

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

**Councillors Hayfield, Humphreys, Jenns, Singh, M Stanley and Sweet**

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

## **SPECIAL SUB-GROUP**

**15 December 2015**

The Special Sub-Group will meet in the Committee Room, The Council House, South Street, Atherstone on Tuesday 15 December 2015 at 6.30pm.

### **AGENDA**

#### **PART I - PUBLIC BUSINESS**

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

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

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

- 5 **Progress Report on Human Resource Issues** – Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Finance and Human Resources)

**Summary**

This report advises Members of progress against the Human Resources Strategy Action Plan, work being done by the Human Resources team, the sickness levels for the period of April 2015 to September 2015 and provides some further information on action taken in managing absence.

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

- 6 **Devolution/ Combined Authorities** – Report of the Chief Executive

**Summary**

To receive a verbal update on any further developments in respect of the proposals for devolution/combined authorities.

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

- 7 **Area Forums and Scrutiny** – Report of the Assistant Chief Executive and Solicitor to the Council

**Summary**

The report suggests the detail of changes to the Scrutiny function agreed at the last meeting and the initial steps for a review of Area Forums.

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

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

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

**Recommendation:**

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

- 9 **Atherstone Leisure Complex – Extension of the Swimming Lesson Programme** – Report of the Assistant Director (Leisure and Community Development)

The Contact Officer for this report is Simon Powell (719352).

- 10 **Shared Service Proposal and Structure Changes in the Community Services Division** – Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Community Services)

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

JERRY HUTCHINSON  
Chief Executive

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

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

## Agenda Item No 5

### Special Sub-Group

15 December 2015

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

#### Progress Report on Human Resources Issues

### 1 Summary

- 1.1 This report advises Members of progress against the Human Resources Strategy Action Plan, work being done by the Human Resources team, the sickness levels for the period of April 2015 to September 2015 and provides some further information on action taken in managing absence.

#### Recommendation to the Sub-Group

That the report be noted.

### 2 Report

- 2.1 This report provides an update on the Human Resources (HR) Strategy Action Plan and under Health and Absence Management gives the position on sickness for the first 6 months of 2015/16.

### 3 Health and Absence Management

#### 3.1 Summary of Sickness Absence 2015/16 (April 2015 – September 2015)

- 3.1.1 Absence Management is recorded for all employees, and is then analysed into short and long term absence. Comparing same time period in 2014/15 to 2015/16 there is a small decrease in short term sickness absence per full time equivalent (FTE) and a small increase in long term sickness. The position is summarised in the table below, with additional detail given at Appendix A.

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Type	2014/15	2015/16
Short Term	1.96 days per FTE	1.89 days per FTE
Long Term	3.27 days per FTE	3.45 days per FTE
<b>Total</b>	<b>5.23 days per FTE</b>	<b>5.35 days per FTE</b>

- 3.1.2 In line with the Attendance Management Policy short-term sickness absence reports are sent to Assistant Directors on a monthly basis. HR also meets with the Assistant Directors on a bi-monthly basis to provide advice and to discuss what action they have taken within their Divisions. The aim of these reports and meetings is to increase managers' awareness of sickness absence within their Divisions, which should aid proactive and consistent

management of absence issues and will contribute to minimising short-term absence figures. Managers now take employees with habitual short-term absences to case management earlier.

3.1.3 Long-term sickness in April 2015– September 2014 has increased by 0.18 days per FTE, compared with the long term sickness in April 2014 – September 2014. The long-term sickness absence is being managed either by getting staff back to work or them exiting the organisation either on ill-health retirement, dismissal or by resignation. Those with significant long-term absence equates to 15 employees having lost a total of 926.17 days. Eight of these employees have successfully returned to work, 3 have left the Council, 2 were dismissed and 2 employees are currently still absent and their cases are being managed in line with the Attendance Management Policy.

3.1.4 Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council currently use a company called First Care, to help them to manage their sickness. Given our current sickness figures, it is planned to run a trial with First Care to see if this assists the council to manage sickness more effectively. Nuneaton and Bedworth have agreed to add the Housing Maintenance Section to their workforce for this purpose to enable us to pilot the scheme. There is some work for HR to set up the system, get the agreements in place and then to brief the workforce and train the managers to use the system. It will be implemented as soon as possible in the New Year.

3.1.5 Appendix B shows the reasons for the number of days lost per FTE. The main reasons for absence relate to: Stress, Musculoskeletal and Operation/Post Operation.

## 3.2 **Ill Health Monitored Under the Attendance Management Policy**

3.2.1 Under the Attendance Management Policy where ill health is having a detrimental effect on an individual's ability to perform their job, or where the trigger points have been exceeded under the policy, then managers will seek to manage these cases in a pro-active way. The Attendance Management Policy sets out the procedures to be used, starting with management reviews to Case Management stages 1, 2 and working through, if necessary, to the end of the process at stage 3.

3.2.2 There are a number of cases currently being dealt with under the Attendance Management Policy, and the current status of these cases are as follows:

- 11 employees are having management/formal reviews
- 17 employees are at Stage 1
- 1 employee due to go to Stage 2
- 2 employees are at Stage 2
- 1 employee due to go to Stage 3

3.2.3 Although we have removed from the books 5 difficult cases in the 6 months from 1 April 2015 to 30 September 2015 their figures are still included in the overall position. However, they are no longer adding to the level of absence.

## **4 Health & Wellbeing**

- 4.1 The Council has trained all of Extended Management team and Principal Officers in an overview of Mental Health First Aid (MHFA). In addition to this 16 officers across the Council have undergone the more in depth 2 day course in Mental Health First Aid. The HR Manager is now working to produce a toolkit for managers to use when they recognise the symptoms. It is hoped that by detecting issues early the MHFA trained officers will be able to signpost employees to get the correct help early and as a result reduce the sickness absence in this area.

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

- 5.1 There were a number of starters and leavers between April 2015 to September 2015. There were 23 leavers, including 5 employees who retired, 1 end of contract, 1 dismissal, 15 resignations and 1 deceased. There were 7 starters. This equates to a labour turnover of 7.09%.
- 5.2 The Council has continued with the strategy of reviewing all posts that become vacant. Those posts that need to be filled are recruited to internally where possible. This supports the Council's ability in succession planning.

## **6 Policies Procedures and Processes**

- 6.1 There are a number of policies currently being reviewed and updated. These are Supported Introduction to Employment, Job Share Policy, Secondment Policy and Procedure and the Dignity at Work Policy. When completed the outcome of these will be reported to Special Sub-Group.

## **7 Pay and Benefits**

- 7.1 Under section 38 of the Localism Act 2011 a Pay Policy Statement was prepared and was adopted at Executive Board on 6 February 2012. This is required to be reviewed annually and the updated statement went to Full Council on 24 June 2015. The Pay Policy Statement is published on the Council's website.

## **8 Learning, Training and Development**

- 8.1 In the 2015/16 training year, Extended Management Team and Junior Supervisors/Team Leaders received a 360-degree appraisal with the HR section managing the process and producing the analysis in house. An external consultant is providing the feedback to the officers and will produce a report of the overall findings.
- 8.2 Our E learning programme is currently covering Health & Safety, Fraud Awareness, Equality & Diversity, Customer Service, Data Protection, Freedom of Information, Bribery Act 2010, Staff Reviews (Appraisals) and Safeguarding Adults. The HR Manager continues to work with the administrator to develop modules for NWBC. Working in collaboration with the other Local Authorities in Staffordshire and Warwickshire, the Council benefits from cost effective or free training.

- 8.4 During the 2015/16 training year, the Council is running in house courses including Child Protection, Dementia Awareness, and Health and Safety courses (e.g. First Aid, Defibrillator training, Personal Safety and Conflict Management, Manual Handling, Risk Assessment and Safety Audit).
- 8.5 The Council has up skilled the workforce which means that there are fewer employees that meet the criteria to qualify for funded training. However, where appropriate the Council will continue to take advantage of this funding.
- 8.6 The Council continues with its apprenticeship programme. Currently we have two apprentices, one who is on an advanced apprenticeship (Level 4).

## **9 Safety Management**

- 9.1 Managers undertake risk assessments, safe systems of work and safety audits in their work areas.
- 9.2 Due to high demands on HR the Council has sourced additional resource to support the HR Officer in undertaking the corporate audits across the Council.

## **10 Employee Relations**

- 10.1 The HR team provides advice and support to managers on all HR issues. The HR Manager and the HR Officer provide support to managers and lead, where appropriate, on investigations, disciplinary, grievance, and capability relating to performance or attendance. There were 7 investigations undertaken from April 2015 – September 2015 and 4 grievances dealt with.
- 10.2 The HR Manager and HR Officer also provide considerable support in the preparation for Hearings and Appeals. The 4 grievances were all dealt with and resolved informally. Of the investigations – 1 resulted in no case to answer, 1 resulted in a written warning, 2 resulted in the employees' resignation and 3 are still ongoing.
- 10.3 Service restructures require staff consultations which the HR Manager and the HR Officer do with the line managers. These require HR to provide support to both managers and staff, with the queries and information they require during the process.

## **11 Report Implications**

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

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

## 11.2 Human Resources Implications

11.2.1 As detailed in the report.

## 11.3 Environment and Sustainability Implications

11.3.1 The work on numeracy, literacy and NVQ's is bringing the employee skills up to a minimum standard and will directly contribute towards the priorities of the North Warwickshire Sustainable Communities Strategy 2009 – 2026 of raising aspirations, education, attainment and skills.

## 11.4 Equality Implications

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

## 11.4 Links to Council's Priorities

11.4.1 The Council has a priority for Local Employment, bringing more jobs to North Warwickshire, whilst seeking to protect existing jobs and developing our workforce.

The Contact Officer for this report is Janis McCulloch (719236)

### Background Papers

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

Background Paper No	Author	Nature of Background Paper	Date



## APPENDIX A

**ALL SICKNESS**

	2014/15	2015/16	2014/15	2015/16	2014/15	2015/16
Division	FTE per Division	FTE per Division	Days Lost by FTE	Days Lost by FTE	Sickness per FTE	Sickness per FTE
Assistant Chief Exec	32.59	29.58	59.65	19.40	1.83	0.66
Corporate Services	30.84	28.96	154.31	125.64	5.00	4.34
Streetscape	61.30	61.27	694.04	342.97	11.32	5.60
Leisure & Comm Dev	54.51	52.06	264.27	350.49	4.85	6.73
Community Services	41.51	36.09	77.76	221.80	1.87	6.15
Finance & HR	16.71	16.62	92.38	7.35	5.53	0.44
Housing	88.26	91.46	382.52	579.14	4.33	6.33
Internal Audit	2.48	2.48	3.95	49.28	1.59	19.87
Chief Exec	3.86	3.86	8.46	28.00	2.19	7.25
<b>Total</b>	<b>332.06</b>	<b>322.38</b>	<b>1,737.34</b>	<b>1,724.07</b>	<b>5.23</b>	<b>5.35</b>

**SHORT TERM SICKNESS**

	2014/15	2015/16	2014/15	2015/16	2014/15	2015/16
Division	FTE per Division	FTE per Division	Days Lost by FTE	Days Lost by FTE	Sickness per FTE	Sickness per FTE
Assistant Chief Exec	32.59	29.58	59.65	19.40	1.83	0.66
Corporate Services	30.84	28.96	83.11	12.64	2.69	0.44
Streetscape	61.30	61.27	111.04	79.08	1.81	1.29
Leisure & Comm Dev	54.51	52.06	154.14	165.49	2.83	3.18
Community Services	41.51	36.09	77.76	107.67	1.87	2.98
Finance & HR	16.71	16.62	10.38	7.35	0.62	0.44
Housing	88.26	91.46	143.52	214.14	1.63	2.34
Internal Audit	2.48	2.48	3.95	3.50	1.59	1.41
Chief Exec	3.86	3.86	8.46	1.00	2.19	0.26
<b>Total</b>	<b>332.06</b>	<b>322.38</b>	<b>652.01</b>	<b>610.27</b>	<b>1.96</b>	<b>1.89</b>

**LONG TERM SICKNESS**

	2014/15	2015/16	2014/15	2015/16	2014/15	2015/16
Division	FTE per Division	FTE per Division	Days Lost by FTE	Days Lost by FTE	Sickness per FTE	Sickness per FTE
Assistant Chief Exec	32.59	29.58	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Corporate Services	30.84	28.96	71.20	113.00	2.31	3.90
Streetscape	61.30	61.27	583.00	263.89	9.51	4.31
Leisure & Comm Dev	54.51	52.06	110.13	185.00	2.02	3.55
Community Services	41.51	36.09	0.00	114.13	0.00	3.16
Finance & HR	16.71	16.62	82.00	0.00	4.91	0.00
Housing	88.26	91.46	239.00	365.00	2.71	3.99
Internal Audit	2.48	2.48	0.00	45.78	0.00	18.46
Chief Exec	3.86	3.86	0.00	27.00	0.00	6.99
<b>Total</b>	<b>332.06</b>	<b>322.38</b>	<b>1,085.33</b>	<b>1,113.80</b>	<b>3.27</b>	<b>3.45</b>

**Reasons for Sickness**

	Accident At Work	Anxiety / Dep	Back	Cancer	Chest	Cold	ENT / Eye	Flu	Geni- Urin	Heart	Hyper ten	Musc	Neuro	Op & Post Op	Preg	Stom	Stress	Total
<b>NWBC</b>	<b>23.38</b>	<b>128.30</b>	<b>74.69</b>	<b>5.41</b>	<b>35.33</b>	<b>9.08</b>	<b>42.58</b>	<b>40.07</b>	<b>7.65</b>	<b>58.89</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>308.73</b>	<b>100.53</b>	<b>312.63</b>	<b>25.55</b>	<b>85.18</b>	<b>466.06</b>	<b>1,724.07</b>

<b><u>Sickness Code</u></b>	<b><u>Description</u></b>
<b>Accident At Work</b>	<b>Accident At Work</b>
<b>Anxiety/ Depression</b>	<b>Anxiety, Depression</b>
<b>Back</b>	<b>Back &amp; Neck problems</b>
<b>Cancer</b>	<b>Cancer related</b>
<b>Chest</b>	<b>Chest &amp; Respiratory: to include Chest infections</b>
<b>Cold</b>	<b>Cold symptoms</b>
<b>ENT/Eye</b>	<b>Eye, Ear, Nose &amp; Mouth/Dental : to include sinusitis</b>
<b>Flu</b>	<b>Flu symptoms</b>
<b>Genito-Urinary</b>	<b>Genito Urinary: to include menstrual problems</b>
<b>Heart</b>	<b>Heart Blood pressure&amp; circulation</b>
<b>Hypertension</b>	<b>High Blood Pressure</b>
<b>Muscular</b>	<b>Other musculoskeletal problems</b>
<b>Neurological</b>	<b>Neurological; to include headaches and migraine</b>
<b>Operation &amp; Post Op</b>	<b>Operation, Post Op</b>
<b>Pregnancy</b>	<b>Pregnancy related</b>
<b>Stomach</b>	<b>Stomach, Liver, Kidney &amp; Digestion; to include gastro-enteritis</b>
<b>Stress</b>	<b>Stress, Mental health &amp; fatigue</b>



**Agenda Item No 7**

**Special Sub-Group**

**15 December 2015**

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

**Area Forums and Scrutiny**

**1 Summary**

- 1.1 The report suggests the detail of changes to the Scrutiny function agreed at the last meeting and the initial steps for a review of Area Forums.

**Recommendation to the Executive Board:**

- a That constitutional changes detailed in the report be agreed subject to the approval of Full Council;**

**Recommendation to the Sub-Group:**

- b That the suggested steps for a review of Area Forums are agreed; and**
- c That Members indicated broad options for the future of the Forums for the review.**

**2 Consultation**

- 2.1 All Members will receive a copy of the report and have been invited to the meeting.

**3 Report**

- 3.1 At the last meeting of this Group, Members agreed as follows:

- a That the scrutiny function of the Council is transferred to appropriately convened Task and Finish Groups as and when required;
- b That consultation be undertaken with partners with a view to reviewing the future of the Area Fora as the primary means of connecting with the public; and
- c That Officers be asked to report back to a future meeting of the Sub-Group in respect of the detail for implementing and undertaking (a) and (b) above.

- ... 3.2 The report to the last meeting is attached to this report for convenience.

### 3.3 Scrutiny Function

- 3.3.1 The idea of creating Task and Finish Groups is to allow Members to look at 'weightier' matters that are difficult to get to grips with at a single meeting after considering a short report on an agenda that has a number of other issues (some of which are equally serious). As discussed previously, the modernised Committee structure adopted by this Council, which allows all Councillors to be involved in decision making, provides for decisions to be scrutinised prior to being made. It could be argued therefore that no separate arrangement for Scrutiny needs to be provided for but that there is still a need to consider a number of issues in greater detail. It is also arguable that this would confirm the inclusive nature of our decision making arrangements, something seen as a positive feature of the Committee system.
- 3.3.2 An increased involvement of the public could also be written into this element. These 'Scrutiny Task and Finish Groups' could include arrangements for ensuring the public's and partners' views are considered. There are a number of ways that this could be carried out including allowing public speaking, co-opting people from outside of the Council onto the Groups, and carrying out specific consultation exercises on the topics being considered.
- 3.3.3 It is suggested therefore that the terms of reference for the three policy Boards (Executive, Resources and Community and Environment) be amended with the following addition:

#### **Powers Delegated to the Task and Finish Group**

The power to consider an item referred to it by the Board in whatever way the Task and Finish Group thinks reasonable.

The power to make recommendations to the Board on any such item.

- 3.3.4 In addition, the Terms of Reference of the Boards will be amended to allow them to create Task and Finish Groups and set their terms of reference, including issue of co-option and the involvement of the public (including by way of public speaking if appropriate).
- 3.3.5 Finally, the Constitution will be amended to delete all references to the Scrutiny Board.
- 3.3.6 There is still a legal requirement to hold at least one meeting to scrutinise crime and disorder work. It is proposed to transfer this responsibility to the Safer Communities Sub-Committee.

### 3.4 Area Forums

- 3.4.1 Informal contact has been made with Warwickshire County Council and the Police regarding a review of Area Forums. This is complicated by potential staff changes within these organisations but it is hoped that meetings can be confirmed by the date of the meeting.
- 3.4.2 In addition, there is a need to discuss a review with Town and Parish Councils. The annual meeting between these Councils and the Borough Council has been set for Thursday 28 January 2016 at 7pm at the Newton Regis Village Hall. This provides a timely opportunity to raise the matter generally and seek a number of representatives from the Town and Parish Councils to discuss it in more detail. It is suggested therefore that this matter is added to that agenda.
- 3.4.3 Prior to discussions, it would be useful for Members to agree broadly what options they would like to consider as part of the review.

#### **4 Future Work**

- 4.1 One consequential issue that will need to be considered is the issue of Members' Allowances given the abolition of the Scrutiny Board and possible changes to Area Forums. Once all issues have been resolved it will be necessary to call a meeting of the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel.

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

**Agenda Item No 6****Special Sub-Group****10 November 2015****Report of the Chief Executive****Area Forums and Scrutiny****1 Summary**

- 1.1 The report details our current arrangements with regard to Area Forums and Scrutiny.

**Recommendation to the Sub-Group**

**That Members decide how they would like to see Area Forums and Scrutiny operate in the future**

**2 Consultation**

- 2.1 All Members will receive a copy of the report and have been invited to the meeting.

**3 Report**

- 3.1 Successive Councils have considered the issue of how our Area Forums and Scrutiny functions operate. A number of changes have been suggested, however it is felt that a further review is undertaken.

**Area Forums**

- 3.2 Previous reports to Members have acknowledged that Area Forums are potential very valuable ways of engaging with the public. They are a chance to meet outside of the Council Offices and focus in on particular issues of importance in our towns and villages.
- 3.3 Experience over a very long period of time has however suggested that the operation and attendance at meetings has not delivered this aspiration.
- 3.4 Analysis in 2012 indicated that only 19% of those attending Area Forums were not formally attached to the Borough, County or Parish Councils or other agencies. This equated to just short of 6 members of the public per meeting against a population of over 62,000 (0.01%). An exercise in 2010 concluded that about 0.2% of Warwickshire's population attended area forums at that time.

- 3.5 Figures for the most recent round of meetings, in September 2015, are however more promising and suggest a mixed picture. For Area Forums North and West, this historical trend seems to be continuing. Of the 37 attending the two meetings, only 7 were unaffiliated residents. However for Area Forums East and South, 34 of the 62 attendees were residents. The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) attended the Area Forum East meeting which may account for the 14 (out of 32) residents at that meeting, however in June 15 residents also attended (out of 29). Jeff Brown has been to discuss the Daw Mill application at each of the last two South meetings which may account for 20 residents out of 30 at the September meeting and 30 out of 43 in June. The County Council however do not appear to record Parish Council representatives separately for Area Forum South so these figures do not show how many of the "residents" were affiliated to Town or Parish Councils. It does suggest however that greater attendance is taking place in the East and South and it may be related to the fact that issues of great local concern are being discussed, with the PCC and Daw Mill issues.
- 3.6 Whilst any review will necessarily involve the other partner organisations involved with the Forums, it would be useful to consider again a number of fundamental issues that have been considered by previous Councils:
- What do we want the Forums to do?
  - Consultation/Informing/Discourse between the "great and good" i.e. Borough/County Councillors, Parish Councils/Councillors and people likely to turn up to formal meetings. Other, wider consultation could be left to more suitable methods.
  - Do we still have an aim of attempting to attract people whom will do not regularly hear from?
  - Depending on the above - venues, times, agenda items
  - Enhanced role for partners other than the Borough and County Council - Charing, administration?
  - Does the recent experience at Area Forums East and South provide a model for future meetings?



- 3.7 This is not an exhaustive list and is intended solely to initiate a discussion to resolve a number of fundamental issues regarding this Council's aims and ambitions for the Forums.

### **Scrutiny**

- 3.8 Since the implementation of the Localism Act 2011, Councils with a "fourth option" enhanced committee system do not need to have a Scrutiny Committee. This Council, in its previous session, did resolve to continue with a Scrutiny Committee, subject to review.
- 3.9 Since 2009, this Council has had one Scrutiny Committee. Prior to this time it had two – one looking at outward facing services and one considering internal services. It has been noted, nationally as well as locally, that the Scrutiny concept has often struggled to find a meaningful place within Councils, particularly for fourth option Councils where there is greater Member involvement in decisions. This is reflected in this extract from a report in 2012 when the Council last reviewed the issue:

"If Members agree to keep the Committee system, the Council has to make a decision whether or not to have a separate Scrutiny Board. Scrutiny has had a mixed reputation, particularly in 4th option Councils where the inclusive nature of decision making ensures that a lot of decisions are "pre-scrutinised" and a number of Members on the Scrutiny Board have been involved in the decisions being considered by that Board.

There appears to be a consensus nationally that some element of overview or scrutiny should be retained and this review gives the Council the opportunity to consider whether any improvements can be made.

As mentioned above, one approach could be to have standing Task and Finish Groups to look at 'weightier' matters that are difficult to get to grips with at a single meeting after considering a short report on an agenda that has a number of other issues (some of which are equally serious). There could be an overlap with the points made above about our scrutiny function. It is suggested that the subjects considered at the formal meetings of the Scrutiny Board have been rather ad hoc and

piecemeal and, on some occasions, items may have been placed on the agenda to fulfil the requirement to have a meeting, rather than any conscious desire of Members to consider that subject. By contrast, the development in the last two Councils of detailed Scrutiny Projects, looking at topics such as recycling performance, play areas, industrial units, consultation and the dog warden service have, it is suggested, produced more meaningful outcomes. If the Task and Finish Groups could become 'Scrutiny Task and Finish Groups', then this element of the current scrutiny function could be retained and the "feeding the beast" nature of the formal Board meetings could be removed (or made into an annual meeting only) without any loss of the value of scrutiny overall. It is also arguable that this would confirm the inclusive nature of our decision making arrangements, something seen as a positive feature of the Committee system.

Another option would be to retain scheduled meetings of the Scrutiny Board but to only proceed with the meeting if Members raise enough issues to generate a meaningful agenda.

The increased involvement of the public could also be written into this element. These 'Scrutiny Task and Finish Groups' could include arrangements for ensuring the public's and partners' views are considered. There are a number of ways that this could be carried out and, whilst our Consultation Strategy and action plan is currently being reviewed by the Scrutiny Board, it might be better not to be too prescriptive to allow the best method to be chosen for each subject. However, some common themes are emerging from the work done so far on the consultation, together with some of the points emerging from the Customer Access and Information Technology Strategies, and are summarized below:-

- A review of whether increased public speaking or questions at Boards have been a success and could be extended to other areas.

- Better use of the Council's Citizens Panel and, in particular, the use of the large number of email addresses and mobile 'phone numbers of people who have previously contacted the Council.
- A regular Place Survey, complimented by more issue specific consultation events."

3.10 Not all of these issues were agreed and are included in this report solely to aid Members' consideration.

#### 4. **Conclusion**

4.1 Meaningful engagement with the public is a difficult issue that all public authorities wrestle with. It should be remembered that this Council undertakes a number of steps to engage the public and the issue of Area Forums therefore is but one of the tools used.

4.2 Similarly, fourth option Councils appear to have struggled with Scrutiny. It is to it credit that this Council keeps both issues under review in an attempt to improve its processes and decision making functions.

4.3 Members are asked to indicate how they would like to see these two areas develop in the future.

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

**Agenda Item No 8**

**Special Sub-Group**

**15 December 2015**

**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 9**

**Atherstone Leisure Complex – Extension of the Swimming Lesson Programme**  
– Report of the Assistant Director (Leisure and Community Development)

Paragraph 1 – by reason of the need to consider the staffing implications

**Agenda Item No 10**

**Shared Service Proposal and Structure Changes in the Community Services Division** – Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Community Services)

Paragraph 1 – by reason of the need to consider the staffing implications

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