

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

23 May 2016

The Resources Board will meet in the Committee Room at The Council House, South Street, Atherstone, Warwickshire on Monday, 23 May 2016 at 6.30pm.

AGENDA

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

4 **Public Participation**

Up to twenty minutes will be set aside for members of the public to ask questions or to put their views to elected Members. Participants are restricted to five minutes each. If you wish to speak at the meeting please contact Amanda Tonks/Emma Humphreys on 01827 719221 or email democraticservices@northwarks.gov.uk.

5 **Presentation from Linda Bird, Assistant Director (Corporate Services) on the work of her Division.**

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

6 **Annual Treasury Report 2015/2016** – Report of the Deputy Chief Executive

Summary

This report shows the out-turn for 2015/16 and highlights any areas of significance.

The Contact Officer for this report is Stephen Robbins (719337).

7 **Progress Report on Achievement of Corporate Plan and Performance Indicator Targets April 2015 – March 2016** – Report of the Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive

Summary

This report informs Members of the progress with the achievement of the Corporate Plan and Performance Indicator targets relevant to the Resources Board for April 2015 to March 2016.

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

8 **Members' Allowances Out-Turn for 2015/16** – Report of the Assistant Director (Finance and Human Resources)

Summary

The purpose of this report is to advise Members of the allowances paid for 2015/16. The Council also has a duty to publish the amounts paid to Members under the Members' Allowance Scheme.

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

9 **HEART Shared Service to deliver home adaptations (including Disabled Facilities Grants)** – Report of the Assistant Director (Housing)

Summary

This report provides the Board with a Business Case to consider which will lead to the formalisation of the shared service the Council has been part of to deliver home adaptations which support people to remain independent at home.

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

10 **Syrian Refugees** – Report of the Assistant Director (Housing)

Summary

This report provides information about the Government's requirements for Local Authorities to assist with rehousing Syrian refugees.

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

11 **Broadband Update Report** – Report of the Assistant Director (Corporate Services)

Summary

The report provides an update on the progress made so far and the future plans to improve broadband coverage and speeds in the Borough.

The Contact Officer for this report is Linda Bird (719237).

12 **Internal Audit – Plan of Work for 2016/2017** – Report of the Deputy Chief Executive

Summary

The report explains the basis upon which the Audit Plan for 2016-17 has been developed, using a variety of sources of information to ensure that all appropriate aspects of service activity continue to be embraced as part of the approved three year review programme.

The Contact Officer for this report is Barbara Haswell (719416).

- 13 **Corporate Debt Strategy** – Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Community Services)

Summary

The report updates the previous corporate debt strategy adopted by this board in March 2013 that outlined how the Council will approach customers who owe multiple debts to the Council.

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

- 14 **Tenant Partnership Agreement 2016/17** – Report of the Assistant Director (Housing)

Summary

This report presents the Council's Tenant Partnership Agreement to the Resources Board for their consideration and provides background information about the regulatory framework for social housing landlords.

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

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

- 15 **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 items of business, on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by Schedule 12A to the Act.

- 16 **Adoption of an Updated Write Off Policy** – Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Community Services)

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

- 17 **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

Agenda Item No 6

Resources Board

23 May 2016

**Report of the
Deputy Chief Executive**

**Annual Treasury Report for
2015/16**

1 Summary

- 1.1 This report shows the out-turn for 2015/16 and highlights any areas of significance.

Recommendation to the Board

- a That the Annual Treasury Report for 2015/16 be noted;**

Recommendation to the Council

- b That the Annual Treasury Report be approved.**

2 Report

- 2.1 The Council is required through regulations issued under the Local Government Act 2003 to produce an annual treasury report reviewing treasury management activities and the actual prudential and treasury indicators for 2015/16. This report meets the requirements of both the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management 2009 (the Code) and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (the Prudential Code).
- 2.2 During 2015/16 the minimum reporting requirements were that the Resources Board and full Council should receive the following reports:
- An annual treasury strategy in advance of the year (Resources Board 26 January 2015);
 - A mid year treasury update report (Resources Board 16 November 2015); and
 - An annual report following the year describing the activity compared to the strategy (this report).
- 2.3 In addition, a report on the treasury management position through four periods was received on 8 September 2015.

- 2.4 The regulatory environment places an onus on Members for the review and scrutiny of treasury management policy and activities. This report is important in that respect, as it provides details of the outturn position for treasury activities and highlights compliance with the Council's policies previously approved by Members.
- 2.5 This Council also confirms that it has complied with the requirement under the Code to give prior scrutiny to all of the above treasury management reports by the Resources Board before they were reported to the full Council. Member training on treasury management issues was undertaken in March 2010 in order to support Members' scrutiny role. No further training took place in 2015/16.
- 2.6 Treasury Management in this context is defined as: *The management of the local authority's investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks.*
- 2.7 The Annual Treasury report covers:
- The Council's treasury position as at 31 March 2016
 - Performance measurement
 - The strategy for 2015/16
 - The economy in 2015/16
 - The Borrowing out-turn for 2015/16
 - Compliance with treasury limits and Prudential Indicators
 - Investment rates in 2015/16
 - Investment out-turn for 2015/16

3 Current Treasury Position as at 31 March 2016

- 3.1 The Council's debt and investment position at the beginning and end of the year was as follows:

	31 March 2015 Principal £m	Ave Rate %	31 March 2016 Principal £m	Ave Rate %	Average Life Years
Fixed Rate Funding: PWLB	56.289	2.62	54.989	2.71	10.74
Internal borrowing	14.868	0.86	16.537	0.88	13.55
Short-term Funding	0	0	0	0	0
Total Debt	71.157	2.25	71.526	2.29	10.96
Investments	12.354	0.86	14.689	0.88	240 days

- 3.2 The investments held include £1,362,193 held on behalf of other organisations (£598,910 in 2014/15).

4 Performance Measurement

- 4.1 Part of the Code relates to the use of performance measurement relating to investments, debt and capital financing activities. Whilst investment performance criteria have been well developed, this is still a difficult area for a small Authority with limited cash balances, as generally we are only able to place funds for short periods and consequently at lower rates. For this reason, we measure investment interest against the 7 day LIBID rate.
- 4.2 As a member of the Capita Investment Benchmarking Group for the region, we can compare our treasury performance against those of other authorities in the Warwickshire, Worcestershire and Oxfordshire region. Overall for 2015/16, our performance has compared favourably to these authorities, with our investment portfolio deemed to have been 'Above' the average benchmarked performance.

5 The Strategy for 2015/16

- 5.1 Within the Treasury Strategy for 2015/16 it was assumed that interest rates would remain at their low levels of 0.5% given the economic uncertainty across certain sectors and the lack of clarity from analysts as to the timing and scope of any interest rate changes.
- 5.2 In this scenario, the treasury strategy was to postpone external borrowing to avoid the cost of holding higher levels of investments and to reduce counterparty risk. As a result we continue to use internal borrowing for General Fund debt.

6 Borrowing Outturn for 2015/16

- 6.1 The Council's external borrowing of £54.989 million at the 31 March 2016 is shown below, and relates entirely to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The repayments were profiled to take account of expected surpluses in the HRA, having regard to the HRA Business Plan, whilst still allowing some flexibility within the plan for unexpected events.

Years	Total loans £000	Rate %
1-5	8,500	1.24 – 2.21
6-10	11,660	2.40 – 2.92
11-15	16,130	3.01 – 3.26
16-19	8,699	3.30 – 3.34
20-25	5,000	3.49
26-30	5,000	3.50

- 6.2 The Council had no short term borrowing during the year.

7 Investment Out-Turn for 2015/16

- 7.1 The Council's investment policy is governed by CLG guidance, which has been implemented in the annual investment strategy. The Council manages its investments in-house with the institutions which fulfil its requirements with regards to credit ratings and security. Investments were made for a range of periods, although predominantly in call accounts, Certificate of Deposits, enhanced money market funds and money market funds.
- 7.2 The Council invested with external bodies on 71 occasions when the bank accounts had a surplus of funds. Investments were made in a Certificate of Deposit (through broker King & Shaxson) on 4 occasions and in a Money Market Fund 54 times. The remaining 13 investments were with banks for a fixed term. Funds were invested over a range of periods to take advantage of favourable interest rates or to fund expenditure later in the year, e.g. payment of precepts. The average amount invested was £1,190,758. The average total investment held was £22.9 million, and the rate of return was 0.89%, compared with the average 7 day rate of 0.36%, earning a total of £172,858 in the year.

8 Prudential Indicators

- 8.1 The 2003 Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities introduced requirements for the way in which capital spending plans are to be considered and approved. The prudential code was developed which requires the Council to consider the affordability of its proposals, their prudence and sustainability, value for money, asset management planning, practicality and service objectives.
- 8.2 The Council is required to set and review regularly a range of indicators that have been developed as part of the Code, which will be used to support capital investment decision-making. In February 2015, the capital prudential indicators for 2015/16 were reported to the Executive Board as part of the 3-Year Capital programme and the treasury indicators were reported to the Resources Board as part of the Council's Treasury Policy Statement and Annual Treasury Strategy Statement.
- 8.3 During the financial year the Council operated within the treasury limits. The Council's Prudential Indicators will be reported to Executive Board in June.

9 Report Implications

9.1 Finance and Value for Money Implications

- 9.1.1 During 2015/16 the net interest earned on investments was £172,858.

9.2 Environment and Sustainability Implications

- 9.2.1 By having effective and prudent treasury management, this contributes towards sustainability and providing services that improve the quality of life for the communities of North Warwickshire.

9.3 Risk Management Implications

9.3.1 Credit ratings are used in assessing the institutions on the lending list and the maximum investment level permitted.

The Contact Officer for this report is Stephen Robbins (719337).

Background Papers

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

Background Paper No	Author	Nature of Background Paper	Date

Agenda Item No 7

Resources Board

23 May 2016

Report of the Chief Executive and the Deputy Chief Executive

Progress Report on Achievement of Corporate Plan and Performance Indicator Targets April 2015 - March 2016

1 Summary

- 1.1 This report informs Members of the progress with the achievement of the Corporate Plan and Performance Indicator targets relevant to the Resources Board for April 2015 to March 2016.

Recommendation to the Board

That Members consider the performance achieved and highlight any areas for further investigation.

2 Consultation

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

3 Background

- 3.1 This report shows the end of year position with the achievement of the Corporate Plan and Performance Indicator targets for 2015/16. This is the fourth report showing the progress achieved so far during 2015/16.

4 Progress achieved during 2015/16

- 4.1 Attached at Appendices A and B are reports outlining the progress achieved for all the Corporate Plan targets and the performance with our local performance indicators during April to March 2015/16 for the Resources Board.

- 4.2 Members will recall the use of a traffic light indicator for the monitoring of the performance achieved.

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

Green – target achieved (shown as a green star)

5 Performance Indicators

- 5.1 The current performance indicators have been reviewed by each division and Management Team for monitoring for the 2015/16 year.

6 Overall Performance

- 6.1 The Corporate Plan performance report shows that 100% of the Corporate Plan targets and 67 % of the performance indicator targets have been achieved. Individual comments from the relevant division have been included where appropriate. The table below shows the following status in terms of the traffic light indicator status:

Corporate Plan

Status	Number	Percentage
Green	12	100%
Red	0	0%
Total	12	100%

Performance Indicators

Status	Number	Percentage
Green	14	67%
Red	7	33%
Total	21	100%

7 Summary

- 7.1 Members may wish to identify any areas that require further consideration where targets are not currently being achieved. The targets not achieved include indicators for Financial Accountancy, Housing Maintenance, Housing Management, Private Sector Housing and Customer Services.

8 Report Implications

8.1 Safer Communities Implications

- 8.1.1 There are community safety performance indicators which are reported to Executive Board.

8.2 Legal and Human Rights Implications

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

8.3 Environment and Sustainability Implications

8.3.1 Improvements in the performance and quality of services will contribute to improving the quality of life within the community. There are a number of actions and indicators which contribute towards the priorities of the sustainable community strategy including customer access strategy, outreach services, financial inclusion, health and well being services and decent and affordable housing.

8.4 Risk Management Implications

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

8.5 Equality Implications

8.5.1 There are a number of equality related actions and indicators highlighted in the report including improving broadband access, the borough care review and procurement strategy and practices.

8.6 Links to Council's Priorities

8.6.1 There are a number of targets and performance indicators contributing towards the priorities of responsible financial and resources management, supporting employment and businesses, safer communities and sustainable and vibrant communities.

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













Background Papers

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













Background Paper No	Author	Nature of Background Paper	Date
None			

















NWCP Resources Board 15/16

	Action	Priority	Reporting Officer	Year End	Status	Direction
NWCP 040	To continue to contribute to the effective provision of services through implementing the actions and projects which help deliver the ICT Strategy	Responsible Financial & Resource Management	Linda Bird	Projects to progress the 2015 - 2019 ICT Strategy have been completed or are progressing as planned. Key project for the year included the upgrade to the Website, upgrade of Citrix, achievement of required security accreditations, Housing mobile working, Leisure system replacement and the upgrade of business application in liaison with the relevant service.	★ Green	➡
NWCP 050	To continue to seek opportunities to rationalise the Council's property portfolio including:- a) Working with partners in the public and voluntary sectors to share facilities	Responsible Financial & Resource Management	Richard Dobbs	Discussions are ongoing with Warwickshire Police to review the current shared property arrangements	★ Green	➡
	b) Continue to work through a programme of capital and maintenance improvements to key Council buildings, community buildings, shops and industrial units, including seeking ways to reduce, where possible, our carbon footprint.	Responsible Financial & Resource Management	Richard Dobbs	Roofing works at Innage Park have commenced and are scheduled for completion in June 2016. Options for using the Council's GIS system in the management of the Council's corporate property are currently being considered	★ Green	➡
	c) Continuing the review of leisure facilities	Responsible Financial & Resource Management	Simon Powell	A tender has been prepared for the appointment of consultants to assist with a Review of Leisure and Community Development Services and the Preparation of Supporting Strategies and Delivery Plans, which will be taken forward in 2016/17	★ Green	➡
NWCP 082	To work to improve broadband access for the people and businesses of North Warwickshire through the work of the Council and specifically the Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire BDUK Project	Supporting Employment & Business	Linda Bird	The locations of cabinets to be upgraded as part of Contract 2.1 are now known and some have been upgraded ahead of schedule. We are awaiting BT's response to the requirements submitted for Contract 2.2, which is the phase the Council's second allocation of match funding is included in. The CSW project team are coordinating a bid to the LEP for ERDF funding for future phases.	★ Green	➡
NWCP 084	To implement the work directed by the Borough Task and Finish Group and deliver any actions agreed by the Resources Board as part of the review. (From June 2015 onwards)	Creating Safer Communities	Angela Coates	A charge of £3.50 is being made for all new customers. Current customers have been consulted on the Council's proposals. The feedback will be considered by Full Council on 29th June 2016.	★ Green	➡

	Action	Priority	Reporting Officer	Year End	Status	Direction
NWCP 033	To act on the objectives set out in the Warwickshire Local Investment Plan by continuing to appraise opportunities to develop affordable homes. This will include having pipeline development schemes for new homes in the Council's own stock. (From March 2015 onwards)	Promoting Sustainable & Vibrant Communities	Angela Coates	The firm proposals remain on track however the Homes and Communities Agency has now confirmed that there will not be any further grant funding for the development of homes for rent. Starter homes will be the priority. Based future programmes will depend on the availability of funding in the HRA with some partnership work with housing associations where they are willing to fund schemes in North Warwickshire.	 Green	
NWCP 037	To work in partnership with other organisations to provide a shared service to deliver adaptations in the private sector. This will include revising the Business Plan and reporting proposals to the Resources Board by September 2015	Promoting Sustainable & Vibrant Communities	Angela Coates	The business case to deliver the shared service across the County is due to be considered by the Council for sign off at the Resources Board in May 2016.	 Green	
NWCP 062(1)	To review and develop a revised Asset Management Plan for the Council's stock (To be done between November 2015 & March 2016)	Responsible Financial & Resource Management	Angela Coates	Comment as previously. The programmes of work that we delivery will ensure that the Council continues to meet the Decent Homes Standard.	 Green	
NWCP 098	To act to ensure that the Council's revenue from housing rent income is collected by reviewing and acting on the action plan to mitigate the impact of welfare reforms. (From March 2015 onwards)	Responsible Financial & Resource Management	Angela Coates/Bob Trahern	The Council achieved improved collection rates in respect of in year Council Tax and arrears, housing rents and housing benefit overpayments in 2015/16. This is very positive in view of the underlying climate we are collecting monies. However, the issues faced by those experiencing debt is a major area of concern and we continue to deliver the planned review of all debts due to the Council which we hope to have completed by the autumn. The evidence to date is clearly showing we have a relatively small but hard core of customers who are experiencing significant ongoing difficulties and who will need significant support and contact to address their issues. A report was taken to the Community and Environment Board in March 2016 outlining actions and activities taken by ourselves, the CAB and other partners that confirmed the good work undertaken to support customers in the area who are facing personal and financial difficulties. The restructure agreed in March in both the Community Services and Housing division should help ensure that issues are better understood by all staff from the two services and help ensure closer partnership and cross divisional work is undertaken.	 Green	
NWCP 099	To review the services delivered to sheltered schemes (including the Neighbourhood Warden and Older Person Support services) in accordance with the direction of the Borough Care review and Supporting People budget changes. (From April 2015)	Promoting Sustainable & Vibrant Communities	Angela Coates	The review of the Tenancy and Neighbourhoods Team was completed on 18th April when a new structure was agreed by the Resources Board.	 Green	
NWCP 100	Review the Council's overall and the Housing Division's specific policies and procedures for dealing with anti-social behaviour to ensure they are robust and accord with the requirements of the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act, 2014.	Creating Safer Communities	Angela Coates	This is complete.	 Green	

NWPI Resources 15/16

Ref	Description	Section	Priority	Year End Target	April - Mar Performance	Traffic Light	Direction of Travel	Comments
NWLPI 052	The % of invoices for commercial goods and services which were paid by the authority within 30 days of such invoiced being received by the Authority (former BV8)	Financial Accountancy	Public Services & Council Tax	98	96.11%	 Red		A dip in performance in January impacted negatively on the indicator, leaving the year end figure slightly lower than that at quarter 3. However performance has improved in both February and March.
NWLPI 57	Percentage of calls answered through the Central Control system within 60 seconds. (TSA national standard 96.5%):	Community Support	Housing	99	99.00%	 Green		
NWLPI 135	Percentage of response repairs completed right first time	Housing Maintenance	Housing	92.00%	88.70%	 Red		Gas materials too varied for all to be carried as van stock.
NWLPI 068	Gas certificates completed	Housing Maintenance	Housing	100.00%	99.83%	 Red		4 certificates outstanding at 31/03/2016
@NW:NI156	Number of households living in temporary accommodation (snapshot at end of each quarter)	Housing Management	Housing	6	6	 Green		
NWLPI 136	Number of tenants with more than 7 weeks rent arrears - as an average over the year	Housing Management	Housing	2.75%	2.21%	 Green		
NWLPI 070	Average time taken to re-let local authority housing (former BV212)	Housing Management	Housing	25 days	33.60 days	 Red		Time taken in maintenance, hard to let properties and refusals.
NWLPI 039	The percentage availability of corporate systems available to users Monday to Friday 8.00 am to 5.30 pm :	Computer Services	Public Services & Council Tax	99.7	99.9%	 Green		
NWLPI 040	The percentage of initial response to helpdesk calls within four hours of a call being placed :	Computer Services	Public Services & Council Tax	95	97%	 Green		
NWLPI 041	Percentage of Service Desk Calls resolved in target (total of IS3 to IS6)	Computer Services	Public Services & Council Tax	95	97%	 Green		
NWLPI 096	The Percentage of Calls answered in 20 seconds in the contact centre	Revenues & Benefits	Public Services & Council Tax	75	73%	 Red		The target has been missed largely as a result of staff vacancies.
@NW:NI181	The average time taken in calendar days to process all new claims and change events in Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit	Revenues & Benefits	Public Services & Council Tax	7.5	6.78	 Green		
NWLPI 106	The percentage of non-domestic rates due for the financial year which were received by the authority (former BV10)	Revenues & Benefits	Public Services & Council Tax	98.6	99.63	 Green		

Ref	Description	Section	Priority	Year End Target	April - Mar Performance	Traffic Light	Direction of Travel	Comments
NWLPI 107	Proportion of Council Tax collected (former BV9)	Revenues & Benefits	Public Services & Council Tax	97.8	98.39	 Green		
NWLPI 161	Percentage of abandoned calls in the Contact Centre	Contact Centre	Public Services & Council Tax	5	5	 Green		
NW: NI 158	Non decent homes relating to our stock	Housing Maintenance	Housing	2.13	0	 Green		
NWLPI 066	The average waiting time for adaptations to local authority housing for people with disabilities between, time taken between referral and completion of work	Housing Maintenance	Housing	5 months	5 months	 Green		
NWLPI 160	The percentage of all council tenants, or a representative sample of council tenants, stating that they are satisfied with the overall service provided by their landlord when surveyed	Housing Management	Housing	86	83%	 Red		The outcome was 85% in 2014.
NWLPI 072	Local authority rent collection and arrears: Rent collected by the local authority as a proportion of rents owed on Housing Revenue Account (HRA) dwellings	Housing Management	Housing	99.2	99.41%	 Green		
NWLPI 076	The number of private sector vacant dwellings that are found to be occupied, returned into occupation or demolished during the year as a direct result of action by the local authority	Private Sector & Public Health	Housing	20	0	 Red		We no longer have an Empty Homes Officer in post to provide direct action to bring Empty Homes into use.
NWLPI 137	The average waiting time for adaptations to private sector housing for people with disabilities: a; time taken between initial request and completion of work	Private Sector & Public Health	Housing	7 months	6 months	 Green		

Agenda Item No 8

Resources Board

23 May 2016

Report of the Assistant Director (Finance and Human Resources)

Members' Allowances Out-turn for 2015/16

1 Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Members of the allowances paid for 2015/16. The Council also has a duty to publish the amounts paid to Members under the Members' Allowance Scheme.

Recommendation to the Board

That the report be noted.

2 Report

2.1 Out-turn for 2015/16

- 2.1.1 The cost of Members' Allowances and other payments made under the Members' Allowance Scheme in 2015/16 was £229,713.79. A breakdown of these costs is shown at Appendix A. There were no claims in respect of Dependents'/ Carers' Allowance.

3 Report Implications

3.1 Finance and Value for Money Implications

- 3.1.1 Provision was made in the Cost of Democratic Processes.

3.2 Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 3.2.1 The Authority is obliged to publish details of the total sum paid to each Member in respect of each of the following:-
Basic Allowance
Special Responsibility Allowance
Dependents'/Carers' Allowance
Travel and Subsistence and
Co-optees' Allowance.
- 3.2.2 This is a requirement under the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003.

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

PAYMENTS TO MEMBERS 2015/16

Name	Initials	Basic Allowance £	Special Responsibility £	Travel (Mileage) £	Travel/Other (Train/Bus /Parking) £	Subsistence £	Total £
Barber	K	677.53					677.53
Bell	M	4,264.43	1,505.80	537.30		73.97	6,381.50
Butcher	D	677.53	683.15	177.30			1,537.98
Chambers	J	4,264.43					4,264.43
Clews	D	4,264.43	753.32		19.05		5,036.80
Davis	MC	4,941.96					4,941.96
Davey	P	4,264.43		199.35			4,463.78
Dirveiks	N	4,941.96	239.24				5,181.20
Dirveiks	LE	4,941.96	119.69				5,061.65
Farrell	AJ	4,264.43	890.02	171.00			5,325.45
Ferro	DC	4,941.96		249.30			5,191.26
Forwood	A	677.53					677.53
Fowler	PJ	677.53		57.60			735.13
Fox	C	677.53					677.53
Freer	LE	677.53					677.53
Hanratty	SJ	4,264.43	753.32				5,017.75
Hayfield	CC	4,941.96		251.10			5,193.06
Henney	BA	4,264.43		124.20			4,388.63
Holland	AF	677.53					677.53
Humphreys	DJ	4,941.96	9,719.92				14,661.88
Ingram	S	4,264.43	1,505.80				5,770.23
Jarvis	RJ	4,264.43					4,264.43
Jenns	A	4,264.43	753.32	340.20			5,357.95
Johnston	K	677.53					677.53
Jones	ME	4,264.43		542.70			4,807.13
Lea	J	4,941.96	4,299.85				9,241.81
Lewis	A	4,941.96	239.24	78.75			5,259.95
May	MC	677.53		65.70			743.23
Moore	JS	677.53	683.15	160.65			1,521.33
Morson	PF	4,941.96	239.24				5,181.20
Moss	BP	4,941.96		520.65	46.90	5.00	5,514.51
Moss	MC	677.53	119.69	57.60			854.82
Payne	RV	4,941.96	4,299.85	157.50	30.00		9,429.31
Phillips	H	4,941.96	683.15	792.00			6,417.11
Pickard	DN	677.53	683.15	287.10	6.90		1,654.68
Reilly	D	4,264.43	1,505.80	806.85	12.40	102.06	6,691.54
Sherratt	GJ	677.53	119.69	95.85			893.07
Simpson	MC	4,941.96		1,444.05	14.90	59.97	6,460.88
Singh	M	4,264.43					4,264.43
Smith	LJ	4,941.96	5,002.20	1,100.25	4.50		11,048.91
Smitten	J	4,264.43	1,505.80				5,770.23
Stanley	A	677.53					677.53
Stanley	E	4,264.43					4,264.43
Stanley	ME	4,941.96	4,232.69				9,174.65
Stanley	Y	677.53					677.53
Sweet	R	4,941.96	1,745.04				6,687.00
Turley	N	677.53					677.53
Watkins	A	4,941.96	753.31				5,695.27
Waters	TV	4,264.43		180.00			4,444.43
Winter	JG	677.53	239.24	73.80			990.57
Wright	A	4,264.43		290.25		33.97	4,588.65
Wright	DA	4,264.43	4,299.85				8,564.28
Wykes	TV	677.53					677.53
TOTAL		172,968.60	47,574.52	8,761.05	134.65	274.97	229,713.79

Agenda Item No 9

Resources Board

23 May 2016

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

**HEART Shared Service to deliver
home adaptations (including
Disabled Facilities Grants)**

1 Summary

- 1.1 This report provides the Board with a Business Case to consider which will lead to the formalisation of the shared service the Council has been part of to deliver home adaptations which support people to remain independent at home.

Recommendation to the Resources Board

- a That the Business Case presented in the report at Appendix 1 be considered and agreed;**
- b That the Assistant Chief Executive and Solicitor to the Council be given delegated authority to develop and enter into a partnership agreement contract to support the delivery of the Business Case;**
- c The Business Case and the partnership agreement will enable the Council to enter into a shared services arrangement with willing partner authorities, who also agree to proceed, from the following authorities:**
- Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council**
 - Rugby Borough Council**
 - Warwickshire County Council**
 - Warwick District Council**
 - Stratford on Avon District Council**
- to discharge those Councils' functions related to the Care Act 2014 and Disabled Facilities Grants and housing renewal and other relevant functions in accordance with Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 and of the Local Government (Arrangements for the Discharge of Functions) (England) Regulations 2000;**
- d That the necessary arrangements are made and implemented to second staff in to the shared service structure; and**
- e That ring fencing and recruitment opportunities during the establishment of the shared service is extended from the host authority to partner authorities to cover appropriate posts currently working within the service as determined by the current project management board.**

2 Consultation

- 2.1 The relevant Unions have been consulted about the progress of this service previously and specifically about this report. Their comments will be shared at the meeting.

3 Background

- 3.1 Some Members will be aware from previous reports to the Housing Sub Committee and the Resources Board that in order to facilitate radical change (the 5 District / Borough Councils and the County Council) agreed in December 2010 an ambitious and challenging collaborative project aimed at creating a new way of delivering home improvement and housing adaptations for disabled and older people across Warwickshire.

- 3.2 Following a system review there were significant issues with the old way of delivering services including delays of over 395 days from customer enquiry to providing an adaptation. Whilst not satisfactory, this was a similar performance to other local authorities and in line with a national picture of delays in this area. There was also a 35% customer drop out as teams struggled to deliver across the organisational barriers of up to 3 organisations in each district and borough locality.

- 3.3 The aim of the project was to create a new customer focused service delivery model which would bring together the different professions from each of the organisations, create a new role and link together existing services within a service model that involves working together to deliver holistic housing assessment and appropriate solutions. The purpose of the new Home Environment Assessment and Response Team (HEART) service is:

“To provide customers with the advice and information to help them make the right choice, and provide practical help to deliver the right housing solution when they want it”

- 3.4 The vision for the shared service is:

“To be the service of choice for advice, assistance and interventions to adapt or improve the home environment to enable activities of daily living and protect and improve the health, safety and wellbeing of residents to prevent, reduce or delay greater needs arising.

- 3.5 The work undertaken to date and the proposals for the shared service are set out in the Business Case at Appendix 1 of this report.

...

4 Shared Service Specification

- 4.1 The decision making process for the determination of an appropriate service delivery model has been methodical, considered and robust. The creation of a single line managed team serving the north of the county lead to the conclusion that the service required a partnership agreement to protect the service and the working arrangements and allow the service to thrive and develop in a stable environment.
- 4.2 Within south Warwickshire, a pilot has been run and reviewed and it is recommended to bypass the single line managed team stage and move to joining the partnership.
- 4.3 An option appraisal process created a preferred option of an agency agreement with the potential to create a Joint Committee at a later stage once the service has been established.
- 4.4 The partnership agreement is being constructed based on the following specification statement.

Shared Service Specification Statement	
Shared Service Vehicle:	Host Authority with potential for Joint Committee
Governance	Governance Board comprising senior managers from each partner. Single management team
Host Authority:	In principle Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council
Functions to be provided by host:	Where possible all organisational and support functions
Support functions not to be provided by host:	Specialist social care legal advice
Spirit of partnership	Support and shared endeavour to improve and develop – avoid a contractor / commissioner relationship Include Spirit Agreement or clause within partnership agreement.
Constraints:	Each partner will not receive a disproportionate financial risk. WCC staff to be within a single management structure. Joint committee would be delegated the relevant powers from each local authority. Service to deliver options 1 to 6 in the Housing Service Matrix.

	<p>Option to expand the services within the shared service e.g. from the second page of the Matrix. Need to keep this option open in the agreement</p> <p>Ability to trade is not important at this stage. Competence and capacity assessment necessary from host organisation.</p>
--	---

4.5 The scope of the service was agreed by the Project Board in July 2014. The HEART service comprises of core elements which are:

- Persons ability to carry out activities of daily living.
Housing environment conditions –single interventions including energy efficiency.
- Alternative accommodation assessment.
- Full Housing Health and Safety Rating Assessment.
- Home safety and falls prevention – person and property.
- Housing needs financial assessment – maximise income.

To deliver the shared service functions from the respective partners will need to be delegated to the host authority.

4.6 In addition the host will provide administrative and ancillary services as follows:

- Provide the Services, and as described in the Business Plan provide Ancillary Services, on behalf of all the Councils during the Term.
- Be responsible for the employment of the Head of Consortium and other new posts within the service.
- Ensure that the Employees and Head of Consortium engaged from time to time are suitably qualified, experienced, trained and supervised to deliver the Services.
- Manage the Employees and Head of Consortium as a diligent employer and shall handle grievance or disciplinary actions properly, with care, in accordance with law and in consultation (where relevant) with the other Councils.
- Ensure the Services are carried out with all due skill care and diligence and to the standard as would reasonably be expected of a local authority service.
- Ensure the prudent and proper control and management of the Cost Centre, Budget and Fund.
- Provide administrative and secretarial support to the Management Board, including producing and supplying regular financial monitoring information to the Management Board.

5 Employee Arrangements

- 5.1 An appraisal of the employment options was carried out for the shared service. The Project Board opted for the secondment of partner employees in to the shared service and where required direct employment of new posts on fixed term contracts. Staff will second on existing terms and conditions and in compliance with the employing organisations policies.
- 5.2 Some of the existing services are provided through contracted organisations in Rugby and Stratford Upon Avon District Council. It is expected that staff delivering the service within the partner organisations will be considered for TUPE transfer in line with the policies of those authorities that currently fund them.
- 5.3 A structure to deliver the service has been developed and there are some posts that will need to be recruited to. It is intended that existing staff form the basis of the service and where the opportunity allows the new posts will be offered to existing staff first. To allow this to happen NBBC will need to allow ring fencing to be extended to employees of other authorities currently working within the service.

6 Funding

- 6.1 The funding of the service is complex due to a number of funding (income streams) and some existing sharing of services between some of the organisations. Section 8 of the Business Case sets out the funding proposals.
- 6.2 A number of principles are proposed by the Project Board.

Agreed Principles

- a) Revenue contributions for the partner organisations will be determined through agreed activity levels for housing authorities and the cost of OT involvement across the county for the County. The measure of activity needs to be agreed as part of the Business Case approval.
- b) Capital funding from the largely Government funded Disabled Facilities Grants will not be pooled.
- c) That the proposal capital agreement is taken to Health and Wellbeing board to be ratified since that body ultimately controls the use of the capital budgets in question – explaining the contract and explaining the implications of changes
- d) Fees will be set across the shared service at a single rate. The proposal is that this would at a single rate subject to work confirming that level is justifiable – currently 12.5%
- e) Risks will be shared by the shared service by adjusting for revenue variations at the end of each year by reviewing actual activity. Capital would vary with demand. The shared service would start each year with no reserves or deficits to manage.

f) The contract for the shared service will include contract clauses about how fundamental changes will be managed.

6.3 In effect this means that no partner is liable for any costs other than those they would have been liable for if delivering the service, or parts of it, by themselves.

6.4 The amount of Disabled Facilities Grant funding being released by central Government is due to more than double from £220 million to £500 million by the year 2019/20. This is because it has been decided that home adaptations are so important to keeping people independent at home that the Social Care Capital Grant allowance has now been included in the overall budget for Grants. Partners will need to respond in order to deliver spending targets including both assessments and delivery. A joint plan has to be agreed. The proposed service and partnership agreement is a timely solution to a current challenge.

7 Customer and organisational benefits

7.1 Benefits to Warwickshire Residents include:

- Improved quality of life
- Reduced pressure on carers
- Maintained independence
- Giving the individual self-respect and dignity
- Enjoyment of living in their own familiar home environment for much longer
- Choice
- Social inclusion and family life

7.2 Organisational Benefits

7.2.1 The organisations involved in the shared service will benefit in many different ways given the unique delivery of services that span the two tiers of local government. The expected benefits include:

- Breaking down of organisational and professional barriers that hinder shared working.
- Establishment of shared teams and services spanning the 6 local authorities in Warwickshire.
- Establishment of procedures and protocols to share benefits, resources and expertise.
- Greater understanding between organisations
- Closer strategic and operational working.
- One unified voice to represent and champion all service users within Warwickshire.

- Shared risk and increased resilience across Warwickshire localities to deliver the services meaning business continuity is enhanced.
- Reduced capital costs through shared procurement and spending power – for example a larger shared budget enable new ways to provide adaptations e.g. direct procurement of stair lifts.
- More customers assessed and assisted for the same revenue costs.
- Potential to engage effectively with Health Services with a single voice for housing related interventions.
- Reputational improvement for establishing a unique, innovative and effective multi-agency service.
- Customer focused.
- Improved health and wellbeing and supporting independence.
- Social and financial inclusion.
- Provision of a simple cost effective and timely responsive service.
- Promotion of the benefits of partnership working.
- Enabling Warwickshire's citizens to be fully informed on 'how to help themselves before they need help' through the provision of advice and preventative assistance thereby helping to reduce crisis interventions which is generally when residents seek help through adaptations.

8 Conclusion

- 8.1 The development of the current service provision for HEART has been carried out over a period of time and with diligence. It has allowed breakthrough improvement across a number of different partners and within a pathway that spans different tiers of local government.
- 8.2 To provide a stable platform and public identity for the service to respond to current and future challenges it is required that the service is subject to a partnership agreement so that partners, employees and residents and be sure of the future.

9 Report Implications

9.1 Financial and Value for Money

- 9.1.1 The Council currently has a full time equivalent post seconded into the interim shared service. It is proposed that this arrangement continues and therefore budget provision will continue to be made for one member of staff. Nonetheless the proposals for funding the revenue required for the

administration of the mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant element of the service may mean that there is a small saving with regard to staff costs.

- 9.1.2 Part of the proposal is to charge a fee for those customers who receive a service to deliver an adaptation to their home as part of the Home Improvement Agency element of the service. A fee arrangement has previously been agreed by the Resources Board. This means that from 2016-2017 the Council will have a saving of £12,600 which it has historically paid to Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council towards the Home Improvement Agency.
- 9.1.3 The Council has historically topped up the capital grant fund provided by central Government. This will continue but the contribution has decreased as grant funding has increased. Government continues to provide funding for Disabled Facilities Grants which remain mandatory. For North Warwickshire this will be £423,766 in 2016/2017. In addition the Housing Revenue Account provides a budget of £175,000 for adaptations required in the Council's own stock.
- 9.1.4 With the increase in the capital DFG pot from £300,000 in 2015-16 to £423,766 in 16-17 there will be additional costs of operating the grant process as part of the proposed shared service. If the proposed Heart shared service goes live the expected fees that were being retained by NWBC of £25,000 as agreed in September Resources board report, and contributing to the savings targets will be foregone, as they will be transferred to the Heart shared service to cover the additional operating costs to cover the increase in the capital budget.

9.2 Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 9.2.1 The relevant legislation for the provision of Disabled Facilities Grants is set out in the Housing Grants, (Construction and Regeneration ACT 1996), the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002.
- 9.2.2 The partnership arrangements ensure that all of the Local Authorities involved can contribute to the Care Act 2014 principle of universal assessment of need.
- 9.2.3 The shared service provisions set out in the Business Case are in accordance with Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 and of the Local Government (Arrangements for the Discharge of Functions) (England) Regulations 2000 and;

9.3 Human Resources Implications

- 9.3.1 The Housing Assessment Officer role was agreed by the Council in February 2013 as it developed out of the traditional Technical Officer job. One of the officers carrying out this role has been part of the interim team which has driven improvements in the service will remain in the shared service. The

other has been in post for 18 months as part of a job share. Due to the interim status of the shared service part of the job share is permanent and part of it is temporary. It is proposed that in order to deliver the service set out in the Business Case that the temporary element (2 days) is made permanent. The salary, terms and conditions for the two staff involved will remain the same as they will continue to be seconded into the shared service. Whilst the proposed partnership contract will be for a term of 5 years there will be a review of the arrangements for seconding staff into the service after 2 years to ensure that they are working well and fit for purpose.

9.3.2 For North Warwickshire the proposals in the Business Case largely formalise the staff arrangement which have been in place since 2013 in the interim shared service. Nonetheless as part of the overall approach to delivering the proposals all staff are being consulted about the Business Case and the implications for them.

9.3.3 The Unions have been consulted about the progress of this service and specifically about the Business Case at the Joint Negotiating Forum.

9.3.4 A series of informal briefings have been undertaken with the staff involved in the interim service. The briefings have advised staff about each organisations intention to submit proposals for a contractual partnership agreement to formalise the shared service arrangements to their Councillors for consideration. Following the political arrangements and if the proposals are agreed there will be a formal consultation process with staff. It is anticipated that this will commence in the Summer of 2016 for a period of at least 30 days.

9.4 Environment and Sustainability Implications

9.4.1 The pilot project has shown the potential for significant service improvements which when fully utilised will enhance the quality of life of people requiring adaptations. By supporting people to be able to live independently the Council is contributing directly towards the developing healthier communities' priority of the Health and Well Being Strategy.

9.4.2 The roll out of this work and continued delivery of this service should provide our customers with consistent information, advice and adaptations that will assist in improving their quality of life.

9.5 Equality Implications

9.5.1 The aim of the HEART is to improve the delivery of the Disabled Facilities Grants service both in quality and timescales and offer a holistic assessment which is much more than just delivering adaptations. The report indicates it is delivering better outcomes for service users. This should result in a positive impact for people with disabilities and other service users as defined under the protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010.

9.5.2 The service aims to improve the quality of life and social justice for residents in the north of the County so it is much closer to that enjoyed by the rest of Warwickshire it also aims to provide a choice of housing to meet the needs of the residents of the Borough. In addition we are working in partnership to improve health and reduce health inequalities for residents in the Borough

9.6 Risk Management Implications

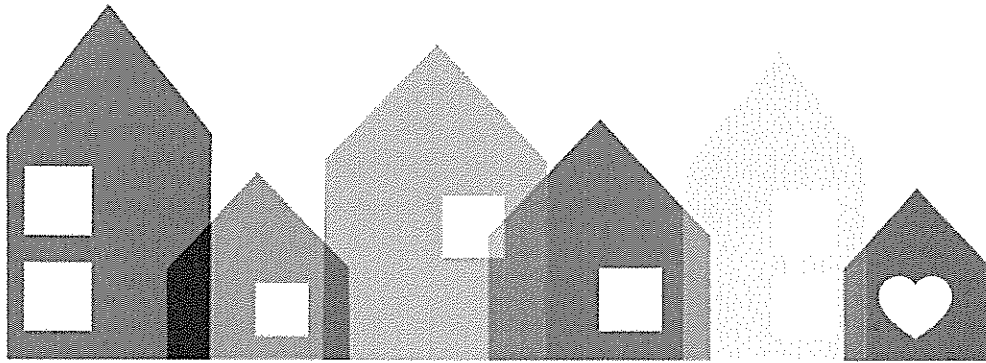
9.6.1 The risks of moving to a new system of service delivery have been reduced by the learning gained from the pilot project.

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

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



Home Environment Assessment & Response Team

HEART: Helping you Live Independently at Home

Business Case

Document Title:	A Business Case for a Home Environment Assessment & Response Team (HEART) Service through a shared agreement.
Description:	This Business case proposal is to provide a Home Environment Assessment & Response Team (HEART) Service delivered by the 5 District & Borough Councils and the County Council through a shared service agreement.
Authors:	Denise Cross & Paul Coopey
Contact:	
Status:	Version 0.6
Date:	29 April 2016
Audience (if restricted)	
Rights. Protective marking	Not protectively marked.
Location	
Filename	

Version History

Version	Author	Date	Changes
0.1	Denise Cross	19.02.2016	
0.2	Denise Cross	18.04.2016	Consultation with Project Board
0.3	Denise Cross & Paul Coopey	24.04.2016	Additional Benchmarking and formatting
0.4	Denise Cross	25.04.2016	Inclusion of amended financial information
0.5	Caroline Potter	27.04.2016	Amendments to financial information
0.6	Paul Coopey	29.04.2016	Amendments to tables

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The new HEART service is an integrated approach between social care and housing which focuses on the customer and their carers, not organisations, to deliver the right practitioner at the right time with the right solution. This will enable the customer choice and control to manage their own lives and maintain their abilities in daily activities within their home that is safe and warm and enable delivery without delay.
- 1.2 This is by far and away the best model going forward because it builds on existing trusted relationships, embeds these services as part of an integrated range of targeted support services for adults, provided by the local public sector, aligns with the Warwickshire Homefirst strategy (Warwickshire County Council & South Warwickshire Foundation Trust, 2015) and meets the national strategic policy direction of integrated services.
- 1.3 The proposal is to continue the rollout of the Home Environment Assessment & Response Team (HEART) service delivered by the 5 District & Borough Councils and the County Council in Warwickshire through a shared service agreement

2. Background

- 2.1 To facilitate radical change and be part of a whole system solution the partners (5 District / Borough Councils and the County Council) agreed an ambitious and challenging collaborative project aimed at creating a new way of delivering Home Improvement Agency (HIA) services and housing adaptations for disabled and older people across Warwickshire. It was ambitious because of bringing together 6 organisations to deliver an integrated one customer pathway for the delivery of housing solutions which includes the HIA, home safety checks and major adaptations without delay, through a Lean systems approach, and sustaining the continuous improvement.
- 2.2 Prior to the undertaking of this partnership the "old model" of service delivery had the Occupational Therapy (OT) practitioners located in different WCC bases across the county and each of the 5 District and Borough Council had their officers in each of their bases. The OT practitioner would undertake their assessment with the customer and then send a letter of recommendation to the relevant council to assess for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). The customer was frequently sitting on a waiting list in social care and then moving on to another waiting list in the district/ borough so timescales were very variable across the county. The Housing grants officer would then visit undertake their assessment and then request a contractor visit. The customer whilst waiting for their adaptation may also be visited by the Home Improvement Agency staff to assist with the process and undertake e.g. home safety check or benefits check and at the time by other services such as PHYLLIS. The table 1. below shows the improvements to-date achieved through an integrated service delivery model.

Before	Improvement Area	Now
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple, disconnected access points • Multiple assessors for different parts of journey • Multiple visits - between 3 & 7 people involved <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disjointed journey • Confusing 	Customer Journey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single multiagency contact point • One assessor per customer who assesses home and person <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One key visit by 1 assessor • 1 or possible 2 people involved • Co-ordinated pathway
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple teams, multiple managers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different offices • Narrow roles within whole process 	Workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased multiskilled workers in social care and housing • Trained to deliver an extensive range of interventions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resilience • Single line managed team
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple offices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 220 steps within the journey • Duplication of work between the agencies • Competing priorities and differing goals 	Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated, managed pathway • Whole system managed - around 22 steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single base • Shared vision and goals and strategic direction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New ways of working
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teams delivering different parts of a whole <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No single ownership of all the solutions being delivered • Reactive, managing backlog etc. 	Service Interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactive - prevention for all customers • Capacity to deliver multiple interventions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unknown customer demand <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 waiting lists • No overall service management 	Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Countywide demand known <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 access point and list • Known and managed adaptations costs • Multiagency management board
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drop out rate at 35% • Average major adaptations at 395 days 	Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drop out rate around 3% • Average time for major adaption North = 179 days. Best times are within weeks of delivery • South = 301 days (backlog being cleared)

Table 1. Comparison between "Old" and "New" Service Delivery Models

2.3 The aim of the project was to create a new customer focused service delivery model which would bring together the different professions from each of the organisations, create a new role of a Housing Assessment Officer; combining the skills of an Occupational Therapy Assistant and a Housing Caseworker to do the non-complex customer work and link together existing services within a service model that involves working together to deliver holistic housing assessment and appropriate solutions. The purpose of the new **Home Environment Assessment and Response Team (HEART)** service was to shift from being a process done to a customer to a process which works with and for the customer:

“To provide customers with the advice and information to help them make the right choice, and provide practical help to deliver the right housing solution when they want it”

2.4 The approach of HEART is tailored to focus on and support the customer and carers to identify their own needs and preferred solutions e.g. advice and information, equipment, housing options, adaptations, telecare, falls prevention strategies. There is evidence that where customers are supported to make choices, they often choose lower-cost and lower intervention solutions (DFG's in England: A Research Report for the District Councils' Network and the Society of District Council Treasurers, April

2013). It is important to develop a partnership with the person and all other parties if necessary over the long term leading to an improvement of the quality of life and their experience.

2.5 In many Local Authorities, the system of Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) delivery for housing adaptations was and is still not working well: resources are not deployed as effectively as they could be, customers are left waiting too long, sometimes two years or more (DFG's in England: A Research Report for the District Councils' Network and the Society of District Council Treasurers, April 2013). In Warwickshire, there were significant issues with the old way of delivering services including delays of 395 days on average from customer enquiry to providing an adaptation, with some delays being far, far greater than this. Whilst not satisfactory, this was a similar performance to other local authorities and in line with a national picture of delays in this area. It is widely acknowledged that poorly joined-up care risks distress and harm and is also hugely frustrating for patients/service users and carers (The King's Fund and Nuffield Trust (2012), Report to the Department of Health and NHS Future Forum). There was also a 35% customer drop out as teams struggled to deliver the major adaptation. The root cause of the problem was having three separate strands in delivering services with 8 different organisations and that we had tried to improve each strand but the fundamental review focused on the customer's experience and involving all organisations across Warwickshire that had been involved in the system brought the conclusion that building 'one customer focussing service' was the only way of bringing the "radical" change which was required.

2.6 A small number of exemplary local authorities have formed well-managed partnerships and Warwickshire HEART service is one of the ground-breaking, innovative and avant-garde services. HEART has the flexibility and agility to meet local need through its new ways of working with different partners. It takes a holistic view of a person and their carer's health and well-being and their home to provide an array of solutions which will meet their needs now and in the future. This effective integrated approach improves the quality of solutions and the person's experience through a more effectively coordinated delivery of the service.

Case Study from the HEART service

A customer was referred to the HEART service having difficulty managing to get in and out of her bath.

Outcome

The appointment to carry out the assessment was made whilst the customer was giving her details about the bathing difficulties. The assessment took place 3 days later and the contractor was able to view the bathroom the same day. The Disabled Facilities Grant was approved and the level shower was installed within 3 weeks. The customer rang to say the shower was "brilliant".

2.7 The majority of services across England are not currently pursuing an integrated systems approach and are still delivering Home Improvement Agency (HIA) and housing adaptations by retaining the silo working, professional boundaries and convoluted processes of work between the Occupational Therapy service and Housing departments, which is how Warwickshire was providing these services.

2.8 Since the start of the collaborative project pressures are only increasing in health and social care. The population is ageing, the prevalence of chronic health conditions increasing, survival rates at birth and major trauma with advances in medical technology are greater, and hence the demand is rising at the same time as savings within the public sector are required. Systems have not aligned with the needs of the society and this is not sustainable. Although, difficult choices on public expenditure were announced in the 2015 Comprehensive Spending Review it was recognised the significant importance of DFG's and explicit in the plans of a commitment of over £500 million for DFG's by 2019-20.

2.9 The commitment of partners across the 6 organisations has facilitated the partnership to forge and mature at all levels within the organisations. This has enabled the radical change in the service provision and establishes the sustainable and transformational change across the county. The project has brought together the Occupational Therapy practitioners, Home Improvement Agency Caseworkers, Grant Technical Services and working with the contractors as an integral part of the whole. It has dissolved the traditional boundaries between the different parts of the system, developed leaner processes, adoption of good practice and significantly improved the outcomes for the customers and carers.

2.10 Key principles to ensure the new HEART service is meeting the people's needs and wishes are being met are:

Customer's Feedback

*"In this day and age of budget cuts and when it seems common to hear the public services freely criticised, it is a pleasure to be able to offer my grateful appreciation for the service you have provided.
Thanks and Well Done"*

"I would like to thank you; you were so understanding and helpful"

"We thank you all for bringing that bit of comfort and safety into the life of the most important person in our family"

- The service is driven by the customer's and /or carer needs and personal goals;
- The focus is on proactive solutions and self-management;
- The importance of having an integrated service delivering one customer pathway with a single access point for the service;
- A multi-agency multi-skilled team;
- Ensure workforce, training and core skills reflect modern day requirement;
- Leadership should encourage us to do things differently; and

- Performance metrics must truly reflect the experience for the customer and the carer and drive improvement.

(Adapted from Commission for Improving Urgent Care for Older People March 2016
www.nhsconfed.org)

- 2.11 Our health is primarily determined by factors beyond just health and social care (Appendix 1). Good Housing is essential to health and well-being: the effects of poor housing cost the NHS over £2 billion every year. Housing plays a crucial role in supporting other determinants such as educational attainment, employment prospects and social interaction. There is evidence that Occupational Therapy and housing-related preventative services prevent or defray much larger housing, health and social care costs as well as improving quality of life (Heywood, F. Turner, L. (2007), *Better outcomes, lower costs – Implications for health and social care budgets of investment in housing adaptations, improvements and equipment: a review of the evidence*).
- 2.12 The integrated HEART service provides a great and unique opportunity to build on the “Making Every Contact Count” initiative and make further improvements in prevention and reductions in costly health and social care, and enable people to maximise their abilities in daily living activities by bringing together a matrix of services and the capability of delivering a wider range of preventative or early intervention solutions either at a county or local district / borough level in Warwickshire.
- 2.13 In the 2011 census, 38,815 residents in Warwickshire that have a long term limiting illness stated it limited their activities a lot and this is projected to rise to 63,944 in 2037 (Warwickshire Observatory, (2015) *Quality of Life in Warwickshire 2014/15*). An estimated two-thirds of those who have reached pensionable age have at least two chronic conditions (cited in Nolte, E. Knal, C. McKee, M. (2008) *Managing chronic conditions*) and 850,000 people in the UK are living with dementia (Age UK (2015) *Later Life in United Kingdom*). There are 1.3 million households aged 55 years and over who live in a home with at least one Category 1 hazard, namely a home that did not meet the minimum standard for housing in England. Around a fifth of homes are not fully useable (level access, flush threshold, WC at entrance level, sufficient circulation space in hallway). The cost of poor housing among older households aged 55 years or more to the NHS equals £624 million (Building Research Trust, (2010) *The Real Cost of Poor Housing & Homes and ageing in England*). The table 2 illustrates the savings if the identified hazards were resolved.

Hazard	Issues	Savings per annum if hazard fixed
Excess Cold	Loneliness & stress	£441,564,353
Falls on stairs	Falls	£71,609,794
Falls on the level	Depression	£34,700,172
Falls between levels	Absence from work	£17,519,361
Fire	Anti-social behaviour	£12,725,126
All other 20 hazards (e.g. sanitation, food safety, pests, carbon monoxide, lighting)	Medical conditions e.g. asthma, fractures, pneumonia	£45,660,759
	Truancy from school	
	Burglaries	
TOTAL		£623,779,566

Table 2. Hazard savings

- 2.14 It is important to mitigate the hazards through interventions such as housing adaptations e.g. handrails to the main stairs at a cost of £200 would save health costs of around £930 and if the falls risk is removed this increases to about £1,250. The payback period of less than one year plus it may also save on home care costs (Building Research Trust, (2010) *The Real Cost of Poor Housing & Homes and ageing in England*). Hospital “bed blocking” is very expensive, costing from £1,750 a week up to over £3,000 for an acute bed (Georghiou, T. and Bardsley, M. (2014) *Exploring the Cost of Care at the End of Life*). Moreover, inappropriate hospital stays for frail older people are dangerous and debilitating.
- 2.15 Demands for adaptations has also been accelerated by changes in social policy and medical advances which have allowed people of all ages, with varying levels of disabilities and complex needs, to lead more independent lives in the community (Home Adaptations Consortium, (Oct 2013), *Home Adaptations for Disabled People*). The Care Act 2014 has been enacted but does not replace the Housing & Regeneration Act 1996 and the responsibilities for the provision of DFG's. The Care Act implementation from April 2015 has seen the planning and implementation of a large number of reforms including:
- Establishing a new statutory “well-being principle.”
 - A new duty to prevent, delay or reduce needs for care and support.
 - An expanded duty to assess the needs of carers.
 - Integrating service provision and combining and aligning processes.
- 2.16 The Better Care Fund arrangements have been established nationally. The Better Care Fund arrangement known as “Warwickshire Cares Better together” has given an opportunity to build the profile of these services, and their contribution to the prevention and wellbeing agenda. The DFG funding stream for the next 5 years is from the DCLG via the Department of Health and will increase from £220m in 2015 -

16 to £500m in 2019-20 (Report on the DFG Summit, Jan 2016, Foundations & College of Occupational Therapists). In 2015-16 Warwickshire received £1,925,079 through Warwickshire Cares Better together.

2.17 The redesign of the customer pathway, via a lean thinking approach, has only those steps that are of value to the customer and the improvements to-date are:

- Initial customer contact to assessment steps have been reduced from 22 steps to one step through a direct contact number to the team.
- Development of all the team members' skills to provide housing solutions thus reducing duplication in roles / customer visits and documentation.
- Development and implementation of a new role of Housing Assessment Officer (HAO) in Sept 2013. This role enables the functional ability of the person and the conditions of their home environment to be assessed and modified accordingly. This has involved extensive training and mentoring of the HAO's by OT's.
- Single assessment process.
- Portfolio of core interventions that are delivered by all practitioners from advice on specific topics such as falls prevention, home safety through to equipment for daily living, assistive technology (e.g. telecare) and minor and major adaptations.
- Resilience within the service.
- Significantly improvement in key performance indicators.
- Improved collaborative working with other teams e.g. Lettings in Districts and Borough, Personalisation within the County.
- The project was a Runner up for a national award within Housing in 2013, cited in DFG's in England: A Research Report for the District Councils' Network and the Society of District Council Treasurers, April 2013 and recognised by Improvement & Efficiency West Midlands (IEWM).
- The service has been the focus of two PhD theses from Warwick Business School.

2.18 On-going funding pressures make the need to demonstrate the benefits of housing solutions and this is that unique opportunity to have one delivery method to enhance the resources we have available as a partnership for housing solutions. The delivery of the HEART service enables people to live more independently at home, for longer. It also reduces the risk of 'crisis' events, like serious falls. This therefore improves health, wellbeing and independence. These services therefore also reduce demand on long term and acute services such as hospital admissions due to falls, or long term home support. However, the "one-off" nature of much of the work makes tracking of longer-term outcomes less easy to achieve. Although there is well-researched evidence base supporting the belief that adaptations can reduce the need for more costly interventions, there are no established structural links between DFG budgets and the statutory beneficiaries of their preventative outcomes ((Home Adaptations Consortium, (Oct 2013), *Home Adaptations for Disabled People*).

2.19 In Warwickshire the Occupational Therapy services provided by Warwickshire County Council had already been re-modelled into specialisms ahead of other local authorities to meet the increasing complex needs of customers and carers and “care closer to home”. This enabled the specialist housing OTs to be co-located in Borough/District Council offices and facilitate closer working with housing colleagues dealing with DFG’s and adaptations under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996. Section 24 of the Act requires a local housing authority which is not a social services authority to consult the social services authority when deciding whether to approve applications for a DFG, in order to satisfy itself that works are necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled occupant. The co-location developed into piloting a shared service hosted by NBBC, and also involving NWBC and RBC and WCC to become part of single line-managed team in NBBC, supported by agreed HR protocols. This has been extended to a pilot in South Warwickshire with Stratford upon Avon and Warwick District Councils and WCC in 2014, and continues with working arrangements with South Warwickshire Foundation Trust OT Children and Young People and Families service, Orbit and Age UK.

Case Study from the HEART Service

A Customer in her seventies with arthritis was referred by a relative as they were worried about her going up and down the stairs. Housing Assessment Officer (HAO) observed the customer going up and down the stairs and performing activities of daily living.

Outcome: *Customer was able to manage the stairs at the present time but required grab rails in the bathroom. Advice and information was given about adaptations (level access shower and stair lift), Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) process and Benefits check. The discussion on benefits led to the customer saying “I am not entitled to a pension” With the consent of the customer Department for Work & Pensions was contacted by HAO and this led to the customer being paid her pension and deferred payments which had accumulated to £90,000 before tax.*

2.20 The aims of the HEART service are:

- A. To enable customers with multiple and complex conditions to maximise their potential and live in their chosen home environment.
- B. To reduce pressure on other expensive services e.g. residential homes, hospitals, and home care by postponing the need or reducing the amount of care and support required.
- C. To improve quality of life for older and disabled people and their carers (improved dignity, less stressful, empowering, and improved flexibility in daily tasks).
- D. To be proactive and avoid where possible, crisis situations for customers and carers in regards to managing in their chosen home environment.
- E. To promote positive health and well-being styles of living, prevention of falls, and reduce hypothermia in older people.
- F. To improve living conditions by reducing hazards in the home.
- G. To reduce demand elsewhere in the housing, health and care system.

- H. To prevent hospital admissions and/or facilitate timely hospital discharges.
- I. To develop practitioners with the skills and capabilities that enables them to provide the appropriate intervention, to minimise risk to their customers and carers, be outcome focussed and able to 'get it right first time'.
- J. To contribute to the following strategic drivers:
 - Integration & Partnership working.
 - New legislation – Care Act.
 - Safety, Well-being & Prevention.
 - Preventing & Facilitating hospital discharges.
 - Better outcomes for customers & carers in their home environment (*Public Health, Social Care & NHS Outcomes Frameworks for 2015-16*).
 - Maximising capacity to meet demand within existing or less resources, e.g. Avoidance of growth in Non-Elective Admissions.
- K. Potential for strategic thinking and planning in building accessible new homes, refurbishment programmes, and best use of stock with registered social landlords.

3. Customer / Carer Feedback

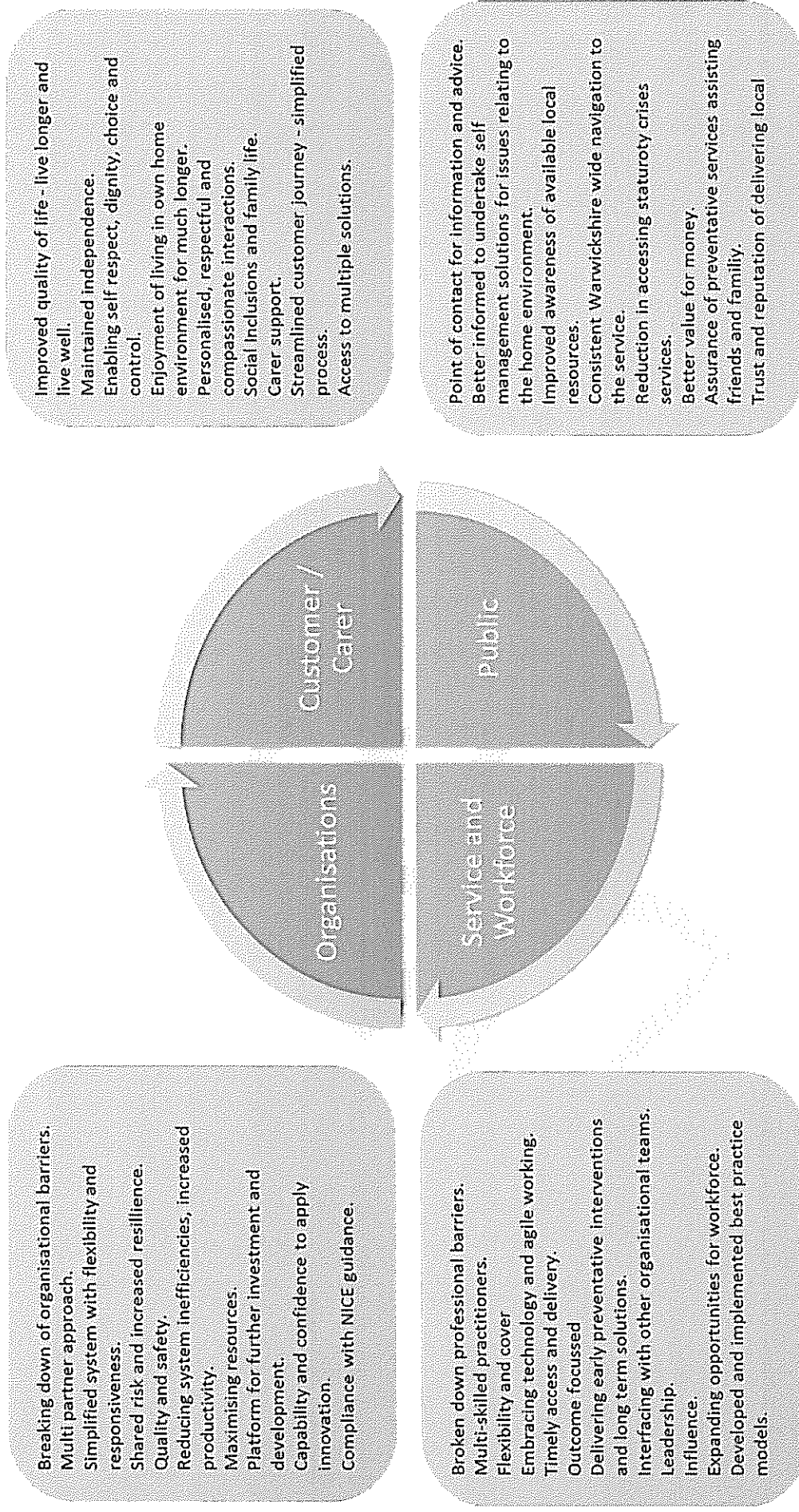
- 3.1 It is important to hear and listen to customer and carer views to enable the service to improve the quality and experience. The customer survey conducted by the HEART service is not solely related to DFG but all interventions provided to the customer by the service.
- 3.2 There are 6 key themes to the customer survey which are:
 - **Respect and Dignity**
 - **Communication**
 - **Responsiveness**
 - **Reliability**
 - **Contractors**
 - **Overall experience**
- 3.3 The table 3 below shows the overall score for each key theme. The 2014/15 Overall Experience rated by customers of the HEART service was 96.25% and up to Q3 2015-16 is 97.9%.

KEY THEME	Overall mean for 2014-15	Overall mean for 2015-16
Respect and Dignity	91.62%	98.4%
Communication	95.25%	97.3%
Responsiveness	96.50%	96.5%
Reliability	98.75%	98.7%
Contractors	93.25%	94.3%
Overall Experience	96.25%	97.9%

Table 3 Customer Satisfaction of HEART

4. Benefits

4.1 A successful service contributes to and links to the key objectives of Warwickshire and this Business Case proposes the HEART service as the continuing delivery model. The customer, carers, the communities and organisations will benefit in many different ways given the unique delivery of this innovative seamless service that spans the two tiers of local government.



- 4.2 Additionally, for this large workforce, there is also an opportunity to enhance their knowledge and skills that would deliver significant additional benefits in prevention and promoting physical and mental wellbeing. For example, falls prevention and enabling strategies can be incorporated. Councillor Izzi Seccombe (2014) highlights that “every contact with a customer should be seen as an opportunity to encourage healthier lifestyle choices” and there is the need for a ‘whole system’ approach to achieve the ‘Making Every Contact Count (MECC)’. Boroughs and Districts have adopted the MECC approach.
- 4.3 In the UK, falls are the most common cause of death from injury in the over 65’s (Fenton, (2014), *The Human Cost of Falls: Health and Wellbeing, Reducing the Burden of Disease*). They are the largest cause of hospital admissions for older people and lead to 70 - 75,000 hip fractures per year and one in five die within three months of fracture. The annual cost to health and social care is estimated to be £2 billion partly due to the fact that half of the people who fracture their hip never fully regain their previous level of function and therefore need additional care and support. Falls are also a major precipitant of people moving from their home to residential or nursing care (Department of Health, 2012).

Example of savings

Table 4: Cost of Falls

Hazard Category 1	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4
Falls on the level	Quadriplegic	Femur Fracture	Wrist Fracture	Treated cut or bruise
Costs in 1st Year	£92,490	£39,906	£1,545	£115

(Building Research Trust, (2010) *The Real Cost of Poor Housing & Homes and ageing in England*).

- 4.4 The HEART service is an appropriate service to incorporate:
- Physical and Mental wellbeing - maintaining health & wellbeing through
 - Brief optimistic advice and preventing falls.
 - Disabilities awareness.
 - Equality and diversity.
 - Design for Dementia – positive actions and solutions in the home.
 - Enabling techniques.
- 4.5 The additional benefits are:
- Compliance with Falls: assessment and prevention of falls in older people (NICE clinical guideline 161; June 2013) and a ‘Falls in older people’ assessment after a fall to help prevent further falls (NICE Quality standard 86; March 2015).
 - Improving Making Every Contact Count (MECC).
 - Supporting the challenge on Dementia.
 - Supporting the new ‘Care Certificate’ (recommendation from the Francis Report 2013).

- Embedding of 'Enabling' techniques so that carers are 'enablers' rather than 'doers' which would promote customer independence and prevent or delay increased formal care services.
- Choice & control, dignity and respect, kindness and compassion.

Table 5: Home conditions

Hazard Category 1	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4
Excess cold	Heart attack, care, death	Heart attack	Respiratory condition	Mild pneumonia
Costs in 1st Year	£19,851	£22,295	£519	£84
Damp and mould	Not applicable	Type 1 allergy	Severe asthma	Mild asthma
Costs in 1st Year		£2,034	£1,027	£242

(Building Research Trust, (2010) *The Real Cost of Poor Housing & Homes and ageing in England*).

5. Performance Data

5.1 The HEART performance data has expanded and become more comprehensive as a consequence of more teams joining the HEART service. However, the service is inputting into a number of different IT systems which makes consistency difficult but in the future will be addressed.

Table 6. Number of HEART Enquiries

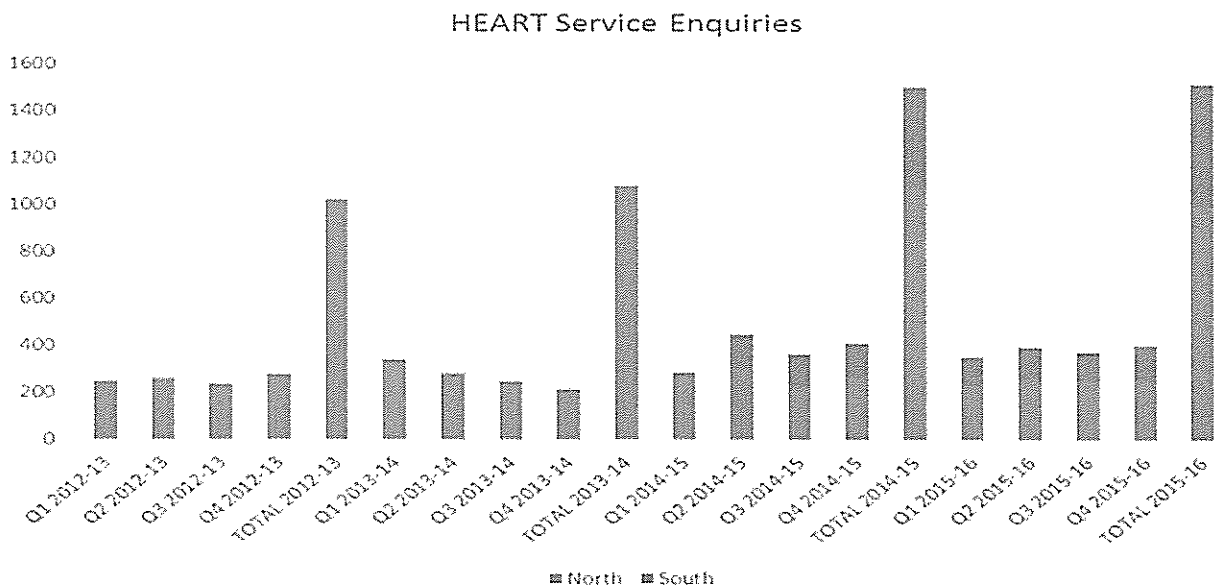


Table 7. Number of Referrals for Council Major Adaptations

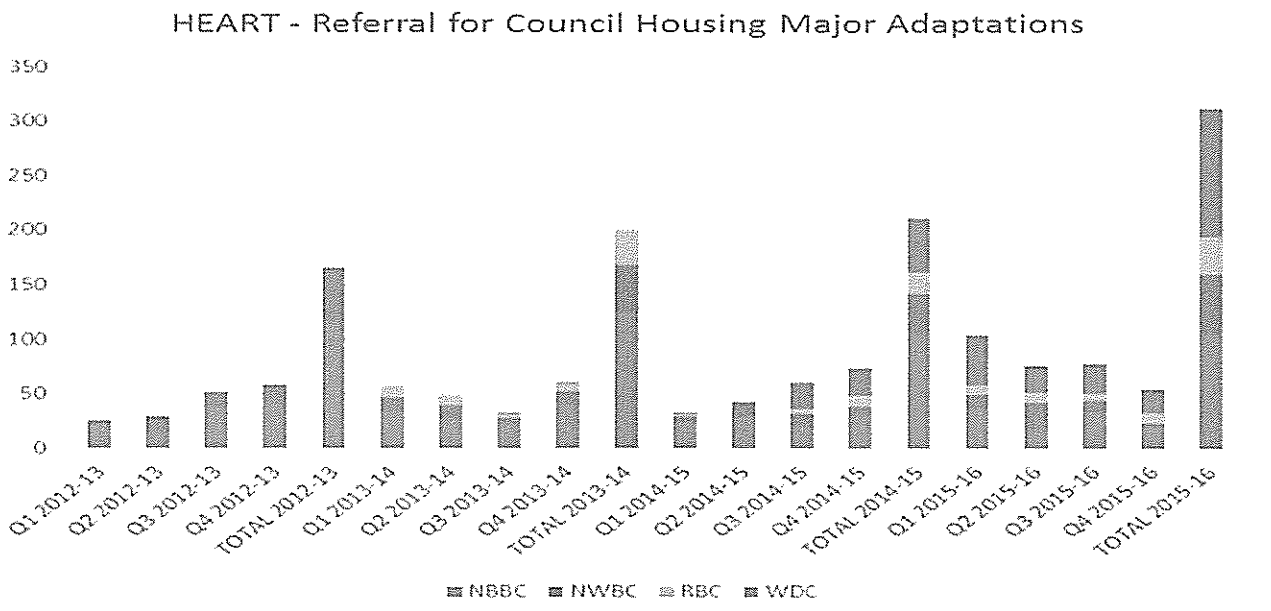


Table 8. Number of DFG Approvals

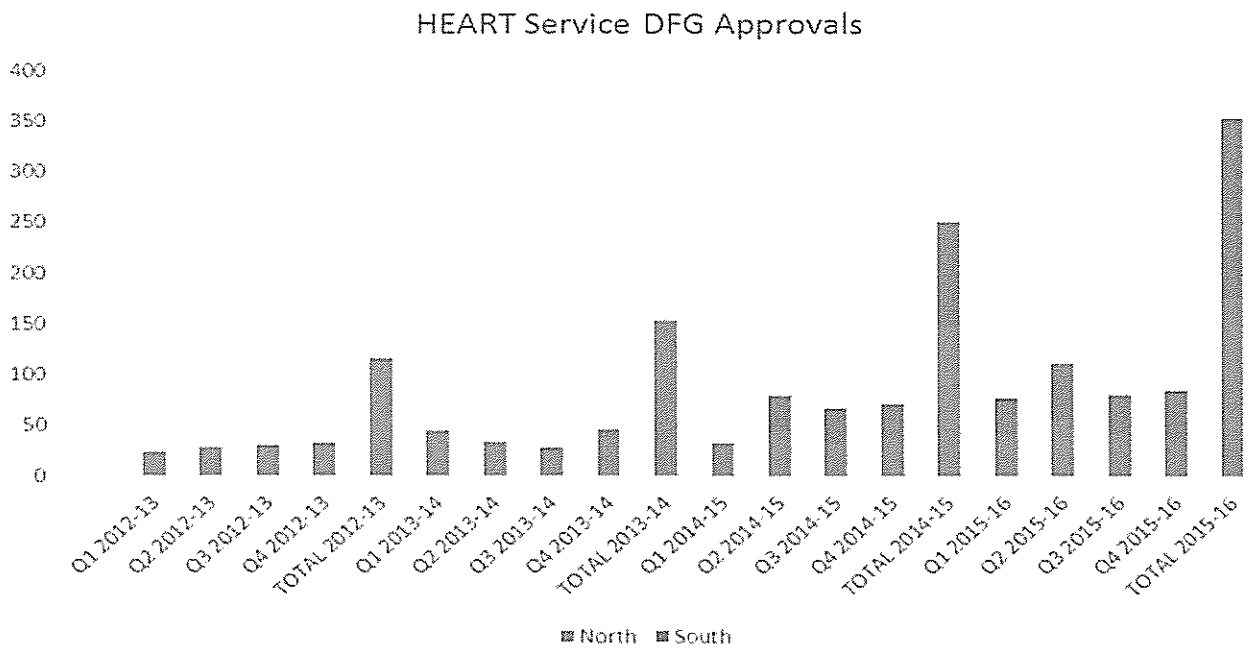
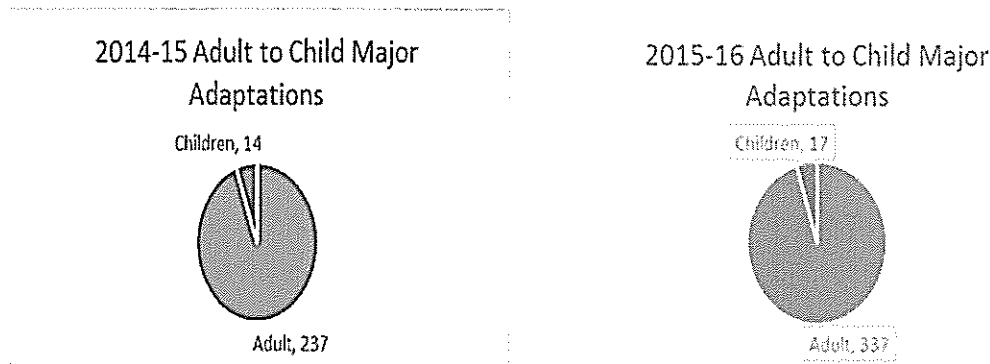


Table 9 & 10 Number of Children & Young People Major Adaptations



5.2 Enquiry to Completion of DFG works

The following tables show the performance of HEART in relation to DFG funded major adaptations, and then how the service is comparing with other Local Authorities. It has always been difficult to undertake benchmarking as service provision is different across England and there is no national data set, but the data clearly shows the progress made in Warwickshire.

Table 11 End to End Time Trend for DFG funded Major Adaptations

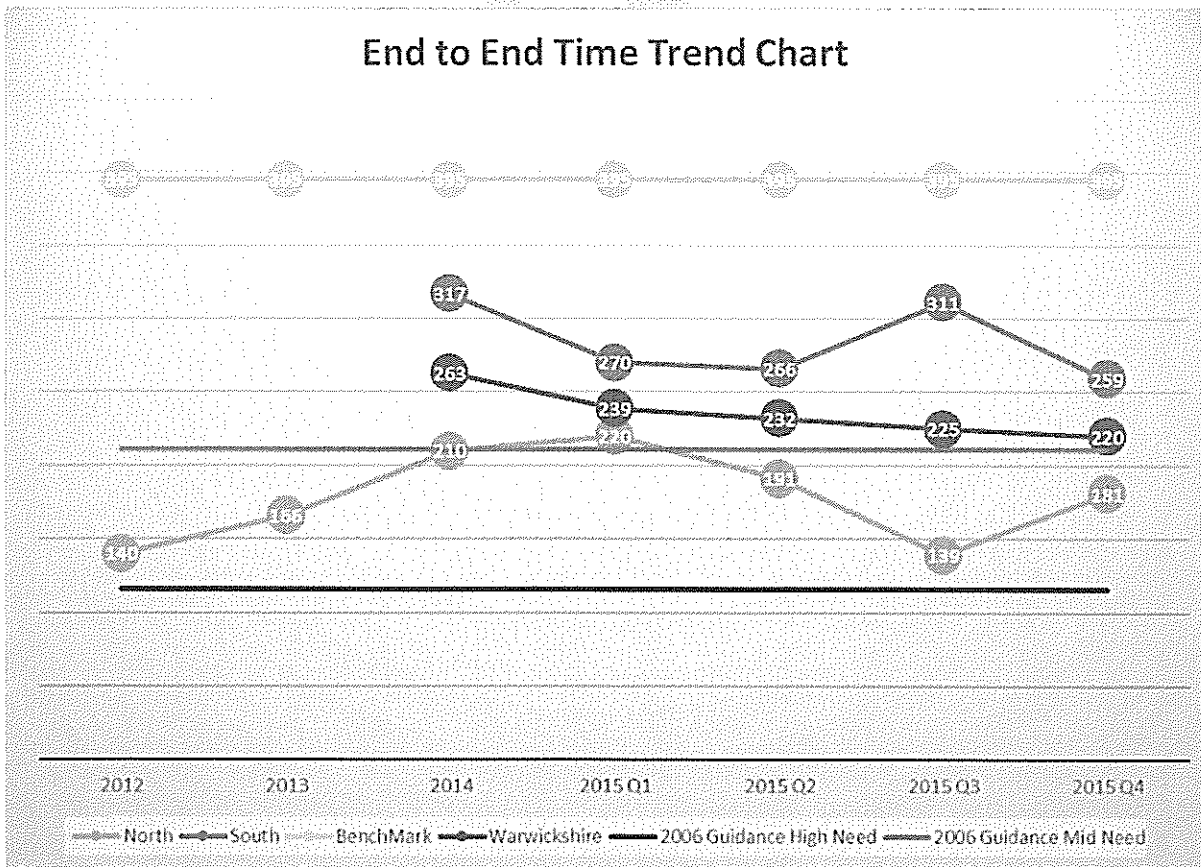
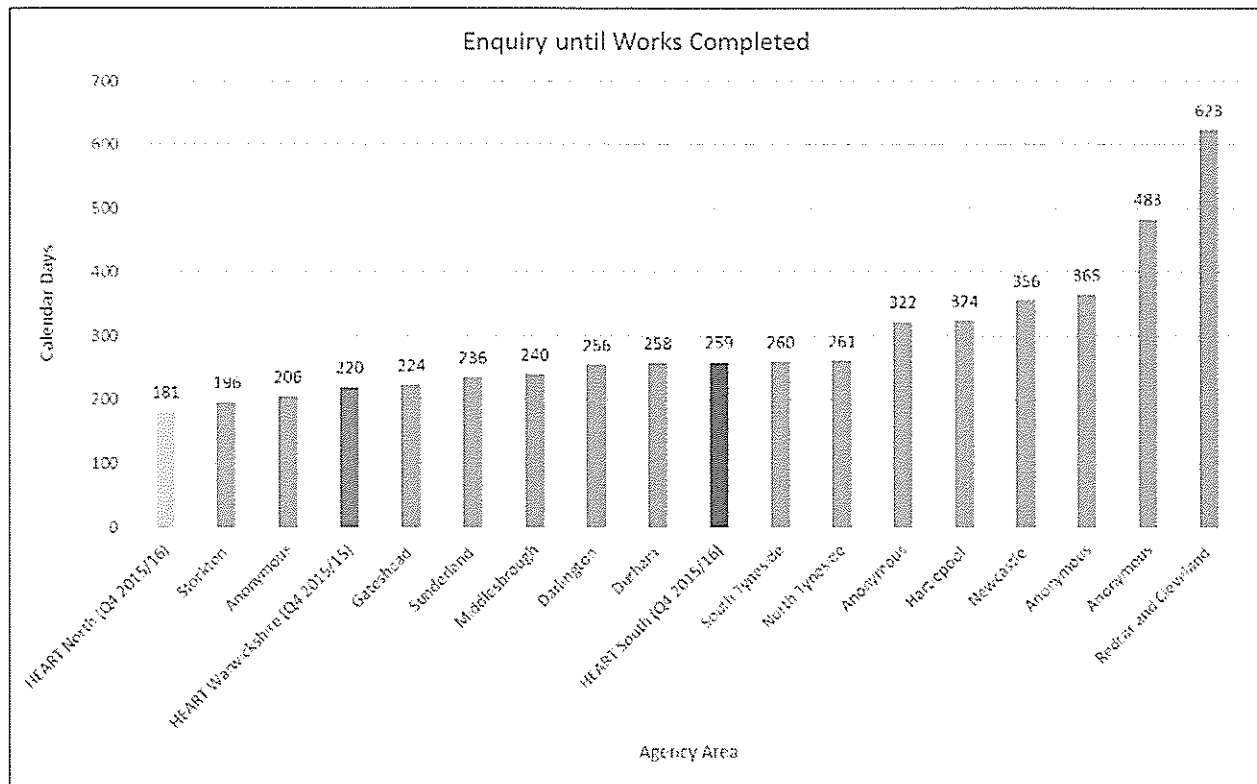


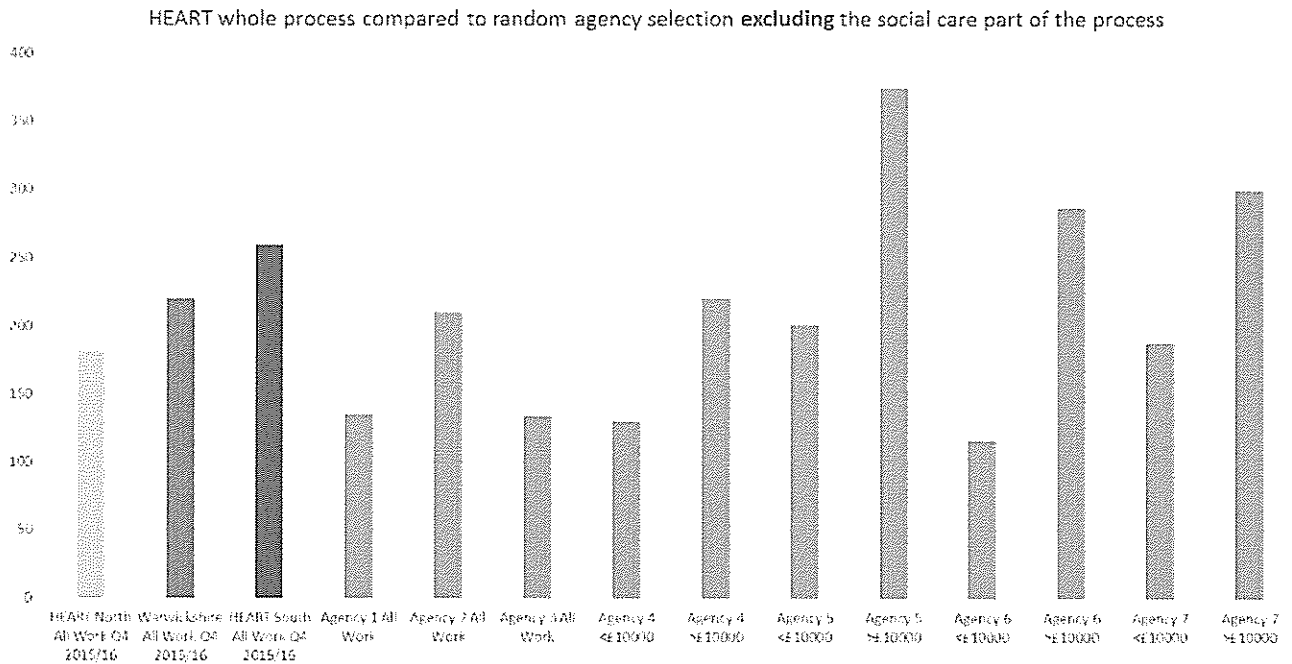
Table 12 a. Benchmarking Information on other Local Authorities – Whole Process



5.3 Table 12a.shows HEART performance compared to a number of unitary authorities responsible for both Housing and Social Care. The chart demonstrates that Warwickshire has developed a system that can perform well when compared to authorities with a structural advantage.

Additionally, in Warwickshire we have achieved an improved service able to continuously improve performance across 6 different local authorities in a two tier structure. This demonstrates the benefits of the integrated approach that has been developed and the shared oversight of the service.

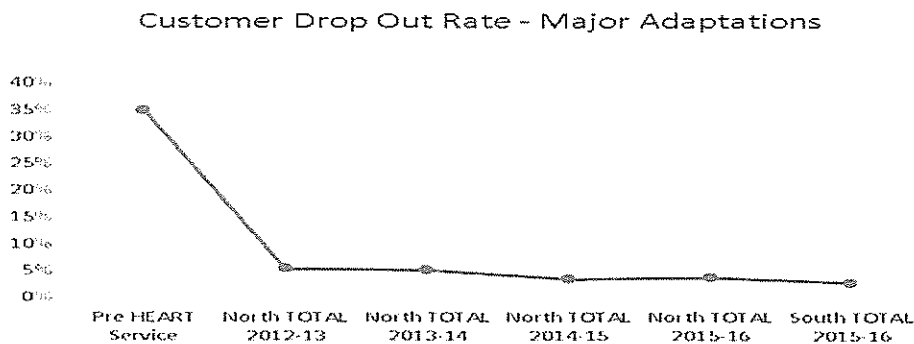
Table12b. HEART Whole Customer Journey vs. Traditional DFG System which Excludes Adult Social Care



Source of Agency information is Foundations.
Identity of LA 1-7 and County not authorised for publication.

5.4 Table 12 b shows HEART performance (i.e. whole customer journey) against authorities that only measure low cost and high cost jobs from the time the agency received the referral. The other authorities have not included the time taken at the front end of the process of the OT assessment within adult social care. Our experience, from the initial review, suggests that the journey through social care is on average 125 days, which needs to be added to the other authorities in the table below.

Table 13. DFG Drop rate



5.5 Not only does a low drop out rate benefit the customer, it benefits the organisations as they do not have such a high amount of waste work.

5.6 Table 14. Customer Outcomes

Care Act Outcomes	Outcomes applied to HEART	2015-16 Total (3 Quarters)
1. Managing and maintaining nutrition.	Able to prepare drinks/food.	1
2. Maintaining personal hygiene.	Provision of facilities (modified/new). Maximise ability in activities of daily living. Maintaining dignity and respect.	225
3. Managing toilet needs.	Able to use the toilet.	116
4. Being appropriately clothed.	Able to dress /undress.	105
5. Being able to make use of the home safely.	Able to use existing facilities within the property. Able to access principal rooms within the property.	368
6. Maintaining a habitable home environment.	Improved condition of the property. Provide comfort security & safety.	0*
7. Developing and maintaining family or other personal relationships.	To reduce isolation, maximise ability. To maximise participation in family roles and work and social activities.	63
8. Accessing and engaging in work, training, education or volunteering	Facilitate working from home.	0*
9. Making use of necessary facilities or services in the local community including public transport, and recreational facilities or services.	Able to go in/out of property to access home. Garden, community.	0* 27
10. Carrying out any caring responsibilities the adult has for a child.	To minimise risk to person, carer or relative.	0*

*The "0" indicates no report functionality at the current time

5.7 Table 15. Average Cost of Major Adaptations

Average Cost of DFG	North	South	Pre Experiment Benchmark
2012-13	£6,422.00	No data	£7,396
2013-14	£6,859.00	No data	£7,396
2014-15	£6,102.00	£7,674.00	£7,396
2015-16 to Q3	£6,085.00	£7,389.00	£7,396

6. Business Requirement

6.1 To deliver the HEART service:

In Scope

The HEART Service Matrix detailed in Appendix 2, and a shared service agreement between all the councils.

Out of Scope

There is the future opportunity for all or some of the “out of scope” additional or service enhancements to be brought in to scope should circumstances and funding allow.

6.2 The Business case has considered a number of options to deliver the change and realise the benefits. The options considered are:

6.2.1 Revert to Original Service

This is not considered viable as an option because of:

- The progress over time of becoming an integrated service.
- It is a difficult area to ‘change direction’ in due to the number of stakeholders.
- The positive results to date indicating sustainable improvement progress.
- The development of a Housing Assessment Officer (HAO) role incorporating the skills of an OT Assistant and a Housing caseworker.

6.2.2 Shared Service with a Lead Authority via a contractual arrangement (section 101 (5) Local Government Act 1972)

This is the preferred option as it has:

- Democratic accountability and transparency.
- Joint oversight and equal governance between councils.
- Trusted and well understood approach – already employed between Councils.
- Pooling of control and risks.
- Existing local government financial arrangements and benefits remain in place.
- Empower the Host to act through the Partnership to provide the service. (Sections 101, 111 & 113 of the Local Government Act 1972, Section 19 & 20 of the Local Government Act 2000, and section 1 of the Localism Act 2011).
- Unlikely to present difficulties with the European Union Procurement Regime.

6.2.3 Teckal Company (wholly owned)

This type of arrangement has limited risk transfer and commercial governance, finance rules apply – accounting and taxation.

6.2.4 Charitable Trust

Financial benefits come with charitable status but commercial governance, finance rules apply.

6.2.5 Staff Mutual

Private sector joint venture, commercial governance, finance rules apply but profit drive of the profit sector organisation may create tensions.

6.2.6 Social Enterprise

Transfer to staff mutual Securing but employee leadership can be difficult – without appropriate leadership, the new business will not get off the ground nor prosper if established.

6.3 The Shared Service with a Lead Authority via a contractual arrangement (HEART service) brings additional benefits:

- It is a distinctive way of providing housing solutions which can't be replicated in the voluntary sector
- A key element of not fully outsourcing (e.g. to a voluntary sector agency) is the flexibility for us to change and develop the service as it is within Council's direct control as a pose to outsourced to specified (and potentially inflexible) contract. This model brings freedoms that are not possible in some of the other models.
- Have an in depth awareness and knowledge of local systems, policies and procedures.
- Are familiar with documentation.
- Have established professional relationships with a large number of agencies.
- Have a proven track record of delivering high quality interventions.
- Foster a quality workforce.
- Will provide a maintained, resilient and managed service because there are a number of practitioners with the capabilities and competencies available to cover (back up) as when/needed e.g. annual leave, sickness etc.
- Will ensure services are compliant to the statutory requirements of the Care Act 2014 and Housing & Regeneration Act 1996 through delegation of responsibilities in the shared service agreement.
- Will continue to work towards achieving the Outcomes in WCC One Organisational Plan 2014-18 and District & Borough strategic objectives.
- Will continue to drive the cultural change required to meet future service demands.

7 Objectives and Outcomes of the Proposal

7.1 The objectives of HEART are:

- Better customer outcomes by improving the customer experience.
- Dispel myths and 'traditional' thinking that Disabled Facilities Grant's take "forever".
- Utilise resources in an effective & efficient manner to deliver a quality co-ordinated service around the customer and carer.
- Promote effective working with in Social Care, Housing and Health.
- Create consistency in practice and ensure adoption of best practice.
- Create a culture that encourages and promotes customer independence, respect & dignity, wellbeing and falls prevention.
- Achieve long term savings by ensuring effective use of resources.

7.2 Existing 'As Is'

The HEART north provision is based in Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council and is a single line managed team with agreed protocols in place. The south provision is in the project phase but is based within Warwick District Council. There is still commissioned HIA provision outside of the Borough and District Councils with AgeUK and Orbit at the present time.

7.3 To be (proposed)

The proposal is:

Shared Service Specification Statement	
Shared Service Vehicle	Host Authority with potential for Joint Committee.
Governance	Governance Board comprising senior managers from each partner. Single management team.
Host Authority	In principle Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council.
Functions to be provided by host	Where possible all organisational and support functions.
Support functions not to be provided by host	Specialist social care legal advice.
Spirit of partnership	Support and shared endeavour to improve and develop – avoid a contractor / commissioner relationship. Include Spirit Agreement or clause within partnership agreement.
Constraints	Each partner will not receive a disproportionate financial risk. WCC staff to be within a single management structure. Joint committee would be delegated the relevant powers from each local authority. Service to deliver options 1 to 6 in the Housing Service Matrix. Option to expand the services within the shared service e.g. from the second page of the Matrix. Need to keep this option open in the agreement. Ability to trade is not important at this stage. Competence and capacity assessment necessary from host organisation.

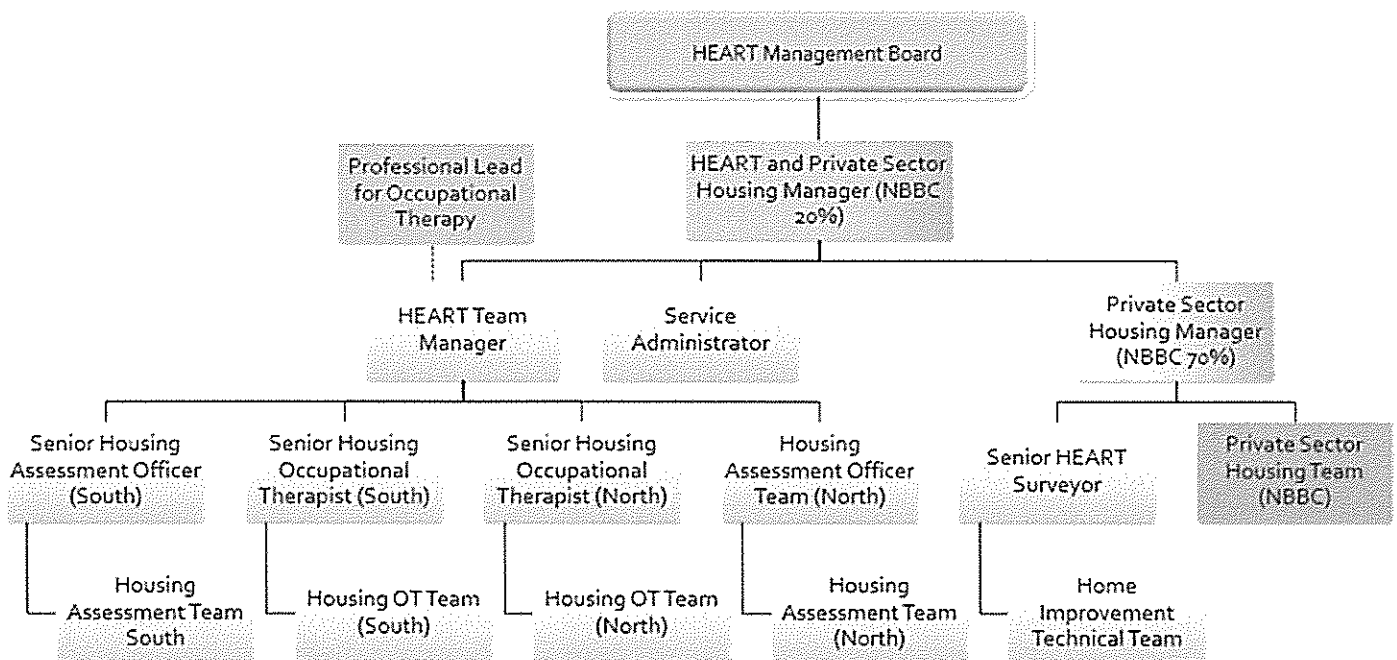
7.4 Governance

The partners have established a Management Board which will be further enhanced with appropriate terms of reference.

1. The Management Board shall consist of the Authorised Representatives of each of the Councils or their authorised substitutes.
2. Receive reports about the performance of the service and Business Plan, Budget, the potential growth of the Shared Service, and any other reports as it may reasonably require from time to time assessing the effectiveness of the Shared Service.
3. Determine and take such action as it considers desirable and necessary to promote the Shared Service and to procure the expansion of the Shared Service where it considers that this would be beneficial.
4. Determine (in accordance with Section 25) any disputes or differences that arise between the Councils concerning the interpretation and effect of any of the provisions of this Agreement.

7.5 HEART Service Structure

The structure of the service has been designed to take in to account a whole of Warwickshire service with teams located within the north and south.



7.6 Human Resources

For staff already employed by one of the 6 organisations in the current services a secondment of 2 years is the preferred and agreed option within the management board. The benefits are:

- Staff retain links with their existing employers.

- Provides a mechanism for multi-agency working.
- The host organisation has no employer liability for the partner organisations employees.
- Staff are able to maintain their HCPC registration requirements including CPD through the established mechanisms set up by WCC. (NB Occupational Therapist is a protected title with the Healthcare Professions Council and registration every two years is mandatory, without this it is illegal to practice as an OT).
- Staff have access to clinical supervision & training without the need to make alternative arrangements within the host organisation.

The staff would be seconded on their existing terms and conditions (unless they were being seconded into an entirely different role), and would be hosted and line managed by NBBC.

The staff would be able to undertake their organisations functions and another authority's functions under the agreement. There are specific provisions in the Local Government Act 1972 (sections 112 and 113) to enable this to happen, so local authorities can create partnerships and shared services with each other and other public bodies, such as NHS bodies.

For those staff not employed by one of the organisations appropriate employment procedures would need to be considered either through a TUPE arrangement or through direct and fixed term employment.

The structure enables other functions to be undertaken should it be required, and has the potential to expand and take on additional services either countywide or at a locality level depending on the different needs of the partners.

7.7 Products and Costs

The HEART Service will provide customers and carers with the advice and information to help them make the right choice, and provide practical help to deliver the right housing solution when they want it. This is detailed in the service matrix Appendix 2.

8 Financial Considerations

8.1 The HEART service will operate with aligned revenue budgets. Partners will continue to act as employers of the staff, who will be working in the shared service and will have:

- a separate cost centre for their shared service staff.
- the net budget for the cost centre will represent each partners general fund cost including the associated on costs.

8.1 The host will:

- Hold the budgets for the pooled parts of the service. This will include the new posts in the structure, and will also contain the hosts' share of the budget.

- Other authorities will pay to host the contributions determined for this part of the overall service, in a timely fashion to be agreed.
- The host will also pay into this service their contribution.
- The pool cost centre will have a net budget of zero.
- Any overspend / underspend will be subject to the agreed rules on overs and unders.
- Charging between the Host and the Partners for HEART costs - the host will issue quarterly invoice of the agreed contributions to be paid by partners.

8.2 Reporting

All partners will be required to submit a quarterly return of full costs to the host to enable the full picture of the shared service to be brought together. A timetable for the submission of returns will need to be prepared and adhered to, to enable the upwards reporting and management of the service by the project manager and Board.

8.3 Management

All partners will require an officer responsible for authorising and forecasting on spend against the shared service that is incurred in their authority.

This should ideally be the officer who is then sitting on the HEART Board, as this keeps clear lines of accountability.

The board receives monthly reports on the overall financial position, with reasons for variances and recommendations for management action.

The final budget structure and first year budget would form part of that agreement and would make clear exactly which costs resided with which partner and how this translates into contributions on the shared service.

Service Budget

The service budget for HEART is set out in the table below.

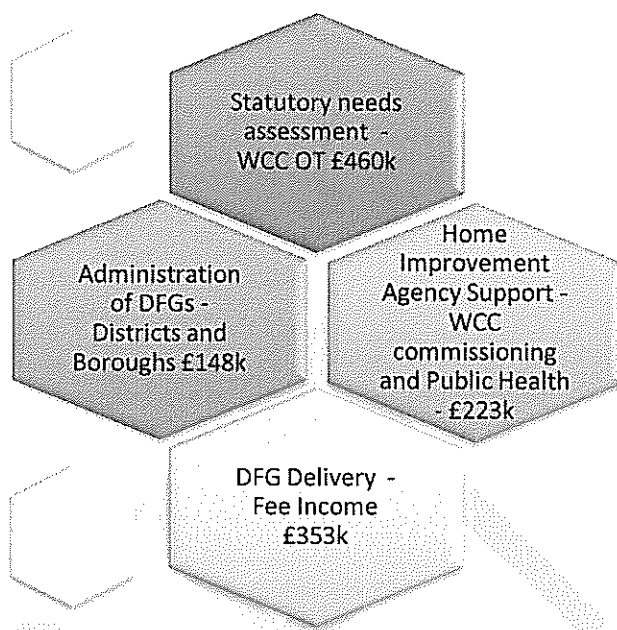
HEART SERVICE BUDGET	2016/17
Staffing	£ 1,024,310
Running Costs - e.g. training / travel etc	£ 33,860
Support Costs	£ 30,000
Sub-Total	£ 1,088,170
Additional Revenue costs of 16/17 additional capital grant	£ 97,073
Total	£ 1,185,243

The 2015/16 cost of these services countywide was £1,122,566. This was based on the DFG for that year, and should be compared with the total cost of HEART before the additional revenue costs for 2016/17 (£1,088,170).

The additional costs for 2016/17 have been added to structure presented in the report to deliver the additional capital which has been agreed through the BCF. The exact utilisation of this revenue will be determined by the HEART Board.

Contributions to HEART

How the budgets fit together:



Partners have agreed that the County will continue to pay for the Occupational Therapy input into the service and to make the same contributions to the home improvement agency aspect of the service. These are countywide allocations. The Districts and Boroughs contributions will be aligned to activity. Initially capital budget will be used as a proxy for activity as it is a good indicator of levels of work.

The capital grant and local capital allocations to be used by the service are as follows:

Council	DFG Capital Grant	Local Capital	Social Care Capital Grant	Total	%
Nuneaton and Bedworth	£ 608,192	£ 191,808	£ 260,012	£ 1,060,012	33%
North Warwickshire	£ 296,156	£ 3,844	£ 123,766	£ 423,766	13%
Rugby	£ 274,508	£ 75,492	£ 109,205	£ 459,205	14%
Stratford	£ 373,165	£ -	£ 144,567	£ 517,732	16%
Warwick	£ 373,058	£ 179,000	£ 155,487	£ 707,545	22%
Total	£ 1,925,079	£ 450,144	£ 793,036	£ 3,168,259	100%

As well as the DFG Capital Grant there is local capital, which is capital resources districts and boroughs have chosen to add to increase the pool of available funding, and half of the Social Care Capital Grant that has been awarded as part of the Better Care Fund. This was formerly a separate grant allocated to Upper Tier authorities. It has now been brought together with the Disabled Facilities Grant in the Better Care Fund. The guidance on this funding is clear that there should be a joint plan between all Better Care Fund partners on its' usage. For 2016/17 it has been agreed that half of the allocation for the Social Capital Fund should be allocated to Disabled Facilities Grants and therefore that is what is included above. Allocations for future years will be subject to further discussions.

The percentages of overall capital works, are used to allocate the costs of the service for DFG administration (costs which cannot be recouped through fees) to the districts and boroughs.

The funding for the service would therefore be split between partners as follows:

Council	Revenue Contribution	% of contribution	Contribution from Fees (12.5%)	Total
Nuneaton and Bedworth	£ 49,574	33%	£ 132,501	£ 182,076
North Warwickshire	£ 19,819	13%	£ 52,971	£ 72,789
Rugby	£ 21,476	14%	£ 47,401	£ 68,877
Stratford	£ 24,213	16%	£ 32,358	£ 56,571
Warwick	£ 33,090	22%	£ 88,443	£ 121,533
Sub-Total	£ 148,173	100%	£ 353,674	£ 501,847
Warwickshire CC - OT	£ 460,455			£ 460,455
Warwickshire CC - Strat Comm	£ 187,092			£ 187,092
Warwickshire CC - Public Health	£ 35,850			£ 35,850
Total	£ 831,569		£ 353,674	£ 1,185,243

Spend on capital by borough can vary up or down, and the cost of the service to each council would vary with that. Decisions to spend more or less on capital will affect both the staffing levels of the service and the individual allocations.

For example if Authority A increased their capital spending to be 50% of the total capital being utilised, their revenue contribution would also increase to 50%. If additional staffing was needed for the service, this would increase the overall amount being distributed, and therefore would not necessarily result in lower cash contributions from other partners.

Adjustments will be made annually, according to planned activity. The actual splits of activity will be monitored by the board, to ensure that income is being maximised and that resources are in line with activity.

These principles will apply to all years of the agreement, and costs and allocations will vary with activity as set out above.

9. Benefits and Outcomes

9.1 Expected Benefits and Outcomes and KPI's

Expected Benefits and Outcomes	Key Performance Indicators (KPI's)
<p>Promote & maintain independence in a safe and secure home environment: Enabling customers to maximise their potential and live in their chosen home environment by promoting customer independence, choice and control and improved support for informal carers to safely carry out their role.</p>	<p>Customer Outcomes</p>

<p>Quality service for customers and carers: Right person at the right time with the right solution</p>	<p>Compliments Complaints Customer satisfaction survey</p>
<p>Skilled workforce: Promote and instil behaviours to provide high quality and compassionate interventions. Creates a competent work force that can cope with complex customer / carer needs. Provide learning and development opportunities. Improve staff retention by helping career progression.</p>	<p>Number of staff who gain / maintain competencies. Staff turnover numbers. Sickness levels</p>
<p>Prevention: Preventing hospital or residential admissions, delivering better outcomes and more effective and efficient solutions. Reduce, delay or prevent the need for residential placements. Better housing conditions.</p>	<p>Number of Council & DFG Major Adaptations End to End times for the provision of Major Adaptations Number of Enquires & Assessments Number & types of interventions delivered Drop-out rate WEMWBS mental wellbeing measurement scale Companionship scale Physical Activity measure</p>

10. Risk Assessment (RAIDD)

10.1 Risks (what could happen)

- Limited support for the continuation of the proposed HEART service, which would result in destabilisation of the current service provision.

- Challenge from non-public sector organisations, which are currently providing aspects of the HIA provision, this could result in fragmented service across the county.
- The reduction in DFG funding which would result in unmet demand and potentially an increase in care packages and residential placements.

10.2 Issues (is happening now)

Concerns about future revenue and capital funding.

10.3 Assumptions

All existing funding sources will be committed to the HEART service.

Resources from non-public sector organisation will transfer into HEART.

10.4 Dependencies

Reliant on support from all Partners Strategic Commissioning, District & Borough councils, Public Health and Adult Social Care & Support.

11. Key Milestones / Time Scales

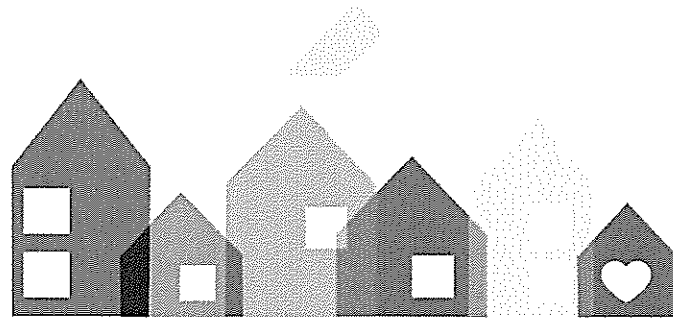
1. Business case approved by all Partner authorities.(May to July 2016)
2. Shared Service agreement signed. (August 2016)
3. Implementation Plan deployed to continue with HEART (September 2016)
4. Staff consultation within HEART and with the non-public sector organisations (August / September 2016)

12. Decisions

12 Decisions (recommendations)

1. To acknowledge the achievements and benefits to-date that the HEART service have delivered and its future potential to enable people to live as independently as possible in an accessible, safe and secure home.

2. To deliver the service specification in the Housing matrix with the option of the development of enhanced elements.
3. The service to be hosted by Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council who will commission specialist services e.g. legal support from other authorities if required.
4. To incorporate the private sector housing function of Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council into HEART service structure to minimise disruption within the host.
5. To create and sign up to a shared service agreement with the option for Local Authorities to join at a later point.
6. To continue to invest in HEART – WCC, Public Health & 5 District & Borough Councils.
7. To agree a risk sharing and benefits model to ensure the host authority or other authorities do not receive a disproportionate financial risk.



Home Environment Assessment & Response Team

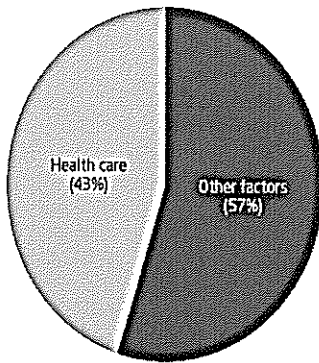
HEART: Helping you Live Independently at Home

APPENDIX 1:

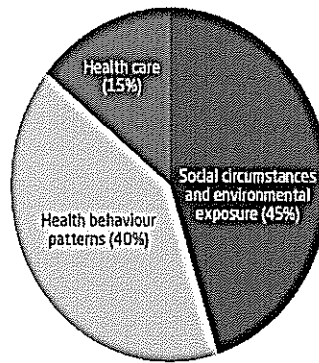
The importance of public health

Our health is determined by our genetics, lifestyle, the health care we receive and our wider economic, physical and social environment. Although estimates vary, the wider environment has the largest impact.

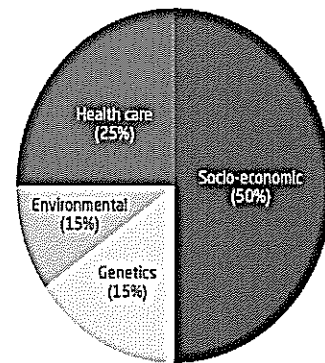
Bunker et al (1995)



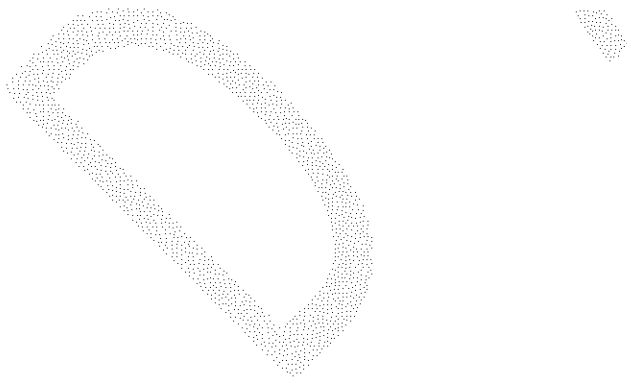
McGiniss et al (2002)



Canadian Institute of Advanced Research (2012)

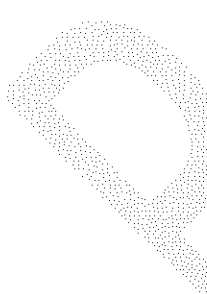


The Kings Fund



Assessment		Interventions		
Contact Enquiries - what are people accessing the service for?	Specialist assessment	Information and Advice.	Direct Provision- (includes contracted services)	Supported provision - by an external provider (to the service).
Request type 1 Request for information on adapting property	Housing Environment Assessment which consists of: Section 1 Person's ability to carry out Activities of Daily Living (ADL) skills. Personal care skills (washing and dressing). Preparing and managing food and drink.	Specialist knowledge provided through: Electronic - webpage Leaflets Verbal Local resources / services	Professional support: Occupational Therapy (strategies and techniques) Technical (building) Activities of Daily Living Equipment - (NET eligible) Assistive Technology Equipment (NET eligible) Minor Adaptations (NET eligible) Grab rails / stair rails Ramp Door widening Social Housing equipment, adaptations and services e.g. Mains –eligible and non eligible under NET.	Retail model through Integrated Community Equipment and Support Service (ICESS)
Request type 2 Request for assistance with adapting a property to meet personal needs	Preparing and managing food and drink Accessing and using Facilities in the home (toilet, bed, chair, bath) Mobility around the home surroundings. Carer support	Identify & demonstrate ADL equipment; and refer to Retail market	Major Adaptations; DFG criteria private and social housing: Level access shower Stair lift Room conversion Property extension Minor Property Works: Minor property repairs & alterations to property Secure gate/entry Fix sealing strips Fix guttering Install spy holes /locks/ key safes Major Property Works: Roof repairs Damp proofing Property insulation Install new boiler	Retail model through ICESS
Request type 3 Request for financial or practical assistance through the Housing Authorities Housing Assistance Policies covering improvements and repairs to owner occupied housing	Section 2 Housing Environment Conditions - (Category) of 2 Hazard(s) relating to: Temperature and damp Internal pollutants - e.g. Carbon monoxide Space, security and lighting Hygiene and sanitation Slips, trips and falls Safety of services, amenities and structure	Signposting - referral to other specialist services: Welfare Rights Citizens Advice Bureau Welfare services GP Registered Social Landlords (RSL) Relevant local services Schemes or funding to improve housing e.g. energy efficiency schemes	Visits with customers to social and private housing to determine whether the property will meet their needs. Housing Suitability Report and facilitating housing choice e.g. Extra care Completion of Application form / Support letter Full Property inspection and report on housing hazards. Assistance assessment in relation to public funds. Caseworker support to deliver improvements and reduction of hazards	Handy person (not procured by service)
	Section 3 Alternative Accommodation Assessment when there is a need to move home due to section 1 assessment.	Advice on what a house will need to provide to allow an individual to access the main facilities		
	Section 4 Housing Health and Safety Rating System Full House Assessment	Information on housing hazards under the HHSRS		Building contractors not procured by the service for bespoke work Private Sector Employment
Request type 4 Home Safety Service	Section 5 Home Environment Falls Risk Assessment in relation to the person interacting in their home.	Information on personal and housing hazards when referred to an older or disabled person.	Use of procured building contractors Falls Risk Reduction Action Plan	Handy person not procured by service. Specialist services
Relevant request type 1, 2, 3	Section 6 Financial Assessment in relation to housing needs	Information on the access criteria for housing assistance	Test of resources assessments Identification and referral to benefit providers / Charities applications and support letters	

Options Assessments and Services		Proposed Interventions	
Enquiry Type	Assessment	Advice & Information	Supported provision - by an external provider (to the service)
Relevant request types	Service 1 Identify and co-ordinate property move	Information on housing options for older and disabled people and practical advice on moving home	Direct Provision- includes contracted service) Assessment identify housing options for client group. Provide practical assistance with moving property for those not able to do so, acting as an "agent".
1.2.3			
Relevant request types	Service 2 Housing adaptation design with potential customers e.g. to construction companies.	Information of design criteria for adaptations.	Work with customers and designers / architects on design features to suit someone who is self-funding adaptation work. Provide information to social and private developers.
1.2			
Relevant request types	Service 3 Identification and assistance with the marketing of adapted properties in the private sector.	Register and access to adapted properties through working with estate agents and web promotion of adapted properties.	Matching service to allow residents to seek already adapted properties that will meet or contribute to meeting long term needs. Accompanied visits.
1.2			
Relevant request types	Service 4 Medical Reviews for Social Housing Applicants	N/A - refer to housing options	Assess conditions against allocations policy criteria
Relevant request types	Service 5 Providing a pathway for the delivery of facilities for medical equipment at home e.g. dialysis areas hygiene cleanable treatment areas.	N/A	Work with health services to deliver adaptations for customers who need them to facilitate treatment at home.
Relevant request types	Service 6 Screening for Health & Well-being Nutrition - MUST Falls Cognitive function	N/A refer to specialist web sites.	Assessment, screening, referrals and advice.



Agenda Item No 10

Resources Board

23 May 2016

Report of the Assistant Director (Housing)

Syrian Refugees

1 Summary

- 1.1 This report provides information about the Government's requirements for Local Authorities to assist with rehousing Syrian refugees.

Recommendation to the Board

- a That the Government's requirement for all Local Authorities to contribute to the rehousing of Syrian refugees be noted;**
- b That the Housing Division continue to work closely with other Local Authorities in Warwickshire in order to contribute to the sub regional approach to resettling refugees; and**
- b That the Council considers making a commitment to rehouse 3 refugee households over the next 5 years.**

2 Introduction

- 2.1 In September 2015, the Government made a commitment to help 20,000 Syrian Refugees to seek refuge in the United Kingdom over a period of five years due to conflict within their own country.
- 2.2 As part of that commitment, the Government has requested that all Local Authorities play a role in helping to meet the target and particularly in the provision of housing. This is currently a voluntary arrangement but if Local Authorities do not co-operate to assist people fleeing the crisis it is could to become a mandatory requirement. The approach is to work as a sub region to co-ordinate a positive response to the need to resettle Syrian refugees.
- 2.3 The Government decided to break down the process into two phases and wanted a first tranche of Local Authorities to take 1000 refugees before December 2015 with the remaining numbers then being taken over a 5 year period. The first phase was achieved and there is now a requirement for all Local Authorities to commit to support the resettlement programme.

- 2.4 All refugees entering the United Kingdom will be given humanitarian protection for the first five years which will allow them to have benefit entitlements as soon as they arrive in the United Kingdom.
- 2.5 Offering suitable housing is a critical element of the resettlement process. As well as suitable accommodation with regard type, size and location the property will have to be furnished (basics such as a cooker, furniture and beds).
- 2.6 There is an expectation that the housing authority will meet the refugee household at the airport and take them to the accommodation and set up initial appointments which are essential to them settling into the area. Having an interpreter available and organising language classes will be essential with introductions made to the Department of Work and Pensions locally as well as access to GPs and schools.

3 Current Position

- 3.1 There are clear requirements on local housing authorities. In order to meet these requirements a Warwickshire partnership of the 5 Districts and Boroughs and the County Council has been established.
- 3.2 As Coventry City Council has been assisting refugees for around 5 years and has experience which is valuable to the group they have been offering advice and information. As part of the sub regional approach the group is also supported by the West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership.
- 3.3 The Government is requesting a clear commitment from each local Housing Authorities about the numbers of refugees they can rehouse over the next 5 years.
- 3.4 Locally Stratford Upon Avon District Council have agreed to rehouse 12 households, Rugby Borough Council have agreed to rehouse 10 households, Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council have committed to 3 to 4 families or 12 individuals (depending on the accommodation available) and Warwick District Council have agreed to rehouse 5 households.

4 Position in North Warwickshire

- 4.1 The Council is being asked by the Government to make a commitment to rehouse and support Syrian refugee households over the next five years. There are a number of considerations that need to be taken into account when considering the location of the housing:
 - Close proximity to local services and facilities
 - Need to be close to buses/transport links
 - Need to be in good proximity to be able to create ties with their own community (for North Warwickshire, local community is likely to be within Nuneaton & Bedworth)

- 4.2 North Warwickshire is a small rural area with high demand for its own stock and a limited private rented sector. Whilst there is a firm expectation that the Council will contribute to the overall requirement to help Syrian refugees we need to be realistic about the extent of the assistance we can provide. It is very important that the Council's commitment is made in a manner which ensures that the refugee families can settle well in their new community.
- 4.3 Given the local context with regard to available housing and resources a commitment to assist 3 households over the next 5 years linked to the resettlement arrangements in Nuneaton and Bedworth is probably realistic. It is expected that rented accommodation in the private sector will be the most accessible and appropriate to meet the housing need.
- 4.4 What housing is available is the first criteria. We will not be in a position to agree to accept a refugee referral until we have a property available. Only when a property is identified and confirmed for use will the referral be requested.
- 4.5 Nonetheless there are number of other critical issues which must be addressed to ensure resettlement is a success. We are currently working with Warwickshire County Council to determine how many school and G.P. places are available in the area to ensure that we give the best possible information to the West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership about the family make up that we will be able to support. Prior to the refugee household arriving, we will also have access to a health screening report which will inform us whether we need to co-ordinate with other agencies in organising care packages. We have been advised that the households are likely to be vulnerable because of the circumstances they have found themselves in some of whom have been without a secure home for several years.
- 4.6 In summary the Local Authority would also be responsible for the following:
- Sourcing the accommodation and making the decision with regard to the make-up of the family that could be accommodated.
 - Meeting the family/individuals at the airport and ensuring that they get to their accommodation.
 - Ensuring that the accommodation is sufficiently furnished to enable the family to move in.
 - Registration with utility companies.
 - Provide briefing on the accommodation and health and safety issues including the provision of an emergency contact point.
- 4.7 A support worker will be required for the household. The partnership group is currently considering how best to provide for the support worker resource.

When appointed they will:

- Ensure that the beneficiary is provided with a welcome pack of groceries on their arrival.

- Provide a cash/clothing allowance for each beneficiary to ensure that they have sufficient funds to live on whilst their benefit claim is processed.
- Arrange appointments with the Job Centre for benefit claims.
- Arrange G.P Appointment and School provision for the family.
- Arrange any specialised classes/ educational needs such as ESOL.
- Provide interpretation services via the support worker.
- To deal with any social care issues that may arise.

It is expected that support should be provided for a 12 month period from arrival.

5 Report Implications

5.1 Finance and Value for Money Implications

5.1.1 The Government is providing initial funding for Local Authorities for the resettlement of refugees. After the initial resettlement households will be financed through employment or welfare benefits. As a two tier authority the initial financial package attached to arriving refugees which will be managed by Warwickshire County Council.

The package that the Government has set out is detailed below:

Unit Cost for Syria Scheme					
	Adult Benefit Claimant	Other Adults	Children 5 - 18	Children 3 – 4	Children under 3
Local Authority Costs	£8520	£8520	£8520	£8520	£8520
Education	£0	£0	£4500	£2250	£0
Special Educational Needs	£0	£0	£1000	£1000	£0
DWP Benefits	£12700	£0	£0	£0	£0
Primary Medical Care	£200	£200	£200	£200	£200
Secondary Medical Care	£2000	£2000	£2000	£2000	£2000
TOTALS	£23420	£10720	£16220	£13970	£10720

5.1.2 The funds set out in the table are for year one. Over the following four years, as households require less intensive support, the funding of £12,000 per person overall will taper from £5000 per person in year two to £1000 per person in year 5.

5.1.3 Depending on what tasks are being undertaken, the budgetary costs will be split between the Districts and Boroughs and the County.

- 5.1.4 The funding will not be ring fenced and there is no additional funding available from the Home Office to cover education or medical costs.
- 5.1.5 Language classes will be essential when the refugees arrive in their new home. There are no separate education contributions for adults even though ESOL classes will be required so that cost will have to come out of the £8520.
- 5.1.6 With regard to access to funds there will be an initial payment of 22% when first claim form is received and a further 13% of the total funding paid each two months after arrival upon submission of the claim form.
- 5.1.7 Payments for rent will initially be paid from the resettlement fund. After that it will be paid from Housing Benefit or directly if the refugee finds work. If it is the former the rental property will have to be in line with the Local Housing Allowance. If it is not an initial claim can be made for Discretionary Housing Payment to cover the additional rent above Local Housing Allowance, but this would be reviewed on a 6 monthly basis with no guarantee of renewal.
- 5.1.8 Providing resettlement for Syrian refugees will require a resource from the Housing Division. This type of work is outside of its traditional remit. We will seek advice and information from organisations that have experience however it should be noted that the Council's contribution will not be fully funded and will require consideration of duties and priorities to meet the Government's requirements.

5.2 Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2.1 There is no mandatory requirement for Local Authorities to provide housing for Syrian Refugees. However letters from the Home Office which have been sent to all Local Authorities since September 2015 have indicated that the Government expects all Local Authorities to act and commit assistance for this humanitarian crisis. Following a conference in Birmingham attended by the Minister with Responsibility for Syrian Refugees, Richard Harrington, a letter received from the Home Office in March 2016. This makes a request for "those local authorities that have yet to offer places to come forward to confirm how many refugees they can resettle." This includes short term and long term places.

5.3 Risk Management Implications

5.3.1 It is important that our resettlement activity is done in a manner which supports refugees to settle well in their new community. The Housing Division has no experience of this type of work. To minimise risk of failure we are working in partnership with other Local Authorities and are forging links to Coventry City Council.

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

Background Papers

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

Background Paper No	Author	Nature of Background Paper	Date

Agenda Item 11

Resources Board

23 May 2016

Report of the Assistant Director (Corporate Services)

Broadband Update Report

1 Summary

- 1.1 The report provides an update on the progress made so far and the future plans to improve broadband coverage and speeds in the Borough.

Recommendation to the Board

That the report be noted.

2 Consultation

- 2.1 Councillors D Wright, Smitten and Henney have been sent an advanced copy of this report for comment. Any comments received will be reported verbally at the meeting.
- 2.2 Members have had a number of reports on improving broadband coverage and providing, where possible, access to Superfast Broadband. Members are also emailed the Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire (CSW) Broadband Team's monthly newsletter. Colour copies of the latest coverage maps will be placed in the Members' rooms.

3 Background

- 3.1 In 2012 the Government made funding available, to Councils, to support the roll out of basic broadband (2Mb) to properties with no, or very poor, service and to help support the delivery of Superfast Broadband (24Mb+). This was in recognition of the fact that Broadband provision across Britain was inequitable with rural and remote areas often having no provision, no choice or struggling to get a basic service. Broadband was also increasingly being regarded as essential and a "utility" service.
- 3.2 An initial Broadband UK (BDUK) grant of £4,070,000 was made to the CSW sub-region. This Council agreed to provide £197,868, as a £50,000 per annum contribution from 2012/13, towards the requested match funding.

- 3.3 BT was awarded the national contract to carry out BDUK work and has provided funding into the various regional projects. The CSW contract, known as “Contract 1”, was awarded to BT in May 2013 and work began in February 2014.
- 3.4 During Contract 1, 264 BT cabinets have been installed or updated to provide superfast broadband. These cabinets serve 47,112 premises and over 11,500 of these premises are in this Borough. These premises were not part of any commercial roll out and therefore it is very unlikely that the people living in them would have been able to get better broadband without the BDUK investment.
- 3.5 Contract 1 is coming to a close and the percentage of premises able get superfast broadband will have increased, from just 50% in 2012 to around 83%, as a direct result of Council funding, BDUK grant and private sector investment. The coverage map and postcode checker on the CSW Broadband website gives the most up to date information on where Superfast Broadband is available and plans to upgrade other areas. <http://www.cswbroadband.org.uk/your-area/broadband-checker/>
- 3.6 In June 2014 an additional £3.68m BDUK grant was awarded to the CSW project. This second grant was matched by Warwickshire CC. An additional £380k of grant was matched by Solihull MBC to enable them to prioritise improvements in their area, some of which will have benefited bordering North Warwickshire properties. This round of funding is being referred to as “Contract 2, Part 1” and is targeted to achieve 95% coverage across the sub-region.

4 **Current Activity**

- 4.1 Contract 2, Part 1, Wave 1 has started, with 33 cabinets being worked on and 9 live. It is expected that this contract will be completed by the end of 2017 and that a new “Wave” of areas will be announced each quarter. The following areas have cabinets identified for upgrade in the rolling plan <http://www.cswbroadband.org.uk/about-the-project/rolling-12-month-plan/> for the next 12 months
- Coleshill (5 cabinets)
 - Curdworth (3 cabinets)
 - Water Orton (1 cabinet)
 - Furnace End/Over Whitacre (7 cabinets)
- 4.2 A further £6m has been made available from BDUK and Warwickshire CC has matched £4.17m of this grant. District and Borough Councils have provided match funding, against some of the remainder of the grant, to help fund improvements in their areas.
- 4.3 This Council agreed to provide match funding at the same level as it approved in 2012 and as such is providing £50,000 per annum, from

2015/2016, for four years. The Council's funding will be ring fenced to improving Broadband in the Borough. This tranche of County Council funding and Borough Councils' funding has formed "Contract 2, Part 2". BT and the CSW team are working to identify where this contract will be targeted.

- 4.4 The project continues to seek to achieve the best value possible by working from the least costly cabinets to upgrade. To measure this, a "cost per premise" value is calculated. This involves the number and type of premises, which would benefit from upgrading a cabinet, combined with an overview of the cost and technical feasibility of upgrading a cabinet. This helps ensure investment decisions are transparent and can be explained. The table below shows how the average cost per premise is increasing as we move to the more sparsely populated areas and technically difficult cabinets.

Contract	Average cost per premise
Contract 1	£218
Contract 2, Part 1	£556

5 Future Issues and Plans

- 5.1 The intention of CSW Broadband project is to achieve 98% superfast coverage for Warwickshire by 2018. However, based on the 2012 estimate there were 120,000 premises, across the sub-region, which didn't have Superfast Broadband, this means there will still be at least 2400 premises with poor broadband.
- 5.2 New properties are also being built, some of which will add to the number without broadband services. This is because some developers are failing to ensure the infrastructure is installed to make properties "internet ready". The CSW Team are working with District and Borough Councils on ways to require developers to provide broadband infrastructure either as a requirement of Local Plans or as a planning condition.
- 5.3 Members need to be aware that, due to the rural nature of the Borough and the number of isolated properties, the Borough is likely to have a higher proportion of these premises than our more urban neighbours. It is expected that the people in these "unconnected" communities and premises will become increasingly frustrated and dissatisfied. The CSW Broadband Team and partner authorities will need to be mindful of this and work to find alternative solutions.
- 5.4 We will also reach a point where the cost of providing broadband, using the BT infrastructure, will become prohibitive. The BDUK programme and the CSW Broadband Team are investigating different technologies to help bring internet service to the properties and people that will not benefit from the current Broadband project.

5.5 The CSW team has bids into the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) for funding and has the ambition, dependent on funding, to achieve the EU target of 100% superfast coverage by 2020.

6.1 Finance and Value for Money Implications

6.1.1 None arising from this report.

6.2 Environment and Sustainability Implications

6.2.1 The improvement of broadband services within the Borough will help support people to live, work and learn in our rural communities.

6.2.2 The lack of adequate internet provision has been shown to affect people's decisions to move to the area or may encourage businesses to relocate from the Borough, thus affecting the sustainability of local communities.

6.2.3 The lack of broadband provision also means people are unable to use online services, this is increasingly becoming a barrier to accessing services, including public service; resulting in them have to travel to get the services they need.

6.3 Risk Management Implications

6.3.1 Not investing in the Borough's broadband infrastructure could result in economic and structural problems for the Borough. Lack of broadband could increase the risk of businesses not investing or thriving in the area and residents may miss out on life chances and access to services.

6.4 Equalities Implications

6.4.1 Poor or no broadband service can prevent people from accessing information and services resulting in them being less well informed, having fewer opportunities and missing out on more effective ways of managing their businesses, life and finances. The impact of this lack of internet service is known as the "digital divide"

6.5 Links to Council's Priorities

6.5.1 Investment in the Broadband infrastructure contributes directly to the Council's priority of Supporting Employment and Business. Working to improve broadband access for the people and businesses of North Warwickshire through the work of the Council and specifically the Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire BDUK Project is a Corporate Plan Target.

The Contact Officer for this report is Linda Bird (719327).

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
Local Broadband Plan and Match Funding Proposal	Linda Bird	Executive Board Report	6/2/2012
Broadband Provision Update	Linda Bird	Scrutiny Board Report	13/12/2013
Broadband Update Report	Linda Bird	Resources Board Report	2/6/2014
Broadband Update Report and BDUK Match Funding	Linda Bird	Executive Board Report	17/6/2014
Broadband Match Funding	Linda Bird	Executive Board Report	22/9/2014
Broadband Match Funding – Further Information	Linda Bird	Executive Board Report	24/11/2014
Broadband Match Funding - Further Information	Linda Bird	Executive Board Report	10/2/2015
Broadband Update and Match Funding	Linda Bird	Executive Board Report	21/9/2015

Agenda Item No 12

Resources Board

23 May 2016

Report of the
Deputy Chief Executive

Internal Audit – Plan of Work for
2016-17 DRAFT

1 Summary

- 1.1 The report explains the basis upon which the Audit Plan for 2016-17 has been developed, using a variety of sources of information to ensure that all appropriate aspects of service activity continue to be embraced as part of the approved three year review programme.

Recommendation to the Board

That the Audit Plan for 2016-17 be approved.

2 Report

- 2.1 The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards document governs how Internal Audit in the public sector operates, and requires the Council to establish risk-based audit plans to determine the priorities of the internal audit activity consistent with the council's goals. An annual plan is used to enable the Chief Executive to produce an annual internal audit opinion on the assurance framework and to effectively manage the internal audit activity, ensuring that it adds value to the organisation.

- ... 2.2 The Audit Plan for 2016-17, which is attached as Appendix A reflects the assessment of risk, based upon defined criteria and the results of audits completed during recent years. The number of productive audit days remains constant with last year and given that over a period of three years the existing cyclical plan has been successfully completed, it has been decided that a change in focus for each audit will increase the benefit to each service.

- 2.3 As well as risk data, the Annual Plan also takes account of the external auditor's (E&Y) requirement that key controls over fundamental systems are reviewed annually. Added to this reviews are based upon:

- National Government initiatives or flavours
- Level of budget allocation
- Any incidents of potentially fraudulent or corrupt activity
- Any past history of weaknesses or problems, staffing changes or new/replacement software
- Experience of delivery of the audit programme in previous years.

- Knowledge sharing with other similar authorities, external auditors and IT auditors of potentially weak or newly attractive activities.

The above considerations are also reflected in fundamental system work where the Plan does not call for a full audit.

- 2.4 This year, as referred to in 2.2, the individual audits will be focussed on reviewing all aspects of any particular service which upon completion will provide a more comprehensive opinion on the level of assurance given by the audit team. Previously there were several corporate audits carried out which resulted in a fragmented outcome for some services. Each major review carried out this year will address all key areas of the service structure at the same time looking in depth at costs, risks, performance, management, counter fraud measures, value for money and identifying any potential for improvement or increased efficiency. This will pull together all audit work completed and enable service managers to form a view of the success of their service from one overarching report.

3 Report Implications

3.1 Risk Management Implications

3.1.1 The Audit Plan for 2016-17 takes specific account of the Council's strategic and operational risks.

3.1.2 Failure to produce and deliver an appropriate and flexible audit plan built on sound evidence may result in criticism from the external auditors.

3.2 Links to Council's Priorities

3.2.1 The Audit Plan for 2016-17 takes into account Council key priorities as outlined in a variety of documents.

The Contact Officer for this report is Barbara Haswell (719416).

Background Papers

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

Background Paper No	Author	Nature of Background Paper	Date

NORTH WARWICKSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL
STRATEGIC AUDIT PLAN 2016/17

Estimate of Available Resources

Internal Audit Section has an establishment of 2.4 full-time equivalent auditors. There is also budgetary provision to buy-in any necessary specialist one off support for the audit of IT. Counter Fraud support through TIAA continues to be sourced.

Calculation of Available Days:

52 weeks x 5 days X 2.4	=	624 days
less bank holidays 10 X 2.4	=	24 days
less sickness provision 3%		18 days
less annual leave		76 days
Gross days available		506 days internal resources

Allocation of Available Resources

START: 506 days

Less		
Training & Development, general duties	15 days	
Management, planning, corporate	80 days	
Counter Fraud and NFI	10 days	
	105 days	

SECTION 151 ACTIVITIES 401 days

Consultancy/Contingency

• Contingency	15 days
• Consultancy	12 days
• External Audit	5 days
	32 days

Special Investigations 10 days

Strategic Audit Plan 359 days
 Cyclical Programme shows 359 days

Key Financial Systems

• Main Accounting	5
• Creditors	35
• Budgetary Control/Budgeting	3
• Payroll	5
• Benefits	5
• Capital Expenditure/Accounting	2
• Council Tax	35
• Cash and banking	3
• NDR	5
• Debtors	5
• Asset Management	0
• Housing Rents	35
• Treasury Management	<u>2 140</u>

Corporate Audits

Performance Indicators and performance management	5
Risk Management	5
NFI	10
Health and Safety	7
Fees and Charges	10
Partnership Arrangements	10
CRB/DBS checks	3
Officers travel etc	5
Data Protection/Access to Info	10
Compliance with Policies & Strategies	10
Corporate Governance	10
Flexible working	<u>15 100</u>

Deputy CEO**Corporate Services**

Procurement and contracts	10
Communications and telephone	5

Housing

Maintenance & Repairs- voids	10
Homelessness	10
Supporting Older people inc boro care	5
Service Charges	3
Housing Management inc Fraud policy review	4

Leisure & Community

Support to voluntary organisations	3
------------------------------------	---

Streetscape

Office cleaning	3
Fly tipping	5
Trade refuse and cesspool emptying	10
Street cleaning	15
Facilities management inc civic offices	<u>5 88</u>

ACEO & StC

Democratic services, elections etc	5
Community planning & Corporate Plan	8
Emergency planning & Business Continuity	5
Building Control	<u>10 28</u>

ACEO-Community Services
Community Hubs

3 3 359 days

Agenda Item No 13

Resources Board

23 May 2016

Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Community Services)

Corporate Debt Strategy

1 Summary

- 1.1 The report updates the previous corporate debt strategy adopted by this board in March 2013 that outlined how the Council will approach customers who owe multiple debts to the Council.
- 1.2 It explains what principles of recovery and approach are currently in place in the Council to assist in such circumstances and reflects the changes necessary to reflect how the Council will continue to deal with people affected by the significant impact of the Welfare Reform agenda and those who are facing financial difficulty due to a variety of reasons.

Recommendation to the Board

That Members adopt the revised Corporate Debt Strategy as attached at Appendix A with immediate effect.

2 Consultation

- 2.1 Consultation and a workshop has been undertaken with officers and partners from the Citizens Advice Bureau and other members of the Financial Inclusion Partnership to agree the changes proposed to update the strategy (see Appendix A).

...

3 Introduction

- 3.1 The issue of debt nationally continues to be a growing problem and based on work undertaken locally with the CAB as part of our wider financial inclusion work, this is a trend being replicated locally (see Appendix B)

...

- 3.2 Our corporate strategy focuses primarily on Revenues, Benefits and Housing activities and has been updated to reflect the improved referral channels due to technological advances and ever increasing opportunities for closer working with external agencies and organisations. As such, it forms a key building block in our corporate wide financial inclusion approach and will help customers break their cycle of dependency helping them to become more self-sufficient and meet their financial obligations to the Council and others.

- 3.3 Since it was initially adopted in 2007, it has evolved and acted as a catalyst for the Council to develop and formalise its approach and separate

partnership action plans to deal with take up of benefits, fuel and food poverty as well as helping to improve customer access. These taken together have developed the successful co-ordinated approach adopted by the Council to deal proactively in areas that all contribute to alleviating poverty.

- 3.4 Our approach which has been built around maximising income and increasingly adopting tailored solutions to help people in debt. This has contributed to the Council continuing to achieve excellent upper quartile collection rates in respect of Council Tax, Non Domestic Rates, Housing Rents and Housing Benefit Overpayments in spite of the difficult climate in which we are collecting money with national data suggesting we should be at best a lower second quartile or upper third quartile performing authority based on our deprivation levels.
- 3.5 In addition, over the last ten years the Council and its partners have consistently been recognised nationally for its innovative and forward thinking work in this difficult area by the winning of a number of awards from its peers and professional bodies as well as making a number of successful funding bids to the Government that has enabled our approach to be embedded and replicated elsewhere.

4 Corporate Debt Framework

- 4.1 The framework document attached at Appendix A has been updated to take into account both current practice in the Council and the future anticipated challenges in recovering ever higher levels of debt. The causes of these can be summarised but are not limited to;
- The impact of Welfare Reform changes which are wide ranging and are resulting in many people reliant on benefits being worse off.
 - The introduction of Universal Credit which will place greater responsibility on customers to make the right decisions in respect of budgeting and money management.
 - The impact of rising housing, fuel and food prices particularly for those on low wages which are prevalent in the borough
 - The impact of changes implemented in 2013 on the Councils charging policy on second homes, long term empty properties and reduced local Council Tax Support awards than were previously awarded under the national Council Tax and Council Tax Benefit schemes.
 - The need to accept that we will be dealing with more cases where there is a genuine inability to pay charges due to changes in circumstances or poor decision making in the past as opposed to a reluctance to pay charges due (i.e.) Can't Pays as opposed to Won't Pays.
- 4.2 The ethos of the Council is therefore to operate arrangements that will provide effective financial support to those customers that may be disadvantaged or vulnerable and ensure that information, documentation, our

processes and a variety of payment methods are in place to support customers address their circumstances.

- 4.3 The overarching approach of the Council is that it is committed to offering realistic and flexible debt recovery arrangements that are “firm but fair” but that have the aim of minimising the burden of debt and its consequential effects.
- 4.4 The pursuit of these principles reflects the Council’s appreciation that, whilst there is no statutory duty for the Council to undertake work on alleviating poverty, it does contribute to meeting corporate plan and community partnership priorities. It also helps maximise collection rates, reduce pressures on our housing department as well as other Council and partner services. In addition it also helps meet the Governments agenda of “promoting the economic, social and environmental well-being of communities as well as promoting individual personal responsibility to break cycles of welfare dependency”.
- 4.5 In summary, the framework
- Provides an effective, consistent and fair approach to debt recovery, whilst minimising the risk of hardship to individuals
 - Improves awareness of, accessibility to and take up of Housing Benefit, Council Tax Support, Free School Meal entitlement and Discretionary Housing Payments
 - Promotes partnership and integration with other agencies
 - Encourages personal ownership and self-management of debt
 - Ensures the most appropriate and cost effective methods of recovery are offered and adopted by the Council, and
 - Provides the corporate commitment to enable procedures, processes and policies to be adopted to minimise hardship for individuals and hopefully prevent debt occurring in the first place.
- 4.6 Outcomes of initiatives put in place to support individuals improve their circumstances are reported quarterly to the North Warwickshire Community Partnership and on an annual basis to the Community and Environment Board in March.

5 Report Implications

5.1 Finance and Value for Money Implications

5.1.1 It is pleasing to report that the adoption of this framework in 2007 has not resulted in a fall in collection performance levels across all our debt types and in fact our performance levels in 2015/16 for Council Tax, Housing Rent, Non Domestic Rates and Housing Benefit Overpayments were very high and as stated are significantly higher than National deprivation indices expectations (see Appendix C). This is a clear indication of the approach and culture that has been developed across the borough over a long period of time is working

...

5.1.2 These monies have also been collected in the current very challenging environment. The impact of this has been that whilst there was a significant spike in court actions in 2013 when major council tax and local welfare changes including the decision by the Council to reduce previous levels of Council Tax Benefit by 8.5% were introduced, over the last two financial years we have experienced a reduced level of debtors against whom recovery action through the courts is being necessary returning us nearly to pre-2013 levels which is very positive. Similarly, collection performance is also equal to, or exceeding previous performance levels demonstrating that for many the work of the Council and the opportunities created in the local economy are having a positive impact.

5.1.3 However, the worrying trend is that whilst those households in debt to the Council are less, those in arrears owe more, their debts are often across debt types and many span over more than one year. This is particularly noticeable in households that are wholly reliant on state benefits as their sole income or as a supplement to their wages which we anticipate without support or proactive intervention will only get worse. As a result, this is meaning that officers and our civil enforcement agents are spending an increasing amount of time dealing with customers whose level of debts are higher, and whose personal circumstances are more complex and challenging to address. This is creating significant additional effort and new approaches being necessary to address these challenges, greater ongoing contact and worryingly more cases are being returned as uncollectable by the Councils civil enforcement agents.

5.1.4 At the same time the ability to pursue those debts via further action in the Magistrates or County Courts is becoming increasingly more expensive with the full risks and costs attached to them wholly borne by the Council (e.g.), the cost of issuing a notice to request a debtors appearance at a court hearing is £240 payable to the Magistrates Court with no guarantee that the debtor will attend. If they do not, it will be necessary to execute a warrant to secure their attendance at court that carries a further fee of £75 plus the cost of employing an officer to serve it. To make a customer bankrupt they need to owe debts in excess of £5,000 and the process can cost upwards of £1,500. Both actions carry no guarantee of immediate or ongoing payment.

5.1.5 This creates a major conundrum to us as the Billing Authority as in most cases the costs associated with taking such recovery action are disproportionate to the debts due particularly in respect of Council Tax where the Council only retains 14% of any monies collected. Despite requests since these charges were introduced in 2010, the County Council to date have

shown no willingness to contribute to these costs despite them being the potential major beneficiary retaining approximately 70% of any monies collected. As such, we are in a position where collection of the historical debt is very difficult but remission of the debt in live cases is potentially damaging to the Council's reputation in ensuring equity and fairness to all council taxpayers as well as potentially influencing our ability to collect future liabilities.

5.1.6 Members will note from the write off report later in this agenda that the number and level of uncollectable debts is increasing. This is in part down to reluctance in the past to write off monies in a timely way where debtors have absconded but is also the outcome of a major exercise to review all outstanding debts due to the Council started in August 2015. This is identifying those cases as stated above where despite the involvement of civil enforcement agents recovery has failed and the options available to recover monies are not cost effective. Officers expect that level of write offs will continue to rise during 2016/17 bringing us more into line with other Councils nationally as we identify more people who appear can't as opposed to won't pay monies due. This position will be continually monitored by officers with the data from work undertaken to date informing forthcoming discussions with the County Council. The outcomes of work and discussions will be reported to Members on a regular basis as at present.

5.1.7 Funding required to continue ongoing work to support individuals delivered with the CAB, our wider food related work with Chapter One and benefit take up activities with Warwickshire Welfare Rights has been committed during 2016/17 by both ourselves and the County Council. How, and whether these activities can continue to be supported at this level beyond March 2017 as well as whether the current Local Council Tax Support scheme can or should stay at its current level of a maximum award of 91.5% of Council Tax due for those of working age will need to be reviewed by Members in the summer. This will need to have regard to the Council's financial position and an evaluation of the benefits of providing such support or removing it.

5.2 Safer Communities Implications

5.2.1 Maximising people's income and providing support for people in debt should have a positive effect on the incidence of crime, whether committing fraud or seeking to supplement income from other means.

5.3 Legal and Human Rights Implications

5.3.1 The corporate debt framework will ensure everyone is dealt with in a fair and consistent way.

5.4 Environment and Sustainability Implications

5.4.1 Greater access to information and accessible payment points via the various links on our website, via the telephone, and the Community Hubs should reduce the need to travel and is providing more opportunities for customers to access information when it is convenient to them.

5.5 Human Resources Implications

5.5.1 The co-location of Housing and Revenues staff has significantly helped the joined up approach to collecting debts due to the council as has the well developed and embedded partnership arrangements brought about by the ongoing work of the Financial Inclusion Manager over recent years.

5.5.2 The recent restructures of the Community Services and Housing Divisions in March 2016 has also placed greater emphasis on giving a greater number of officers the responsibility to assist customers find solutions to their debt problems going forward as we prepare for the expected future challenges.

5.5.3 In addition, the Community Services shared management arrangement with Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council agreed in December 2015 is also providing greater opportunity to share resources, approaches and increase capacity to deal with the issues identified in this report

5.5.4 The ongoing review and roll out of welfare changes and the arrears position is subject of regular reviews overseen by the Assistant Chief Executive (Community Services) and Assistant Director (Housing) and with partners via the Councils Financial Inclusion Partnership.

5.6 Equalities Implications

5.6.1 The framework ensures equality of access to all and that we continue to promote with equality related objectives with help and assistance to customers being enhanced during a time of reducing incomes.

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

Background Papers

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

Background Paper No	Author	Nature of Background Paper	Date

CORPORATE DEBT STRATEGY

NORTH WARWICKSHIRE BOROUGH
COUNCIL

Drafted and Adopted: July 2007
Revised: March 2013
Revised: May 2016

A CORPORATE DEBT FRAMEWORK

Policy Vision

The vision of corporate debt management for the Council is:

“To minimise the amount of non-collectable debt through the efficient collection of income within a framework of customer care and client sensitivity.”

The policy encompasses the following objectives:

To balance the effective recovery of monies owed to the Council by adopting a holistic approach to the recovery of debts owed. The framework recognises the importance of the role played by independent external partners and agencies in helping people in debt to maximise their income and manage their financial affairs.

Policy Aims

The key aims of this policy are to:

- Ensure a professional, consistent and timely approach to recovery action for all the different types of debt owed to the Council
- Fully consider the customer’s circumstances and ability to pay and so distinguish between those who won’t pay and those who genuinely can’t pay
- Cost effectively pursue all debts ensuring that those with the means to pay do so
- Promote a coordinated approach towards sharing debtor information and managing multiple debts owed to the Council effectively.
- To administer an efficient debt collection process that is organised such that responsibilities are clearly defined and processes are well understood and documented
- To ensure that all amounts due are collected according to the agreed payment criteria and that the most efficient methods of payment are used
- To identify high risk customers e.g. those impacted by future welfare changes, new council tenants, who are most likely to get into financial difficulties and to take proactive action to safeguard further revenue income and establish satisfactory payment arrangements
- To operate within an overall framework where core working practices are consistently applied

- Treat individuals consistently and fairly regardless of age, gender, disability or sexual orientation and that an individual's rights under Data Protection and Human Rights legislation are protected.
- Notwithstanding the above, take into account each individual's circumstances particularly if they are vulnerable, when deciding on the next course of action

This document is not about detailed procedure notes and process maps but outlines principles and protocols, which the Council will endeavor to deliver.

Responsibilities

The Deputy Chief Executive has a statutory responsibility for the efficient administration of the Council's financial affairs and to protect the Council's financial position. Consequently all officers must comply with this policy. The policy principles set out below represent the standards and procedures that shall apply to all income collection systems throughout the Council. Any deviation from these principles will require the approval of the Assistant Chief Executive (Community Services), Assistant Director (Finance and Human Resources) or the Assistant Director (Housing).

They will monitor the arrangements on behalf of the Deputy Chief Executive by analysing the overall debt position of the Council and keep under review the arrangements for the effective and efficient collection of monies due to the Council.

Legal Framework for Recovery

Council Tax:	Local Government Finance Act 1992 The Council Tax (Administration and Enforcement) Regulations 1992 (as amended)
Housing Rents:	Housing Acts Landlord and Tenant Acts
Housing Benefit: Overpayment	Social Security Administration Act 1992 (Housing Benefits) Local Authority Financial Regulations The Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit (Decisions and Appeals and Discretionary Financial Assistance) (Consequential Amendments and Revocations) Regulations 2001. Section 123 of the Social Security Administration Act 1992. Section 134 of the Social Security Administration Act 1992 (Housing Benefit) Section 139 of the Social Security Administration Act 1992 (Council Tax Benefit) Sections 130, 131 of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992

The Housing Benefit (General) Regulations 1987 – and subsequent varying regulations

The Council Tax Benefit (General) Regulations 1992 – and subsequent varying regulations

Housing Benefit (Recovery of Overpayments) Regulations 1997

NNDR:

Local Government Finance Act 1988

The Non-Domestic Rating (Collection and Enforcement) (Local Lists) Regulations 1989

Sundry Income:

Local Government Act 1972

Accounts and Audit Regulations 1996

Introduction

The Council has a duty to recover outstanding debts but must ensure that its policies and procedures are fair to everyone. With this in mind, the Council has, in line with best practice, developed a corporate framework for debt recovery in 2007 that provides a more consistent approach across the Council.

With the changing situation of more people having to pay council tax and more customers finding themselves in a multiple debt situation either to the Council only or other creditors due to the impact of welfare reforms and/or low wages, the Council regularly reviews how we need or can better support customers in terms of delivering and/or facilitating real “hands on” support where they are in debt.

This updated framework relates to the following types of debt:

Council Tax – the charge payable on all domestic properties

Business Rates – the charge payable on all commercial properties

Housing Rents and Former Tenants Arrears – the charges levied on Council owned properties

Overpayment of Housing Benefit – this occurs when benefit is paid and the claimant is not entitled to some or all of the Housing Benefit that has been given

Sundry Debts – the fees and charges made for a wide and varying range of Council services.

These monies are collected to help pay for local services particularly important as we move to a less central grant supported system of support for Local Government and so we can continue to improve the services for the benefit of all the people that live in, work and visit the borough.

This framework will help us to achieve the collection of these monies as well as the expectations objectives of the Council’s community partnership expectations and

corporate plan. These aligned to the Councils wider financial Inclusion commitments to improve the way we work by improving the quality of and access to partner services, and maximise resources to “help others help themselves” are all key commitments that underpin this document.

This document is supported by more detailed procedural guidance for staff, which are regularly reviewed and monitored to ensure their consistent and timely application in recovering monies.

The principles of good practice

It is recognised that people do not pay their debts in a timely way for a variety of reasons. Some people will have difficulty in paying and if this is the case we will make every effort to help such people and to minimise the impact of debt on them. Others may deliberately set out to delay or not make payments and where this is determined, appropriate methods of enforcement will be used to secure payment in these cases.

The following good practice principles already exist but are incorporated into this document to highlight the Council's commitment to assist the statutory debt recovery processes:

- Accurate and prompt billing will take place
- A range of payment options will be available
- Agreement of affordable repayment arrangements for those customers experiencing financial difficulties
- Advice on ways to reduce bills and maximise income such as applying for a Discretionary Housing Payment will be given
- Access to advice and information will be provided at every stage of the collection and recovery process
- Communication between the different parts of the Council that collect and recover debts will take place
- Appropriate and proportionate recovery action will be taken
- There will be a regular and realistic review of doubtful debts
- Good customer care is a minimum expectation
- Efficiency and cost effectiveness must be demonstrated
- Partnership arrangements and secure referral systems will be in place
- Timely monitoring and reporting of performance will be undertaken

How we will deliver on these commitments is outlined in the remainder of this document.

Accurate and prompt billing

We know that for our policy to be effective it is vital that we ensure that:

- accurate and clear bills are produced promptly
- a quick response is made to changes in circumstances and applications for exemptions, discounts and reliefs
- fast and accurate delivery of benefit award entitlements is in place

The information provided on the bill will be clearly written, without the use of jargon except where statutory wording is prescribed and will show:

- what the bill or liability is for
- the amount due and, where appropriate, the instalment amounts and payment due dates
- how to make a payment with bar codes used where possible on letters
- a contact point for enquiries - including our e-mail and website details

In the case of Housing Benefit Overpayments we will also provide:

- the amount of deduction from future benefit – if the overpayment is to be recovered this way
- the person's right to request a written statement and the timescale for this
- the person's right to appeal and the timescale for this

A range of payment options

It is acknowledged that the easier it is to pay, the more likely it is that payment will be made. We will provide a choice of convenient methods of payment for bills and invoices and details of these options will be advised on each bill.

The range of payment options, dependent on debt type, currently includes direct debit on a variety of dates (including weekly), cash at post offices, banks, Pay Zone outlets, cheque, or debit and credit card (which can be made 24 hours a day, 7 days a week using the automated telephone line or website). For some services, a charge is made for use of a credit card to discourage this method of payment and reflect the higher cost of offering this method by the Council.

We will provide information on outlets where payments can be made via our website and documentation. Wherever possible, Housing Benefit Overpayments will be recovered from ongoing benefit entitlement.

In all cases we will actively encourage people to contact us early if they are in arrears.

Affordable repayment arrangements

We recognise that people do not pay their debts for a variety of reasons. Some customers will have difficulty in paying and we recognise the need to agree payment arrangements that reflect the ability to pay as well as the level of debt owed. By enabling people who fall into arrears to come to payment arrangements appropriate to their circumstances, we can help to reduce the risk of further action and unnecessary additional costs becoming payable. For example, this will result in customers being offered 12 monthly instalments to pay as opposed to 10 instalments to pay Council Tax in a financial year at no penalty as a matter of course where they either contact us to request this or we identify this would help.

Some customers may deliberately set out to delay or not make payments and where we identify deliberate non-payers, we will ensure that all appropriate methods of enforcement are used to secure payment.

The need for our customers to get in touch with us when they are experiencing difficulties is paramount. Where a customer does make contact we will consider their circumstances with a view to agreeing a reasonable payment arrangement, if possible. We will seek to avoid taking action that will increase the level of the debt to the customer, wherever possible and make payment as easy as possible by consolidating debts due onto one reference number only.

We may require customers to complete an income and expenditure form and to provide documentary evidence to help us to assess their circumstances and confirm particular details before we can agree an arrangement where additional time to pay beyond the statutory time period allowed is made, or payment beyond a financial year end.

Where customers fail to make contact or maintain arrangements, recovery action will continue.

We will work towards making computer systems, processing and information about outstanding debts available to all recovery sections, in order that we can adopt a coordinated approach to payment arrangements, particularly for multiple debts. This includes the use of the Money Advice Service's Common Financial Statement.

We will, where possible, provide access to help and advice via our localised community hubs for customers who are unable to visit the offices and who need support to agree payment arrangements etc. by utilising technology provided.

Advice on ways to reduce bills and maximise income

We welcome the involvement of welfare agencies in connection with recovery of debts and recognise the benefits that these organisations's can offer both the customer and the Council in helping customers prioritise debts and maximise income. We will continue to work with, and fund such agencies whenever possible.

We will train our staff involved in the recovery of debts on anti-poverty and financial inclusion awareness. This will enable us to:

- inform customers of their entitlement to Housing Benefit and council tax support, discounts, reliefs and exemptions
- inform customers of the general availability of other income related benefits such as Job Seeker's Allowance, Child Tax Credits, Working Tax Credits, Pension Credits or Universal Credit
- direct customers for help and advice on all potential state benefit entitlements
- direct customers who need help and advice on money management matters to Citizen's Advice Bureau or online Government sponsored support sites
- inform customers who are at a serious stage of recovery to seek independent help and advice from appropriate organisation's

Access to advice and information at every stage of the collection and recovery process

We recognise the importance of keeping our customers informed about the recovery process, the consequences of not making payments and where they should go for help and advice if they do not wish to discuss the matter directly with us.

We will:

- invite and encourage customers to make contact with us as soon as they begin experiencing difficulties paying their accounts
- ensure that advice and information given to customers by members of staff is consistent and that customers are treated fairly and equally
- keep customers informed of the action being taken at each stage of the recovery process and of the sanctions that will apply if non-payment continues
- provide documents in large print and in other formats for example audio tape, computer disk, Braille
- assist customers with language and sensory communication difficulty by offering a translation service where appropriate
- ensure that all documents use plain English
- provide clear information on payment methods on all documentation
- advise customers where to get help and advice about benefit and money matters via letters and links to our website
- ensure that members of staff providing advice at the Magistrates' Court have access to account information
- maximise personal phone contact with customers by experienced Council officers during and outside normal office hours

- provide facilities to enable customers to discuss their debts in a confidential manner
- make notes on our online systems of all contacts made

In addition to the information shown on bills and invoices, we will also provide the following information via the Council's website:

- a system to enable customers to receive council tax and business rate bills electronically and make balance enquiries
- on-line forms (for example applying for benefits, notifying of change of circumstances, direct debit instructions, discount forms etc) and links to benefit information
- general information about debt recovery, housing benefit, council tax, business rates and sundry debts
- access and signposting to appropriate help and advice

We will also seek information from our customers at an early stage to help us to use the most appropriate method of recovery. For example, when a council tax customer contacts us to inform us of a change of address, we will ask them for their telephone number, e-mail address etc. so that we can contact them if there is a problem with their account. Due to the limited number of staff we have, we cannot guarantee that this will be the norm but we will endeavor to be pro-active whenever possible.

We will also periodically update our records from information held on the CRM or Civil Enforcement Agents website of contact details such as telephone numbers and e mail addresses to provide as many ways to contact customers direct.

Communication between recovery teams

We will work towards making computer systems and information about outstanding debts available to all recovery sections in order that we can adopt a coordinated approach to the billing, collection and enforcement of debts.

All Council recovery teams are signed up to agreeing to ensure consistency in working practices and to improve communication between the sections. Where a multi debt situation is discovered, they will liaise with each other before taking legal action that could result in the loss of property or their liberty, and a case conference will take place to determine the most appropriate recovery action and formulate a mutually acceptable repayment plan with the customer wherever possible. This will be conducted both formally and informally and amongst other information be based on completion of the local debt evaluation and means enquiry form.

Appropriate recovery action is taken

We will follow the principles of enforcement outlined below:

- our action will be **proportional** – we will strike a balance between the potential loss of income to the Council and the costs of taking a course of action
- our approach will be **consistent** – with the aim of achieving consistency in the advice we give, the use of our powers and in the recovery procedures we use
- our actions will be **transparent** – to help customers to understand what is expected of them and to explain the reasons for taking any recovery/enforcement action.

We will always seek to make realistic arrangements for customers to clear outstanding debts by regular payments wherever possible.

Provided an offer of payment is reasonable (this will have regard to the permitted deduction level possible under an attachment of earnings order or attachment of benefits) and fairly reflects the individual's income and expenditure, the mutually agreed arrangement will be accepted and further enforcement action will be suspended.

The arrangement will seek to recover all monies within the financial year in question. An early review date of the arrangement will be agreed (no longer than 3 months in advance) to review the situation if this is deemed appropriate

This procedure is in the spirit of a “firm but fair” approach to debt recovery and helps distinguish the genuine “can't pay” customers who the Council is keen to help from the “won't pay”. The success of this framework is dependent upon the commitment of those who “can't pay” maintaining contact with the Council and advising of any unexpected situations that will prevent them from meeting their agreed repayments.

Any reminders we issue will convey a willingness to discuss matters with customers and encourage them to make contact if they cannot pay as advised. They will also make the customer aware of the consequences of failing to pay or keep to arrangements.

If a customer fails to make contact or maintain arrangements, we have a duty to collect what is due and will use all legal means available to recover debts. This includes:

- attachment of earnings
- deduction from benefits
- bailiffs action
- possession proceedings
- county court proceedings
- charging orders

- bankruptcy / liquidation / debt relief orders
- committal to prison proceedings

The Council is measured by the DCLG on its performance in collecting in-year raised invoices by the 31 March in any given financial year which is reported annually.

Whilst we will seek to recover monies due within the financial year in question, in cases of genuine financial hardship, this may be unrealistic and therefore the Council will negotiate repayment levels that take into account individual financial circumstances and accept that for appropriate cases payment arrangements may fall into the next financial year. This will involve completion of a means enquiry and require the debtor to agree to be referred for money management advice and assistance where considered appropriate. Use of a common income and expenditure form with standard thresholds, for money spent on housekeeping, utility bills etc., according to family size, will be used wherever possible by internal Council Departments.

An early review date of the arrangement will be agreed (no longer than 3 months in advance) to review the situation to determine if payments can be increased or outgoings reduced and review how the customer is seeking to help themselves.

Where there is insufficient income available to clear all debts, rent will be the Council's priority debt in order to reduce the number of potential evictions with the balance being used to pay other debts in a priority to be determined, but will usually be in appropriated in the following order; Housing Benefit Overpayments, Sundry Income and then Council Tax. This will be based on a case by case basis, having regard to the impact and individual wishes of the customer.

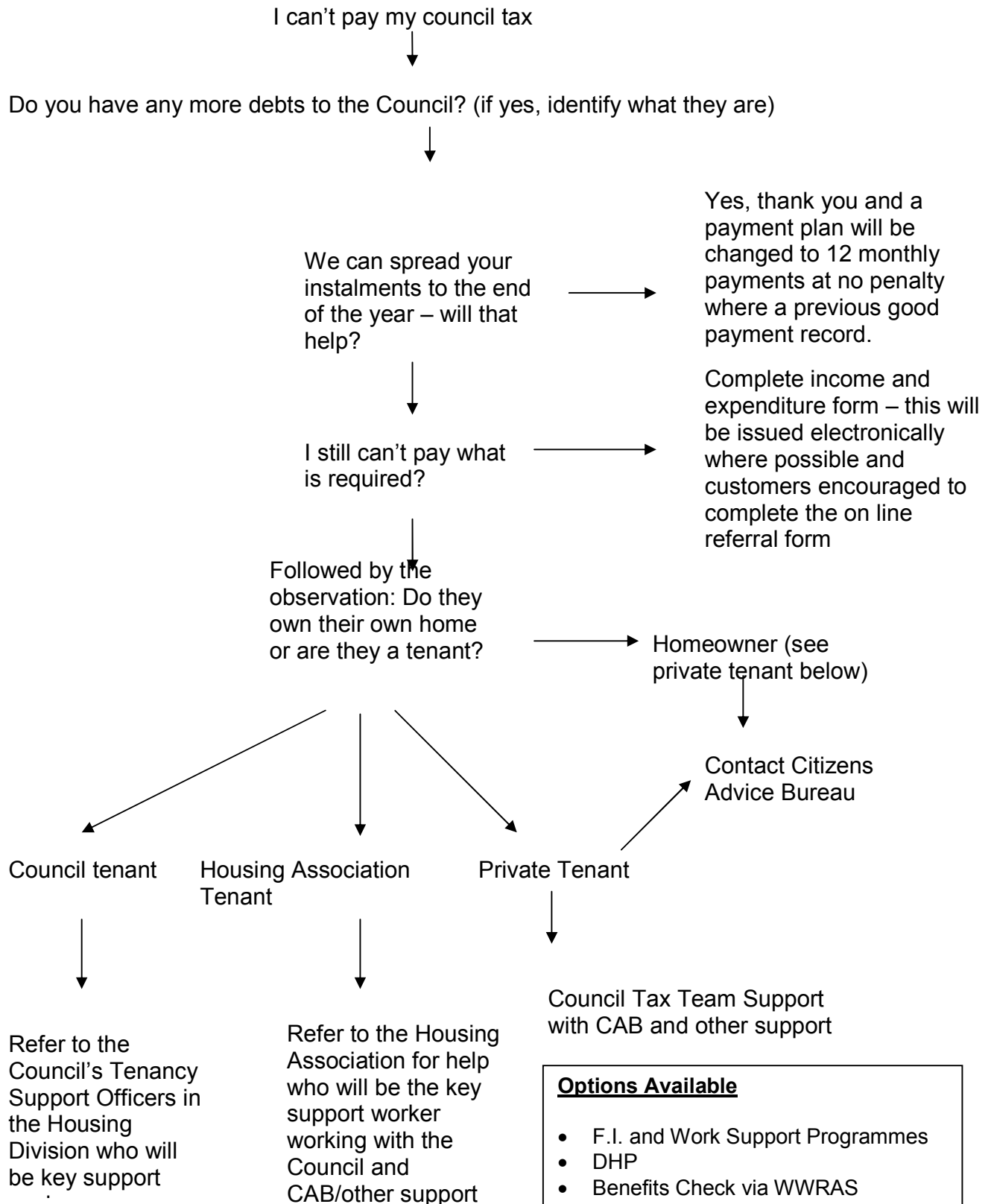
Where contact or payments are not made for sundry debts we will terminate any non-statutory services.

The Council is empowered to recover any overpayments of benefits that have been paid. However, where the overpayment is the result of an error or omission by the Council, recovery will only be made where in the opinion of the Council the claimant could reasonably have been aware that an overpayment had occurred. The weekly rate of recovery of benefit overpayments that is applied in situations of deduction from ongoing benefit claimant entitlement is determined by reference to the guidance rates as set by the Department for Work and Pensions covering both normal overpayment scenarios and also the higher rate covering fraud overpayment situations.

However, claimants can request a reduction in the recovery rate levied (in non fraud overpayment cases) on the grounds of hardship. The claimant is required to complete an income and expenditure document and the Senior Revenues Officer will review the case with a view to setting a reasonable lower rate in cases deemed appropriate.

An example of how officers should deal with a standard customer enquiry in relation to the recovery of monies is shown overleaf

For example - Receipt of a Council Tax Reminder



- Options Available**
- F.I. and Work Support Programmes
 - DHP
 - Benefits Check via WWRAS
 - Foodbank Referral
 - Remission of some or all of debt

Despite our procedures for recovering debts, there are always cases that may be deemed impossible or not cost effective to pursue. There are a variety of reasons why this might happen, these include:

- the amount outstanding is below an agreed lower limit
- the customer has left an address and we are unable to trace them
- the customer has died and there are not sufficient funds from their estate to pay the amount owed
- the customer is bankrupt or if the company is insolvent (however we do submit a claim in bankruptcy and any payments received from the receiver are credited to the account accordingly)
- it is uneconomical to pursue the debt due to health, or financial reasons. In determining “uneconomic”, account must be taken of the overall impact on the Council of non-pursuit of that debt including the likelihood that other customers may then also choose not to pay their outstanding debts. We will use write off as a final option where there is no realistic chance of recovery and it is considered inappropriate to use other methods of recovery. This procedure may be linked to the person agreeing to take money management advice etc. as considered appropriate.
- statute barred – An invoice is irrecoverable if six years have elapsed from the date of the invoice, date of service or last payment date, whichever is the later. If the debtor acknowledges the debt the six years runs from this date. All debts, which are statute barred, will be processed through the agreed write off procedures as irrecoverable.
- Inability to pay – if after all attempts to help a customer meet their payment obligations such as through providing budgeting advice or access to food parcels etc. there is still an inability to pay some or all of their debt then write off may be considered. However this will be the extreme exception and will only be made after working with the customer to find an alternative solution.

We will monitor all outstanding debts to ensure that they are recoverable and will take prompt action when irrecoverable debts are identified to write them off in accordance with our financial regulations which are outlined in our write off policy. This includes an appropriate level of authority that has been delegated to officers for write off purposes and will ensure recovery action is proportionate to the level of the debt due.

The formal 'writing off' of any debts will not rule out recovery action being taken in the event that a customer's circumstances change.

Customer Care

In order to provide good customer care we will:

- ensure that debts are collected in an efficient and empathetic way
- provide advice and guidance on ways to reduce bills and maximise income
- advise customers how to complain if they are unhappy with the service they have received
- encourage constructive comments from customers about how we can improve our services
- give our customers and partners the opportunity to be involved in shaping the policies and procedures that determine how we recover debt
- ensure that services are delivered in the line with our Equality principles and that they are accessible, including making services physically accessible to people with disabilities

All staff involved in the billing, collection, recovery and enforcement of debts will be trained in customer care.

Customers will be provided with the contact details of the originating department on any invoices, recovery notices or letters issued in order that they have access to officers with detailed and specific knowledge of the goods and/or services provided at all times.

Offices will be open to take customer queries either by telephone between the hours of 8:30 am to 5.00pm Monday to Friday and in person between 9.00am to 5.00pm. Email contact and relevant information will be available at all times via the Councils website.

All customers will have access to their account information and history in line with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998, and for council tax, business rates and housing benefit this will be available on line.

All customers will be encouraged to take ownership of their financial affairs. Whilst it is not the role of the Council to provide a debt counseling service, where customers are facing clear financial hardship they will be made aware of external debt counseling services provided by the Citizens Advice Bureau and other information on how customers can get help and advice with debt online. This will also include information on help that can be received from utility companies in paying their debts to those companies.

The Council will continue to develop further its links with customer groups, particularly ethnic, disabled and pensioner groups by attendance at focus meetings and promotional events. This will enable the Council to 'test' customer awareness of the financial support and discounts/exemptions that are available together with an indication as to how understandable the Council's billing and recovery documents are. These will also be covered as appropriate in the corporate North Talk magazine.

Efficiency and cost effectiveness

We will seek to ensure that our recovery and enforcement activities are delivered in the most efficient and cost effective manner. This will include the use of external suppliers of services such as civil enforcement agents as well as investigating the use of alternative suppliers of other recovery, legal and enforcement related services.

The use of civil enforcement agents and any other debt collection agency used will be conducted in accordance with the Council's procurement policy and they will adopt practices and policies that reflect the total value of debts owed and collect monies in line with agreed protocols with the Council.

We will seek to maximise the use of technology in order to improve efficiency and ensure the most up-to-date information is available on line where possible to both the Council and our external agents.

We will respond to any complaints or freedom of information request with the locally adopted and statutory timeframes as a minimum in a way most convenient to the customer.

Partnership Arrangements

Relationships with partner organisations are a key component in any Corporate Debt Framework. The Council's resources and debt counseling skills are limited and it is unable to assist individuals properly who have significant and complex multiple debt problems. In response to this, the Council has developed close relationships with the Citizen's Advice Bureau as well as other complimentary partners coordinated via its Financial Inclusion Partnership and introduced procedures for referring customers for debt counseling and wider personal support in these situations.

This has involved:

- Providing additional funding to the CAB since 2009 over and beyond the core approved Council budget both locally and via the County Council. This additional funding is helping to address situations where multiple debt problems are identified, there is a threat of homelessness and it is also supporting some of the outreach work being developed from the community hubs. This approach has ensured a professional, empathetic and consistent approach is adopted by the Council and is ensuring all parties work together to determine payment arrangements that are acceptable to all parties. This process has enabled help and advice on money management and how to prioritise their debts to be provided to customers as well as support on accessing emergency food support, cheaper energy provider advice and solutions to improve long term circumstances.

- Developing a comprehensive on line referral claim form, improved income and expenditure form, a multiple debt referral form and comprehensive website that includes signposting to other debt related sites and charities. This is used by front line staff to advise and refer customers for help and advice and has recently been developed to enable self referral.
- An onsite presence in the Councils One Stop Shop by key partners e.g. the DWP via a co-located job centre, the British Legion, the CAB and various specialist agencies dealing with probation, drug and alcohol related issues.
- Working with Warwickshire Welfare Rights on undertaking targeted campaigns to promote benefit take up with some particular successes in the promotion of free school meals and attendance allowances as well as general benefits
- Working with Act on Energy to help address fuel poverty and Severn Trent to promote greater awareness of water schemes available to vulnerable people
- Working with Chapter One and the County Council to set up a foodbank and second hand furniture retail operation as part of the replacement / alternative crisis loan arrangements.
- Restructuring the Community Services and Housing Division in 2016 to place greater emphasis on officers providing holistic solutions to customers.
- Setting up a shared management arrangement with Nuneaton and Bedworth BC to share key officers including their court officers, our Financial Inclusion expertise to maximize capacity and to develop common approaches and policies.

These are only some examples of the partnership work that the Council is doing to support the outcomes of this framework and respond to some of the consequences of customers being in debt.

In a more proactive way, the Council also works closely with its Civil Enforcement Agents ensuring that they operate within the Council's Code of Practice and deal with cases sympathetically, involving in appropriate cases returning sensitive cases to the Council for action.

Civil Enforcement action will continue to be strictly monitored; with a sample of accounts checked on a regular basis to ensure excessive enforcement costs have not been added to accounts, adding unfairly to the indebtedness of individuals. Our relationship with Bristow & Sutor has developed over the last 20 years and they are the Council's sole recovery agent. The approach of only using a single bailiff/collection agency means that they are fully aligned with the Council's approach and culture of collection.

An initial last opportunity letter with no additional cost and a small balance protocol has been agreed with the Bristow & Sutor outside the standard legislative framework to

ensure that the cost of instruction and visits are not disproportionate to the debts instructed and give the customer every opportunity to pay monies due without further financial penalty.

The development of this framework has drawn on best practice and procedures implemented over a number of years. Our ongoing activities promote positive engagement with the public around providing advice on all types of welfare benefits, improving access to benefits information and promoting more effective and joined up working relationships with external advice agencies. This has resulted in very successful promotional campaigns on fuel poverty, awareness of loan sharks and free school meals being publicised and promoted working closely with Warwickshire Welfare Rights. Work also continues alongside the Job Centre Plus to prepare those impacted by universal credit as well as other Councils across Warwickshire.

To foster more effective closer working between the Council and external advice agencies, a programme of secondments / exchange visits and cross training with Housing, the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and Civil Enforcement agents will continue to be undertaken. This will develop greater staff understanding and appreciation of the role of each organization and also update on new legislation and techniques.

These activities have all contributed to the Council achieving a fully compliant Customer Excellence Award with a number of best practice activities noted as compliant plus and the winning of a significant number of National awards. Where appropriate, we will continue to promote the excellent work being undertaken in order to promote activity as wide as possible

Monitoring and Reporting

We will monitor our policies and procedures (using a standard format) to ensure that they are effective. Monitoring will include:

- quality checks on work processes to ensure fairness and consistency
- audit and quality checks on work processed by individuals
- rate of collection – to identify our performance against the monetary targets set for the collection of debts
- regular benchmarking with other Councils
- number of cases at each stage of the recovery process
- a review of trends and changes in the nature of recovery action
- complaints received – to assist us with making service improvements
- consultation with our customers and with advice agencies
- regular reporting to members and our partners

Review of this framework

The Council is committed to continuous improvement and so it is inevitable that new approaches and ways of working will be introduced. This framework will be reviewed as appropriate (no longer than every 4 years) to enable it to be updated where necessary and to take into account any service improvements or changes.

CAB data: April 2015 to
January 2016

Headline Stats

So far this year, NWCAB has recorded outcomes for 750 issues, with a total annualised value of £724,856. During the same period last year, we recorded 502 outcomes with a total annualised value of £592,628.

This shows an increase of 248 (49%) issues with outcomes worth an additional £126,228 (21%).

Financial Capability, Debt and Utilities & Communications are the advice areas which have seen the most noteworthy increases in outcomes.

Financial Capability

Last year, we achieved 97 outcomes worth £22,271 by advising on Financial Capability issues
This year, we have achieved 148 outcomes worth £104,876 by advising on Financial Capability issues.

In particular, we have seen an increase in successful Budgeting Changes. Last year, we recorded 16 clients saving £7,561 through budgeting changes. This year, we have seen 32 clients save £15,764.

Debt

Last year, we achieved 78 outcomes worth £11,271 by advising on Debt issues.
This year, we have achieved 229 outcomes worth £244,635 by advising on Debt issues.

Outcomes related to Mortgage Arrears, Rent Arrears, Council Tax Arrears and Benefit Overpayments have all increased.

Utilities & Communication

Last year, we achieved 13 outcomes worth £10,070 by advising on Utilities & Communication issues
This year, we have achieved 83 outcomes worth £11,923 by advising on Utilities & Communication issues.

The bulk of these increases come from assisting clients with switching tariffs, and by helping clients on low income reduce their water rates through applications to the Big Difference Scheme. These applications have saved 45 clients £11,107.64 so far this year.

Charitable Support

This year has seen an increase in clients in need of food bank referrals or charitable support. During this period last year, 15 food bank referrals were made, and £1,759 was obtained through charitable support. This year, 41 referrals have been made, and £10,601 has been obtained through charitable support.

Outcome Summary 2015 April-January

- 127 benefit increases or reinstatements, new benefit awards, or decisions challenged for a total annualised value of £X.
- £19,006 of annualised savings made through assisting clients with budgeting.
- 27 better deals on fuel supply costs achieved through assistance with switching supplier, and 36 better deals negotiated by staying with the same supplier, for total annualised savings of £17,375.
- 20 instances of homelessness prevented or delayed, and 12 clients successfully rehoused.
- 102 reports of clients benefiting from improved health and capacity to manage after receiving advice.
- 55 instances of bailiff or other creditor enforcement action being prevented or suspended.
- 62 charitable payments or provisions of food or goods with an estimated value of £11,136.

Local Authority	Overall Score (out of 325)	Have wards in 10% Most Deprived Nationally	Income Deprivation	Employment Dep	Education, Skills & Training Dep	Health Deprivation and Disability	Crime levels	Barriers to Housing & Services	Living Environment Deprivation
Nuneaton and Bedworth BC	109	110	112	97	61	91	57	247	148
Rank of 5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	2
North Warwickshire BC	178	160	175	170	86	161	165	218	178
Rank of 5	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	4	4
Rugby BC	243	none	230	233	231	213	156	204	213
Rank of 5	3	3	3	3	3	4	2	3	5
Stratford DC	262	none	270	273	288	243	262	117	120
Rank of 5	4	3	4	4	4	5	5	1	1
Warwick DC	268	none	272	286	303	194	216	183	173
Rank of 5	5	3	5	5	5	3	4	2	3

ON ALL INDICATORS A LOWER SCORE MEANS MORE DEPRIVED OR MORE BARRIERS EXIST

A ranking of 1 of out 5 means the most barriers or deprivation and so on

About the English Indices of Deprivation 2015

The Indices of Deprivation 2015 provide a set of relative measures of deprivation for small areas (Lower-layer Super Output Areas) across England, based on seven domains of deprivation. The domains were combined using the following weights to produce the overall Index of Multiple Deprivation

- Income Deprivation (22.5%)
- Employment Deprivation (22.5%)
- Education, Skills and Training Deprivation (13.5%)
- Health Deprivation and Disability (13.5%)
- Crime (9.3%)
- Barriers to Housing and Services (9.3%)
- Living Environment Deprivation (9.3%)

Agenda Item No 14

Resources Board

23 May 2016

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

**Tenant Partnership Agreement
2016/17**

1 Summary

- 1.1 This report presents the Council's Tenant Partnership Agreement to the Resources Board for their consideration and provides background information about the regulatory framework for social housing landlords.

Recommendations to the Board

- a That the HCA regulatory requirements applicable from 2012 are noted;**
- b That the revised Tenant Partnership Agreement be agreed;**
- c That the tenant participation activities undertaken during 2015-16 highlighted within the Tenant Partnership Agreement are noted; and**
- d That members consider how they can work with the Borough Wide Tenants Forum in the spirit of the Tenant Partnership Agreement.**

2 Consultation

- 2.1 Members of the Borough Wide Tenants Forum have been consulted on the Tenant Partnership Agreement and the Tenant Involvement Impact Assessment.

3 Introduction

- 3.1 In 2000 the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister introduced legislation and guidance which set out a duty on Local Authorities to have a Compact with their Tenants which sets out how they can participate in the landlord services provided. North Warwickshire Borough Council published its first Compact in 2001. The underlying principle of the compact is that in general terms Tenants cannot take their custom elsewhere if they are not satisfied with the services they receive from their landlord so there must be a robust and open method for them to influence the services they receive.
- 3.2 Since the Borough Wide Tenants Forum was formed and the first Compact was published Tenant participation has evolved from strength to strength in

the Borough. The document that sets out how Tenants will work with the Council is now called the 'Tenant Partnership Agreement' in order to reflect the view that in order to be productive the relationship is one of genuine partnership.

- 3.3 The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) introduced new regulatory requirements for social housing in England applicable from 1 April 2012 and replaced the regulatory framework that came into effect on 1 April 2010. The framework implemented the amendments to the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 introduced by the Localism Act 2011 and the Secretary of State's directions on specific standards. A copy of the HCA Regulatory Framework has been put in the members group rooms for information and is available on their website www.gov.uk/hca.
- 3.4 The principle underpinning the regulatory framework is co-regulation – a robust and open relationship between the Regulator, Council and its tenants.
- 3.5 The consumer standards are the ones that relate to this report and the 'Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard' in particular. Registered providers are expected to support their tenants to develop and implement opportunities for involvement and empowerment by:
- “supporting their tenants to exercise their Right to Manage or otherwise exercise housing management functions, where appropriate
 - Supporting the formation and activities of tenant panels or equivalent groups and responding in a constructive and timely manner to them
 - The provision of timely and relevant performance information to support effective scrutiny by tenants of their landlord's performance in a form which registered providers seek to agree with their tenants. Such provision must include the publication of an annual report which should include information on repair and maintenance budgets and
 - Providing support to tenants to build their capacity to be more effectively involved”
- 3.6 In addition registered providers are expected to consult on the scope of local offers/service standards for service delivery, consult with tenants if they are proposing to make significant changes in their management arrangements and consult them every three years about the best way of involving tenants in governance and scrutiny of the housing service.
- 3.7 How the Council adheres to this standard is set out in its Tenant Partnership Agreement which is complimented by its Annual Report to tenants and newsletters which provide key information. In addition, an impact assessment is undertaken annually which assesses the outcomes of all our tenant involvement activities.

4 Revised Tenant Partnership Agreement

4.1 The Tenant Partnership Agreement is updated annually to reflect any changes in approach; provides an update on key achievements during the year and includes a forward work plan. The Tenant Partnership Agreement has been refreshed following discussion with members of the Borough Wide Tenants Forum at their meeting on 15 March 2016 and is attached at Appendix 1 for consideration by the Resources Board.

...

4.2 The Tenant Partnership Agreement includes a forward work plan for 2016-17 and identifies the key actions to be worked on during the forthcoming year. A more detailed forward work plan will be developed with the Borough Wide Tenants Forum.

4.3 At the heart of the Agreement there remains an expectation that work can be undertaken to broaden the base of Tenant participation in the Borough. This is a key task for the Housing Services Manager and the Neighbourhood and Tenant Involvement Officer to progress in conjunction with the Housing Tenancy and Neighbourhoods Team.

5 Tenant Involvement Impact Assessment

5.1 An annual assessment of outcomes or “Impact Assessment” has been undertaken which highlights the achievements as a result of our tenant participation activities. The Impact Assessment compliments the Tenant Partnership Agreement as it measures and evaluates the effect that tenant participation activities have had and the difference it makes to the services provided by the Council. The Impact Assessment also showcases the tenant participation work undertaken across the Borough during the year (2015-16) including the work of the Borough Wide Tenants Forum, Tenant Led Community Panels and the Tenant Improvement Groups.

5.2 We hope that the Impact Assessment document will encourage others to get involved by promoting the benefits of involvement and showcasing the results it has helped to achieve. The assessment outcomes have been used to inform the forward work plan for the forthcoming year (2016-17) so that priority can be given to those activities that provide value for money.

5.3 The Tenant Involvement Impact Assessment is available to view on the Council’s website and copies are available in the members group rooms. We will also circulate it to all tenants with the summer edition of the Tenants Link newsletter that will be sent to all Council tenants in August.

5.4 The Leader of the Council has attended several of the Borough Wide Tenants Forum meetings earlier this year including the meeting on 20th October when the six months outcomes report was discussed. The Borough Wide Forum members have indicated that they would be keen to meet with members of the Resources Board to discuss specific topic areas of interest and how they can work with Council members in the spirit of the Tenant Partnership Agreement. This is something we would be happy to arrange and suggestions for topic areas are welcomed from members.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 The Council's Tenant Partnership Agreement has promoted positive Tenant participation in the Borough over many years. The revised agreement continues to offer a range of ways in which Tenants can get involved in order to influence the services they receive. The Tenant Partnership Agreement is complimented by the Tenant Involvement Impact Assessment which assesses the impact of tenant participation activities.
- 6.2 The Homes and Communities Agency oversees how registered providers perform. However their role is light touch and therefore the strong relationship between the Council and its Tenants, including being clear about how they are involved and can scrutinise services, is critical.

7 Report Implications

7.1 Financial and Value for Money Implications

- 7.1.1 There is a budget of £14,600 (excluding staffing costs) for delivering Tenant participation activities. The Tenant Partnership Agreement will be delivered within that budget provision. The budget covers involvement related training, membership of the Tenant Participation Advisory Service, computer and printer related expenditure for Tenant Led Community Panels, newsletters to all tenants and travel expenses to enable tenants to get to meetings.
- 7.1.2 Resources Board agreed to a new post of Neighbourhoods and Tenant Involvement Officer as part of the restructure proposals for the housing management team. This combines the Tenant Involvement Officer and Neighbourhoods Team Leader post which has resulted in a cost saving. The new post will ensure a close focus on dealing with estate issues including managing the communal areas and working with tenants to improve the service provided. The post gives a focus to the work, ensures information can go out to all tenants who need to be informed about the services we provide and supports tenants who do give up their time to get involved and attend meetings.
- 7.1.3 Tenant participation helps the Council understand what services are important to Tenants and how they expect them to be delivered. Acting on this information helps the Council to be more efficient by focussing on priorities and to provide services which receive high satisfaction levels.

7.2 Risk Management Implications

- 7.2.1 The regulatory regime continues to have a very strong focus on a social landlord's relationship with its Tenants. If that relationship is not a positive one which delivers good service outcomes it is likely that a landlord would be criticised. The regulator's role is limited to setting the consumer standards

and intervening only where failure of the standard could lead to risk of serious harm to tenants (the 'serious detriment test'). This is described in Section 5 of the Regulatory Framework, if the regulator is satisfied that there could be a serious detriment or that there are reasonable grounds to suspect this, it will fully investigate and will require evidence of harm or potential harm, in particular but not exclusively in relation to:

- Health and safety
- Loss of home
- Unlawful discrimination
- Loss of legal rights
- Financial loss

7.2.2 Ultimately, decisions on serious detriment are a matter of judgement by the regulator, based on evidence available and its published approach. They may also take the view that issues under one consumer standard may result in problems under one or more of the other standards, indicating a systemic failure.

7.2.3 The Tenant Partnership Agreement and Tenant Involvement Impact Assessment demonstrate the Council's commitment to involving tenants in the housing service and provides evidence that we are meeting the tenant involvement and Empowerment standards.

7.3 **Equalities Implications**

7.3.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken on the Tenant Partnership Agreement. The Agreement sets out to engage tenants in a way that suits them and therefore addresses diverse needs. Specifically the Standards set out to promote equal opportunity and respect diversity. If there are any training issues these can be addressed.

7.4 **Links to Council's Priorities**

7.4.1 One of the Council's priorities is to listen and work with our tenants to maintain and improve our housing stock and provide affordable housing in the right places.

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

Background Paper No	Author	Nature of Background Paper	Date
1	Homes & Communities Agency	The document comprises the regulatory framework for social housing in England applicable from 1 April 2012	March 2012



North Warwickshire
Borough Council

North Warwickshire Borough Council Tenant Partnership Agreement 2016/17



Tenant and Council
Approved

**An agreement between
North Warwickshire Borough Council
and its tenants**

Forward

Dear Tenants

We are pleased to present this updated version of the North Warwickshire Borough Council Tenant Partnership Agreement. It has been reviewed and agreed by all partners and demonstrates our continued commitment to working more closely together.

The ultimate aim of the Agreement is to give you a greater say in the way housing services are delivered through a range of opportunities for involvement. The agreement outlines how you can become more involved and we hope that more tenants will take up this invitation to influence the housing services delivered by the Council.

The key achievements made during 2015/16 were:

- **Reviewing the Anti Social Behaviour Policy and Procedure**
- **Tenant Scrutiny work including recommending improvements for the communal cleaning service**
- **Reviewing and updating the empty property standard and how this will be monitored**
- **Developing the Tenant Partnership Agreement and Tenants' Forum Forward Work Plan**
- **Reviewing the Asset Management Plan**
- **Monitoring the Grounds Maintenance Enhanced Service**
- **Reviewing Rent Collection and Welfare Reform Action Plan**

We would like to thank all partners for their assistance in making these achievements. We would encourage all our tenants to get more involved in a way that suits them. This could be by completing satisfaction surveys, getting involved in local community groups or joining in our neighbourhood visits.



Councillor
David Humphreys
Leader of the Council



Angela Coates
Assistant Director of
Housing



Pat Cotterill
Chair of the
Borough Wide
Tenants' Forum



John Holt
Vice Chair of the
Borough Wide Tenants'
Forum

Contents



Page		Part
1	Introduction	1
3	Roles and Responsibilities	2
6	Involvement Options	3
12	Core Standards	4
18	Monitoring	5
21	Action Plan	6
22	Useful Contacts	7
23	Glossary	8

The North Warwickshire Tenant Partnership Agreement (from hereon referred to as the Agreement), sets out how Council tenants can participate in housing issues that affect them. It outlines how tenants and the Council will work together in a spirit of equal partnership, co-operation and mutual respect to enable tenants to influence decisions about their homes and the services they receive.

The Agreement sets out how tenants can participate by offering a range of ways for tenants to:

- **Get more involved in decision making**
- **Tell us about their priorities**
- **Give feedback and tell us where services need improving as well as letting us know when we get things right**
- **Influence decisions about their homes and the services they receive**
- **Scrutinise the housing service**

The Agreement is a continuously evolving document that will change with time and work undertaken within the Housing Services Division.

About us

The Housing Service Division is responsible for managing 2663 homes in North Warwickshire. This includes delivering services such as:

- **Responsive repairs**
- **Planned improvements**
- **Letting properties**
- **Rent Collection**
- **Neighbourhood Services**
- **Tenant Participation**

Housing Services is driven by the need to deliver effective customer service and is committed to service improvement. We are committed to working in partnership with the Borough Wide Tenants' Forum to achieve our aims and objectives.



Our Vision



“To give every tenant the opportunity to have a say about how and what services are provided for them in a way that suits them and to use their feedback to make improvements”

Shared Principles

The Agreement is based on the following that the partners will:

- Commit to meaningful tenant involvement and see it as a fundamental part of the Housing Strategy
- Support and encourage tenant involvement at a level and pace decided by the tenants of the Borough
- Empower tenants so that they take an active role in the management of their homes and communities at a level they are happy with
- Provide and increase varied types and levels of involvement, giving more opportunity for all groups and sections of the community to be involved in the decision making process
- Ensure that all tenants have equal and fair access to participate
- Recognise that changes will occur that affect the Agreement and that the Agreement will be regularly reviewed
- Agree that changes will not be made to this Agreement without the agreement of each partner
- Value diversity and inclusiveness and be committed to ensuring that all tenants have the opportunity to influence policies, strategies and the delivery of a customer focussed housing service
- Be open and honest and work together to deliver change and improvement

Equal Opportunities

“North Warwickshire Borough Council will not discriminate on the grounds of nationality, political opinion, race, religious opinion, age, sex, sexuality or disability”

This Agreement is intended to encourage ways that all groups within our community can be involved. It is intended to work with partners and other external bodies to improve the current involvement levels from hard to reach and under-represented groups within our community.



Each partner has a role in ensuring the success of the Agreement

Tenants

Individual tenants have a key part to play in the success of the Agreement. Tenants will contribute to the success of the Agreement by:

- Reading information provided by the Council about housing services and opportunities for involvement – for example, in newsletters, personal letters, on the Council's website www.northwarks.gov.uk and on community notice boards
- Deciding how they want to get involved – being positive in responding to surveys and questionnaires, giving views in consultation exercises, attending local groups, Community Panels and focus groups
- Reading the Tenants' Handbook and making use of the information contained in it to help resolve problems arising in their neighbourhood or in their homes
- Being a good neighbour – taking a positive approach to the community where they live and abiding by their Tenancy Conditions
- Co-operating with and respecting the Council's staff and contractors
- Ensuring any group's terms of reference and standing orders are adhered to
- Community Panel members should ensure that they are familiar with the Community Panel bidding process and consult and seek agreement from members of their panel regarding any bids for improvement money from the Council. Requests for any neighbourhood improvements should reflect the views of those tenants living locally.

In addition, every tenant has the right to:

- Access relevant papers or background information (excluding those of a confidential nature), in order to make an informed decision on services provided for them
- Be involved in decision making processes concerning Housing Services, working in partnership with the Council.
- Have their views recorded to reflect a true, accurate measure of their needs and to ensure there are no misunderstandings
- Establish a local Tenants Group
- Co-operation and respect from council staff contractors

Councillors

Councillors are elected by local people to be responsible and accountable for policy and strategic decisions and ensuring legal requirements are met. Councillors will (either individually or through Council systems):

- Consult, communicate and address the needs of tenants when policies are amended and developed
- Be honest, listen and be non-judgemental when approached by tenants for a change of housing strategy or policy
- Provide feedback and information regarding any issue
- Be supportive, strengthening links with tenants to promote close understanding of local community issues and the implementation of the Agreement
- Support staff in their work to broaden involvement opportunities and customer focussed housing services

Council staff

Staff will work at every level ensuring the success of the Agreement by:

- Adopting a customer focus in the delivery of all aspects of the housing service
- Constructively responding to tenants' needs, views and priorities when they develop and review housing policies and services
- Allowing adequate time to consult tenants when developing or reviewing housing services and policies
- Providing easy to understand, attractive and accurate newsletters, performance information and consultation materials to help tenants get involved in monitoring and developing services
- Listening to and respecting the views of tenants and other service users
- Learning and adapting services based on feedback from tenants and other service users – through meetings, compliments and complaints and customer satisfaction surveys
- Giving feedback to tenants on what has happened as a result of their views being taken into account
- Working in a flexible way to meet the needs of tenants, arranging meetings and events at times and in places to suit tenants
- Arranging training events between tenants and the Council to build skills and a shared understanding of effective tenant involvement

The Borough Wide Tenants' Forum

The Borough Wide Tenants' Forum is our borough wide tenant representative group. They are tenants who come from all areas of the Borough and want to be involved in the decision making process and improving services to all tenants. The members may also be involved in Community Panels in their local areas.

They will:

- Review and monitor the Agreement and action plan
- Participate in the information of new policies and service standards
- Monitor and oversee tenant scrutiny activities and the work of the Tenant Improvement Groups
- Participate in service reviews
- Participate in tenant inspection programmes
- Monitor the Tenant Participation Budget



Tenant Champions


A Tenant Champion is a tenant of North Warwickshire Borough Council who has agreed to take a lead for a specific area of the housing service. Each service area will be represented by two champions and a reserve who will agree to:


- Attend and participate in the Tenant Improvement Group meetings
- Support other members of the group, in order for them to play a full part in planning changes or improvements
- Feedback progress and outcomes to the Borough Wide Tenants' Forum


There is a wide range of options available to tenants who wish to get involved in the Housing Service. The involvement options set out below are designed to ensure that all tenants have the opportunity to get involved at a level they choose. All tenants can have their say in a way that they are comfortable with and what fits their lifestyle. You may choose to get involved through just one involvement option or in an area that is of particular interest to you or you may decide to get involved through several options and in several areas. The decision is yours.


All of the options will need some commitment. This ranges from half an hour on an occasional basis, through to several hours a month. To help tenants decide which options might suit them, we have graded them and explained the amount of time commitment required. This has been graded by using a star indicator for low to high involvement.

Grading our options for involvement

 **Low (occasional) – this can just be a one off commitment, attending a focus group, reading information or coming along to an occasional neighbourhood visit.**

 **Low (regular) – agreeing to give a little of your time from time to time. For example contributing to the Tenants' Newsletter, or completing surveys over the phone as part of "Talking Tenants."**

 **Medium Level – for example becoming a member of a local Community Panel Group, which meet four times a year.**

 **High Level – for example, becoming a member of the Borough Wide Tenants' Forum which meets monthly and has an important role in guiding policy, strategy and service development.**

If you would like to get involved in any of the activities please get in touch (see contacts on page 22). Information will be accessible and freely available. Important documents will be provided for all tenants and will be available on our website www.northwarks.gov.uk Key issues will be highlighted in local newspapers, north talk, and "Tenant Link". Information is available in alternative formats e.g. in large print, on audiotape, in another language or through face to face discussion – please just ask

★ Letters, Leaflets and Questionnaires

The Council's Housing Division will write to you throughout the year for a variety of reasons. Some will be confirming repairs you have reported or informing you about your rent account and changes in rent. Others may be informing you of new services and some may be inviting you to special events and meetings. Housing Services may also write to you asking for your views and comments on issues.

Very little time needed but very important information! Some letters you receive are purely to keep you up-to-date and inform you. Others may require a response and we will provide Freepost envelopes.

Leaseholder Questionnaire

If you are a leaseholder then you are invited to complete an annual questionnaire, which will give leaseholders the opportunity to raise issues.

An opportunity to highlight leaseholder issues with no fixed commitment. We will provide Freepost envelopes.

★ Neighbourhood Visits

A regular programme of neighbourhood visits will be led by the Neighbourhood Services Team. The visits are displayed in the communal rooms and on the Council's website. Tenants are encouraged to get involved in these inspections of their local neighbourhood to identify areas for improvement. Details of the Neighbourhood Services Team can be found in the Contacts Section on page 22

An easy way to raise concerns over local neighbourhood issues with minimum time commitment.

★ Focus Groups

These are small gatherings of between six and twelve residents and are usually one off sessions designed to gather information on one or more issues. Meetings usually last between one and two hours and refreshments are provided. Focus Groups form a key part of service improvements and external inspections, which look at improving specific aspects of the housing service.



Suitable for tenants who want to share their views without regular commitment.

★ Planned Maintenance and Improvement

The Housing Division will arrange consultation events for all future improvement works that are undertaken to tenants' and leaseholders' homes. Events will be organised in partnership with the contractor to talk to tenants and leaseholders more directly about future works.

This requires very low commitment but is an excellent opportunity for tenants to discuss any questions about the works or clarify any issues they may have with either Housing



★ Informal Local Meetings

Where Community Panels do not exist, local tenant meetings will be held twice a year to keep tenants informed about the service.

This is a good opportunity for tenants to discuss issues that affect them and their neighbourhoods generally without a regular commitment.



★★ Mystery Shopping

Is a method of testing the quality of services. An individual (for example, an existing customer or an independent person) will ask for information, or test out the process of reporting a repair. They may also visit a neighbourhood to examine caretaking standards to see how well services are being delivered.

An easy way to get involved in testing the quality of housing services and contribute to service improvements with minimum time commitment. Training will be provided.



★ ★ Talking Tenants

A customer panel to enable tenants to have a say by taking part in our surveys and by consultation. Members of the panel can take part in either postal, e-mail or telephone surveys in order to help us review our services, plan new projects and other issues.

New members are welcome and should contact the Tenant Participation Officer on 01827 719402 to join or email: tenantparticipation@northwarks.gov.uk

An easy way to get involved and make an important contribution without leaving home. You will be invited to take part several times a year. This is a good opportunity to guide the Housing Service in the right direction.



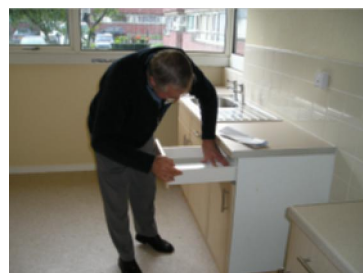
★ ★ ★ Tenant Led Community Panels



This is an opportunity to meet with other local residents, your Tenant Participation Officer and other key staff. Local neighbourhood issues will be discussed and you will be able to work together to plan service improvements and community activities. You will receive news and performance information from the Council. Other statutory and voluntary organisations will be encouraged to send representatives to discuss issues of local interest. The Panel meetings are led by tenants and have a constitution. All local residents will be invited to attend and we will promote the meetings by letters, posters and flyers.

★ ★ ★ Tenant Liaison Representatives

An opportunity for individual tenants to take on a liaison role during an improvement works contract – acting as a representative to voice any concerns tenants may have, and maintaining contact with the contractors and council officers.





Borough Wide Tenants' Forum

The Forum is an independent body that acts as one voice to represent all tenants' views to North Warwickshire Borough Council and the Housing Service. The Forum meets monthly and provides support to its members who represent the local areas. The Council is committed to listening and responding to the views of the Forum and provides financial and practical support to the group. Local Councillors will be invited to attend the Forum to discuss partnership working and the services provided by the Housing Division. Individual members of the Forum with an interest in a particular aspect of the Housing Service act as 'Tenant Champions'. This will mean taking an active role in the Tenant Improvement Groups to review policy or develop service improvement plans, or by supporting staff in running a focus group.

Regular commitment required to attend meetings, take part in discussions, reading and commenting on documents also sharing information with Community Panels, Local Tenant Groups and/or local people.



Tenant Improvement Groups (TIG)

The Tenant Improvement Groups play a crucial role in the accountability of Housing Services to tenants. They look at performance and plans through the eyes of our customers to see where improvements can be made and make recommendations to Housing Senior Management Team. The groups use feedback and input from customers, such as satisfaction surveys and the views of focus groups, tenant inspectors and other activities.

Tenant Scrutiny Panel

The Tenant Scrutiny Panel is a tenant led group that scrutinises different aspects of the housing service. It is an independent group that decides projects based on performance and customer feedback information. It reports its findings and recommendations to the Senior Housing Management Team.



Performance and Customer Service

This group provides close scrutiny about the performance of the housing management and maintenance services. They look at specific performance targets, satisfaction levels and the cost of services.



Home Repairs and Maintenance

This group monitors all aspects of the repairs and improvements service. This includes performance generally, procurement of works and planned programmes.



Tenancy and Allocations

This group considers the lettings and rent collection service as well as how we manage tenancies.



Neighbourhood and Communities

This group acts to ensure that the neighbourhoods, where our properties are located, are kept to a good standard by providing an active presence, acting quickly to resolve issues and promoting community engagement.

The Tenant Improvement Groups meet at least quarterly and agree and work to an annual forward work plan linked to the delivery of the Housing Service Standards for housing management and maintenance. Each group has two “Tenant Champions”, a reserve Champion and a lead officer from the Council.

Standards for Resources for Tenant Participation

The Council is committed to providing the resources needed to support the Tenant Partnership Agreement and the involvement activities it describes. There is a full time Tenant Participation Officer, whose role is actively to promote participation and involvement. In addition, the whole Housing Division is committed to a customer focused approach in delivering housing services. This means that other officers will support participation and involvement, and work alongside the Tenant Participation Officer.

It is important that the Council achieves good value for money on behalf of the tenants from the resources it puts into involvement. The Housing Services team will monitor closely the relationship between costs and the benefits which come from involvement activities.

We will regularly review our expenditure on tenant participation activities and provide the Borough Wide Tenants' Forum with an annual budget report detailing all income and expenditure in relation to tenant participation. We will also undertake an annual Tenant Participation Impact Assessment with tenants, which will evaluate the cost and benefits of all involvement activities. These will be ranked using a simple evaluation system scoring the impact of each involvement activity and a value for money assessment. The outcomes of the impact assessment will be used to inform the following year's Tenant Participation Action Plan.

Financial help

All tenants groups will receive, as a minimum, the following support from the Housing Services:

- **Help with invitations, posters etc. for local meetings**
- **Payment of room hire if necessary**
- **Payment for specialist services (e.g. signers for British Sign Language)**
- **Reimbursement of reasonable expenses (e.g. transport, childcare and carers' costs)**
- **Office facilities, including stationary, photocopying, telephone**
- **A small start up grant, if required, for constituted tenants' groups**
- **Provision of office accommodation where facilities are available***
- **Training costs – training needs will be identified and an annual plan agreed by the Council. The Council will pay only for those courses agreed within the annual training plan.**



*These office facilities will be made available for the use of all tenants living within the local area.

The Tenant Participation Officer will organise transport and technical help for people who need it e.g. interpreters, signing for the deaf etc. All reasonable costs incurred for the above, along with any carer expenses, will be met by the Council. Any reasonable out of pocket expenses will also be considered for payment by the Council on completion of an expenses form, which is available from the Tenant Participation Officer.

An annual budget will be made available for locally agreed neighbourhood improvements. Financial systems and local consultation will be put in place to make sure that this budget is spent wisely on projects which tenants want.

Advise, Information and Support

The Tenant Participation Officer will;

- **Offer and coordinate useful sources of advice (including independent advice from organisations like Tenant Participation Advisory Service TPAS)**
- **Work with tenants and colleagues within the Council to develop and encourage support for local tenant networks**
- **Seek out useful sources of training and good practice from regional and national tenant involvement organisations**
- **Send a newsletter to all tenants containing a range of useful information, along with contact numbers for sources of further advice. The newsletter will also give all tenants an update of issues discussed by the Forum and any changes made as a result of feedback from tenants.**

Training and Capacity Building

Resources will be made available to provide training and capacity building for tenant representatives and tenant groups. Grants and other sources of external support will be explored to support the training budget. The quality of training and the benefits it brings will be evaluated as part of the annual Tenant Participation Assessment.

A review of training needs will be undertaken annually. The Tenant Participation Officer will work with the Borough Wide Tenants' Forum, Community Panels and local groups to identify training needs. Where there are training opportunities that would benefit Councillors and staff, arrangements will be made for joint courses. Information about the courses on offer will be given to the Borough Wide Tenants' Forum and other tenant groups.

Standards for Meetings

The Borough Wide Tenants' Forum and Community Panels will each have a written constitution to set out how they will conduct business. A Chairperson will be elected and will chair all meetings. An agenda with clear objectives will be set out and will be co-ordinated by the Chairperson. Provision will be made at the end of the agenda to allow for any other business.

Other informal or occasional meetings will elect a person to lead the meeting and will agree the purpose of the meeting at the outset.

For all meetings, an attendance sheet will be completed to ensure that a copy of minutes, along with any other information requested, is sent to everyone attending. At the Forum and Community Panels, the Secretary (or Tenant Participation Officer) will take minutes of the meeting and distribute these with any other relevant documents to all concerned within an agreed timescale. The Forum's minutes will be distributed within ten days after the monthly meeting has taken place. The minutes will contain a clear action plan to deal with matters arising. Target dates for action points will be agreed at each meeting.

Publicising meetings and making them accessible

The Forum and Community Panel members will be responsible for publicising meetings in good time, with details to be advertised in prominent locations. Other local and occasional meetings will be well publicised to enable as many tenants as possible to attend. The purpose of meetings will be made clear on posters, invitations and agendas.

The venue for any meeting should be accessible, so as to not exclude anyone for any reason (e.g. people who are disabled or partially sighted etc.) Facilities such as hearing loops should be made available, whenever possible. We will plan involvement activities at times and in locations that suit tenants and leaseholders, recognising that they are volunteers and give their time freely.

A standing invitation will be extended to all local Councillors to attend meetings in their areas. Councillors will be invited to attend Forum meetings three times a year. Minutes will also be circulated to local Councillors.

Fair and democratic meetings

It is important that meetings are chaired in line with the agreed Code of Conduct and that everyone has a chance to have their say. Chairs will receive training to enable them to be effective. The Chair will ensure the meeting is run in a democratic way and that everyone's views are given consideration and discussed in a fair manner. Minutes and information will be made available.

Standards for Information

Good quality, comprehensive and easy-to-read information is central to achieve involvement. Information will be widely and freely available. Tenants and the Council are committed to providing accessible information which is clear and which avoids jargon and any form of racist, sexist or other biased language. Information will also be available in large print, on CD, in translation, or through face-to-face discussion. The Council will provide tenants with any information requested, so long as it is available and its disclosure does not breach confidentiality. An 'open government' policy will be adopted by the Council in its provision of information to tenants. Important documents such as the Tenants' Handbook and a summary of this Partnership Agreement will be provided for all tenants. A copy of this Partnership Agreement will be available on request from the Council's offices and will be available on the Council's website. In addition, there is a specific Tenant Web Page on the website. Minutes of the Borough Wide Tenants' Forum and local Community Panels will be placed on the website and will be available on request.

Key issues will be highlighted frequently in local newspapers, north talk and the tenants' newsletter. Policy reports relating to the Housing Service will be available to tenants in advance of Council Board meetings. Housing Services will produce an Induction Pack for the Tenants' Forum and will produce a similar pack for Community Panels.

Information will be timely and adequate – this means that enough time will be allowed and enough information provided for proper consultation and participation to take place. Notices of meetings or other events will be sent out well in advance.

Standards for Tenants Groups

A written Constitution

The Borough Wide Tenants' Forum and the Community Panels have an agreed written Constitution. This helps ensure that they exercise their decision-making role effectively. The Constitution sets out the aims, powers, membership and procedures for meetings. A Code of Conduct is attached to the Constitution.

Diversity and Equality Policies (including race equality policies)

All members of the Forum, Community Panels and informal Tenant Groups should uphold equal opportunity and respect diversity. Tenants' groups should promote and work towards the elimination of all forms of racism and discrimination, and strive towards good relations amongst all members of the community. Training needs will be identified and offered to enable all those involved to keep up to date with the relevant policies and legislation.

Regular Elections

Committee members and officers of the Forum and Community Panels will be elected at the Annual General Meetings.

- **The Forum will hold their AGM at its first meeting after 1st May. Not less than 28 days notice will be given in writing to all existing Members.**
- **Community Panels will hold their AGM between 1st March and 30th April each year. Not less than 28 days notice of the AGM shall be given in writing to Members, Tenants and Leaseholders, living within the area.**

Open financial records (and annual accounts if appropriate)

A Treasurer will maintain the financial records for the Forum and each Community Panel if necessary. Financial records will be open to audit by a local authority finance officer.

Other tenants' meetings

The Council will support informal Tenants' Groups as well as the Forum and Community Panels. Officers will work with the tenants involved in these informal groups, agreeing the frequency and topics of meetings and assisting them in meeting good standards of conduct.

Membership clearly open to all tenants

Membership of all tenants' groups will be free and open to all tenants and leaseholders regardless of age, gender, nationality, race, sexual orientation, disability or religious opinions. Non-tenant residents will also be invited to attend certain meetings. However, these residents will not be able to vote on matters regarding housing issues.

Being effective – meeting objectives and acquiring skills to work effectively

Where the Forum and Community Panels agree objectives and Action Plans, these will be reviewed from time to time. Tenants involved in decision-making groups agree to develop their skills and understanding by attending the necessary training arranged by the Council.

Standards for Housing Services

Tenants can play an important role in the delivery and improvement of housing services. Tenants will be consulted on an equal and open basis. Where they get involved in developing standards and improving services, they will be seen as equal partners with the Council's officers and members. However, it is recognised that the final decision rests with the Elected Members. The Council values the input of tenants in the decision making processes and will provide feedback where appropriate.

Tenants will be consulted and can be involved in the decision-making process in the following areas:

- **Developing the Council's housing policies, Strategy and Asset Management Plan**
- **Renovation and maintenance improvement programmes**
- **Budget, finance and rent setting**
- **Management of housing services (including repairs, tenancy management and the Council's Letting Scheme, tenant involvement, neighbourhood management services and customer services).**

The Council's service standards set out the standard of service you can expect to receive from the Council as a landlord. It includes the allocation of our properties as well as their management and maintenance. We will revise our customer promises annually in consultation with tenants. A copy of the standards is available from the Council offices and on our website www.northwarks.gov.uk

Comments, Compliments and Complaints

The Council's Complaints Procedure covers all complaints relating to compliance with the Agreement. These may be about the lack of consultation or participation. They could include specific comments (for example, the Council changing heating without consultation), or general (for example, the Council is not supporting Community Panels as set out in the Agreement), or a complaint about any Tenants' Group. Publicity contained within the Tenants' Handbook, and the leaflet 'Complaints and Compliments' will ensure tenants are fully aware of this procedure. A report will be made to the Forum on any complaints received and investigated. Compliments will also be recorded and reviewed as a way of reinforcing good standards of service across the whole Borough.

The Tenant Partnership Agreement and Action Plan

The Agreement and Action Plan sets out the aspirations and targets for Tenant Involvement. It is important that we monitor, evaluate and measure the success of this Agreement. Progress will be monitored against the Action Plan's targets and standards, as well as by using National and Local Performance Indicators. The Action Plan will be monitored and evaluated quarterly by the Borough Wide Tenants' Forum.

Housing Services

The performance of the Council's Housing Services Division will be monitored by the Performance TIG, with the Tenant Scrutiny Panel scrutinising different aspects of the housing service. The findings and recommendations from the Tenant Scrutiny Panel will be considered by the Housing Senior Management Team and an action plan agreed. The agreed action plan will be reported to the Borough Wide Tenants' Forum. The relevant Tenant Improvement Group will oversee and monitor to ensure the action plan recommendations are implemented. They will provide an update on progress and any concerns to the Borough Wide Tenants' Forum.



- The percentage of tenants satisfied with the overall service provided.
- The percentage of tenants satisfied with the opportunities for participation in management and decision making.

A postal survey will be sent to all tenants and will include the above indicators. A full survey will be carried out every three years in accordance with Government guidelines and a shorter version every year. The results will be fed back to tenants in October in the Annual Report and through our newsletters.

Local Performance Indicators - topic	National Performance Indicators
Tenant satisfaction with Tenant Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The percentage of tenants satisfied that views are taken into account. ➤ The percentage of tenants who have heard of tenant participation compacts. ➤ The percentage of tenants who are satisfied with local tenant participation.
Tenants Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The number of Tenants' Groups recognised by the Council. ➤ The percentage of Tenants/Leaseholders covered by a recognised Tenant Group. ➤ The number of newly formed Tenants' Groups recognised by the Council in any one year.
Support to Tenants' Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The number of tenants attending training courses or seminars arranged by the Council. ➤ The level of tenant satisfaction with the training courses arranged by the Council.

Structures and Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The number of Tenant Representatives on the Forum. ➤ The number of tenants getting involved in panels, local groups and “Talking Tenants”.
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The number and percentage of Tenants responding to surveys. ➤ The number of editions of the Tenants’ newsletter, issued in a year.

In addition to the National and Local Performance Indicators listed, there are a number of other ways in which we will monitor tenant involvement including:

- Monitoring and evaluating different approaches to tenant participation and involvement using an impact assessment
- Monitoring and assessing the outcome of consultation and surveys to find out whether or not change has resulted
- Comparing performance with other Housing organisations
- Having a system in place to address dissatisfaction or non-compliance with the Agreement
- Monitoring all complaints relating to housing services
- Monitor Equal Opportunities

A detailed Action Plan for tenant involvement will be produced annually. This will be monitored by the Borough Wide Tenants' Forum.

The key actions for 2016/17 are:

- Produce two tenant newsletters focusing on the work of the Borough Wide Tenants' Forum and good news stories
- Organise and promote a Tenants Gardening Competition
- Undertake tenant meetings across the Borough, find out what is important to tenants, review effectiveness and make recommendations
- Undertake an impact assessment to evaluate the effectiveness of tenant participation activities
- Review the arrangements for the Tenant Scrutiny Panel
- Review the outcomes from the Tenant Improvement Groups and produce forward work plans for each group
- Look at ways of encouraging more tenants to get involved; appoint new members to the Borough Wide Tenants' Forum
- Review the effectiveness and outcomes from the Community Panel activities and monitor expenditure
- Review the constitution for the Community Panels and the Borough Wide Tenants Forum
- Produce an Annual Report to inform tenants of the performance of Housing Services
- Review tenant participation information on the website and ensure it is kept up to date





North Warwickshire Borough Council Housing Staff

Angela Coates Assistant Director of Housing

Telephone: 01827 719369 Email: angelacoates@northwarks.gov.uk

Helen Hughes Housing Services Manager

Telephone: 01827 719494 Email: helenhughes@northwarks.gov.uk

Martyn Juggins Response Repairs Manager

Telephone: 01827 719308 Email: martynjuggins@northwarks.gov.uk

Geoff Joseph Planned Investment Manager

Telephone: 01827 719281 Email: geoffjoseph@northwarks.gov.uk

Julie Richardson Neighbourhoods & Tenant Involvement Officer

Telephone: 01827 719402 Email: julierichardson@northwarks.gov.uk

Shirley Gilbert Performance & Quality Officer

Telephone: 01827 719211 Email: shirleygilbert@northwarks.gov.uk

Caroline Morris Tenancy & Neighbourhood Services Manager

Telephone: 01827 719351 Email: carolinemorris@northwarks.gov.uk

Mandy Rashid Housing Options & Lettings Team Leader

Telephone: 01827 719313 Email: mandyrashid@northwarks.gov.uk

One Stop Shop – Customer Contact Centre

Telephone: 01827 715341 Email: customerservices@northwarks.gov.uk

Repairs Hotline - Emergency Out of Hours Repairs

Telephone: 01827 719299 Email: housingrepairs@northwarks.gov.uk



Borough Wide Tenants' Forum Members

Mrs Pat Cotterill – Chair

21 Rowland Court, Old Arley, Nr Coventry, CV7 8PF

Tel: 01676 541951 Email: arleytenantsassociation@yahoo.co.uk

Mr John Holt – Vice Chair

48 Priory Walk, Mancetter, Atherstone, CV9 1QB

Tel: 01827 716822 Email: sandraelaineholt@yahoo.co.uk

Mrs Vera Robinson – Treasurer

12 Rowland Court, Old Arley, Nr Coventry, CV7 8PF

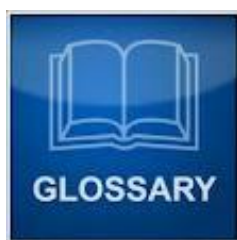
Tel: 01676 541631 Email: arleytenantsassociation@yahoo.co.uk

Mr Gerry Brough – Secretary

19 St Marys Road, Fillongley, Nr Coventry, CV7 8EY

Tel: 01676 542563 Email: gerrybrough@gmail.com





Action Plan	Summary of action to be taken - should be SMART-specific, measurable, action-orientated, realistic and time-bound
Allocations	Process of allocating empty properties
Audit Commission	An independent public body responsible for ensuring public money is spent wisely on local government services such as housing (also on health, police and other services)
Board	A Council Board of Borough Councillors that determines policy for the local authority
Borough Wide Tenants Forum	Forum made up of tenant representatives of local groups and individual tenants
Community Panel	A local group for tenants and other residents working to improve housing services and other community priorities
Customer Involvement Strategy	A strategy setting out the way the Council's Housing Service will meet its objectives to offer customer- focused services and good opportunities for tenant involvement
Decent Homes	A standard set out by the government for homes owned by councils and housing associations – includes standards for the outside of buildings (wind and weather proof), for warmth and insulation, and for reasonably modern kitchen and bathrooms
Environmental Works	Works carried out to improve the environment or neighbourhood
Housing Policy	An agreed method of achieving the objectives of the Council in relation to the provision of its housing service

Housing Strategy	Document produced by the Borough Council outlining the strategy it will undertake to meet housing need in North Warwickshire
HRA Business Plan	Document produced by the Borough Council outlining the current status of the Council's service to its tenants, its resources and the condition of its stock. HRA stands for 'housing revenue account'
Impact Assessment	Evaluations of the outcomes from tenant participation activities undertaken
Improvement Programme	Works carried out to council homes to bring them up to modern standards (e.g. bathroom or kitchen replacement)
Leaseholder	An individual'(s) who has purchased the lease of a former council dwelling (usually a flat)
Lettings	See "Allocations"
Local Tenant Group	Informal group of tenants
Local Strategic Partnership	The Local Strategic Partnership is a body which ensures that organisations(voluntary and statutory) work together to provide services for North Warwickshire
Mystery Shopping	A method of testing the quality of services whereby an individual (for example, an existing customer, or an independent person) will ask for information, or test out the process of reporting a repair or visit neighbourhoods to examine caretaking standards – to see how well services are being delivered
Neighbourhood Services or Wardens	A new service introduced by the Council in 2006/7 to offer a responsive local service around our neighbourhoods
"North Talk"	The regular North Warwickshire Borough Council newsletter sent to all households in the Borough
Performance Plan	Document outlining performance standards to be achieved by the Council (published annually)

Scrutiny	A detailed study of an activity or service area undertaken by an independent group of tenants
Sheltered Housing	Housing provided specifically for those with special needs because of age or disability
Stakeholder	Individual or organisation with an interest in a particular service (e.g. tenants, contractors, staff, councillors)
Stock Condition Survey	A survey of the Council's properties undertaken every five years to assess the condition. This informs the Council's capital programme for improvements
Tenancy Agreement	A legal agreement between a landlord and tenant setting out the obligations of both parties
Tenant Association	A group of tenants who have decided to adopt a formal constitution and form an association
Tenant Champions	Individual tenants selected from the Borough Wide Tenants Forum or Community Panels with a particular interest in or knowledge about an aspect of the housing service – they will work with staff and councillors on working groups and represent the interests of tenants on that particular topic
Tenant Partnership Agreement	Agreement between the Council and its tenants describing how tenants will be involved in the decision-making processes affecting the delivery of the housing service
Tenant Partnership Advisory Service	TPAS is a not for profit membership organisation that provides information, consultancy, training and conferences on all aspects of involving tenants in their housing management
Tenant Improvement Group	A group of tenants working in partnership with the Council to review a particular aspect of the housing service
Tenants Link	Newsletter published by Housing Services together with an Editorial Panel of tenants distributed to all tenants
Void	Empty property awaiting allocation to new tenant



North Warwickshire
Borough Council

North Warwickshire Borough Council and the Borough Wide Tenants' Forum are committed to working in partnership with tenants to ensure that our neighbourhoods are places where people choose to live and can contribute to their community.

How to contact us:

**The Council House, South Street, Atherstone, Warwickshire,
CV9 1DE**

By Telephone on: 01827 715341

Out of Hours on: 01827 719299

By Email at: housingservices@northwarks.gov.uk

Our Website at: www.northwarks.gov.uk

This document is available in other formats on request

Agenda Item No 15

Resources Board

23 May 2016

**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 16

Adoption of an Updated Write-Off Policy – Report of the Assistant Director (Community Services)

Paragraph 3 – by reason of the report relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

Agenda Item No 17

Irrecoverable Local Taxation Debts – Report of the Assistant Director (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).