

To: Deputy Leader and Members of the Resources Board

Councillors Symonds, Barnett, Chapman, Clews, Davey, Humphreys, Parsons, O Phillips, Simpson, Stuart, Taylor and Watson

For the information of other Members of the Council

For general enquiries please contact Democratic Services on 01827 719226 or via email – democraticservices@northwarks.gov.

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

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RESOURCES BOARD AGENDA

11 MARCH 2024

The Resources Board will meet on Monday 11 March 2024 at 7.00pm in the Council Chamber at The Council House, South Street, Atherstone, Warwickshire.

The meeting can also be viewed on the Council's YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/user/northwarks

AGENDA

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

4 **Public Participation**

Up to twenty minutes will be set aside for members of the public to put questions to elected Members.

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

If you wish to put a question to the meeting, please register by email to democraticservices@northwarks.gov.uk or telephone 01827 719221 / 719226 / 719237.

Once registered to speak, the person asking the question has the option to either:

- (a) attend the meeting in person at the Council Chamber.
- (b) attend remotely via Teams; or
- (c) request that the Chair reads out their written question.

The Council Chamber has level access via a lift to assist those with limited mobility who attend in person however, it may be more convenient to attend remotely.

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

- 5 **Minutes of the Resources Board held on 29 January 2024** – copy herewith, to be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND DECISION (WHITE PAPERS)

- 6 **Internal Audit Plan 2024/25** - Report of the Interim Corporate Director – Resources (Section 151 Officer)

Summary

The purpose of this report is to set out the proposed internal Audit Plan for 2024/25.

The Contact Officer for this report is Alison Turner (719374).

- 7 **Irrecoverable Debts** – Report of the Interim Corporate Director- Resources (Section 151 Officer)

Summary

The purpose of the report is to provide details to members of debts which are considered to be irrecoverable.

The Contact Officer for this report is Katie Hines (719374).

- 8 **Treasury Management** – Report of the Interim Corporate Director- Resources (Section 151 Officer) **TO FOLLOW**

Summary

This report outlines the Treasury Management Strategy, Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement and Investment Strategy for 2024/25.

The Contact Officer for this report is Alison Turner (719374).

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

To consider, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, whether it is in the public interest that 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.

- 10 **Request to Purchase Land** – Report of the Corporate Director – Streetscape

The Contact Officer for this report is Emma Guilfoyle-Carey (719218).

- 11 **Land Sale** – Report of the Interim Corporate Director (Streetscape)

The Contact Officer for this report is Cath James (719295).

- 12 **Confidential Extract of the minutes of the Resources Board held on 29 January 2024** – copy herewith to be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

STEVE MAXEY
Chief Executive

NORTH WARWICKSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE
RESOURCES BOARD**

29 January 2024

Present: Councillor Symonds in the Chair

Councillors Barnett, Chapman, Clews, Davey, Hobley, Humphreys, Parsons, O Phillips, Simpson, Stuart, and Watson

An apology for absence were received from Councillor Taylor (Substitute Councillor Hobley)

Also in attendance was Councillor H Phillips.

23 Disclosable Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None were declared at the meeting.

24 Minutes of the Resources Board held on 13 November 2023

The minutes of the Resources Board held on 13 November 2023, copies having been previously circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

25 General Fund Capital Programme 2023/24 to 2026/27

The Interim Corporate Director – Resources (Section 151 Officer) identified proposals for Resources Board capital schemes to be included within the Council's three-year General Fund capital programme for Resources Board services.

Recommendation to the Executive Board:

That the schemes, detailed in Appendix A to the report of the Interim Corporate Director – Resources (Section 151 Officer), be supported as the Council's three-year General Fund capital programme for Resources Board services.

26 Housing Revenue Account – 2023/24 Revised and 2024/25 Estimates, Capital Programme, 30 Year Business, Rent Review and Fees and Charges

The Interim Corporate Director – Resources (Section 151 Officer) reported on the revised budget for 2023/24 and an estimate of expenditure for 2024/25, together with the 30 years business plan and detailed HRA capital programme for 3 years. A rent increase of 7.7% in line with the Government's social rent policy and increases for service charges, garages and fees and charges from 1 April 2024 was recommended.

Resolved:

- a** That the revised estimates for 2023/24 be approved;
- b** That the 2024/25 estimates for revenue, as set out in the report of the Interim Corporate Director – Resources (Section 151 Officer), be approved;
- c** That the 3 year capital programme, as detailed in Appendix H of the report of the Interim Corporate Director – Resources (Section 151 Officer), be approved;
- d** That the 30 year business plan, as detailed in Appendix I of the report of the Interim Corporate Director – Resources (Section 151 Officer) be approved;
- e** That, in line with the social rent policy set by the Government, a rent increase of 7.7% in 2024/25, be approved;
- f** That an increase in garage rents of 50 pence per week from £7.58 to £8.08, as detailed in Appendix D of report of the Interim Corporate Director – Resources (Section 151 Officer) be approved;
- g** That the proposed fees and charges, as set out in Appendix D of the report of the Interim Corporate Director – Resources (Section 151 Officer), be approved;
- h** That the service charges for cleaning, as detailed in Appendix E of the report of the Interim Corporate Director – Resources (Section 151 Officer), be approved from April 2024;
- i** That the service charges for window cleaning, as detailed in Appendix F of the report of the Interim Corporate Director – Resources (Section 151 Officer), be approved from April 2024; and
- j** That further work on the New Build scheme to utilise the Right to Buy receipts before March 2025 be supported.

27 Land at Trinity Road – Use of Urgent Business Powers

The Interim Corporate Director – Streetscape sought the Board’s endorsement of action taken under the Chief Executive’s Urgent Business Powers to dispose of land at Trinity Road, Kingsbury, and Member approval that the Chief Executive had the power to dispose of this land accordingly.

Resolved:

That the action taken under the Chief Executive’s Urgent Business Powers to dispose of land at Trinity Road be approved.

28 Private Sector Shared Services

The Director of Housing informed the Board about the current position with regards to the Council’s shared service with Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council to deliver its private sector housing condition oversight and enforcement duties and detailed a proposed change.

Resolved:

- a That the work undertaken by the Private Sector Housing shared service be noted;**
- b That the proposal to bring the service back in house be approved; and**
- c That a growth bid in 2024/25 for £25,000 be agreed to cover the additional costs of bringing the service in house.**

29 General Fund Revenue Budget – 2023/24 Revised and 2024/25 Estimates – Services Recharged Across All Boards

The Interim Corporate Director – Resources (Section 151 Officer) reported on the revised budget for 2023/24 and an estimate of expenditure for 2024/25, together with forward commitments for 2025/26, 2026/27 and 2027/28.

Resolved:

- a That the revised budget for 2023/24 be accepted; and**

Recommendation to the Executive Board:

- b That the 2024/25 estimates, as presented in the report of the Interim Corporate Director – Resources (Section 151 Officer) be included in the overall Tax Set 2024/25 report to Executive Board on 12 February 2024.**

30 General Fund Revenue Budget – Services Remaining 2023/24 Revised and 2024/25 Estimates and Fees and Charges

The Interim Corporate Director – Resources (Section 151 Officer) reported on the revised budget for 2023/24 and an estimate of expenditure for 2024/25, together with forward commitments for 2025/26, 2026/27 and 2027/28 for the services remaining in the Resources Board, that were not recharged to other services. A review of the fees and charges was also detailed, with recommendations for increases.

Resolved:

- a That the revised budget for 2023/24 be accepted;**
- b That the fees and charges, as detailed in Appendix C to the report of the Corporate Director – Resources (Section 151 Officer) be approved.**

Recommendation to Executive Board:

- b That the 2024/25 estimates, as detailed in the report of the Interim Corporate Director – Resources (Section 151 Officer) be included in the overall Tax Set 2024/25 report for Executive Board on 12 February 2024; and**

31 Irrecoverable Debts

The Interim Corporate Director – Resources (Section 151 Officer) provided Members with details of debts which were considered to be irrecoverable.

Resolved:

- a That the total Irrecoverable Non-Domestic Rates Debts totalling £262,218.59, as detailed in Appendix A to the report of the Interim Corporate Director – Resources, be approved for write off; and**
- b That the total Irrecoverable Council Tax Debts totalling £9,197.25, as detailed in Appendix B to the report of the Interim Corporate Director – Resources, be approved for write off.**

32 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.

33 Review of Housing Maintenance Service

The Director of Housing detailed a proposal in respect of staffing in the Housing Maintenance Service.

Resolved:

That recommendations a – h as set out in the report of the Director of Housing be approved.

34 Property Adaptation Polesworth

The Director of Housing provided the Board with information about a recommendation which had been received to provide an adaptation for a disabled person who lived in Council owned accommodation.

Resolved:

That recommendations a and b as set out in the report of the Director of Housing be approved.

Councillor Symonds
Chair

Agenda Item No 6

Resources Board

11 March 2024

**Report of the
Interim Corporate Director – Resources
(Section 151 Officer)**

Internal Audit Plan 2024/25

1 Summary

1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out the proposed Internal Audit Plan for 2024/25.

Recommendation to the Board

That the Internal Audit Plan at Appendix A be approved.

2 Background

2.1 In July 2023 the Section 151 Officer presented a report to members of the Staff Sub Committee with options for providing the Internal Audit function for this Council as it has been operating below capacity for some time with a budget for 2.5 FTEs but only 1FTE auditors delivering the function for much of 2022. This has led to no Head of Internal Audit which urgently needed to be addressed to ensure the Council had the sufficient assurance from its audit arrangements and the capacity to deliver a robust audit plan. The existing arrangements were not delivering a resilient service for the Council.

2.2 After consideration of the options presented Members approved a six month trial with the Central Midlands Audit Partnership (CMAP) providing an audit service to supplement the in house audit function. It was agreed that during the pilot period the issues around structure, transfer of staff and performance indicators be addressed, to the satisfaction of the Council; and That pending a satisfactory pilot period and contract negotiation, the Council joins the Central Midlands Audit Partnership and delegate powers to Derby City Council under S101(1)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 to perform the role of internal audit.

2.3 The pilot commenced at the end of October 2023 with a revised six month audit plan being delivered. To date all of the feedback is positive, with a number of auditors working on the audits along with the in house auditor, sharing good practice from other authorities and providing that much needed resilience a report will be brought back to members as approved and if the arrangement is considered successful North Warwickshire will request to join the partnership from April 2025.

3 Internal Audit Plan

3.1 The internal Audit plan has been put together by the Head of CMAP and Interim Director of Resources (Section 151 Officer) and considered by the Management Team.

3.2 The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) require an annual internal audit plan to be developed using a risk-based assessment process. The assessment process at North Warwickshire Borough Council considers factors such as:-

- the extent of change and development;
- Staffing issues, e.g. potential inadequate training, high vacancy levels or extensive delegation;
- the complexity of the system;
- previous audit reports/agreed action plans and the length of time since the last review;
- frauds detected or investigated;
- the sensitivity of the system, for example the impact to the authority of something going wrong; and
- the value and volume of transactions.

3.3 Along with these factors consideration has also been given to ensuring that the audit service has full management in place with the role of Head of Internal Audit being delivered, quality review of all audits to achieve conformance with PSIAS and flexibility within the plan to respond to reactive work along with a contingency for advisory reviews. As a result of the lack of audit coverage the revised six month plan for the current year covered governance and financial systems to ensure internal controls were robust and this theme carries through into the 2024/25 plan making sure all of the core processes, controls are in place and operating effectively.

... 3.4 The proposed plan at Appendix A has been developed considering risk; as part of reviewing the plan Risk, Councils Corporate Plan, Audit Needs assessment and third party requests are considered. There has to be some flexibility in this as some reviews will run over from one quarter to the next at times for various reasons. In determining the number and timing of the reviews, consideration has been given to service priorities and the audit resources available.

- 3.5 There are audits on the current year plan which may not be complete until early next financial year due to availability of resources to work with the auditors and the delay in the pilot commencing. These will be completed as soon as possible in 2024/25.
- 3.6 Follow-up reviews are completed after the final report has been issued to ensure that all agreed actions have been addressed as planned; the timing of these reviews is dependent upon when the report was finalised, and the audit opinion given. These have been built into the plan presented.

4 Counter Fraud

- 4.1 The current Counter Fraud Officer has been employed by the Council since June 2018, this is a shared role with Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council (NBBC), on average the Officer spends 40% of his time investigating fraud allegations at NWBC and 60% at NBBC. The officer has informed the Council he will not continue working at this Council from 1 April 2024 and CMAP have been approached to provide this service from April.

5 Report Implications

5.1 Risk Management Implications

- 5.1.1 The Audit Plan for 2024/25 takes specific account of the Council's strategic and operational risks.

5.2 Links to Council's Priorities

- 5.2.1 The Audit Plan for 2024/25 is based on a risk assessment which will ensure the best use of resources to provide a high-quality service.

The Contact Officer for this report is Alison Turner (719374).

APPENDIX A

North Warwickshire B C – Internal Audit Plan 2024/25

Audit Plan Assignments	Assurance/Reason for audit
Information Governance	This will be split into separate audits to provide assurance on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freedom of Information • Subject Access Requests • Records Management • Data Protection
Unit 4 System	To provide assurance around the implementation of the new financial management system
Key Financial Systems	To provide assurance on the Council's mitigation of risks within its financial systems.
Contract Management	To provide assurance on the risks associated with the Council's contract management arrangements and to ensure that they are in line with agreed standards.
Data Quality	To review the data held by the Council for both accuracy and completeness and to ensure compliance of personal data with GDPR/Data Protection legislation.
Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)	To provide assurance on the Council's policies and processes for EDI and its compliance with legislation/regulations.
Business Continuity & Disaster Recovery	Earmarked for inclusion in the 2024/25 IA Plan within the 2023/24 Emergency Planning Audit issued in December 2023. Key turnover in senior officer posts at NWBC elevates

Audit Plan Assignments	Assurance/Reason for audit
	the need for audit coverage of the Council's Business Continuity & Disaster Recovery arrangements.
Capital Programme	Not covered by Internal Audit for over 5 years, so requires coverage. The Capital Programme involves large scale expenditure which requires continuous oversight.
Fly-tipping	Key turnover in senior officer posts at NWBC elevates the need for audit coverage of the Council's arrangements for dealing with illegal fly-tipping in the Borough. To assess the adequacy of the Council's proactive deterrence measures and its enforcement / seeking prosecution of large-scale fly-tipping offenders.
Hackney Carriage (Taxi) & Private Hire Vehicle Licensing	A risk area if unlicensed taxi drivers operating in the area. Also need to check on controls over MOT, insurance and vehicle tax of hackney carriage and private hire vehicles operating in the Borough, to ensure vehicles are roadworthy
Housing Maintenance & Repairs – Use of Procurement Cards	Not covered by Internal Audit for over 5 years, so requires coverage, given change in management of the function and level of expenditure using procurement cards
Cyber Security	Heightened threat nationally from potential cyber-attacks. New Technical Support Manager post created at NWBC.
Information Security	To assess the robustness of security of access to the Council's IT infrastructure, including its network and system applications
Follow-Up of 2022/23 Procurement Audit	
Follow-up of 2023/24 Elections & Electoral Registration Audit	

Audit Plan Assignments	Assurance/Reason for audit
Follow-up of 2023/24 Civil Parking Enforcement Audit	
Follow-up of 2023/24 Commercial Properties & Industrial Units Audit	
Follow-up of Health & Safety - Waste & Transport Audit	
Follow-up of 2023/24 Housing Repairs – Annual Gas Safety Checks Audit	

Agenda Item No 7

Resources Board

11 March 2024

**Report of the
Interim Corporate Director – Resources
(Section 151 Officer)**

Irrecoverable Debts

1 Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide details to Members of debts which are considered to be irrecoverable.

Recommendation to the Board

- a That the debts detailed in Appendix A of this report are approved for write off; and**
- b That the total Irrecoverable Non-Domestic Rates Debts totalling £213,844.36 are approved for write off.**

2 Background

- 2.1 At times it becomes necessary to write off, as irrecoverable, certain items of income, whether the debtor is either untraceable, deceased, where legal procedures for recovery have been exhausted, or because the amount involved does not justify further action.
- 2.2 The Write-Off policy recommends a realistic approach to write offs, based on the principles of reasonableness and value for money and should ensure that the Council's resources are deployed in the most effective way to recover monies due. This is particularly relevant in respect of Council Tax debts where the Council only retains approximately 10.3% of monies collected despite being responsible for 100% of the staffing and administration costs to recover monies due.
- 2.3 Since March 2020 there have been restrictions on recovery due to the closure of Courts to escalate proceedings and also that the priority of the Revenues Team has been to award Covid Grants and Energy Rebate payments to help support our residents and businesses. As the recovery is now back to full status the team are focusing on bringing customers who owe debt to the authority up to date. We have needed to contact all our customers again with reminders of debt owed and expectation of repayments.

- 2.4 The Revenues Team make every effort to ensure monies due to the Council are recovered in line with the Authority's write off policy. Where this is not possible, individual cases are considered for write-off.
- 2.5 The types of situations mentioned later in this report where enforcement action cannot be taken by any creditors for debts are covered under the following:
- Individual Voluntary Arrangement (IVA), a dividend is paid by the debtor through an insolvency practitioner to cover all, or part of their debt. Creditors may receive a percentage of the amount owed or nothing. Any balance declared in the IVA and not covered by the dividend payment must be written off.
 - Debt Relief Order (DRO) – Once agreed, the debt under the DRO is set aside for a period of 12 months. No recovery action can be taken to recover the debt during this time. If the debtors' financial circumstances do not improve significantly during the 12 months, the debt cannot be recovered and must be written off.
 - Winding up / Insolvency / Liquidation - All recovery is held while assets are realised, usually dealt with by a Court appointed administrator. Once proof of debt is submitted, we may or may not receive any money, any money that is received will be paid off the debt.

3 **Business Rates**

- 3.1 The Business rate cases put forward for consideration in Appendix A relate to 1 business in insolvency.

4 **Council Tax Debt**

- 4.1 There are no Council Tax cases put forward for consideration.

5 **Report Implications**

5.1 **Finance and Value for money Implications**

- 5.1.1 The total amount to be written off for National Non-Domestic Rates is £213,844.36, equating to 0.31% of debt raised to date in 2023/24. The loss of income will be written back to the individual service.

6 **Legal Implications**

- 6.1 The Council has a statutory duty to recover Council Tax and non-domestic rates and a general fiduciary duty to the inhabitants of its area to safeguard the public funds entrusted to it. Notwithstanding these duties where a debtor is subject to statutory processes such as insolvency or an IVA as referred to above, the Council is barred from taking further action and must write off any sums which are not realised through that process. Similarly, where a debtor cannot be traced or where it is not cost effective to recover the debt, the Council may write off the debt provided it is satisfied that the steps taken to do so are reasonable in all the circumstances.

The Contact Officer for this report is Katie Hines (719374)

NDR Bulk Write Offs - Batch 74**Appendix A**

Recovery Year	Liability Year	Transaction Code	Amount
	2023	2023 3INSOLV	£26,352.36
	2022	2022 3INSOLV	£62,564.00
	2021	2021 3INSOLV	£62,464.00
	2020	2020 3INSOLV	£62,464.00
Totals for Transaction Sub Code :	3INSOLV		
Total Number of Authorised Requests :		4	
Total Value of Authorised Requests :		£213,844.36	

Agenda Item No 9

Resources Board

11 March 2024

**Report of the
Chief Executive**

Exclusion of the Public and Press

Recommendation to the Board

To consider, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, whether it is in the public interest that 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

Request to Purchase Land – Report of the Corporate Director – Streetscape.

Paragraph 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

Agenda item No 11

Land Sale – Report of the Interim Corporate Director Streetscape.

Paragraph 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

In relation to the items listed above members should only exclude the public if the public interest in doing so outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, giving their reasons as to why that is the case.

The Contact Officer for this report is Marina Wallace (719226).