether the building components are 'old'. These are used to construct the national estimates of the number of dwellings that are decent and those that fail. These lifetimes are those considered appropriate for use in planning for newly arising renewal works for social landlords. They are the same as those used to calculate the MRA which were agreed following consultation in November 1999. Landlords will wish to consider whether these lifetimes are appropriate within their own stock for predicting the age at which the component ceases to function effectively.

Table 1: Component lifetimes used in the disrepair criterion			
Building components (key components marked*)	Houses and bungalows	All flats in blocks of below 6 storeys	All flats in blocks of 6 or more storeys
Wall structure*	80	80	80
Lintels*	60	60	60
Brickwork (spalling)*	30	30	30
Wall finish*	60	60	30
Roof structure*	50	30	30
Roof finish*	50	30	30
Chimney*	50	50	N/A
Windows*	40	30	30
External doors*	40	30	30
Kitchen <sup>19</sup>	30	30	30
Bathrooms	40	40	40
Heating central heating gas boiler*	15	15	15
Heating central heating distribution system	40	40	40
Heating other*	30	30	30
Electrical systems*	30	30	30

<sup>19</sup> Kitchens are assumed to require replacing on grounds of repair every 30 years, bathrooms every 40 years. Therefore the age aspects in the disrepair criterion are set at 30 and 40 years respectively. These lifetimes were agreed following consultation on the MRA. However, it is clear that social landlords and tenants prefer these amenities to be replaced more frequently, to enable them to be maintained at a reasonably modern standard. Thus different ages are required for kitchens and bathrooms under the reasonably modern facilities and services criterion.

## Asset Management Plan 2018 -2022

Landlord Stock - Capital Programme priority spend proportions based on a budget of £3.5m submitted to Resources Board

Proposed Programme	Share of budget 2018-2019	Share of budget 2019 -2020	Share of budget 2020-2021
<b>Electrical Installations</b> Inspection report (EICR), rewire, Cat 1 works, smoke alarms, safety lighting	13%	13%	13%
This is a new work stream	1000 EICR Urgent rewires & remedial works	500 EICRS Programmed rewires	500 EICRS Programmed rewires
<b>Kitchens &amp; Bathrooms</b>	20%	13%	11%
The first year is a catch up programme and then to meet the Decent Homes Standard	Average 150 kitchens and bathrooms	Average 80 kitchens and bathrooms	Average 70 kitchen and bathrooms
<b>Heating (Gas &amp; Electric)</b>	9%	8%	7%
The first year includes replacement electrical heating systems. There has been an extensive programme in place over 3 years to provide efficient boilers.	Average of 130 heating systems	Average of 80 heating systems	Average of 65 heating systems
<b>Windows &amp; Doors</b>  (Fire doors, door entries)	15%	8%	8%
A new programme will be developed to replace old and defective windows, provide for new fire doors and develop a new door entry programme			
<b>Energy Efficiency measures</b>	9%	3%	3%
There has been an extensive programme over the last 3 years to provide for external wall insulation. The need for a full programme diminishes from 2019			
<b>Roofing</b> (includes garages)	15%	13%	13%

This programme is for roofs on flats, individual properties and garages.			
<b>Multi Contractor Works</b>	13%	13%	13%
Bespoke works to individual properties, Housing Direct Works fascia programme & priority fire safety works. Parking schemes as budget allows.			
<b>Alder &amp; Heather Flats Atherstone</b>	Carried forward budget	None	None
Extensive programme of work to complete external improvements should be completed during 2018/2019			
<b>Improvement works for blocks of flats – external and common areas.</b>	N/A	23%	30%
From 2019 we will start a rolling priority programme of remedial works to blocks of flats. The works will deal with structural issues and			
<b>Adaptations</b>	6%	6%	6%

**Agenda Item No 9**

**Resources Board**

**19 March 2018**

**Report of the  
Chief Executive**

**Exclusion of the Public and Press**

**Recommendation to the Board**

**That under 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 10**

**Irrecoverable Local Taxation Debts** – Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Community Services)

Paragraph 1 – by reason of the report containing information relating to an individual.

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