To: **Deputy Leader and Members of the Resources Board (Councillors Moore, Morson, Davis, N Dirveiks, Forwood, Johnston, Smith, Watkins and Winter)**
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

2 April 2012

The Resources Board will meet in the Committee Room at The Council House, South Street, Atherstone, Warwickshire on Monday, 2 April 2012 at 6.30pm.

AGENDA

1 **Evacuation Procedure.**

2 **Apologies for Absence / Members away on official Council business.**

3 **Declarations of Personal or Prejudicial Interests.** (Any personal interests arising from the membership of various Parish Councils of Councillors Davis (Atherstone), Moore (Baddesley) and Morson and Winter (Dordon) are deemed to be declared at this meeting).

4 **Request for discussion and approval of remaining En Bloc items.**

5 **Minutes of the Resources Board held on 30 January 2012** (copy herewith) to be approved and signed by the Chairman.

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

6 **The Council House and Old Bank House – Revised Fire Evacuation Procedures** – Report of the Assistant Director (Streetscape)

Summary

Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Services have changed their policy on attending calls from automatic fire alarms. As a consequence, amendments are required to the Fire Evacuation Procedures for both the Council House and Old Bank House. Members of the Resources Board are asked to approve the attached revised procedures.

The Contact Officer for this report is Richard Dobbs (7192440).

7 **Depot Relocation – Lower House Farm** – Report of the Assistant Director (Streetscape)

Summary

This report updates Members on the results of Warwickshire County Council's tendering process in relation to Lower House Farm and recommends that Members confirm their agreement to the relocation of the Council's refuse collection and garden waste collection services to the new facility once it is completed next year.

The Contact Officer for this report is Richard Dobbs (719440).

8 **Charges for Use of Sheltered Scheme Communal Rooms** – Report of the Assistant Director (Housing)

Summary

This report asks the Board to reconsider its decision to increase the charges for the use of the Council's sheltered scheme communal rooms.

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

9 **Internal Audit – Plan of Work for 2012-13** – Report of the Deputy Chief Executive

Summary

The report explains the basis upon which the Audit Plan for 2012-13 has been developed, using a variety of sources of information to ensure that all appropriate aspects of service activity are embraced as part of the approved three year review programme.

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

10 **Information and Communications Technology Strategy 2012 – 2015** – Report of the Assistant Director (Corporate Services).

Summary

The report presents the Draft Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Strategy for 2012 – 2015 to Members for their consideration and comment.

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

11 **Right to Buy Regulations** – Report of the Assistant Director (Housing)

Summary

This report provides Members with information about the Government's changes to the Right to Buy being introduced by the Government.

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

PART B – ITEMS FOR EN BLOC DECISIONS (YELLOW PAPERS)

12 **Internal Audit – Performance for Third Quarter 2011-12** – Report of the Deputy Chief Executive

Summary

The report allows the Board to monitor the progress for the Council's Internal Audit function against the agreed plan of work for the year.

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

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

Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update of the Financial Inclusion activity undertaken by the Council and its partners in the last twelve to twenty four months.

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

14 **Minutes of the Housing Sub-Committee held on 13 March 2012 (copy herewith) to be received and noted.**

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 **Requests to Purchase Land** – Report of the Assistant Director (Housing)

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

17 **Update on Industrial Units Scrutiny Project** – Report of the Assistant Director (Streetscape)

The Contact Officer for this report is Richard Dobbs (719440)

18 **The Arcade** – Report of the Assistant Director (Streetscape)

The Contact Officer for this report is Richard Dobbs (719440).

JERRY HUTCHINSON
Chief Executive

NORTH WARWICKSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE RESOURCES BOARD **30 January 2012**

Present: Councillor Moore in the Chair

Councillors N Dirveiks, Johnston, Smith, Morson, Watkins and Winter.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Davis.

66 Declarations of Personal or Prejudicial Interests

Any personal interests arising from the membership of various Parish Councils of Councillors Moore (Baddesley) and Morson and Winter (Dordon) were deemed to be declared at the meeting.

67 Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of the Board held on 10 October and 21 November 2011, copies having previously been circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

68 Corporate Plan 2012-13

The Board's approval was sought for the Corporate Plan Key Actions for which the Board was responsible. Members were also asked to agree the 2012-13 Service Plans for the Finance and Human Resources, Community Services and Corporate Services Divisions and the Internal Audit Service.

Recommendation to the Executive Board:

a That those Corporate Plan Key Actions, as set out in Appendix A to the report of the Chief Executive, for which the Resources Board is responsible be agreed;

Resolved:

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

69 Proposed Removal of the Extended Hours Telephone Service

The Assistant Chief Executive (Community Services) sought approval for a proposal to remove the current extended out of hours telephone service currently provided by Warwickshire County Council via its contact centre locations in Kings House, Bedworth, between the hours of 5.15pm to 8.00pm, Monday to Friday, and 9.00am to 4.00pm on a Saturday.

Resolved:

That the removal of the extended hours arrangement for telephone contact be agreed with effect from 1 April 2012.

70 General Fund Fees and Charges 2012/13

The Assistant Chief Executive and Solicitor to the Council, Assistant Director (Streetscape), Assistant Chief Executive (Community Services), Assistant Director (Housing) and Assistant Director (Finance and Human Resources) reported on the fees and charges for 2011/12 and the proposed fees and charges for 2012/13.

Resolved:

That the schedule of fees and charges for 2012/13, set out in the report of the Assistant Chief Executive and Solicitor to the Council, Assistant Director (Streetscape), Assistant Chief Executive (Community Services), Assistant Director (Housing) and Assistant Director (Finance and Human Resources) be agreed.

71 General Fund Revenue Estimates 2012/13 – Services Recharged Across All Boards

The Deputy Chief Executive reported on the revised budget for 2011/12 and gave an estimate of expenditure for 2012/13, together with forward commitments for 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16 for those services recharged across all Boards.

Resolved:

a That the revised budget for 2011/12 be accepted; and

b That the Estimates of Expenditure for 2012/13, as submitted, be included in the budget to be brought before the meeting of the Executive Board on 6 February 2012.

72 General Fund Revenue Estimates 2012/13 – Services Remaining within the Board

The Deputy Chief Executive reported on the revised budget for 2011/12 and gave an estimate of expenditure for 2012/13, together with forward commitments for 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16 for those services remaining within the Board.

Resolved:

a That the revised budget for 2011/12 be accepted; and

b That the Estimates of Expenditure for 2012/13, as submitted, be included in the budget to be brought before the meeting of the Executive Board on 6 February 2012.

73 General Fund Revenue Estimates 2012/13 - Summary

The Deputy Chief Executive reported on the revised budget for 2011/12 and gave an estimate of expenditure for 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16.

Recommendation to Executive Board:

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

a The revised budget for 2011/12; and

b The schedule of expenditure requirements totalling £8,957,280 for 2012/13.

74 Housing Revenue Account Estimates 2012/13 and Rent Review

The Deputy Chief Executive reported on the revised budget for 2011/12 and gave an estimate of expenditure for 2012/13, together with forward commitments for 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16.

Resolved:

a That the revised estimates for 2011/12 be accepted;

b That rent increases, calculated on the basis that the Council will continue to move properties towards their individual target rents, be adopted;

c That the proposed fees and charges for 2012/13 as set out in Appendix E to the report of the Deputy Chief Executive, be approved;

d That the service charges for the cleaning of communal areas, as detailed in Appendix F to the report of the Deputy Chief Executive, be approved from April 2012;

e That the service charges for window cleaning, as detailed in Appendix G to the report of the Deputy Chief Executive, be approved from April 2012; and

f that the Estimates of Expenditure for 2012/13, as submitted, be approved.

75 Housing Self-Financing

The Deputy Chief Executive detailed the payment the Authority would be required to make as part of the self-financing settlement and asked the Board to indicate how it would wish to use any surpluses that were generated.

Resolved:

That the Housing Sub-Committee recommendation to use the surplus to repay debt and support new build be endorsed.

76 Capital Programme 2012/13 to 2014/15

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

Resolved:

a That the schemes previously approved within the Council's three-year capital programme be supported;

b That the inclusion of the new scheme within the Council's provisional three year capital programme be supported; and

c That the schemes which will not be included within the capital programme be noted.

77 Treasury Management Update - Quarter 3 2011/12

The Deputy Chief Executive detailed the Treasury Management activity during the first nine months of 2011/12.

Resolved:

That the Treasury Management Update Report for the first nine months of 2011/12 be noted.

78 **Internal Audit - Benchmarking**

The Deputy Chief Executive provided the Board with information from a benchmarking exercise undertaken to assess the performance of the Internal Audit function against other similar Councils.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

79 **Progress Report on Achievement of Corporate Plan and Performance Indicator Targets April – December 2011**

The Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive informed Members of the progress with the achievement of the Corporate Plan and Performance Indicator targets relevant to the Resources Board for April to December 2011.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

80 **Treasury Management Strategy Statement, Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy for 2012/13**

The Deputy Chief Executive outlined the Treasury Management Strategy, Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement and Investment Strategy for 2012/13.

Resolved:

a That the proposed strategies for 2012/13 be approved; and

Recommended:

b That the Council adopts the 2011 Code of Practice on Treasury Management.

81 **Minutes of the Housing Sub-Committee held on 20 December 2011 and 17 January 2012**

The minutes of the Housing Sub-Committee held on 20 December 2011 and 17 January 2012 were received and noted.

82 Exclusion of the Public and Press

Resolved:

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

83 Introduction of a Supported Housing Scheme for People with Learning Disabilities

The Assistant Director (Housing) provided the Board with information about Warwickshire County Council's proposals about how to meet the housing needs of people with Learning Disabilities and how the Council could act to assist.

Resolved:

a That Warwickshire County Council's proposal to introduce a new supported housing scheme for people with Learning Disabilities ('KeyRing') be supported;

b That when required the Housing Division can lease a flat from the Council's own stock to the 'KeyRing' organisation to enable them to employ a Community Volunrteer support worked; and

c That Warwickshire County Council be requested to establish a referral panel for the scheme, which would include a representative from the Housing Division with one of its aims to ensure there is a balanced membership of the local KeyRing scheme.

84 Irrecoverable Housing and Local Taxation Debts

The Assistant Chief Executive detailed the amounts recommended for write off, in accordance with the write off policy agreed by the former Finance Sub-Committee in September 2000.

Resolved:

a That the write-off of 8 balances over £1,250 totalling £10,471.18 in respect of unpaid Council Tax be approved;

b That the write-off of 8 balances over £1,250 totalling £24,407.50 in respect of unpaid Non Domestic Rated be approved;

c **That the write off of 5 balances over £1,250 totalling £14,591.16 in respect of overpaid Housing Benefit be approved;**

d **That the write off of 68 balances under £1,250 totalling £19,555.19 in respect of unpaid Council Tax be noted;**

e **That the write off of 4 balances under £1,250 totalling £2,038.43 in respect of unpaid Non Domestic Rates be noted;**

f **That the write off of 78 balances under £1,250 totalling £11,821.82 in respect of overpaid Housing Benefit be noted;**

g **That the write back of 9 balances totalling £1,072.96 in respect of Council Tax be noted;**

h **That the write back of 5 balances totalling £427.58 in respect of Non Domestic Rates be noted; and**

i **That the write back of 2 balances totalling £221.56 in respect of overpaid Housing Benefit be noted.**

J Moore
Chairman

Agenda Item No 6

Resources Board

2 April 2012

Report of the
Assistant Director (Streetscape)

The Council House and Old Bank House – Revised Fire Evacuation Procedures

1 Summary

1.1 Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Services have changed their policy on attending calls from automatic fire alarms. As a consequence, amendments are required to the Fire Evacuation Procedures for both the Council House and Old Bank House. Members of the Resources Board are asked to approve the attached revised procedures.

Recommendation to the Board

That the Revised Fire Evacuation Procedures for The Council House and Old Bank House be approved.

2 Report

2.1 Background

2.1.1 Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Services have implemented changes to their policies of sending Fire Engines and Crews to unconfirmed fire calls from automatic fire alarm systems. The new arrangement was introduced as a response to the service attending excessive numbers of false alarm activations which had become a drain on their resources.

3 Automatic Fire Alarms

3.1 Automatic Fire Alarms (AFA's) are linked to an alarm receiving centre. When activated, the alarm receiving centre automatically contacts the appropriate Fire and Rescue Service who previously have responded by sending Fire Engines and Crews to the location.

3.2 Although most organisations perception is that the purpose of AFA's is to summon professional help, this in fact is not the case. Warwickshire Fire and Rescue's Service's definition of AFA's is
"*that the primary purpose of an automatic fire alarm system is to ensure that the persons within a building are notified quickly so they can escape safely. They are* ***not*** *systems for requesting the attendance of fire engines.*

4 Changes to Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Services' Attendance Policy and Implications

5.1 The revised arrangements mean that, between the hours of 7:00am and 8:00pm, Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Services will **not** respond to AFA's unless a separate call is made, via 999, confirming a fire or any other emergency requiring rescue assistance. Outside of these hours Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Services will respond to AFA's as per the previous arrangements.

5.2 Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Services have provided advice on actions which building owners need to take following the changes which include a safe and tested procedure for investigating the cause of the alarm. As a consequence, amendments to the Fire Evacuation Procedures for both the Council House and Old Bank House are necessary.

6 Revised Fire Evacuation Procedures for the Council House and Old Bank House.

... 6.1 The proposed revisions to Fire Evacuation Procedures for the Council House and Old Bank House are attached (Appendix A and B).

6.2 Both procedures incorporate flow charts which detail the actions to be taken in the event of unscheduled fire alarm activations, and include actions to safely investigate the cause of the alarm activation.

7 Report Implications

7.1 Risk Management Implications

7.1.1 The fire evacuation procedure sets out the Council's approach to managing any potential risks to both employees and buildings if a fire is discovered.

The Contact Officer for this report is Richard Dobbs (719440).

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

Fire Evacuation Procedure
for
Old Bank House

Page

Fire Evacuation of Building Procedure Statement 3

Fire Action Notices 4

Fire Evacuation Zones – Old Bank House 5

Fire Assembly Location Points – Old Bank House 6

Duties of All Employees (unless you have a designated role) 7

Duties of Fire Marshals and Deputies 8

Duties of Incident Control 9

Flow Chart 10

Duties of Community Support Control Centre Staff 11

Duties of Contractors Working Out of Hours 12

Duties of the Chair Person or Trainer of any Meeting or Training 13

Fire Evacuation of Building Procedure Statement

As far as is reasonably practical, all steps will be taken by the Council to prevent or minimise the possibility of fire within Council premises.

The Council acknowledges that despite these measures, it cannot be assumed that fire will never break out. Should a fire break out, systems are in place to warn and guide staff to safety via designated means of escape. A continual or intermittent ringing of bells will sound to warn that there is a fire and you must evacuate the building.

The fire alarm system, fire extinguishers, emergency lighting, evacuation signage, fire doors and evacuation procedures are all reviewed and will be tested regularly.

This procedure will be reviewed annually or as a consequence of a change in the buildings use, layout or opening times.

Assistant Directors that have employees working in zones should co-ordinate provision for Fire Marshals in each zone, one per storey exit plus a deputy. Facilities Management and Human Resources will monitor this to ensure that adequate Fire Marshals are appointed and will alert Assistant Directors to possible shortfalls.

All staff will be given fire safety and prevention training. Fire Marshals will be given practical and theoretical training to prepare them further in carrying out their duties. Training will be co-ordinated by Human Resources and all staff will be trained every 3 years.

Additionally, staff should be encouraged to report to their Fire Marshal any concerns or ways of improving fire safety or prevention within their area of the office.

Any suggestions on ways of improving this procedure are welcome and should be directed to Facilities Management.

Fire Action Notices

‘Fire Action’ and ‘Your assembly point is’ notices are displayed at every storey exit at Old Bank House.

Ensuring the notices are displayed and the fire assembly points are displayed on the notices is co-ordinated by Facilities Management.

Example of the notices:

Fire Action

! On discovering a fire you must:

- Raise the alarm immediately by breaking the glass in the nearest call point.
- Extinguish the fire using equipment provided, if possible and safe to do so.
- Call the Fire and Rescue Service, Landline - (9)999 or Mobile - 999.
- Evacuate the building by the shortest, safest route.
- Report to Assembly Point H (Incident Control) and advise the Incident Controller of the location and details of the fire.
- Report to your designated Assembly Point for roll call.
- Remain at the assembly point until authorised to leave.

! On hearing the fire alarm bells you must:

- Evacuate the building by the shortest, safest route. (Escort your visitors to Assembly Point G).
- Report to your designated Assembly Point for roll call.
- Remain at the assembly point until authorised to leave.

Remember:

! Close all doors where possible but do not delay the evacuation.

! Your safety is our first concern.

🛇 DO NOT take risks.

🛇 DO NOT stop to collect personal belongings.

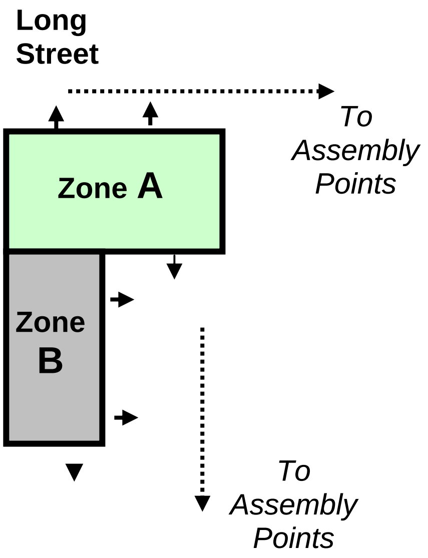
🛇 DO NOT re-enter the building for any reason until authorised to do so.

Your assembly point is

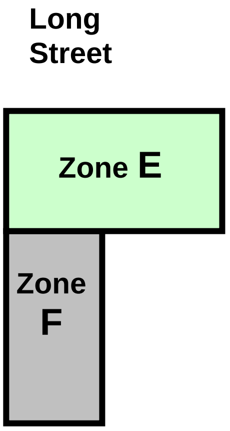
(A, B, C, D, E, F, G inserted as per the zone)

Fire Evacuation Zones – Old Bank House

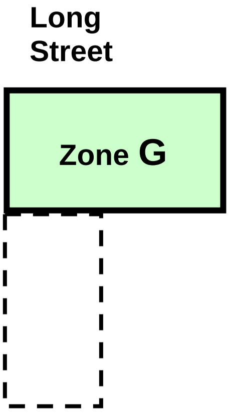
Ground Floor


Long Street
Zone A
Zone B
To Assembly Points
To Assembly Points

First Floor

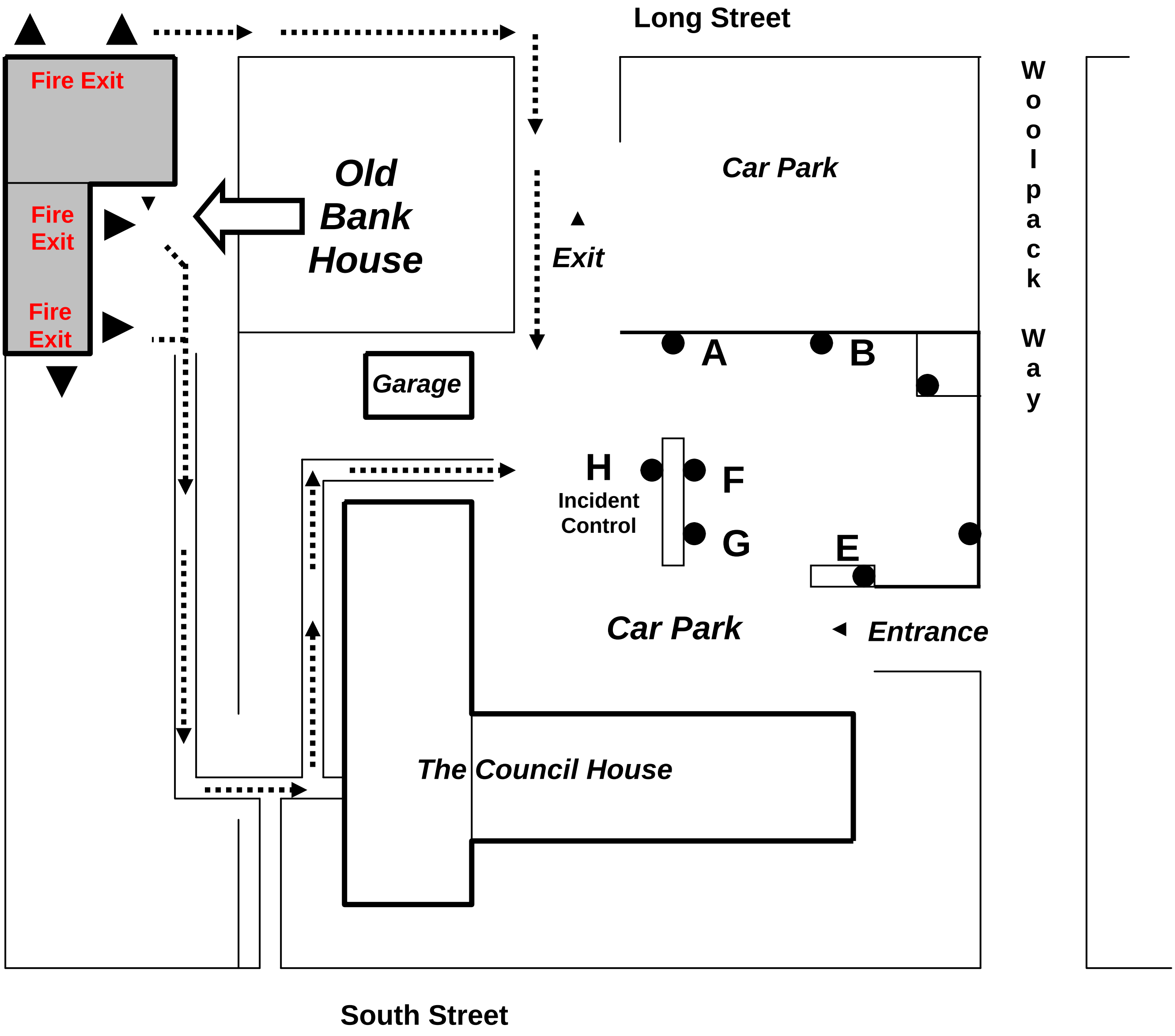

Long Street
Zone E
Zone F

Second Floor


Long Street
Zone G

Zone G:	**Includes Councillors & Contractors**
Zone H:	**Incident Control**

Fire Assembly Location Points – Old Bank House


Long Street
Fire Exit
Fire Exit
Fire Exit
Old Bank House
Car Park
Woolpack Way
Exit
A
B
Garage
H
Incident Control
F
G
E
Car Park
Entrance
The Council House
South Street

Duties of All Employees (unless you have a designated role)

All members of staff have a responsibility for fire safety within the Council.

This responsibility includes:

- Ensure that members of your team know your whereabouts during the day,

- Ensure that your visitors have been signed in/out at reception every time they enter and exit the building,

- Ensure that any Contractors working for you on the premises are aware of;
  what the fire alarm sounds like (a bell),
  the ‘Fire Action’ notices - what they must do and
  their fire assembly point - G.

- Ensure that if you are working out of hours or during weekends that you sign in/out of the ‘out of hours’ log every time you enter/exit the building.

- Adhere to fire prevention rules and procedures,

- Attend Fire Awareness courses when requested,

- Report any health and safety issues to your line manager or the HR Officer.

Duties of Fire Marshals and Deputies

Fire safety and prevention training will provide fire marshals and their deputies with the necessary skills for performing their responsibilities and tasks.

This responsibility includes:

- Keep an up to date roll call list of all staff within your zone in the document stored into ‘Trim’,
- Notify Facilities Management when any changes are made to the roll call list document.
- Attend Fire Marshal training and refresher training, as required,
- Promote fire awareness and fire prevention within designated zone,
- Carry out visual fire safety inspections on a monthly basis and record the results in the document stored into ‘Trim’. Report any hazard or defect to Facilities Management,
- Carry out quarterly fire safety inspections with Facilities Management.
- Ensure deputies are aware when you will not be available to carry out your duties. Examples include annual leave, when on a course, at a meeting, lunch etc.

Additional Duties to the Fire Action Notice:

! On hearing the fire alarm bells you must:

- Collect roll call list and put on fire marshal tabard, if possible. If roll call list is not nearby, report to Assembly Point H, Incident Control and collect the roll call list for your Zone/Assembly Point,
- Collect the out of hours log if you pass it as you exit.
- Report to your Assembly Point and carry out a roll call.
- Report to results of the roll call to the Incident Control Team at Assembly Point H.
- Carry out any other duties as instructed by the Incident Control Team.
- Attend the post evacuation debrief.
- Attend the post evacuation debrief.

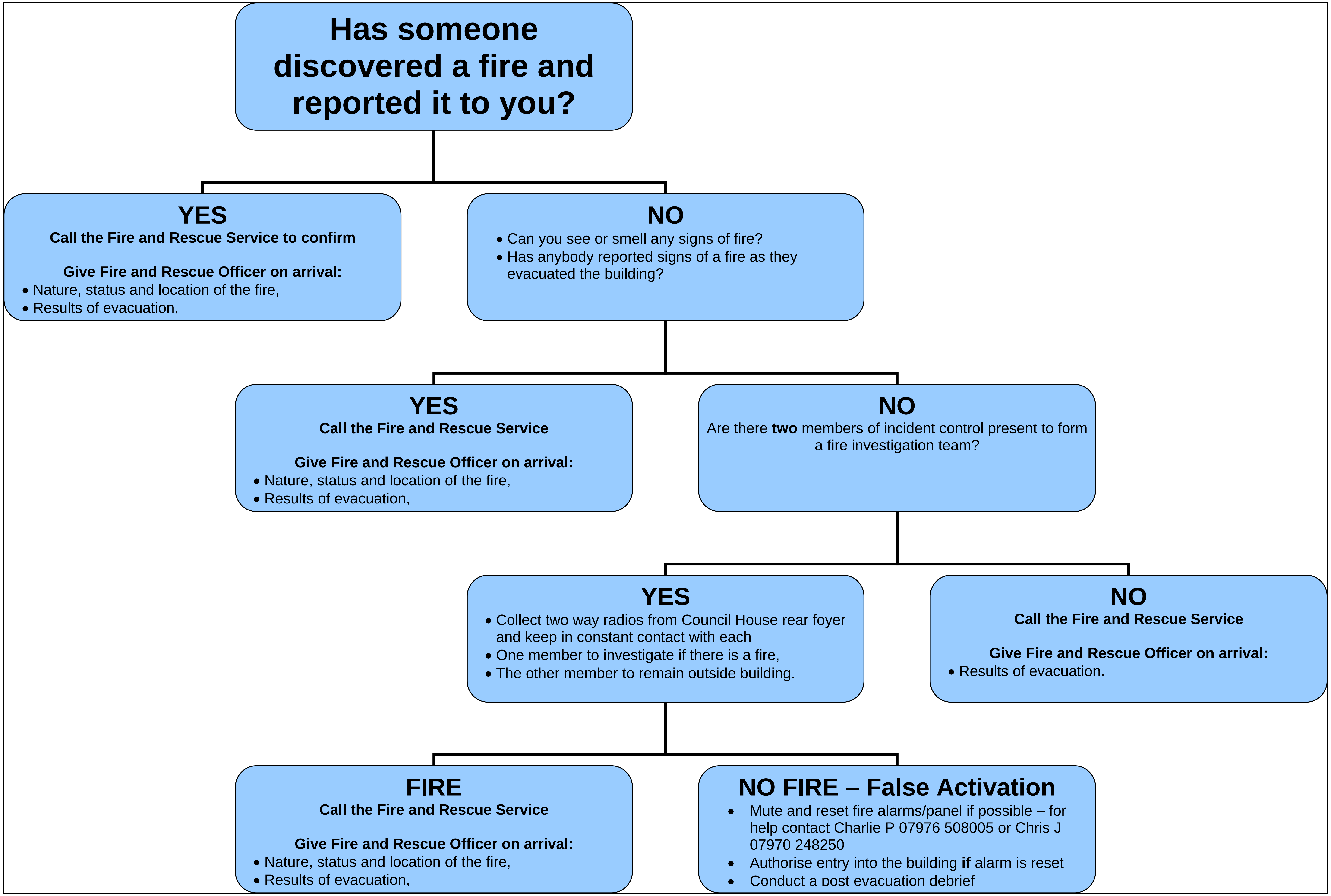
Duties of Incident Control

Incident control will be managed by way of a team formed by the most senior members of management present.

Additional Duties to the Fire Action Notice:

! On hearing the fire alarm bells you must:

- Collect fire evacuation clipboard and tabard from adjacent to the **fire panel in the rear foyer of the Council House**,
- Go to Assembly Point H, Incident Control,
- Instruct two individuals; one to stand duty at the 2 external doors on Long Street and if possible between the 4 external doors in Old Bank House garden to ensure no-one enters the building,
- Instruct an individual to remove the car park barrier, if affixed,
- Collate information from the Fire Marshal roll call lists to establish if all persons are accounted for,
- Using the flow chart on the next page carry out a risk assessment to further investigate the fire incident and the actions to be taken.
- If the building is determined as **NOT SAFE** to enter by the Fire and Rescue Service:
  - The most senior member of management will initiate a recovery plan in an accordance with the business continuity plan.
  - If no member of Management Team is present then call one of them to inform them of the situation. (Appendix A – Telephone numbers)
- If the building is determined as **SAFE** to enter by the Fire and Rescue Service
  - Mute and reset fire alarms/panel – for help contact Charlie Phillips 07976 508005 or Chris Jones 07970 248250
  - Authorise re-entry to the building, remember to inform those stationed at the external doors.



Has someone discovered a fire and reported it to you?

YES

Call the Fire and Rescue Service to confirm

Give Fire and Rescue Officer on arrival:

- Nature, status and location of the fire,
- Results of evacuation,

NO

- Can you see or smell any signs of fire?
- Has anybody reported signs of a fire as they evacuated the building?

YES

Call the Fire and Rescue Service

Give Fire and Rescue Officer on arrival:

- Nature, status and location of the fire,
- Results of evacuation,

NO

Are there **two** members of incident control present to form a fire investigation team?

YES

- Collect two way radios from Council House rear foyer and keep in constant contact with each
- One member to investigate if there is a fire,
- The other member to remain outside building.

NO

Call the Fire and Rescue Service

Give Fire and Rescue Officer on arrival:

- Results of evacuation.

FIRE

Call the Fire and Rescue Service

Give Fire and Rescue Officer on arrival:

- Nature, status and location of the fire,
- Results of evacuation,

NO FIRE – False Activation

- Mute and reset fire alarms/panel if possible – for help contact Charlie P 07976 508005 or Chris J 07970 248250
- Authorise entry into the building **if** alarm is reset
- Conduct a post evacuation debrief

Duties of Community Support Control Centre Staff

Central Control will be contacted by telephone by the Remote Fire Alarm Receiving Centre and advised that the fire alarm has been activated.

On being advised that the Fire Alarm has been activated Control Centre Staff will:

- Call a member of Facilities Management
  Chris Jones 07970 248250 or Charlotte Phillips 07976 508005
  to inform them that there is an activation at Old Bank House.

Duties of Contractors Working Out of Hours

All Contractors working at weekends must:

- Be logged in at the start of their shift and out at the end of their shift, by the member of staff responsible for them,
- sign in and out of the ‘out of hours’ log every time they enter and exit the building during their shift,
- be aware of;
  the ‘Fire Action’ notices - what they must do and
  their Assembly Point - G.

Duties of the Chair Person or Trainer of any Meeting or Training

Before any meeting or training commences the chair person or trainer must ensure that they read out to everyone the statement below.

Read This Statement Out
At The Beginning of All Meetings / Training

There is a location plan of the exits and the assembly points situated on the doors of this room, familiarise yourself with it. **All visitors report to Assembly Point G.**

Fire Action

! On discovering a fire you must:

- Raise the alarm immediately by breaking the glass in the nearest call point.
- Extinguish the fire using equipment provided, if possible and safe to do so.
- Call the Fire and Rescue Service, Landline - (9)999 or Mobile - 999.
- Evacuate the building by the shortest, safest route.
- Report to Assembly Point H (Incident Control) and advise the Incident Controller of the location and details of the fire.
- Report to your designated Assembly Point for roll call.
- Remain at the assembly point until authorised to leave.

! On hearing the fire alarm bells you must:

- Evacuate the building by the shortest, safest route. (Escort your visitors to Assembly Point G).
- Report to your designated Assembly Point for roll call.
- Remain at the assembly point until authorised to leave.

Remember:

! Close all doors where possible but do not delay the evacuation.

! Your safety is our first concern.

🛇 DO NOT take risks.

🛇 DO NOT stop to collect personal belongings.

🛇 DO NOT re-enter the building for any reason until authorised to do so.

Appendix B

Fire Evacuation Procedure
for
Council House

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Fire Evacuation of Building Procedure Statement

As far as is reasonably practical, all steps will be taken by the Council to prevent or minimise the possibility of fire within Council premises.

The Council acknowledges that despite these measures, it cannot be assumed that fire will never break out. Should a fire break out, systems are in place to warn and guide staff to safety via designated means of escape. A continual or intermittent ringing of bells will sound to warn that there is a fire and you must evacuate the building.

The fire alarm system, fire extinguishers, emergency lighting, evacuation signage, fire doors and evacuation procedures are all reviewed and will be tested regularly.

This procedure will be reviewed annually or as a consequence of a change in the buildings use, layout or opening times.

Assistant Directors that have employees working in zones should co-ordinate provision for Fire Marshals in each zone, one per storey exit plus a deputy. Facilities Management and Human Resources will monitor this to ensure that adequate Fire Marshals are appointed and will alert Assistant Directors to possible shortfalls.

All staff will be given fire safety and prevention training. Fire Marshals will be given practical and theoretical training to prepare them further in carrying out their duties. Training will be co-ordinated by Human Resources and all staff will be trained every 3 years.

Additionally, staff should be encouraged to report to their Fire Marshal any concerns or ways of improving fire safety or prevention within their area of the office.

Any suggestions on ways of improving this procedure are welcome and should be directed to Facilities Management.

Fire Action Notices

‘Fire Action’ and ‘Your assembly point is’ notices are displayed at every storey exit at the Council House.

Ensuring the notices are displayed and the fire assembly points are displayed on the notices is co-ordinated by Facilities Management.

Example of the notices:

Fire Action

! On discovering a fire you must:

- Raise the alarm immediately by breaking the glass in the nearest call point.
- Extinguish the fire using equipment provided, if possible and safe to do so.
- Call the Fire and Rescue Service, Landline - (9)999 or Mobile - 999.
- Evacuate the building by the shortest, safest route.
- Report to Assembly Point H (Incident Control) and advise the Incident Controller of the location and details of the fire.
- Report to your designated Assembly Point for roll call.
- Remain at the assembly point until authorised to leave.

! On hearing the fire alarm bells you must:

- Evacuate the building by the shortest, safest route. (Escort your visitors to Assembly Point G).
- Report to your designated Assembly Point for roll call.
- Remain at the assembly point until authorised to leave.

Remember:

! Close all doors where possible but do not delay the evacuation.

! Your safety is our first concern.

🛇 DO NOT take risks.

🛇 DO NOT stop to collect personal belongings.

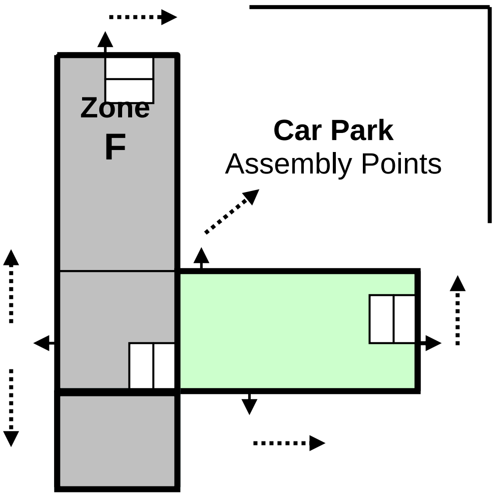
🛇 DO NOT re-enter the building for any reason until authorised to do so.

Your assembly point is

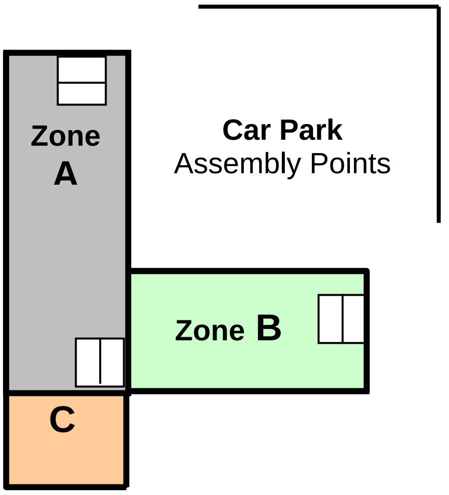
(A, B, C, D, E, F, G inserted as per the zone)

Fire Evacuation Zones – Council House

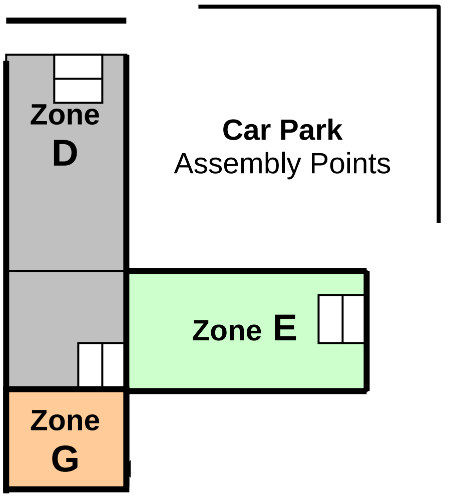
Ground Floor


Zone
F
Car Park
Assembly Points

First Floor


Zone
A
Car Park
Assembly Points
Zone B
C

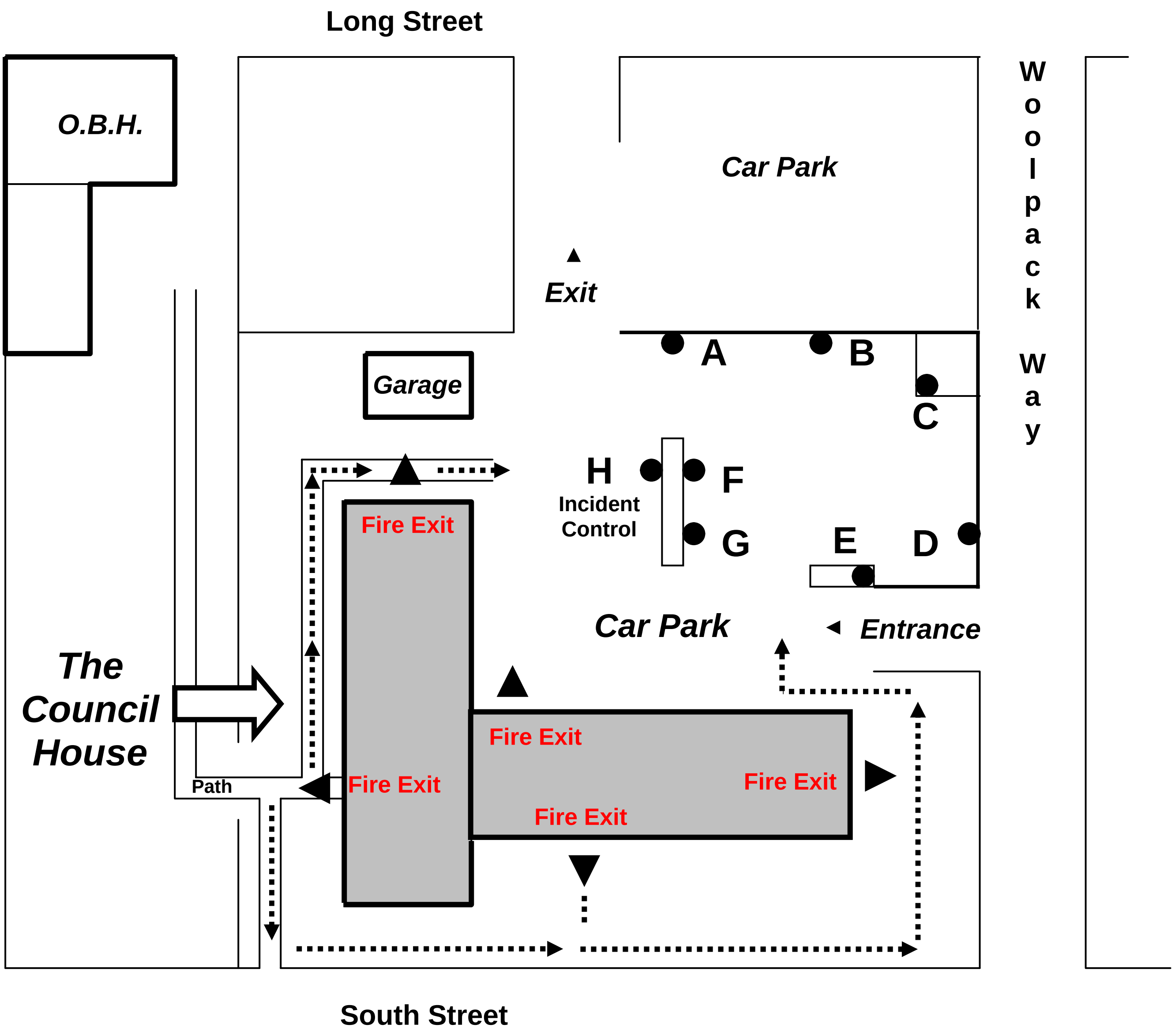
Second Floor


Zone
D
Car Park
Assembly Points
Zone E
Zone
G

Zone G: **Includes Councillors, Visitors & Contractors**

Zone H: **Incident Control**

Fire Assembly Location Points – Council House


Long Street
O.B.H.
Car Park
Exit
Woolpack Way
A
B
C
Garage
H
Incident Control
F
G
E
D
Fire Exit
Car Park
Entrance
The Council House
Fire Exit
Fire Exit
Fire Exit
Fire Exit
Path
South Street

Duties of All Employees (unless you have a designated role)

All members of staff have a responsibility for fire safety within the Council.

This responsibility includes:

- Ensure that members of your team know your whereabouts during the day,
- Ensure that your visitors have been signed in/out at reception every time they enter and exit the building,
- Ensure that any Contractors working for you on the premises are aware of;
  what the fire alarm sounds like (a bell),
  the ‘Fire Action’ notices - what they must do and
  their fire assembly point - G.
- Ensure that if you are working out of hours or during weekends that you sign in/out of the ‘out of hours’ log every time you enter/exit the building.
- Adhere to fire prevention rules and procedures,
- Attend Fire Awareness courses when requested,
- Report any health and safety issues to your line manager or the HR Officer.

Duties of All Councillors

All Councillors have a responsibility for fire safety within the Council.

This responsibility includes:

- Recording every time you enter and exit the building using the fire evacuation log by the rear door,
- Ensure that your visitors have been signed into the fire evacuation log every time they enter and exit the building,
- Ensure that your visitors know the evacuation instructions,
- Promote fire awareness and fire prevention within the Civic Suite zone,
- Ensure that a copy of this fire evacuation procedure is kept available in all group rooms at all times.

Duties of Fire Marshals and Deputies

Fire safety and prevention training will provide fire marshals and their deputies with the necessary skills for performing their responsibilities and tasks.

This responsibility includes:

- Keep an up to date roll call list of all staff within your zone in the document stored into ‘Trim’,
- Notify Facilities Management when any changes are made to the roll call list document.
- Attend Fire Marshal training and refresher training, as required,
- Promote fire awareness and fire prevention within designated zone,
- Carry out visual fire safety inspections on a monthly basis and record the results in the document stored into ‘Trim’. Report any hazard or defect to Facilities Management,
- Carry out quarterly fire safety inspections with Facilities Management.
- Ensure deputies are aware when you will not be available to carry out your duties. Examples include annual leave, when on a course, at a meeting, lunch etc.

Additional Duties to the Fire Action Notice:

! On hearing the fire alarm bells you must:

- Collect roll call list and put on fire marshal tabard, if possible. If roll call list is not nearby, report to Assembly Point H, Incident Control and collect the roll call list for your Zone/Assembly Point,
- Report to your Assembly Point and carry out a roll call.
- Report to results of the roll call to the Incident Control Team at Assembly Point H.
- Carry out any other duties as instructed by the Incident Control Team.
- Attend the post evacuation debrief.

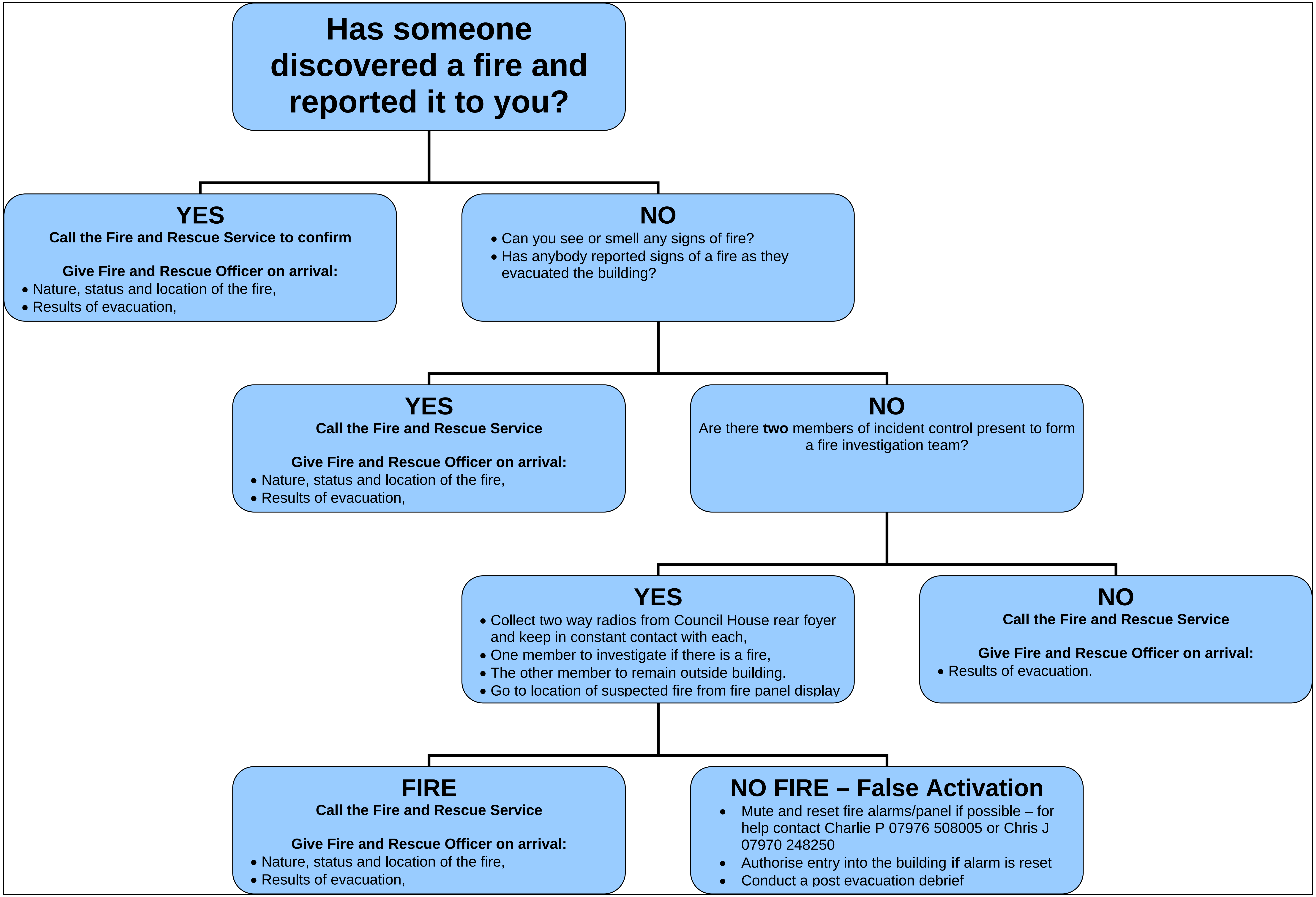
Duties of Incident Control

Incident control will be managed by way of a team formed by Facilities Management, the HR Officer and the most senior member of management present, or Community Support if none of the above are present.

Additional Duties to the Fire Action Notice:

! On hearing the fire alarm bells you must:

- Go to fire panel in rear foyer,
- Collect the fire evacuation clipboard adjacent to the panel,
- Make a note on the clipboard of which zone has been activated from the display on the fire panel,
- Collect tabard from adjacent to the fire panel,
- Go to Assembly Point H, Incident Control,
- Instruct two individuals; one to stand duty at the Reception entrance/exit door and the other at the Civic Suite entrance/exit door to ensure no-one enters the building,
- Instruct an individual to remove the car park barrier, if affixed,
- Collate information from the Fire Marshal roll call lists to establish if all persons are accounted for,
- Using the flow chart on the next page carry out a risk assessment to further investigate the fire incident and the actions to be taken.
- If the building is determined as **NOT SAFE** to enter by the Fire and Rescue Service:
    - The most senior member of management will initiate a recovery plan in an accordance with the business continuity plan.
    - If no member of Management Team is present then call one of them to inform them of the situation. (Appendix A – Telephone numbers)
- If the building is determined as **SAFE** to enter by the Fire and Rescue Service
    - Mute and reset fire alarms/panel – for help contact Charlie Phillips 07976 508005 or Chris Jones 07970 248250
    - Authorise re-entry to the building, remember to inform those stationed at the entrance/exit doors.



Has someone discovered a fire and reported it to you?

YES

Call the Fire and Rescue Service to confirm

Give Fire and Rescue Officer on arrival:

- Nature, status and location of the fire,
- Results of evacuation,

NO

- Can you see or smell any signs of fire?
- Has anybody reported signs of a fire as they evacuated the building?

YES

Call the Fire and Rescue Service

Give Fire and Rescue Officer on arrival:

- Nature, status and location of the fire,
- Results of evacuation,

NO

Are there **two** members of incident control present to form a fire investigation team?

YES

- Collect two way radios from Council House rear foyer and keep in constant contact with each,
- One member to investigate if there is a fire,
- The other member to remain outside building.
- Go to location of suspected fire from fire panel display

NO

Call the Fire and Rescue Service

Give Fire and Rescue Officer on arrival:

- Results of evacuation.

FIRE

Call the Fire and Rescue Service

Give Fire and Rescue Officer on arrival:

- Nature, status and location of the fire,
- Results of evacuation,

NO FIRE – False Activation

- Mute and reset fire alarms/panel if possible – for help contact Charlie P 07976 508005 or Chris J 07970 248250
- Authorise entry into the building **if** alarm is reset
- Conduct a post evacuation debrief

Duties of the Customer Services Staff located in Reception and Civic Reception

The reception staff have different roles to perform because there are likely to be members of the public in the area and they have the visitors log.

This responsibility includes:

- ensure that visitors have been signed in/out at reception every time they enter and exit the building,
- ensure that visitors have been made aware of the fire evacuation instructions on the back of their visitors' badge.

Additional Duties to the Fire Action Notice:

! On hearing the fire alarm bells you must:

- one member of the team to ensure that the reception area and public disabled toilet facilities are clear,
- one member of the team to stand outside main entrance doors to prevent members of the public from entering. This person must not re-enter the building until the all clear is given,
- one member of the team to take the visitors book, do a roll call of visitors at Assembly Point G and then report the results of the roll call to the Incident Controller at assembly point H,

Duties of Community Support Control Centre Staff

Community Support (CS) Control centre staff will have specific duties to perform due to their nature of work and their constant presence at the Council House. If Facilities Management, the HR Officer or a senior member of management is not present then Community Support will form Incident Control.

Additional Duties to the Fire Action Notice:

! On hearing the fire alarm bells you must:

- CS staff collect EMIVAC bag & van keys,
- CS Fire Marshall collect control centre mobile phone, blue DRC folder & evacuation clip board located by control centre exit door,
- CS Fire Marshall to collect the out of hours log (if necessary) and/or Councillors log located by the rear door, and the Fire evacuation procedure from adjacent to the fire panel by the rear door.
- go to Assembly Point G,
- CS Fire Marshall carry out a roll call including Councillors and their visitors,
- all Control Centre staff except CS Fire Marshall go to Disaster Recovery Centre (DRC) at Nursery Rd, Ansley Common,
- Using the flow chart on the next page carry out a risk assessment to further investigate the fire incident and the actions to be taken.
- CS Fire Marshall to set up DRC smart diverts to transfer Borough Care lines to DRC (Tel numbers in blue DRC folder),
- CS Fire Marshall to remain at the assembly point until the Fire and Rescue Service have carried out their duties.
- If the building is determined as **NOT SAFE** to enter by the Fire and Rescue Service:
  - The most senior member of management will initiate a recovery plan in an accordance with the business continuity plan (Appendix A)
  - If no member of Management Team is present then call one of them to inform them of the situation.
- If the building is determined as **SAFE** to enter by the Fire and Rescue Service
  - Mute and reset fire alarm bells/panel – for help contact Charlie Phillips 07976 508005 or Chris Jones 07970 248250
  - Authorise re-entry to the building, remember to inform those stationed at the entrance/exit doors.

Duties of Contractors Working Out of Hours

All Contractors working at weekends must:

- Be logged in at the start of their shift and out at the end of their shift, by the member of staff responsible for them,

- sign in and out of the ‘out of hours’ log every time they enter and exit the building during their shift,

- be aware of;
  the ‘Fire Action’ notices - what they must do and
  their Assembly Point - G.

Duties of the Chair Person or Trainer of any Meeting or Training

Before any meeting or training commences the chair person or trainer must ensure that they read out to everyone the statement below.

Read This Statement Out
At The Beginning of All Meetings / Training

There is a location plan of the exits and the assembly points situated on the doors of this room, familiarise yourself with it. **All visitors report to Assembly Point G.**

Fire Action

! On discovering a fire you must:

- Raise the alarm immediately by breaking the glass in the nearest call point.
- Extinguish the fire using equipment provided, if possible and safe to do so.
- Call the Fire and Rescue Service, Landline - (9)999 or Mobile - 999.
- Evacuate the building by the shortest, safest route.
- Report to Assembly Point H (Incident Control) and advise the Incident Controller of the location and details of the fire.
- Report to your designated Assembly Point for roll call.
- Remain at the assembly point until authorised to leave.

! On hearing the fire alarm bells you must:

- Evacuate the building by the shortest, safest route. (Escort your visitors to Assembly Point G).
- Report to your designated Assembly Point for roll call.
- Remain at the assembly point until authorised to leave.

Remember:

! Close all doors where possible but do not delay the evacuation.

! Your safety is our first concern.

⊘ DO NOT take risks.

⊘ DO NOT stop to collect personal belongings.

⊘ DO NOT re-enter the building for any reason until authorised to do so.

Agenda Item No 7

Resources Board

2 April 2012

Report of the
Assistant Director (Streetscape)

Depot Relocation – Lower House Farm

1 Summary

1.1 This report updates Members on the results of Warwickshire County Council's tendering process in relation to Lower House Farm and recommends that Members confirm their agreement to the relocation of the Council's refuse collection and garden waste collection services to the new facility once it is completed next year.

Recommendation to the Board

That the Council's refuse collection and garden waste collection services be relocated to Lower House Farm once all necessary construction works have been completed.

2 Background

. . .

2.1 A report setting out the advantages of relocating refuse collection and garden waste services to the new Warwickshire County Council transfer station at Lower House Farm was presented to Resources Board on 28 March, 2011 (attached at Appendix A). Members agreed to the future relocation of those services in principle, but requested a further report following the completion of the County Council's tender process so that the likely final cost to the Council could be assessed.

2.2 The tender process has been completed, and North Warwickshire Council's capital contribution to the new site has been confirmed as just over £139,770 compared with an initial estimate of £135,995. It should be stressed that this is an estimate based on the prices returned by the appointed contractor, but these costs are unlikely to increase significantly during the construction period. The annual service cost is estimated at £2,600.

2.3 Moving these services to Lower House Farm will produce a number of benefits, including significant savings in terms of transport and fuel costs. Officers are currently assessing the available opportunities to relocate the remaining services operating out of the current depot site on Sheepy Road. Particular consideration is being given to the vacant industrial units within the Council's ownerships, and a further report on the available options will be brought to this Board in due course.

3 Report Implications

3.1 Finance and Value for Money Implications

3.1.1 In addition to the annual revenue savings resulting from moving the refuse and garden waste services to Lower House Farm, utilising the disposal facilities at the site will also lead to savings in transport and fuel costs.

3.2 Environment and Sustainability implications

3.2.1 The proposal to relocate this service to Lower House Farm will help to reduce carbon emissions and costs from travelling less and making fuel savings.

3.3 Links to Council's Priorities

3.3.1 The revenue savings arising from the proposed actions link to the Council's priority of protecting public services for local people whilst maintaining a balanced budget and keeping Council Tax increases lower than inflation while the reduction in fuel use links to the priority to protect and improve our local environment.

The Contact Officer for this report is Richard Dobbs (719440).

Background Papers

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

Background Paper No	Author	Nature of Background Paper	Date

Appendix A

Agenda Item No 7

Resources Board

28 March 2011

Report of the
Assistant Director (Streetscape)

Potential Change of Refuse Collection Service Depot

1 Summary

1.1 This report is seeking the Board's agreement to relocate the Refuse Collection and Garden Waste Collection services to the Lower House Farm Household Waste Recycling Centre and Transfer Station when that facility opens in 2013.

Recommendation to the Board

That the Board agree to the future relocation of the Refuse Collection and Garden Waste Collection Services to Lower House Farm, Lower House Lane, Baddesley Ensor.

2 Consultation

2.1 Portfolio Holder, Shadow Portfolio Holder and Ward Members

2.1.1 The Portfolio Holders and their Shadows for Resources and Environment have been sent advanced copies of this report for comment.

3 Background

3.1 Warwickshire County Council (in partnership with Staffordshire County Council) are in the process of providing a new Household Waste and Recycling Centre and Transfer Station facility at Lower House Lane, Baddesley Ensor. The facility is due to open in Spring 2013 and will be the disposal (tipping) site for NWBC's waste collection services. In specifying for the construction of the facility it is also possible to provide the opportunity for it to be used as the depot location for North Warwickshire's waste collection services.

3.2 Should North Warwickshire Borough Council decide to move its refuse collection and garden waste services to Lower House Farm, Warwickshire County Council would specify hard standing parking bays for refuse vehicles and mini compactors, a staff parking area (for up to 30 vehicles), sufficient office space (along with washroom and mess facilities) within a shared building, a dedicated fuel store and wash down facilities for NWBC vehicles.

3.3 The total capital cost for these additional elements has been estimated by the County Council at £135,995. This is a pre-tender estimate which may be revised following the procurement process and the final cost may come down. Any significant cost changes will, of course, be brought back to a future meeting of this Board should Members agree in principle to proceed with a future relocation to Lower House Farm. The ongoing service charge to NWBC for the use of the site has been quoted at £2,600 per annum.

4 Report – Potential Savings

4.1 The change of disposal site location will substantially reduce mileage for the waste services fleet which will be achieved even without a change of NWBC depot location. However it is estimated that the elimination of the mileage for the return to the depot from the final tipping location would, as a result of the change of depot to Lower House Farm, itself produce a further £7,500 to £8,000 saving in fuel costs per year.

4.2 The actual annual mileage reduction across the fleet is of a similar order i.e. 7,200 miles. Apart from the fuel costs there would also be some benefit in reduced wear and tear to the vehicles. The additional reduction in mileage could add a significant overall saving of 6 hours of driving time per week across the fleet. There could be efficiencies generated from the extra time available, i.e. the crews will be finished upon making the final tip but with greater potential to assist any rounds that have difficulties. When allied to the anticipated reduction of travel time generated overall by the change of disposal location to Lower House Farm there may be opportunity to further revise the collection rounds.

4.3 Use of the ‘hard-surface’ tipping facility has the potential to provide financial benefit in three ways.

1. Reduced damage to vehicles intrinsic in landfill site tipping e.g. tyre and suspension damage are quite regular occurrences but also items such as fuel tanks and radiators have also been damaged. Tyres currently cost £300 per tyre and items such as fuel tanks are £565 with other associated costs.

2. Specification of replacement vehicles may be more flexible. The reduction in demand placed upon the chassis, suspension and ancillary equipment may allow for a vehicle specification at lower cost and possibly with a greater payload due to reduced unladen weight.

3. Extension of the useful life of the replacement vehicles from five years to seven because of reduced wear and tear.

5 Additional Costs

The service requirements for the waste collection fleet could generate some increased costs in travel i.e. four miles between Sheepy Road and Lower House Farm.

Basic service work such as greasing is carried out weekly (Saturdays) – this may be able to be completed on site at Lower House Farm

Main Service of the vehicles is carried out every 6 weeks and requires workshop facility.

Lower House Farm Timetable

Currently the anticipated time scale for the development of Lower House Farm is:

- Tender process – Mid summer 2011
- Site works initiated – Spring 2012
- Site commissioned and hand over for operation Spring 2013

6 Sheepy Road Depot

6.1 The current facility not only caters for the waste collection services but also the Housing DSO and management, street cleaning, grounds maintenance and the workshop unit. The waste collection services occupy the greater part of the depot and by inference would therefore leave a substantial area unoccupied should it relocate to LHF. This may present the opportunity to relocate the remaining services to other sites, perhaps industrial units within NWBC's portfolio that are not realising lease revenue. In so doing the Sheepy Road site would be released with the potential for sale for development when the market improves. A general guide to the sale value of the site is £350k to £400k.

7 Report Implications

7.1 Finance and Value for Money Implications

7.1.1 The anticipated costs associated with moving the Waste Collection Service from the Sheepy Road Depot to Lower House Farm are shown in the table below:-

	£
Cost per year of new facility for Waste Collection Service at Lower House Farm estimated at £135,995 over 15 years @ 5.0%	15,870
New facility annual service charge	2,600
Net saving in fuel costs – non return to depot after last tip run partially offset by additional maintenance and servicing requirements	(7,500)
Potential additional costs	**10,880**
Saving of 6 hours of driver time per week – no initial cash saving but could be used in future to reduce overtime and/or allow reconfiguration of collection processes	(4,900)
Current depot recharges to the Waste Collection Service (net controllable element)– saving not realisable until future changes in Sheepy Road Depot facilities are realised	(14,630)
Potential saving realisable in the future	**(19,530)**

7.1.2 The table above shows that there will be initial costs relating to the move to Lower House Farm, which could be more than covered by future savings dependant on future outcomes.

7.3 Environment and Sustainability Implications

7.3.1 The proposed relocation to the Lower House Farm site should result in efficiencies in use of fuel and other resources which can re invested in other services or help achieve cost savings. The Lower House Farm household waste and recycling centre should provide positive environmental and sustainability outcomes in terms of waste disposal and collection.

The Contact Officer for this report is Richard Dobbs (719440).

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 8

Resources Board

2 April 2012

Report of the
Assistant Director (Housing)

Charges for Use of Sheltered
Scheme Communal Rooms

1 Summary

1.1 This report asks the Board to reconsider its decision to increase the charges for the use of the Council's sheltered scheme communal rooms.

> **Recommendation to the Board**
>
> **That the charges for the use of the sheltered scheme communal rooms are not increased in 2012/2013.**

2 Introduction

2.1 At its meeting on 30 January 2012 the Resources Board considered a number of reports on financial matters. One of those reports was the Housing Revenue Account Estimates 2012/2013.

2.2 Appendix E of the report set out charges for sheltered scheme communal room use and proposed that they be raised by inflation from 1 April 2012.

2.3 The increases as stated in the report are relatively small. For each two hour session it proposed increases from as little as 40p to as much as 80p.

3 Current Room Users

3.1 The sheltered scheme communal rooms are first and foremost an extension of the tenants' living room who live on that scheme. They do not pay a charge because they are already paying for the facility in their rent. Other users tend to be from the voluntary sector and have made use of them for many years.

3.2 A consideration of the effect the increase in charges will have on the voluntary sector users has shown that whilst they provide a very small increase in income for the Housing Revenue Account there is a bigger impact on groups who make use of the rooms in order to serve the community (for example Stroke Clubs and Over 60's Groups). Three Groups who have long sessions would have in the region of £100.00 to £170.00 added to their annual costs.

3.3 In consideration of the hardship this might cause to voluntary groups it is proposed that the increase in charges for sheltered scheme communal rooms recommended to the Resources Board is not applied during 2012/2013.

3.4 Consideration of charges for the rooms will be considered afresh by the Housing Division in October and November 2012 in advance of budget setting processes.

4 Report Implications

4.1 Finance and Value for Money Implications

4.1.1 The Housing Sub-Committee has recently agreed a policy to extend the use of the sheltered scheme communal rooms to a wider range of users. Utilising the rooms and encouraging tenants to take part in activities ensures the rooms are achieving their purpose of preventing social isolation.

4.1.2 The rooms are funded from rents collected for the Housing Revenue Account. The small amount of additional income which would have been received if the rates had been increased by inflation would not make a significant contribution to paying for services.

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 No 9

Resources Board

2 April 2012

Report of the
Deputy Chief Executive

Internal Audit – Plan of Work for 2012-13

1 Summary

1.1 The report explains the basis upon which the Audit Plan for 2012-13 has been developed, using a variety of sources of information to ensure that all appropriate aspects of service activity are embraced as part of the approved three year review programme.

Recommendation to the Board

That the Audit Plan for 2012-13 be approved.

2 Report

2.1 The Code of Practice for Internal Audit requires the development of a risk based audit plan. The development of a systematic and continuous evaluation of audit risk was based upon:

- a formal and structured definition of the criteria used in evaluating audit risk; amongst the criteria used are the operational risk scorings developed by individual service managers and the relevance of the Council's identified strategic risks;
- a clear linkage between the relative risk attributed to different systems and the allocation of audit resources;
- a facility to revise risk assessments to reflect the findings of subsequent audits.

... 2.2 The Audit Plan for 2012-13, 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 has been increased by 7% from 2011-12 with streamlining the audit process.

2.3 As well as risk data, the Annual Plan also takes account of the external auditor's (PWC) 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 continues with the expanded scope of the audit team to consider in each review carried out aspects of value for money, efficiency savings and counter fraud measures that may be advantageous. This adds to the existing consideration of performance measures, benchmarking activity and process improvement already incorporated in each piece of work undertaken.

3 Report Implications

3.1 Risk Management Implications

3.1.1 The Audit Plan for 2012-13 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 2012-13 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

APPENDIX A

NORTH WARWICKSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL
STRATEGIC AUDIT PLAN 2012/13

Estimate of Available Resources

Internal Audit Section has an establishment of 2.5 full-time equivalent auditors. There is also budgetary provision to buy-in up to 24 days of specialist support for the audit of IT that will be sourced through the contract negotiated by Warwickshire IT Audit Consortium with Haines Watts and up to 15 days Counter Fraud support through CEAC.

Calculation of Available Days:

52 weeks x 5 days X 2.5	=	650 days
less bank holidays	14 X 2.5 =	35 days
less sickness provision 2%		13 days
less annual leave		66 days
Gross days available		**536 days internal resources**

Allocation of Available Resources

START:		**536 days**
Less		
Training & Development, general duties	25 days	
Management, planning, corporate	85 days	
	110 days	
SECTION 151 ACTIVITIES		**426 days**
Consultancy/Contingency		
• Contingency	10 days	
• Consultancy	10	
• PwC	10	
	30 days	
Special Investigations	**5 days**	
Strategic Audit Plan		**391 days**
Cyclical Programme shows		**391 days**

INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN FOR 2012-13

Strategic Audit Plan – Available Days	391 **days**

Draft

Key Financial Systems			
• Main Accounting	10		
• Creditors	10		
• Budgetary Control/Budgeting	10		
• Payroll	10		
• Benefits	20		
• Capital Expenditure/Accounting	5		
• Council Tax	15		
• Cash and banking	10		
• NDR	10		
• Debtors	10		
• Asset Management	5		
• Stocks and Stores	3		
• Housing Rents	10		
• Treasury Management	5	**133**	
Corporate Audits			
Corporate Governance	10		
Performance Indicators and performance management	15		
Grant claims (NDR, Benefits etc)	5		
Compliance with Policies & Strategies	18		
Risk Management	10		
Insurances	5		
Post implementation reviews	10		
Partnerships	5		
Contracts	10		
NFI	5		
Use of vehicles/equipment	5	**98**	
Resource Directorate			
HR processes	5		
Housing Maintenance & Repairs	20		
Housing Management	5		
Choice Based Lettings	5		
Contact Centre	5		
Community Support (CCTV & Borough Care)	5		
Communications & Telephony	5		
Procurement	10	**60**	
ACEO Directorate			
Democratic Services	5		
Emergency Planning & Business Continuity	5		
Official Conduct	5	**15**	
Community & Environment Directorate			
Leisure development, leisure centres etc	20		
Grounds maintenance, public space/horticulture	10		
Development Control & Enforcement	10		
Env Health Control Enforcement	5		
Disabled Facility Grants	10		
Domestic Refuse	10		
Trade Refuse & cesspool emptying	5		
Amenity cleaning	5		
Facilities management inc civic offices	5		
Transport	5	**85**	**391 days**

Agenda Item No 10

Resources Board

2 April 2012

Report of the Assistant Director (Corporate Services)

Information and Communications Technology Strategy 2012 - 2015

1 Summary

1.1 The report presents the Draft Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Strategy for 2012 – 2015 to Members for their consideration and comment.

Recommendation to the Board

... **That the Draft Information and Communications Technology Strategy provided as Appendix A is approved.**

2 Consultation

2.1 As required for Council Strategies, in addition to this Board, this report will be submitted to the Executive Board and Scrutiny Board.

3 Introduction

3.1 The Council has had a formally approved ICT Strategy since 2000, with the previous Strategy covering the period April 2009 – March 2012.

3.2 This three year Strategy has been developed after consultation and using best practice from other Councils and professional bodies such as the Society of IT Managers.

3.3 The next three years provide an opportunity to make a step change in the ICT infrastructure and services available to the Council. The essential work being done through or in conjunction with the accommodation project will enabling us to improve network access, telephony services and server room energy efficiency. We also have to upgrade the Office and email solutions used by staff and members and this will bring additional functionality and flexibility.

3.4 The ICT Strategy is intended to:

- Ensure that the use of, and investment in, ICT is aligned with the Council's Priorities and Corporate Plan and through these the Sustainable Community Strategy

- Define the technical direction for the Council and the governance and operational services needed to manage and deliver ICT services for the Council

- Support the delivery of the Council's services in ways that citizens want and value

- Promote the effective strategic and efficient operational and public use of e-services and information

- Follow and adopt legislative requirements, industry standards and best practice.

4 Information and Communications Technology Strategy

4.1 The ICT Strategy will be delivered by addressing the issues and aims identified in the Strategy and to further these principles:-

- **Accessibility –** to give easy, secure and appropriate access to information and services to people when and where they need it, using ways they value; including face-to-face, telephone, mobile phone and particularly through the Internet and the website.

- **Partnership –** to work with others to provide convenient, customer focused and consistent services which the Council regards as a priority and citizens want and value.

- **Effective ICT service provision** – to provide cost effective, efficient and reliable technology, information and customer focused ICT services by developing our own staff and resources and by working with others; sharing skills, developments, technology and information.

- **Flexibility and Innovation –** to be responsive to the need for change; to help services identify and use technology and information to improve and support their ways of working.

4.2 Section 4 of the Strategy describes our current technology and systems and provides a baseline against which we can judge our progress. It also identifies issues that need to be addressed.

4.3 Section 5 details the high level strategic aims relating to all elements of ICT services, equipment and systems for the next three years.

4.4 We have carried out an assessment of the Council's computer applications and Appendix 1 of the Strategy is the plan for reviewing their use and fitness for purpose. We will only seek to replace systems if, on review, they prove to no-longer meet service needs and a costed business case for replacement can be established.

4.5 Unlike previous Strategies where a detailed Action Plan has been produced each year. Our plan for this Strategy is to include detailed actions in the Corporate Services Annual Service Plan and if appropriate in other Division's Service Plans. This will reduce the duplication of work involved with maintaining two predominantly similar plans and help ensure ICT projects are more embedded in Divisions' work plans. This will still give visibility for Members as all Service Plans go through Boards for approval. We are also planning to produce a more Strategic Joint Plan which will pick up the linked actions from the ICT Strategy, the Customer Access Strategy and the outcome of the Council's work on Consultation and Communication.

5 Report Implications

5.1 Finance and Value for Money Implications

5.1.1 There are no financial commitments arising directly from this Report. Funding for projects and new initiatives will be identified as part of a project business case and a bid made through the Budget process if needed.

5.1.2 It is expected that ICT will help the Council to make savings and service improvements.

5.2 Safer Communities Implications

5.2.1 The use of ICT will help contribute towards the Council's role in reducing crime and disorder in a number of ways including use of broadband for mobile cctv cameras, opportunities for wider community engagement through social media, publishing safer communities related information and advice on the website and other partnership related activities.

5.3 Legal and Human Rights Implications

5.3.1 The ICT Strategy supports developments, such as security improvements, to ensure that human rights are not infringed and that the Council complies with relevant legislation, including the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act.

5.4 Environment and Sustainability Implications

5.4.1 The use of ICT can help deliver sustainability improvements including reducing the need to travel. We also plan to investigate improving the cooling and general power and space use in the Server Room as part of the Council's work on carbon reduction and to contribute to cost savings.

5.5 Human Resources Implications

5.5.1 The ICT Strategy identifies the need to develop skills to ensure that Staff and Members can use the technology, applications and information they require.

5.6 Risk Management Implications

5.6.1 Having an ICT Strategy and its subsequent implementation is one of the ways the Council can mitigate risks associated with the provision and development of ICT systems and services. The Risk Assessment first compiled for the 2009 Strategy has been updated and is included at Appendix B to this report. . . .

5.7 Equalities Implications

5.7.1 The use of ICT can enable people to access services and information that they may previously have been unable to. However, it is also important to ensure that people are not excluded or disadvantaged through the provision of on-line services. The Equality Impact Assessment compiled for the 2009 Strategy has been updated and is included at Appendix C to this report. . . .

5.8 Links to Council's Priorities

5.8.1 The ICT Strategy and its delivery contributes to a number of Council Priorities and specifically supports the priorities relating to Access to Services, Consultation and Communication and the effective use of resources.

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

DRAFT

Appendix A

North Warwickshire Borough Council

Information and Communication Technology Strategy

2012 – 2015

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Version: Draft – 5th March 2012

1. Summary

High quality, customer focused services are increasingly dependent on access to up to date and meaningful information and information systems.

The potential benefits of the changes and developments identified by services during the creation of this strategy are wide ranging and their realisation needs to be supported by the effective use of information and communication technology (ICT).

Our ICT Strategy cannot be summed up in a few words or as a single technical approach; but is a collection of principles, actions and initiatives which continue to take us towards a robust, reliable infrastructure running applications and holding information that staff need to do their jobs and which citizens use and value. Our strategy has to be flexible and able to accommodate and respond to the inevitable changes which will impact on the Council's customers, services or priorities over the next 3 years. It needs to ensure we take advantage of appropriate and cost effective innovations that can give efficiencies and improve service delivery.

This document describes the technical and organisational elements we will implement to provide an ICT service which is fit for purpose, supports the work of the Council and helps it achieve its aims and ambitions.

Delivery of the strategy is subject to a number of key dependencies, not least capacity and the availability of financial resources, ICT skills and a skilled workforce that is able to use technology.

2. Introduction

This ICT Strategy builds on the achievements of the 2000, 2006 and 2009 Strategies.

Advances in technology continue to help improve the ways we can share information and work collaboratively, irrespective of time or location. Technology can enable people to access services equitably using ways they prefer. In this environment of increasing availability, flexibility, complexity and customer expectation, the Council depends on a sound and secure information and technology base.

2.1 Purpose of the Strategy

This strategy is intended to:

- Provide direction for the Council's use of technology and information.
- Define the governance and operational services needed to manage and deliver ICT.
- Ensure that the use of and investment in ICT is aligned with the Council's Priorities and Corporate Plan and through these the Sustainable Community Plan.
- Support the delivery of the Council's services in ways that citizens want and value.
- Promote and facilitate the development and use of on-line services and information.
- Follow and adopt legislative requirements, industry standards and best practice.

The Strategy underpins and guides the Computer Development Programme, which informs the Council's capital funded investment programme.

2.2 Timeframe, Approach and Audience

2.2.1 Timeframe

The ICT Strategy covers the period from April 2012 to March 2015. It will be reviewed fully in 2014 for re-publication in April 2015. Actions to support the delivery of the Strategy will be identified and updated annually to include new requirements and priorities and to reflect what has been achieved.

2.2.2 Approach, ownership and monitoring.

The Strategy has been developed with regard to Council policies and priorities and after consultation with Services to establish their needs and ambitions. Best practice, industry standards and national strategy has been drawn on. The Strategy is developed and owned by Corporate Services on behalf of the Council. Progress will be monitored via Extended Management Team and reported annually to Board. Internal and External Audit independently assess the Strategy and its delivery.

2.2.3 Audience

This strategy is intended to inform Councillors, Citizens, Local Communities, Staff, Partners and Suppliers about how the Council plans to use technology and information. The Strategy will help guide day-to-day technology decisions, purchases and actions.

2.3 Constraints and Assumptions

Our aim is to provide the best technology and ICT services for the Council, but there are practical constraints such as finance, time and skills.

This strategy takes a corporate view of ICT, which may sometimes conflict with and override divisional needs. If the Council is to get maximum benefit from using ICT, services must lead the implementation of their business systems and the realisation of the benefits from these solutions. Corporate Services will continue to take a lead on Council wide systems such as email.

During the life of this strategy the Council will replace various mechanical and electrical installations in the Council House including data cabling, network infrastructure and telephony services. Funding has been identified in the capital programme for the network and telephony; our challenge will be to ensure that solutions meet the current and future needs of the Council.

Services have not identified a need to replace any corporate or business applications during this period, with the exception of the Leisure Flex system and UChoose.

2.4 Finance

Funding will be particularly tight during this strategy and this may impact on Council plans and ambitious. However, our computer hardware will continue to reach “end of life” and applications may cease to meet our needs in these circumstances business cases will need to be made for investment.

Investment in hardware and software can result in additional license and maintenance costs and put pressure on budgets. Business cases must identify all costs including on-going revenue costs. There is an expectation that the Council will get efficiencies from investments made in ICT.

The Capital Programme for ICT covers the provision of hardware, corporate desktop software and infrastructure. Services must make a case for investment in business applications and identify approved funding to cover all the associated costs.

2.5 Council Priorities

The Council has identified a number of key priorities, which support its vision for the Borough and its communities. These corporate priorities are reviewed annually by Members and by officers as part of the Corporate Plan process. It is expected that ICT will help the Council achieve each of its priorities in some way but is most closely allied to “Access to Services” and “Consultation and Communication.

2.6 Other Strategies and Policies

The ICT Strategy needs to link with, and support the delivery of, other Council strategies and policies, most specifically the Customer Access Strategy. The Access Strategy expresses the Council’s and its customers’ and communities’ aims and ambitions for service delivery and this strategy has been developed to support their achievement. There are close links and dependencies between this Strategy and strategies and policies supporting Consultation and Communication. The Officers responsible for strategy in these areas have agreed to develop a Joint Action Plan to ensure the required connections are made and dependencies recognised.

The ICT Strategy most also take account of and contribute to the delivery of many other strategies policies and projects including the HR strategy, Climate Change reduction and the Information Security Policy.

2.7 External Influences

During the life of this Strategy the Council will have to achieve a number of milestones and respond to government initiatives and legal requirements. Some of the key issues which will impact on the ICT Strategy are listed below: -

- Savings and efficiencies; their achievement and impact.
- Government proposed changes to Council services such as benefits, planning and electoral registration.
- The drive for transparency and the opening up of access to our data.
- Increased demand for security from those who influence us, those we work with and from the public.

3. Strategic Principles

ICT must support the Council’s business vision and priorities for how it will serve the people and communities of North Warwickshire. This will be done by addressing the issues and aims identified in Sections 4 and 5 and by using these principles to guide us:-

- ☐ **Accessibility** – to give easy, secure and appropriate access to information and services to people when and where they need it, using ways they value; including face-to-face, telephone, mobile phone and particularly through the Internet and the website.
- ☐ **Partnership** – to work with others to provide convenient, customer focused and consistent services which the Council regards as a priority and citizens want and value.
- ☐ **Effective ICT service provision** – to provide cost effective, efficient and reliable technology, information and customer focused ICT services by developing our own staff and resources and by working with others; sharing skills, developments, technology and information.
- ☐ **Flexibility and Innovation** – to be responsive to the need for change; to help services identify and use technology and information to improve and support their ways of working.

4. Current Situation and Issues

To determine what must be done we have to have an understanding of our current use and management of ICT and the issues, needs and wants we are obliged to address.

4.1 ICT Governance

The range and depth of ICT services needed by the Council are provided via a mixture of methods. Information Services Section is responsible for the direct provision of the majority of ICT services and has proven, through benchmarking, to be a highly valued[1] and efficient service.

4.1.1 Direction and Management

Projects – ICT needs are built into the Council's 10 year Capital Programme. Projects are managed, monitored and prioritised via the Computer Development Programme, which is reported to Extended Management Team (EMT). Projects are managed by a project manager, who reports to a project sponsor, board or working group. Projects must have a valid business case and a plan which is owned by a service or by Corporate Services for council wide systems.

Bids and Purchasing - All ICT must be purchased through Information Services. Consultation takes place to identify future ICT needs. The majority of the hardware replacement is funded through a capital programme budget. If funding is needed for an application, the relevant service is expected to identify this from their budgets or make a capital programme bid.

ICT Disaster Recovery - We have a minimal ICT disaster recovery (DR) service which is tested annually and which covers key systems and connectivity. Each Division is responsible for defining its business continuity arrangements and identifying ICT needs in an DR or emergency situation.

Business Change, Benefits Realisation and Review – ICT is an enabler of business change and improvement. Information Services Section (IS) work with Divisions to ensure that these opportunities are recognised and realised through the implementation of ICT projects. IS staff also assist with reviews, including Systems Thinking interventions and co-ordinate post implementation reviews to find out what benefits have been achieved.

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[1] Highest Customer Satisfaction score achieved by a Council in SOCITM benchmarking.

4.1.2 In-house ICT Services

Information Services - Has two areas involved with delivering ICT services:

- Support - provides helpdesk services, support engineers and PC and system installation.
- Development - network and security policy and management, application upgrade and support, corporate application ownership (Website, EDRM[2], GIS[3]) and project management.

Divisional Expertise – A few Services have staff who support the use of their business applications. This is beneficial where the business process is heavily integrated with, and dependant on, the application. These staff have knowledge of the service and its processes, they are able to work with IS and suppliers to ensure systems meet service needs.

4.1.3 External ICT Services – Shared Services and outsourced provision

The range of skills needed to manage the breadth of technology used will always cause difficulties for a small team. Our approach is to minimise and manage ICT risk and complexity and to provide the core ICT services as cost effectively and efficiently as possible using our resource.

We will continue to develop collaborative relationships or shared services with others to share applications, supplement skills and augment capacity or to provide services we do not regard as our core business. At present we use a number of systems which are developed, supported and hosted by other organisations e.g. Performance Plus and E-learning modules.

Known ICT Governance Issues:

- Maintaining or getting access to the range of professional and technical skills and services needed for the future.
- The management and development of corporate systems relies on a few IS Staff and in some cases a few hours of their time. This can limit our ability to exploit these applications.
- The Council will need to take a wider and more co-ordinated view of the use of applications and information if it is to avoid cost and if new shared services are to be developed.

4.2 ICT Standards, Legislation and Good Practice

Information Services maintains an awareness of ICT related legislation, standards and good practice. We aim to adopt, advise on and comply with those that are relevant. This is sometimes challenging given procurement rules, costs of compliance and the need to balance business functionality with technical fit and supplier responsiveness.

We have implemented or are in the process of complying with a number of technology and information related standards and good practice:-

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[2] EDRM - Electronic Document and Records Management system – used to store and retrieve documents.
[3] Geographic Information System – used for mapping and storing data about a physical location or object.

- We have staff trained in Prince2 and MPS for IT Project and Programme Management.
- We have procured a new payments management system to assist us with Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards (PCIDSS) compliance.
- Used ISO 270001 (International Standard for Security Management Standard) to formulate our Information Security Policy and inform our approach to security.
- Adopted the Local Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG) as our master property address file and integrated its use into a number of business systems.
- Conformance with Web site accessibility standards.
- Use previously agreed Local Government service category descriptions to help organise our website information, Contact Centre and EDRMS.
- Complied with security requirements to connect to the GCSX (Gov Connect) secure network.

Known ICT Standards, Legislation Issues and Good Practice Issues

- To continue to migrate systems to use the LLPG as their address data source.
- We need to ensure we maintain the appropriate approval to connect to GCSX and future iterations of the Government's Secure Intranet (GSi) while there is a business need.
- We need to help support the Council's commitments on climate change reduction and sustainability.
- Our security policy needs to be updated and awareness sessions provided.

4.3 Current Applications, Software and Information

The Council's software applications are reviewed periodically to ensure they continue to meet its needs. However, the hardware used to run these systems has a shorter lifespan and needs to be assessed and replaced if necessary.

The Council must have the business and corporate applications and technologies in place to enable communication, to provide access to information and to support service delivery to the public and self-service by them via the Internet.

The information held in our systems must be fit for purpose and available where and when it is needed to those authorised to use it.

Known Application, Software and Information Issues:

- Some services (e.g. Grounds Maintenance) and functions (e.g. Consultation) are not supported by business applications or information sources.
- The contract for the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system used by the Contact Centre ends in 2014. We need to work to get a solution which meets our needs.
- We need to investigate integration between applications and develop this where there is a business case.
- The hardware used to run applications needs to be reviewed and replaced or upgraded if necessary as it reaches “end of life”.
- Some of our applications can't be used by home or mobile workers.
- Our on-line payments functionality does not meet customers' expectations. We have purchased a new solution and need to implement it fully to achieve benefits.

- We need to continue to prioritise the development of our website and on-line services to help support the ambitions set out in the Customer Access Strategy. .
- We ceased our Enterprise Agreement with Microsoft in 2010. We are licenced to use current versions of Windows and Office but we will need to decide if we take out a new agreement with Microsoft or use other software to provide this functionality.
- The need to maintain and develop corporate system to meet service or corporate needs.
- A need to remain on supported versions of systems, resulting in regular upgrade projects.
- Some of the date held in our systems is not of the quality or completeness we require. We particularly need to review and improve GIS data and expand the use of our Address Gazetteer.
- Some services have a developing need for location aware applications and information.

4.4 Current Infrastructure and Hardware

A solid and reliable infrastructure underpins access to systems, information and resources such as telephones, printing and scanning. There has been no major investment in the ageing cabling, ICT and telephony infrastructure as their replacement has been dependant on the Accommodation Project. There is funding in the Capital Programme for this equipment and it will be purchased and implemented in-line with the Accommodation Project. This new investment will lead to a step-change in the functionality available and it is our challenge to ensure that future needs are anticipated and accommodated as far as possible.

There are well documented problems with the lack of fast broadband in the Borough. This impact on the people of the Borough and on our connections to Leisure Centres, Community Hubs and cyber cafés. Working with the County Council to help improve broadband provision via the implementation of the Sub-Regional Local Broadband Plan is a priority.

The Council has invested in its technical infrastructure and now has the following in place:-

4.4.1 Hardware

- Computers - A replacement programme, which is now based on a “fit for purpose” test, not the age of the equipment, guides the purchase of PCs and monitors. Laptops and other devices are provided where there is a business need.
- File Servers – We start to review file servers once they are five years old to ensure they, and the operating system software used on them, is fit for purpose and supported.
- Backup – In 2011 we upgraded the backup solution to provide quicker backups, easier restores and less down time while applications are being backed up.
- Audio Visual – There is audio visual equipment in the Chamber for presentations.
- Community Hubs – We have ICT facilities in Community Rooms for use by residents and are planning the installation of hardware at Community locations for public use as advocated in the Customer Access Strategy.

4.4.2 Communications Infrastructure

The communications infrastructure enables the Council to store, disseminate and communicate information.

Network

- Local Area Network (LAN) - The Council has a 1Gbit Cisco layer 3 switched Ethernet LAN running TCP/IP. This covers the main administrative buildings and provides up to 100 Mbit connections to our desktop computers.
- Wireless - Provide wireless access for Councillors at home and in the Civic Suite.
- Firewall – Two makes of firewall are used to provide secure access to the network.
- Cabling Standards – Older cabling is Cat5, newer cabling is Cat5e.
- County Broadband – We have a single connection to the County network.
- Secure Logon – Two factor authentications is used for remote and home working.
- Internet – In 2011 we replaced our 2Mb internet line with a 10Mb line for web browsing etc.

Email

E-mail is an essential business communication tool and therefore the reliability and accessibility of this service is essential.

- The Email server is being replaced and the application upgraded to the latest version.
- We have an Email archive solution to improve resilience, search capabilities and backup/restore.
- We have a Blackberry Enterprise Server for access to email using Blackberry devices.

Telephony

The Council uses an Index Switch and software at the heart of its telephone system; these are very old and ostensibly unsupportable. They will be replaced as part of the Accommodation Project.

- The MacFarlane ADC used by the Contact Centre was upgraded in 2011.
- We have implemented a Mitel VOIP system to facilitate home working and provide additional capacity in the Depot and Council Offices.
- Leisure centres have standalone switchboard and telephone systems which lead to additional costs and inconvenience.

Printing

The Council has a policy of using multi-function workgroup devices (MFDs), which can print, copy and scan at a lower cost than small devices. Our current contract with Ricoh ends October 2012.

- There are 8 Ricoh MFDs with secure printing facilities deployed for general printing, copying and scanning.
- There is a Ricoh production copier and a colour copier, which must be used via the Print room service for larger print jobs.
- We have a plotted and a large format scanner which are old and fail to meet some needs.
- Small printers have been phased out except where there is a case for their retention.
- We use line printers for cheques which are old, large and costly to maintain.

4.4.3 Home Working/Flexible

- A home and flexible working solution using broadband and Citrix is widely used.
- A secure virtual private network (VPN) has been implemented to give secure access to the Council’s network and applications.

- Thin Client Solution – Citrix access is the approved, secure solution for home and flexible workers. It enables the use their home computers for some work purposes.
- Remote and Mobile Working:-
  - We have standardised on the use of Blackberry PDAs for remote email.
  - A range of devices (Tablet PC’s, Laptops) are deployed for specific mobile projects.
  - We are piloting the use of small tablet/slate devices such as the ipad and android alternatives for information provision and data collection in the field.

Known Infrastructure and Hardware issues:

- Capacity - There is little spare capacity on the network and telephone system.
- Cabling - Certain network points are testing as faulty and are unable to support the higher network speeds to the desktop PC. Cabling for telephones is old and inflexible.
- Connection to the County – Our single connection to the County WAN may cause capacity issues and is a single point of failure; this will need to be monitored and possibly improved.
- Mobile / Remote access - Access to email, applications and information while working out of the office needs to be provided in ways that are secure, cost effective and supportable.
- Thin Client Solution – We need to ensure that our Citrix environment covers all applications needed by home and flexible workers.
- Telephone system – A replacement for the Index must be implemented and needs to accommodate future requirements (e.g. Leisure Centres) and some existing equipment.
- Home and Flexible working – Solution is sized for current use and may need to be expanded and made more resilient if the Council increases this type of working or introduces hot-desking.
- Servers – Our servers need to be reviewed regularly to ensure they are fit for purpose and running supported software.
- Server Room – The server room is large and has old and energy inefficient equipment in use for cooling and power protection.

4.5 Skills and Knowledge

4.5.1 Employees and Councillors

Most jobs require some use of computers and the majority of staff and Councillors have access to ICT and applications. Staff and Members must be given the chance to gain the skills and confidence they need to use them effectively.

We currently provide the following awareness of, and training in, the use of technology, information and systems:-

- Appraisal - Skills and knowledge needed by jobs and people are considered at Appraisal.
- In-house Application training – Corporate Services staff provide training in the use of applications such as TOTAL, Trim, GIS and Web Management.
- Package training – Training has been provided in the past via an agreement with Warwick District Council.
- Technical Training - Specific technical or IT project related training is arranged by IS.
- On the job training - Provided for new staff in their services applications and processes.
- Prince 2 - IT Project Managers are trained in Prince 2 project management.

- Awareness – Corporate Services holds Open Days and workshops to raise awareness of the use of existing systems and new technologies.
- Briefing sessions are held on policy and strategy changes.
- Induction – All new staff and members who are expected to use a computer are given an ICT Induction within two weeks of starting work with the Council.
- Process improvement – A number of IS staff are trained in various process improvement and change management techniques such as "Systems Thinking"

4.5.2 Community

This strategy needs to support the development of skills by local people and the ambitions set out in the Customer Access Strategy.

Known Skills and Knowledge Issues:-

- We are introducing new versions of Office, Windows and email software which have a different look and feel that staff and members will need to become familiar with.
- We have staff that do not have access to ICT, such as those based at the Depot.
- We need to keep on top of the changing skills and knowledge needed to exploit applications and technologies such as social media.
- The skills needed to implement and support ICT are diverse and in some cases specialised e.g. security management and integration skills. We need to develop, buy-in or share these skills to be effective.
- There are some areas where we are reliant on one or two staff with specific skills and knowledge.
- We need to have the skills to support the access and ICT elements of the Community Plan, Customer Access Strategy, Consultation Strategy and Service Plans.
- Skills are needed to effectively publicise, promote and measure the use and impact of our on-line services.

5. Future Strategic Aims

The Council it must continue to exploit and invest in hardware, systems and skills if it is to address the known issues and deliver ICT solutions and services which further the principles detailed in Section 3 and meet its needs.

5.1 ICT Governance

The Council needs to continue to develop the governance of ICT, including our approaches to ICT service provision, partnerships and innovation.

ICT Governance – Strategic Aims:

Our Strategy is to develop structures and services which address the following:-

- **Shared Services** - Respond to, and help enable, any approved Shared Services or joint working initiatives. Exploit opportunities for ICT collaboration where they save cost or provide capacity or capability.

- **On-line Services** - Develop and encourage the use of customer focused, accessible on-line services, such as Internet payments and self-service to deliver efficiencies.
- **Mobility** - Provide access to information and services regardless of location (Council buildings, at home, on site), time or device.
- **Accessibility** - Provide accessible information and services by complying with standards and by delivering services in ways people want i.e. via the telephone or the web.
- **Business Continuity** (BC) – To minimise and manage ICT risk by ensuring ICT BC solutions are in place which meet Council and service and are regularly tested.
- **Project Management -** Business cases must be produced to identify how systems help deliver Council priorities and clearly identify benefits.
- **New ways of working** – Help the Council respond effectively to change and the organisational impact of new systems and ways of working (e.g. collaborative working).
- **Benefits realisation** – The Council will need to be able to measure the impact of new processes and technologies and be able to judge if they are making a real difference to the Council and/or people's lives.
- **Performance and Service Management** – Manage and improve the performance of the ICT Service by being customer focused and proving value for money services.

5.2 Standards, Legislation and Good Practice

The Council must continue to abide by legislation, adopt standards and apply best practice approaches to security, information and technology.

Standards, Legislation and Good Practice – Strategic Aims:

Our Strategy is to implement standards and adopt best practice to help us manage technology and information securely and effectively:-

- **Information Security** – Provide technology to enable the Council to store and manage its own and partner information securely and successfully, ensuring that the right people get access to the right information, at the right time.
- **Security Standards** - Protect the Council's physical and information assets and ensure confidentiality for our citizens by continuing use ISO27001 as a good practice guide.
- **Data transfer** – Ensure data collection, transfer and storage is done securely and where necessary compliantly.
- **Service Standards** - Adopt appropriate service standards and best practice to help provide quality and value for money ICT services.
- **Policies** – Have relevant and up to date policies and good practice guidance and ensure staff and Members are aware of them and their impact on their use of ICT or information.
- **Information Management** – Help the Council manage, use and share its information effectively by implementing relevant classifications, data schemas, information categorisation and information management standards (ISO 15489) in the systems it uses.
- **Compliance** – Provide systems and processes to help ensure the Council can respond and comply with legal requirements such as Freedom of Information (FOI), Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) and the Data Protection Act (DPA).
- **Climate Change** – Reduce the energy used to run the Council's ICT hardware and infrastructure and particularly that used in the Server Room.
- **Data Format** – Ensure our electronic information assets are in a format which can be used by the Council for as long as they are required.

- **Transparency & Open Data** – Facilitate the publishing of data stipulated by the Government as part of its "Transparency" agenda. Make other data available for use where there is a need or desire to do so.

5.3 Applications, Software and Information

The applications used by the Council must be developed, maintained, upgraded and, if necessary, replaced so that services are well supported and information is available.

Applications, Software and Information – Strategic Aims:

Ensure services are supported by effective applications, suitable software and reliable information to achieve this we will:-

- **Be business driven** – New applications or upgrades will be driven by our needs and a business case.
- **Reuse** – When possible we will utilise software and applications already purchased.
- **Buy not build** – Buy "off the shelf" applications written for the Local Government market or which contain the functionality we need as standard.
- **Partner** - Look to work with other Councils to share, host or implement systems together where we can achieve efficiencies.
- **Integrate** – Use integration to improve processes if there is a business case.
- **Comprehensive** – Fill the gaps in our application and software portfolio where there is a business need and cost case.
- **Cost Effective** – Provide value for money solutions by investigating and if feasible implementing free or lower cost software, systems and services.
- **Web and Social Media** – Enable the use of web technologies such as social media and mashups (combining information from various websites) to meet business needs around information, consultation and engagement.
- **Application Review** - Investigate, bid for funding and if a business case is approved replace applications identified in the plan provided as Appendix 1. A particular priority will be the decision on the Contact Centre CRM system.

5.4 Infrastructure and Hardware

Over the next three years we need to replace the majority of our aged ICT infrastructure as part of the Accommodation Project. Our challenge is to ensure that the new infrastructure is fit for purpose and will serve us through the foreseeable future.

Infrastructure and Hardware – Strategic Aims:

To provide a modern and robust infrastructure through approved investment which will meet the Councils current and anticipate needs and ambitions; we will:-

- **Availability** - Maintain agreed level of infrastructure availability, resilience and reliability.
- **Communication** – Help the Council to identify new and utilise existing methods of communication and collaboration which add value to services, citizens and customers.
- **Innovation** – To use technology to support innovative ways of working which deliver efficiencies and / or improve services delivery and working practices.

- **Appropriate Technology** - Provide up to date and fit for purpose hardware and software.
- **New infrastructure** – To ensure the infrastructure purchased and implemented as part of the Accommodation Project meets the Council's current and future needs.
- **Printing** – Provide multi-function devices. Provide specialist plotters, scanners and printers and keep high cost small printers if there is a strong business case for their retention.
- **Choice** – Work to enable staff and members to use their own device of choice where appropriate to securely access information and systems.
- **Broadband** – Work to improve Broadband coverage and speeds within the Borough.
- **Community Access** – Provide technology solutions to meet service's ambitions for community access e.g. Community Hubs, Cyber Cafes, Community Room computing.
- **Server Room** – Provide a server infrastructure which is more energy efficient and space efficient and enables other equipment to be located in the Server Room.

5.5 ICT Skills

Providing the skills staff need to use and utilise ICT solutions is essential if the Council is to get the most from its investment in ICT and information assets. Encouraging and promoting initiatives which help the public develop ICT skills and become confident in the use of the Internet will hopefully be beneficial for them and support the delivery of Council Strategies and priorities.

Skills – Strategic Aims:

Ensure the efficient use of technology, systems and information; we will:

- **New Microsoft Software** – Provide staff and members with the awareness and skills needed to use and exploit new versions of Office and Windows software.
- **Future Skills** - Continue to develop staff to have the skills needed to use the applications and information they require to do their jobs.
- **Technical Skills** – Have the technical skills needed to managed and develop ICT through training our own staff, buying in services or working in partnership.
- **Process Improvement** – Provide skills to help services improve their business processes and deliver efficiencies
- **Community ICT Skills –** Help residents gain ICT skills and awareness through Council Projects such as Community Hubs and by supporting initiatives such as Race On-line.

There will always be a need for day-to-day, tactical and technical decisions. However, we will use this Strategy as a guide; ensuring that decisions are aligned with it and that there is a business case for investment and action.

The detailed actions needed to implement the Strategy are contained in the Corporate Services Service Plan which has been approved by Members for 2012/13. Relevant tasks will be incorporated in to the Joint Strategy Action Plan which will focus on actions relating to customer service and supporting communication and consultation with customers and the citizens of the Borough. Actions for 2013/14 and 2014/15 will be included in the annual Corporate Services Service Plans and submitted to Board as we approach these years.

Appendix 1

Application Status and Plans

Business Area	Application	Date Implemented	Fit for purpose	Plans
Service Applications				
Revenues & Benefits	Academy	Pre 2000	Yes	Hardware review 2014
Housing Maintenance	Open Housing	2003	Yes	Hardware review 2015
Housing rents and allocations.	Open Housing	2005	Yes	No plans to replace application.
Land Charges	Northgate(iLap)	2005	Yes	Review 2012 as part of Systems Thinking / Service Reviews.
Planning	Northgate(iLap)	2005	Yes	
Environmental Health	Civica – Flare	Pre 2000	Yes	Hardware review 2015
Refuse	In-house	Pre 2000	No	Decision to be taken after Review
Committee Minutes	Jadu	2009	Yes	Using Website and Email
IT Helpdesk	Richmond	Pre 2000	Yes	No plans to replace.
Leisure management and booking.	Flex	2006	Yes	Major upgrade/replacement needed.
Electoral Registration & Management	eXpress	2008	Yes	Review 2015.
Shared Applications (corporate cross-cutting information systems)				
Contact Centre – CRM	Northgate Front Office	2004 & New Contract 2008	Yes	5 year contract Dec 08. Review 2013
Automatic Call distribution (ACD)	MacFarlane	2004	Yes	Technology refresh & upgrade 2010
Finance & e-procurement	Consilium - Total	2005	Yes	Hardware replacement 2009
Local Land and Property Gazetteer	Northgate(iLapSX3)	2005	Yes	Review 2014
Facilities (Assets)	IBS	2003	Partially	Review 2013
Bank / payment transfer	EIGER (BACS)	2005	Yes	No plans to replace.
Cash receipting & Phone Payments	Civica ICON	Upgraded 2008	No	Move to Capita by Oct 2012
HR and Payroll	WCC Service	2009	Yes	Review 2014
Application Support Tools (software to help people use and present information)				
GIS	Cadcorp GIS	2005	Yes	No plans to replace.
Reporting Software	Crystal Reports	Exisiting	Yes	Review 2015
Project planning software	Microsoft Project	Existing	Yes	No plans to replace.
Common Infrastructure Services				

Business Area	Application	Date Implemented	Fit for purpose	Plans
Corporate EDRMS & Workflow	Tower Trim	2005	Yes	No plans to replace
Content Management (Web & Intranet	Jadu	2005. Hardware 08	Yes	No plans to replace
Directory Services	Microsoft AD	Existing	Yes	Updated in 2012
Personal Productivity – Word, Excel	Microsoft Office	PC repl. and EA[4]	Yes	Upgrade to Office 2010 by 2014.
Email & Calendar	Exchange 2003 & Outlook	Upgraded 2005	Yes	Upgrade to Exchange 2010 in progress.
Email archive & backup	Cryoserve	2005	Yes	Review 2014
Infrastructure				
Members ICT	Hardware & Software provided to members	Latest update from May 2011	Yes	Review for May 2015 election.
Microsoft Server operating system.	Windows 2007 Server.	2010	Yes	Review with new server purchases.
Unix Operating System	Solaris	New 2004, upgraded 2009.	Yes	Review 2014 – part of Academy project.
Desktop operating system	Windows XP, 2003. 7	Eliminate 2000.	Yes	Moving to Windows 7.
Internet browser software	IE 8, Firefox	Existing	Yes	Upgrade as needed.
Telephone Switch Management	Oak	Pre 2000	Partially	Accommodation Project.
Desktop and server Anti-virus software	Symantec Anti virus	Existing	Yes	Review Annually before renewal.
Backup software	Veritas	Upgraded 2011	Yes	Review 2015
Preferred Database Management Systems	Oracle SQL Server	Existing	Yes	No plans to replace.

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[4] EA = Microsoft Enterprise Agreement, 3 year agreement (2008 – 2011) to enable us to implement latest version of Microsoft software.

Appendix B

Risk Management Form – ICT Strategy 2012 - 2015

NORTH WARWICKSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Division - Corporate Services

Risk Ref	Risk: Title/Description	Consequence	Likelihood (5 = high, 1 = low)	Impact (5 = high, 1 = low)	Gross Risk Rating	Responsible Officer	Existing Control Procedures	Likelihood(5 = high, 1 = low)	Impact (5 = high, 1 = low)	Net Risk Rating
1	**Not having an approved ICT Strategy.**	ICT investment not made or wasted.	**3**	**4**	**12**	**AD (CS)**	**Strategy, actions and any project plans show links to Council Priorities and Service Plans.**	**2**	**2**	**4**
		Skills not identified or developed.	**3**	**3**	**9**	**AD (CS)**	**Skills identified in advance and plans and bids for training made**	**2**	**2**	**4**
		Technical direction not clear or followed.	**3**	**3**	**9**	**AD (CS)**	**Technical direction stated and projects identified to support it**	**2**	**2**	**4**
		Legislative and security requirements not met.	**3**	**4**	**12**	**AD (CS)**	**Strategy identifies compliance requirements and aims set to deliver them.**	**2**	**2**	**4**
		Benefits from ICT use for customers, staff and the Council not achieved.	**3**	**4**	**12**	**AD (CS)**	**Strategy identifies**	**2**	**2**	**4**

							potential benefits and clarified in projects which aim to deliver them.			

Risk Ref	**Options for additional / replacement control procedure**	**Cost Resources**	**Likelihood (5 = high, 1 = low)**	**Impact (5 = high, 1 = low)**	**Net Risk Rating**
	Having a Council ICT Strategy helps ensure we manage and mitigate against known corporate and operational risks such as those detailed below. All current ICT Risks Assessments are Stored on Trim.				
	- Hardware failure- server				
	- Hardware failure due to damage in the server room				
	- Back up device failure and core system failure & back up device failure only				
	- Failure to deliver service due to lack of capacity				
	- Failure to achieve compliance with requirements e.g. GCSX, PCIDSS.				
	- Health, Safety and Welfare of employees and those affected by our undertakings				

Compiled By : Linda Bird Date: 19/1/2009 (for 2009 – 2012 ICT Strategy)
Reviewed and Updated by : Linda Bird Date : 9/3/2012 (for 2012 – 2015 ICT Strategy)

Appendix C

Initial Equality Impact Assessment Pro Forma

Section	Information and Procurement Services	Officer responsible for the assessment	Linda Bird – AD (Corporate Services)

Name of Policy to be assessed	~~ICT Strategy 2009 – 2012~~ **ICT Strategy 2012 - 2015**	Date of initial Assessment **Date of Review & Update**	19/1/2009 **9/3/2012**	Is this a new or existing policy ? **Existing**	Update to Existing? **Yes**

1 Briefly describe the aims, objectives and purpose of the policy.	• Provide direction for the Council's use of technology and information. • Define the governance and operational services needed to manage and deliver ICT. • Ensure that the use of and investment in ICT is aligned with the Council's Priorities and Corporate Plan and through these the Sustainable Community Plan. • Support the delivery of the Council's services in ways that citizens want and value. • Promote and facilitate the development and use of on-line services and information. • Follow and adopt legislative requirements, industry standards and best practice.
2 Are there any associated objectives of the policy? Please explain.	See Above
3 Who is intended to benefit from this policy, and in what way?	This strategy is intended to inform Councillors, Staff, Partners, Citizens and Local Communities about how the Council plans to use technology and information
4 What outcomes are wanted from this policy?	Our aim is to provide the best technology and ICT services for the council. Outcomes of specific projects and initiatives are defined during the project.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2"></td><td colspan="6"></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">5 What factors/forces could contribute/ detract from the outcomes?</td><td colspan="6">• The strategy takes a corporate view of ICT needs, which may conflict with and override divisional needs.
• If the council is to get maximum benefit from using ICT, services must be involved in the implementation of business solutions and the realisation of the benefits from these solutions, as this relies on operational ownership and cultural change.
• It is envisaged that funding, especially capital will be particularly tight during the period of this strategy and this may impact on our plans and ambitious.
• The council is engaged in major accommodation project which will require ICT resource and lead to a step-change in ICT infrastructure including ICT and Telephony
• Services have not identified a need to replace any corporate or business application during this period, with the exception of the Leisure Flex system which is to be upgraded by its developers and the Uchoose.</td></tr>
<tr><td>6 Who are the main stakeholders in relation to the policy?</td><td colspan="4">Councillors, Staff, Partners, Citizens and Local Communities, Local Businesses.</td><td colspan="2">7 Who implements the policy, and who is responsible for the policy?</td><td>The Strategy is developed and owned by Corporate Service Division on behalf of the Council. Implementation will be led by Information Services but relies on numerous projects and other Sections and Divisions..</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">8 Are there concerns that the policy **could** have a differential impact on racial groups?</td><td>~~Y~~</td><td colspan="2">**N**√</td><td colspan="2">Please explain.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this ?</td><td colspan="5"></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">9 Are there concerns that the policy **could** have a differential impact due to gender?</td><td>~~Y~~</td><td colspan="2">**N**√</td><td colspan="2"></td></tr>
</table>

What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?			
10 Are there concerns that the policy **could** have a differential impact due to disability?	**Y**√	~~**N**~~	The Strategy promotes the provision of accessible information. Specific initiatives include meeting accessible standards to the Website (large text, speech readers). Information and services provided online help people who are unable to visit the council or who prefer not to use the telephone to get a service.
What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?	Research by Government and others identifies how online service can benefit people with disabilities.		
11 Are there concerns that the policy **could** have a differential impact due to sexual orientation?	~~**Y**~~	**N**√	
What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?			
12 Are there concerns that the policy **could** have a differential impact due to their age?	**Y**√	~~**N**~~	There are conflicting views about the impact of ICT on older people and the preference of younger people to use technology and information. It is important for the ICT Strategy to encourage access to technology for all and the provision of information and services to meet people's needs regardless of age.
What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?			
13 Are there concerns that the policy **could** have a differential impact due to their religious belief?	~~**Y**~~	**N**√	

What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?			
14 Are there concerns that the policy **could** have a differential impact due to them having dependants/ Caring responsibilities?	**Y**√	~~**N**~~	The provision of services electronically as promoted in the Strategy could help people with caring responsibilities by making services available at times, places and in ways convenient for them. It also support the Councils stance on home, flexible and mobile working.
What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?			
15 Are there concerns that the policy **could** have a differential impact due to them having an offending past?	**Y**√	~~**N**~~	Some of the information held and processed is of a financial, sensitive or confidential nature. Anyone employed to use or access this information would have to satisfy criteria laid down by HR and Audit.
What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?			
16 Are there concerns that the policy **could** have a differential impact due to them being trans-gendered or transsexual?	~~**Y**~~	**N**√	
What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?			
17 Could the differential impact identified in 8 – 16 amount to there being the potential for adverse impact in this policy?	~~**Y**~~	**N**√	Please explain.
18 Can this adverse impact be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for	~~**Y**~~	**N**√	Please explain for each equality heading (questions 8-16 on a separate piece of paper).

	one group? Or any other reason?			
19	Should the policy proceed to a partial impact assessment?	**~~Y~~**	**N**√	

20	If Yes, is there enough to a full EIA?	**Y**	**N**	
21	If no please detail the steps taken to minimise the adverse impact?	The Strategy is written on the basis of ensuring accessibility and giving secure, appropriate access to information and services to all people when and where they need it, using ways they value including face-to-face, telephone, website, mobile phone etc.		
22	Date on which Partial or Full assessment to be completed by.	**Y**	**N**	

Comments

It is anticipated that the Strategy will become approved after the February 09 meeting of the Council.

It has been assumed that the Council’s Customer Access Strategy will express customers and communities aims and ambitions for using ICT and that this strategy will support the delivery of these aims.

Signed (Completing Officer) : Linda Bird……………………………………………………………………

Date : 9/3/2012……………………………………………………………………

Signed (Head of Section): Linda Bird……………………………………………………………………………

Date: 9/3/2012……………………………………………………………………

Agenda Item No 11

Resources Board

2 April 2012

Report of the
Assistant Director (Housing)

Right to Buy Regulations

1 Summary

1.1 This report provides Members with information about the Government's changes to the Right to Buy being introduced by the Government.

Recommendation to the Board

That the Board consider the new arrangements and agree to the Council seeking to sign up to an agreement to use up to 30% of the Right to Buy receipts for replacement homes.

2 Consultation

2.1 The Chairman of the Housing Sub-Committee (Councillor Winter) and the Opposition Spokesperson for Housing (Councillor Johnston) have been sent an advance copy of this report and asked for their comments.

3 Introduction

. . . 3.1 The Department for Communities and Local Government recently published a consultation paper about intended changes to the Right To Buy regulations. The Council's response is attached at Appendix 1 of the report.

3.2 On 12 March 2012 the changes to the Right to Buy regulations were announced. They will be implemented from 2 April 2012. This report advises Members of the changes and their implications.

4 "Reinvigorating Right to Buy and One to One Replacement"

. . . 4.1 The Government has published information for Local Authorities about the changes they are making to the Right to Buy scheme. The document is attached at Appendix 2 of this report. It states:

- That the discount cap for Right to Buy purchases has been increased to £75,000. (It is currently £26,000 in the West Midlands)
- Nationally the Government intends to ensure every home that is sold is replaced and therefore some of the capital receipts from sales will be recycled.

- Local Authorities will be able to retain receipts to provide replacement housing if they sign an agreement to limit the use of the receipts to 30% of the replacement homes
- The current Buy Back provision remains in place
- The cost floor has been changed from 10 years to 15 years for new social homes built after 2008.

4.2 The published document states that further details will be forthcoming about how the agreement to keep receipts to replace housing sold will operate. However, it is worth noting that the one for one replacement is a national commitment not a local one.

4.3 The document indicates the ‘30% rule’ has been proposed because it reflects the model used in the Affordable Housing Programme managed by the Homes and Communities Agency. As with this programme the remainder of the cost will come from borrowing against the net rental income stream from the new property and cross subsidy from the landlord’s own resources, including (in some cases) land.

4.4 It is envisaged that the funding from the Right to Buy receipts received will be accounted for at the end of each financial year once the number of sales is known and the level of capital receipt received.

5 Conclusion

5.1 The Government is increasing the discount cap to £75,000 to allow a greater number of people to realise their aspiration of home ownership. There may or may not be an increased take up in North Warwickshire

6 Report Implications

6.1 Financial and Value for Money Implications

6.1.1 The Council’s business plan for self financing anticipates the number of Right to Buy sales it expects. This figure has been agreed with the Department of Communities and Local Government. An increase in Right to Buy sales will have an impact on the business plan.

6.1.2 It is welcomed that a percentage of the Right to Buy receipts can be used to fund affordable housing in the Borough if an agreement is made with the Government. However it is possible that the number of homes the Council is able to fund might not match the level of Right to Buy sales and therefore reduction in rent income becomes a risk to the business plan.

6.2 **Links to Council's Priorities**

6.2.1 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. Preventing tenancy fraud will help us to make best use of our stock.

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

Consultation

Question 1: ***We would welcome views on the proposals outlined***

We understand that the Government wishes to encourage more Right to Buy sales. However we are concerned that an increased level of sales will have a detrimental effect on the Council's Housing Revenue Account Business Plan. Reduced stock numbers will have a direct impact on rent revenue and therefore, ultimately, viability. We understand that the Government intends the revised scheme to ensure there is a 'one for one' replacement of stock. However, the receipts received in this area will not be sufficient in themselves to make this happen with a risk (depending on the delivery model chosen by the DCLG) that the stock lost locally will not be replaced locally at a time of rising numbers of applicants in housing need. There will also be a time lag between the sale and the extensive work required to get a fully funded new scheme completed. It is also noted that any replacement properties would be Affordable Rent tenancies and therefore, in any event, there will be a loss of Social Rented homes.

The consultation states that, even with the increased cap, the receipt for a single sale in London could support more than one Affordable Rent replacement home. It also clearly states that in other areas receipts may be insufficient to support funding for one-for-one replacement. Does this not lead to a conclusion that the current practice of differential caps for different areas of the country should continue?

The consultation acknowledges that the receipts generated will only be a fraction of the cost of funding a replacement home. The balance will need to be financed by borrowing against the future rental income stream. If this is the case, then it will be necessary to increase local authority housing debt caps to enable this borrowing to take place.

Question 2: ***Do you agree that information currently provided to prospective Right to Buy purchasers is sufficient? If not, what else should be included?***

The information is comprehensive and sufficient.

Question 3: ***Are there further steps which could be taken to ensure that tenants who purchase under the Right to Buy know and understand the implications of home ownership, including their obligations on becoming a leaseholder*?**

Our view is that the information provided is sufficient for the Right to Buy purchaser. However, when the property is sold to another buyer they do not always have sufficient information about possible charges. This can cause problems around leaseholder arrangements and therefore strengthening the legal requirement to make potential financial responsibilities clearer would be welcomed.

Question 4: ***We would welcome evidenced assessments of the impact on rural affordable housing of the proposed changes to Right to Buy discounts.***

North Warwickshire is a rural district. In the past the Right to Buy has been popular in some of our smaller villages. The direct impact of this, which would be exacerbated by a resurgent of purchases, is that it is rarely possible to replace the properties in those villages. This is because land in smaller villages, which are hemmed in by green belt considerations, is not available to provide for developments. Social Housing would be lost to the community and any Affordable Rent tenancies which are achieved locally in the Borough would be developed in and around the three Market Towns.

Two examples are one village which had 12 family homes owned by the Council and due to Right to Buy sales now has only 3 and another in which there was a mix of 18 Council owned homes and now there are 9. (4 of which are bungalows which are not eligible)

Question 5*: Loss of Income to the Housing Revenue Account (Right to Buy sales have been taken into account in the housings subsidy self financing settlement however if sales are substantially higher than the projections there would need to be a method of accounting for the housing debt supportable from the lost income from additional sales) – We would welcome your views on these proposals*

The Council supports the proposals for calculating the level of debt attributable to each additional property sold. However, greater clarity is needed on the calculation of attributable debt, is this based on an average of all properties sold in the year and then applied to additional sales, or does it only relate to those disposals after the original figure has been achieved?

Question 6/7*: What proportion of Right to Buy applications are subsequently withdrawn in your area? What costs are incurred in managing aborted applications?*

Around 50% of the Right to Buy applications made to the Council are withdrawn. The costs for these aborted applications are the same up to final conveyance as the full process needs to be adhered to in order to provide the correct information for the prospective purchaser. An aborted case costs £375 on average. The Council believes that the administration allowance should be pitched at the 50th percentile.

Question 8: ***What sources of funding have you used for improvement works in your area?***

The Council has used the following sources of funding to meet expenditure on Decent Homes:

	£000
Supported Borrowing	2,932
Major Repairs Allowance	10,997
Unsupported Borrowing	3,558
Capital Receipts	5,155
Revenue	4,230
Other Contributions	858
	27,730

Roughly, half of the resources used to finance decent homes have come from the Council's own resources and not from Central Government. In the future, the Council will be using its own resources totally to ensure properties remain decent, therefore, we believe it important that these costs should continue to be wholly recoverable from right to buy receipts. This would not be the case if this provision were removed. It does not follow that the market value of a property rises £ for £ with the costs of improvement work and in any case any increase would be reduced by the discount allowable.

Question 9: ***(The Local Government Settlement provided for assumptions on income from receipts for both local and central government. The consultation proposal sets out to ensure that these are protected.)We would welcome views on the proposed approach to projected receipts.***

The Council relies on its current level of Right to Buy receipts to finance its General Fund Capital Programme, of which private sector housing forms a significant part. It is important that access to the existing level of useable receipts is preserved in order to finance these programmes. Unless the Council increases its sales by 80%, then the additional sales will be insufficient to cover the assumed General Fund income and therefore some further protection needs to be built into the proposals to ensure the General Fund receives its anticipated income and is not disadvantaged by the increased discounts and supportable debt reductions. The Council is hoping to be able to build new properties under the self-financing regime. Whilst we welcome the proposal to accept applications for sales receipts of newly built homes to be excluded from the pooling regime, we would prefer if this was the accepted position and therefore individual applications would not be necessary.

Question 10: ***Under current arrangements councils can use Right to Buy receipts to cover part of the costs of buying back council homes. (The proposal indicates that buy back in these terms would only be applicable if the home was going to be rented out and not demolished as part of a regeneration scheme.) We would welcome any information councils can provide on the use of Buyback properties. We would also welcome views on this proposal.***

North Warwickshire Borough Council has not had cause to use the Buy Back Scheme. However we would like to retain a Buy Back Scheme which allows for the purchase of homes which will can be rented out to applicants and not demolished. This will help address local housing need by replacing stock by a very direct means rather than waiting for new housing developments.

Question 11***: Section 131 of the Housing Act 1985 (the cost floor) limits Right to Buy discount to ensure that the purchase price of the property does not fall below what has been spent on building, buying, repairing or maintaining it over a certain period of time. (There are no proposals to change this). Do you have any comments on this proposal?***

The Council has recently built 25 new properties and hopes to have the resources to continue to do so under the self-financing regime. We therefore welcome the proposal to maintain the cost floor principles which limits the discounts that would be available on these new properties.

Question 12: ***Once account has been taken for costs of both local and central government with regard to assumed income Right to Buy receipts will be apportioned in order to provide funding for replacement homes. A calculation is provided in the proposal for this. We would welcome views on the calculation for allowable deductions.***

We can follow the logic of the calculation in apportioning Right to Buy receipts between the amount that relates to sales in the original self-financing proposals and additional amounts due to increased Right to Buy sales. However, how will long term assumptions about Local and Central Government assumed capital receipts be calculated?

We have concerns that unless significant additional sales materialise (80% in our case), the Council will have less retained receipts with which to finance its general fund private sector housing capital expenditure and there will be no residual receipt to help finance replacement homes.

Question 13: ***Which model for delivery of replacement housing do you consider the most appropriate and why?***

North Warwickshire Borough Council would favour the ‘Local Model with direction’. This model would enable Councils to take responsibility and work locally to replace homes within the area to meet housing need directly but would still give central government assurance that their aim of replacing Right to Buy properties would happen.

Questions 14 and 15 are not applicable to the Council.

Question 16: ***Based on your experience are you able to provide any evidence on the likely percentage of Right to Buy purchasers on Housing Benefit?***

Since 2009, out of 10 Right to Buy completions, 2 purchasers were in receipt of housing benefit payments.

APPENDIX 2

Communities
and Local Government

www.communities.gov.uk
community, opportunity, prosperity

From the Permanent Secretary

To: Local Authority chief execs

Copy to: Chief Executives of
Registered Housing Providers
which own more than 1000
homes

12 March 2012

Dear Colleague

Reinvigorating Right to Buy

I'm writing to update you about the changes we are making to reinvigorate Right to Buy. These changes form part of a wider set of initiatives that were announced in *Laying the Foundations: a Housing Strategy for England*, last November. Details of the NewBuy Guarantee scheme, also in the Housing Strategy, and which helps those for whom finding a big enough deposit is the barrier to home ownership, are also being announced today.

On Right to Buy, following consultation, the Minister for Housing and Local Government is today making regulations that will increase the maximum discount cap for tenants to £75,000 across England from 2 April 2012, subject to parliamentary approval. This also applies to the Preserved Right to Buy for stock transfer tenants.

We have worked with the Local Government Association and expert advisers from local authorities during (and before) the consultation in designing the scheme. As a result of this, we have made a number of changes to our proposals, set out in the attached guide to the scheme for local authorities. These include measures to remove potential dis-incentives to council house-building; an increase in the allowances for transaction and administration costs; and making clear that we are not compelling authorities to pay off debt associated with the sale.

I know that many of you will be particularly interested in what Ministers have decided about the use of the Right to Buy receipts. As you know, the Government's aim is that – for England as a whole - every additional home sold under the Right to Buy is replaced with a new affordable rented home. However, Ministers have decided not to adopt a 'national' model of delivery, in which receipts would be pooled.

Instead, in response to the consultation, and in line with the Government's localist approach, we are inviting councils who have an appetite to replace the homes sold under the Right to Buy, to sign an agreement with us that enables you to keep the remaining receipts (after covering debt, transaction costs and previously planned income from receipts) to spend on replacement homes for affordable rent – either by directly building, or working in partnership with a registered housing provider. To ensure value for money, and to help us meet Ministers' aim of one-for-one replacement nationally, the agreement will stipulate that no more than 30% of the cost of the replacement homes will be met from the Right to Buy receipt.

Any receipts not subject to an agreement will be passed to the Greater London Authority in London and the Homes and Communities Agency outside London, who will re-invest them in new affordable housing. Local authorities and registered housing providers will be able to bid for this money. Further details of the changes are available in the enclosed Local Authority guide.

Right to Buy in this new incarnation, alongside the reform of the Housing Revenue Account, gives you the opportunity both to support your tenants' aspirations to own their homes, helping them acquire an asset; and for the first time, to build new affordable homes (either directly or through another social housing provider), providing local employment opportunities, and helping meet local housing need for future generations.

We will be producing a set of materials, including model letters for your council to personalise and send to tenants, which will be an effective means of meeting your statutory duty to inform tenants of these changes. We are also producing a new "summary guide" to the Right to Buy for tenants, as well as refreshing our existing literature, to ensure that tenants get full information.

The Minister is also keen to support councils further so we are offering to work with a small number of "spotlight areas" - exploring what we can do to ensure tenants are aware of the benefits of the increased opportunity and then sharing what we learn in these areas with other councils. Our aim is to ensure that those tenants for whom Right to Buy is the right choice are fully aware of their extended rights; and that all tenants are properly advised so that they can make an informed decision. If you are interested in innovative ways of informing tenants about Right to Buy in your area, please get in touch with Louise Beckingham via louise.beckingham@communities.gsi.gov.uk or 0303 444 4336.

I am copying this letter to the Chief Executives of those housing associations and other registered providers who hold stock of more than 1000 homes, since they will be interested in the potential opportunities this offers them and, in some cases, the changes to the Preserved Right to Buy. The Housing Minister is also writing today to Council Leaders and MPs.

Bob Kerslake

SIR BOB KERSLAKE

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Communities
and Local Government

Reinvigorating Right to Buy and One for One Replacement

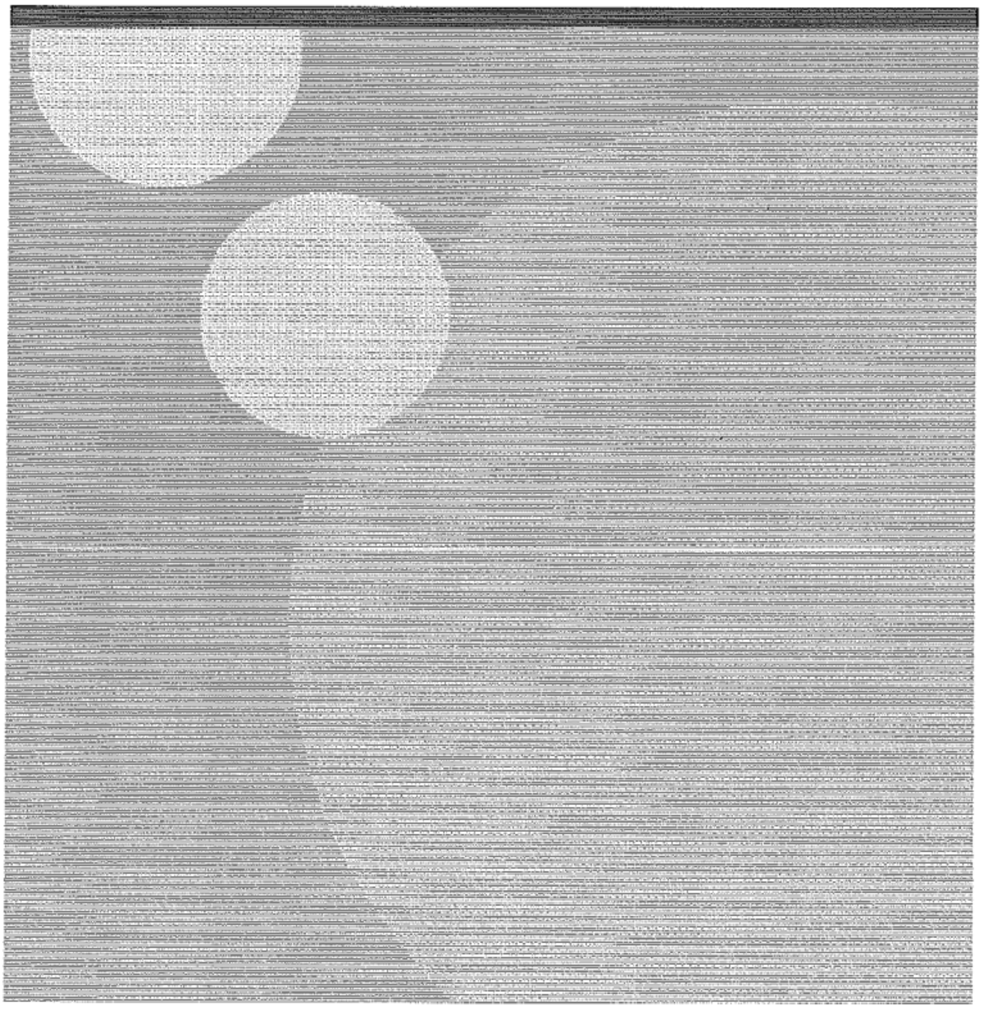
Information for Local Authorities

March 2012
Department for Communities and Local Government

Communities and Local Government

Reinvigorating Right to Buy and One for One Replacement

Information for Local Authorities



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Eland House
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March 2012

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Summary

The Right to Buy scheme was introduced in 1980 and gives qualifying social tenants the right to buy their home at a discount. The scheme is open to secure tenants of local authorities and non-charitable housing associations, and to those assured tenants of housing associations who have transferred with their homes from a local authority as part of a housing stock transfer.

In *Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England*[1], the Government announced its intention to increase the caps on Right to Buy discounts to enable more tenants to achieve their ambition for home ownership. It also set out the Government's commitment to ensure that the receipts on every additional home sold under the Right to Buy are used to fund its replacement, on a one for one basis, with a new home for Affordable Rent. In December 2011, the Department for Communities and Local Government published a consultation[2] setting out proposals for how this would be achieved and seeking views.

The Government has now announced its planned changes to the Right to Buy scheme, with details of how one for one replacement will work. Subject to Parliament, these changes will take effect from 2 April 2012.

This document sets out the changes in more detail and aims to address common questions. Further information is available at http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/homeownership/righttobuy/.

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[1] Published on 21 November 2011 – see http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/housingstrategy2011

[2] http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/reinvigoratingrighttobuy

Key points

- We have **increased the discount cap to £75,000** – a £25,000 increase on the cap proposed in the consultation document, allowing an even greater number of people to realise their aspiration of home ownership.

- For the first time, **every additional home sold under Right to Buy will be replaced by a new home for affordable rent**, with receipts from sales recycled towards the cost of replacement.

- Local **authorities will be able to retain the receipts for replacement housing –** provided they can sign up to an agreement with Government that they will limit the use of the net Right to Buy receipts to 30% of the cost of the replacement homes.

- **Councils will be able to deduct the necessary amount to cover the debt** from the receipt but will not be required to use this part of the receipt to repay loans.

- For the first time, **councils will be able to deduct a certain amount from the receipt for the cost of withdrawn applications**. We have increased that amount in response to evidence provided in the consultation, from 25% to 50%. Authorities will now be able to retain £2,850 in London and £1,300 in the rest of England to cover the costs of administration.

- We have decided to **retain the Buy Back provision**, following representation from councils. **Local authorities will be allowed to fund up to 50% of the cost of re-purchasing a former council home, up to a maximum of 6.5%**[3] of any additional net receipts (i.e. receipts available to support one-for-one replacement).

- In response to consultation, we have decided to: **retain and extend the 'cost floor', from 10 years to 15 years**; and continue to **allow councils to apply for exemption from pooling arrangements** (and therefore one-for-one replacement) for Right to Buy receipts from new social homes built after 2008. Without these changes, we recognise there could be a financial disincentive for local authorities to provide new affordable rented homes in future.

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[3] 6.5% is around the average level of Right to Buy receipts retained by local authorities for Buy Back over the last three years.

Key Changes

Policy	Current Policy	From 2 April 2012
Discount Rates & Cap	Current discount rates are: • for houses: 35% of the property's value plus 1% for each year beyond the qualifying period up to a maximum of 60%; • for flats: 50% plus 2% for each year beyond the qualifying period up to a maximum of 70%. Tenants must have been public sector tenants for 5 years before they qualify for the Right to Buy In practice, most Right to Buy discounts are limited by caps. These currently range from £16,000 in most parts of London to £38,000 in parts of the South East (full details at Annex A).	We will increase the discount cap to **£75,000 across England.** Discount rates will not change and tenants will still need to have been public sector tenants for 5 years.
Use of Right to Buy Receipts	Subject to the deductions mentioned below, 75% of the receipts are paid to HM Treasury ("the poolable amount") and the remaining 25% are retained by local authorities.	After calculating transaction costs and compensating authorities for loss of income above what has been covered in the self-financing settlement, **HM Treasury and local authorities will receive the amounts they would have expected to receive,** had the policy on Right to Buy remained unchanged. (See Annex A of http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/2053578.pdf)
Administration Costs	For the purposes of calculating the poolable amount, local authorities may deduct the actual transaction costs of successful sales from Right to Buy receipts, but there is no allowance for costs relating to Right to Buy applications which do not result in a sale.	We will introduce flat rate allowances for London and the rest of England, set with regard to the 40th percentile of costs achieved by councils over the last 3 years, and – for the first time - with a 50% uplift for withdrawn applications. In our consultation, we proposed allowances of £2,360 for London and £1,070 for the rest of England. In light of consultation responses, we have decided that **allowances will be fixed at £2,850 for London and £1,300 for the rest of England.**
Preserved	As Housing Associations are	We propose a number of **measures to**

Policy	Current Policy	From 2 April 2012
Right to Buy	independent organisations, we do not intend to mandate what they do with any receipts from Preserved Right to Buy sales – but our assumption is that receipts will be recycled into new affordable homes or other programmes with public benefits.	**incentivise Housing Associations to reinvest receipts**: • For providers who are not developing under the main Affordable Homes Programme, the Homes and Communities Agency will offer to broker working with an investment partnership. • Associations recycling their own receipts into new affordable housing will be prioritised when we consider any bids for Right to Buy receipts which have been returned to the centre. • We will also consider bids for additional freedoms and flexibilities for Housing Associations, where this would help ensure funds were recycled into new affordable housing
Buy Back	Councils may Buy Back former council properties and claim around 50% of the costs from their total Right to Buy receipts.	We will retain the **Buy Back facility, allowing councils to claim up to 50% of the value of each property** bought-up to **a total of 6.5% of the value of net Right to Buy receipts** (after administration costs, debt and assumed income). 6.5% is around the average level of Right to Buy receipts retained by local authorities for Buy Back over the last three years
Cost Floor	Section 131 of the Housing Act 1985 (the cost floor) limits the Right to Buy discount to ensure that the purchase price of the property does not fall below what has been spent on building, buying, repairing or maintaining it over a certain period of time (relevant expenditure).	We will increase the period of time the cost floor covers from **10 to 15 years** for new homes subject to Right to Buy, bringing rules for councils into line with those for Housing Associations and protecting initial investment in the housing. We will also **retain the option for councils to apply for an exemption from pooling receipts** for new homes built in future.

Questions and Answers

What is the new discount?

The discount cap will be raised to £75,000 - quadrupling the discount across London and tripling it in much of the rest of the country. This will allow a greater number of social tenants to exercise their Right to Buy and meet their home ownership aspirations, support social mobility and help create and sustain mixed communities.

Why have the discount rates not changed in percentage terms, or regionally?

The simplest and most immediate way of improving the Right to Buy offer is to raise the cap. While there is an argument for introducing a disparate approach across the country, we want to communicate a clear message to tenants of what is being offered. In practice, most tenants will still be limited by the discount rates according to their length of tenure.

Have the criteria for who can qualify for Right to Buy changed?

No. To qualify for Right to Buy or Preserved Right to Buy, tenants must have spent five years as public sector tenants.

How will one for one replacement be delivered?

Local authorities will be able to retain the receipts for replacement housing – provided they can sign up to an agreement with Government that they will limit the use of the net Right to Buy receipts to 30% of the cost of the replacement homes. The way this will work is explained in a bit more detail below.

After discussion with local government, the Government has decided that receipts from Right to Buy sales will in future be applied as follows:

- the council may deduct certain costs, namely: an amount to cover the housing debt supportable from the income on the additional Right to Buy sales; transaction and administration costs; and an amount which reflects the income the council might reasonably have expected from Right to Buy sales prior to the new scheme;
- The council must also pay the Government an amount which reflects the income which the Treasury expected from Right to Buy sales prior to the new scheme;
- Once these costs are deducted, the remaining receipts (the 'net receipts') are available to fund (and must be applied to) replacement affordable rented homes.

The Government expects that, if it were to retain the net receipts from Right to Buy sales, it would be able to provide – at a national level - one-for-one replacement affordable rented homes, while restricting the contribution made from the net Right to Buy receipts to 30% of the cost of the replacement homes. Where a local authority is satisfied that it can match this rate (in other words, apply the remaining receipt to new affordable rented housing, while restricting the contribution made from the net Right to Buy receipts to 30% of the cost of the replacement homes), the Government will be prepared to enter into an Agreement that the authority may retain the remaining receipts. We will publish further details of the way in which this will operate shortly. Where authorities do not wish to enter into such an Agreement, the remaining receipt will be returned to the Department for Communities and Local Government, and re-distributed for new affordable rented housing by the Homes and Communities Agency (or, in London, the Greater London Authority).

Why has the 'local model with agreement' been adopted, rather than the national or purely local?

As the consultation paper made clear, the Government is seeking a solution that supports the localist agenda while achieving one-for-one replacement (for England as a whole) and ensuring value for money. Against these criteria, Ministers have concluded that the best option is a version of the 'Local Model with Agreement'. Of the other models: the 'Local' and 'Local with Direction' models do not give sufficient assurance of one-for-one replacement for England as a whole; and the 'National' model does not support the localist agenda.

How can you replace the additional homes sold on a one-for-one basis? Surely, the remaining receipt won't be large enough to cover the cost of a new home?

Drawing on evidence from the 2011-2015 Affordable Homes Programme - for which most agreements have now been signed - we are clear that that it should be possible to fund new homes let at Affordable Rent levels, with no more than 30% of the cost of the new homes needing to come from the Right to Buy receipt. As in the Affordable Homes Programme, the remainder of the cost will come from borrowing against the net rental income stream from the new property, and cross-subsidy from the landlord's own resources, including (in some cases) land.

So, for instance, for a new home costing £140,000 to build, the Right to Buy receipt would contribute up to £42,000. The Right to Buy receipt would not need to cover the full cost of the new home, just as Government grant only provides a minority of the funding for Affordable Rent in the Affordable Homes Programme. (A worked example is included at annex B.)

The only way in which the funding for Right to Buy replacement differs from the main 'Affordable Rent' model is that cross-subsidy from converting re-lets of existing social rented homes to Affordable Rent will not be permitted. The 30% maximum contribution takes this into account (in the Affordable Homes Programme, Government grant only contributes around 20% of the cost of the new homes).

In our area, the remaining receipt will not be sufficient to fund one-for-one replacement. Must a council commit to delivering one-for-one replacement, to be allowed to retain the remaining receipt?

No. As we set out in our consultation paper, our aim is to deliver one-for-one replacement nationally. We recognise that the remaining receipt will not be large enough to fund one-for-one replacement in some areas, and we are not requiring councils to do so. If a council wishes to retain the remaining receipt, all it must do is spend that receipt on new affordable rented homes, making sure that no more than 30% of the cost of the new homes comes from the Right to Buy receipt. It can provide the new homes itself, or contract with another social housing provider.

Will councils be required to pay down the debt related to the sold property?
No.

What do these changes mean for rural areas?
The Government proposes to retain the current restrictions on the resale of homes sold under the Right to Buy in rural areas. We understand concerns about the ability to replace homes sold under the Right to Buy in rural areas but the Government's decision to allow receipts to fund up to 30% of replacement costs will reflect any increased costs in the development of new affordable homes in rural areas.

What about the impact on housing in National Parks?
The Government is not minded to add National Parks to the list of exemptions of Right to Buy, which would require changes to primary legislation. However, we welcome additional evidence of any impacts that the changes to Right to Buy have on affordable housing levels in National Parks.

What is being done to communicate the changes?
The Government is producing a set of materials to support local authorities in communicating the changes. This includes a template letter which local authorities can personalise and a new "summary guide" to the Right to Buy for prospective purchasers.

What is being done to prepare the financial sector for an increased up-take in Right to Buy applications?
We are in dialogue with lenders and the Financial Services Authority to ensure that appropriate advice and information on mortgage products is available for prospective purchasers. We have issued a fact sheet to help ensure lenders are ready for implementation in April. This is available at http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/homeownership/righttobuy/. The Government is also working closely with the Money Advice Service, independent financial advisors and lenders to ensure that potential Right to Buy purchasers can access independent financial advice on their options.

What will you do to prevent the system being abused or people being given the wrong advice?
The Government does not intend to make any legislative changes to the Right to Buy to require financial checks or limit purchase with family members at this time but, as set out in the consultation document, we plan to keep the potential for any abuses under continual review.

What about transitional arrangements?
Where a tenant has already applied for the Right to Buy, but hasn't yet bought their home, they will automatically receive the increased discount. This means

they will be able to take up the higher discount without making a new application to their landlord. And it will minimise additional administration for landlords.

Where can tenants get more information?

Tenants looking to exercise the Right to Buy can find useful information on the Directgov website[4].

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[4] http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/HomeAndCommunity/BuyingAndSellingYourHome/HomeBuyingSchemes/DG_4001398

Annex A

Maximum Discount Limits under the current Right to Buy scheme

Area	Discount Limit
South East	£38,000 (unless home is in the local authority areas of Chiltern, Epsom & Ewell, Hart, Oxford, Reading, Reigate & Banstead, Tonbridge & Malling, Vale of the White Horse and West Berkshire where the maximum discount is £16,000)
Eastern	£34,000 (unless home is in Watford where the maximum discount is £16,000)
South West	£30,000
North West, West Midlands	£26,000
Yorkshire and the Humber, East Midlands	£24,000
North East	£22,000
London	£16,000 (unless home is in Barking and Dagenham or Havering where the maximum discount is £38,000)

Annex B

Worked example on one-for-one replacement

Nb. This is for illustrative purposes only – actual figures will vary within each locality. The example assumes each home sold supports the same level of debt and produces the same receipt.

Assumptions:

Projected sales in Housing Revenue Account settlement	10 homes
Local Authority assumed income	£165,000
Government assumed income	£420,000
Assumed debt under self-financing	£170,000
Attributable debt on each home sold	£17,000 per home
Transaction costs allowance	£1,300 per sale*
Receipt per home sold under new discounts	£50,000

*£2,850 in London

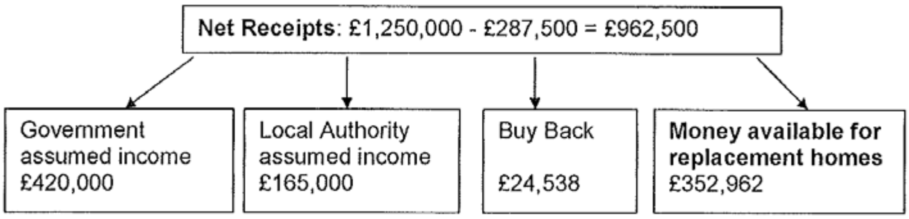
25 homes sold under new discount, equivalent to 15 additional sales

Receipts: 25 x £50,000 = £1,250,000

LESS

Costs: Attributable debt on 25 units:	25 x £17,000 =	£425,000
Less assumed debt		£170,000
		£255,000
Transaction costs:	25 x £1,300 =	£32,500
		£287,500

NET RECEIPTS


Net Receipts: £1,250,000 - £287,500 = £962,500
Government assumed income £420,000
Local Authority assumed income £165,000
Buy Back £24,538
Money available for replacement homes £352,962

Terminology

Projected sales: number of projected Right to Buy sales calculated per authority based on self financing assumptions.

Government assumed income: assumption made by the Office for Budget Responsibility of income to central government from Right to Buy receipts – calculated per authority.

Local authority assumed income: assumption made by Government of income to local authority – calculated per authority.

Assumed debt: means the level of debt for which allowance has already been made in the self-financing settlement based on projected sales.

Buy Back: receipts the local authority may (if it wishes) retain from net receipts to finance up to 50% of the cost of re-purchasing a former council home.

Attributable debt: debt attributed to a unit of Housing Revenue Account housing derived from the self-financing calculations.

Transaction costs: costs attributable to the sale of the Right to Buy home and withdrawn applications.

Receipt per home under new discounts: Amount of money left over after the discount has been applied.

Agenda Item No 12

Resources Board

2 April 2012

Report of the
Deputy Chief Executive

Internal Audit – Performance for
Third Quarter 2011-12

1 Summary

1.1 The report allows the Board to monitor the progress for the Council's Internal Audit function against the agreed plan of work for the year.

Recommendation to the Board

That the report be noted.

2 Introduction

2.1 The CIPFA Code of Practice on Internal Audit in Local Government defines standards of best practice for Internal Audit. The Code requires that Members both approve the Internal Audit Section's strategic work plan and receive periodic reports on performance against plan. This report summarises performance for October 2011 to December 2011.

3 Summary of Work Completed

... 3.1 Appendix A to the report summarises progress on the s151 audit plan for the period, identifying audits completed and indicating the extent of progress on those audits still outstanding. The 90% performance target of planned work in ... the year to date was exceeded. Appendix B provides definition for the levels of assurance applied.

3.2 Internal Audit can place a high level of assurance on the following final reviews;
Risk Management, Energy Management, Commercial Properties, Building Control, HR Process Update and printing & Stationery. IT system audit was satisfactorily finalised on Protection against Malicious Software and Theft.

3.3 The Internal Audit Section has undertaken an increased amount of work recorded under contingency audits and consultancy. These are reviews and pieces of work carried out either resulting from departmental requests, external audit suggestions, counter fraud activity or monitoring of reporting information from the National Fraud Initiative. There has been continued involvement in PCI compliance preparations and the Council's vehicle fleet management.

3.4 The performance standards set by the Audit Commission require that Internal Audit complete at least 90% of planned work in the year unless there are good reasons otherwise. In calculating that statistic, planned work deferred at client request is ignored if such deferrals have appropriate justification. All client requests for deferrals have been based on sound service objective reason.

4 Report Implications

4.1 Risk Management Implications

4.1.1 Failure to provide an effective Internal Audit Service may adversely affect the level of internal control operating within the Council and will attract criticism from external assessors such as the Audit Commission and the External Auditors.

4.2 Links to Council's Priorities

4.2.1 The audit programme agreed and delivered is aligned to both the priorities of the Council and the requirements of external assessors.

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

Appendix A

Audits Completed third quarter 2011-12

Audit	Quarter Due	Status	Assurance Level *	Tot No. of Recs	High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority	H/M Recs not Agreed(attach)
Risk Management	3	Final	High	5		5		
Energy Management	3	Final	High	0				
Commercial Properties	3	Final	High	2		2		
Building Control	3	Final	High	1		1		
HR Process Update	3	Final	High	2	1	1		
Printing & Stationery	3	Final	High	1		1		

Reasons for not providing a high assurance level on final reports

Not applicable

Progress Against Audit Plan

Audit	Status	Due	Audit	Status	Due
Risk Management	Completed		Procurement	Completed	
Performance Management & PI's	Completed		Travel	Completed	
Data Protection	Completed		C House sales	Completed	
Housing Repairs & Maintenance	Completed		Recycling	Completed	
Memorial Hall	Completed		Land Charges	Completed	
Leisure Centres	Completed		Energy	Completed	
Homelessness	Completed		Contracts	Completed	
Pitches & Pavilions	Completed		VAT	Started	Quarter 4
Printing & Stationery	Completed		Building Ctrl	Completed	
Private Sector Assistance	Ongoing	Qtr 4	HR Update	Completed	
Commercial Properties	Completed				
Compliance with Policies & Strategies	Ongoing	Qtr 4			

Progress Against Audit Plan

Audit	Status	Due
IT Based Audits		
Data Back Up	Final	
Protection against Malicious Software	Final	
Windows 7 & Office upgrade	Postponed	

Audit	Status	Due
Electronic Payments	Draft	Qtr 4
IBS - Rents	Draft	Qtr 4

Performance of Audit 2011-12 for Quarterly Indicators

No.	Indicator	Suggested Frequency	Performance for 2011-12
1	Performance reports to Resources Board	Quarterly	September 2011, November 2011, April 2012
3	Number of audits where time taken to complete the work is more than 10% longer than planned.	Quarterly	2 - both due to additonal work being undertaken within the review
4	Number of audits completed by set deadline	Quarterly	All 19
5	Final report issued within 4 weeks of completion of fieldwork	Quarterly	17- 2 commenced toward latter half of the first period and delayed due to accessibility to officers during holiday periods.
9	Questionnaire:Feedback obtained from report recipients is good (average 4 out of 5)	Quarterly	Good in those returned.
10	% of sickness levels within Audit is below 5%	Quarterly	1.50%

Assurance level definitions:

Overall Audit Opinion	
High	Controls are in place and operating satisfactorily. Reasonable assurance can be given that the system, process or activity should achieve its objectives safely and effectively.
Medium	There are some control weaknesses but most key controls are in place and operating effectively. Some assurance can be given that the system, process or activity should achieve its objectives safely and effectively.
Low	Controls are in place but operating poorly or controls are inadequate, failing or not present to satisfaction. Only limited assurance can be given that the system, process or activity will achieve its objectives safely and effectively.

Recommendation Priority Levels definitions:

High	Action is agreed for implementation within one month of the report date
Medium	Action is agreed for implementation within three months of the report date
Low	Action is agreed for implementation within twelve months of the report date

Agenda Item No 13

Resources Board

2 April 2012

Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Community Services)

Financial Inclusion Activity Update

1 Summary

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update of the Financial Inclusion activity undertaken by the Council and its partners in the last twelve to twenty four months. The wide ranging activity undertaken is assisting residents of the borough experiencing personal and financial difficulties to meet their commitments during what are particularly challenging times.

1.2 In addition and with future welfare reforms, our approach will be key in ensuring support around debt advice, income maximisation, affordable lending and health and well being is available to help residents pay bills and ensure they are best equipped to address the future challenges.

Recommendation to the Board

That the report be noted.

2 Background to the Report

2.1 For many years, the Council working with key local partners have delivered help and support to customers to ensure they have maximised their benefits entitlement and been able to access debt and other advice when they have experienced financial difficulty or personal problems.

2.2 Since June 2009, the activity provided by various Council divisions, in particular Community Services (formerly Revenues and Benefits), Housing and Community Development and externally by our key partners, the CAB (Citizens Advice Bureau), WWRAS (Warwickshire Welfare Rights Advice Service) and the CWCDA (Coventry and Warwickshire Cooperative Development Agency) has been delivered under the now Nationally acclaimed B.O.B (Branching Out Bus) brand.

2.3 The B.O.B brand has quickly become recognised by customers of the borough as being the vehicle under which we are delivering a wide ranging financial inclusion programme that is meeting the needs of local communities by taking information, advice and services into communities. It is a brand that has no barrier or stigma attached to it and this has been a key feature attributed to its success.

2.4 The services provided under the B.O.B brand continue to grow as it has become more popular and it now provides information about a range of Council and over 20 key partner services. This holistic approach is enabling the Council to deliver commitments on its three corporate priorities of:-

- Improving access to services,
- Addressing alcohol, obesity and the impacts of fuel poverty, and
- Helping to raise education attainment skills and aspirations.

2.5 The wide-ranging activities are coordinated within the Community Services Division and the Council has benefited hugely from the ongoing appointment of Sally Roberts, the Financial Inclusion Manager. The outputs and outcomes of work undertaken have been captured in two documents attached at Appendix A and B. ...

2.6 Appendix A is one of the Council’s award winning submissions written in May 2011 which outlines examples of activity undertaken to assist residents from 2009 onwards and Appendix B covers activity and initiatives undertaken during 2011/12 and that is planned to take place during 2012 and beyond.

2.7 In terms of deciding action plans going forward, it is obvious that the future will continue to remain uncertain financially, both externally and internally, and the challenges to the Council and its partners will centre on delivering support around the following priorities;

1. The ongoing economic situation and the increasing cost of living
2. The Welfare Reform Agenda, which will involve a number of changes to our non-pensioner customers reliant on benefits to meet housing and/or council tax costs. The most significant is the design and adoption of a localised Council Tax Support scheme to replace the current Council Tax Benefit system. This will need to deliver a 10% saving on the current spend when introduced in April 2013. These have been subject of separate reports to this board.
3. Other key priorities for 2012/13 focusing on the promotion of free school meal take up and the “soon to be launched” improved credit union presence in the borough.

2.8 The infrastructure put in place in the Council in recent years means we are well placed to address the outcomes of these challenges via the ongoing commitment to fund the B.O.B bus to March 2013 and the financial inclusion post until March 2014 which will both be subject of further review and the commitment to setting up a number of B.O.B hubs in support of the mobile bus activity in key locations in 2012/13.

2.9 The work surrounding promotion of financial inclusion will continue to be embedded into the organisation and co-ordinated via both the Councils own Financial Inclusion forum and the wider countywide Financial Inclusion Partnership. The Assistant Chief Executive (Community Services) chairs both these groups.

3 Report Implications

3.1 Finance and Value for Money Implications

3.1.1 Funding to undertake the financial inclusion work undertaken to date has been sourced from a number of different areas. These can be summarised as follows;

- Successful bids to Central Government (e.g.) the B.O.B bus project was one of ten National pilots that fully funded the capital costs of purchasing the vehicle and the revenue costs of paying for staff both internally and from the CAB and CDA staff for the first 2 years up to and including 31 March 2011. The Council has funded the bus and a reduced level of CAB support in 2011/12 from a specific budget identified to deliver outreach activity and this will continue for a further year in 2012/13 albeit it is no longer possible to fund a CAB outreach worker due to budget constraints.

- By successfully bidding for funding awarded to the County Council via the LPSA2 process, this has funded targeted third sector and voluntary sector work around debt advice, school bank and benefit take up. This funding ends in September 2012 and is currently being reviewed by a countywide group to determine how it may continue. In addition, specific grants have also been used where monies has been targeted at particular areas. For example the front line workers toolkit was funded from monies awarded to the County Council to promote activity to address child poverty and a worklessness project has been funded from Section 106 monies in Birch Coppice.

- By using existing internal resources from the Housing, Community Development and Community Services divisions. In many cases, these staff have been successful in pooling finance and resources to deliver better joined up results as well as also being successful in accessing external funding from a variety of sources to fund specific projects (e.g.) cook and taste activity, promotion of free school meals campaigns, providing fuel poverty help, raising awareness of loan sharks.

- The Council has also continued to make grants to the local CAB which have been increased in the last two years and will continue again in 2012/13. This has helped address the increased workload created by the ongoing economic downturn and enabled joint projects around addressing homelessness and benefit take up to be delivered.

3.1.2 This investment has seen considerable improved take up and maximisation of benefits and increased opportunities to access debt advice and affordable lending as detailed in the documents attached at Appendix A and B. The CAB already report half yearly to the Community & Environment board on their performance and outcomes. It is clear to see that our holistic approach to delivering this activity has and continues to receive significant National acclaim from peers and professional bodies in how we as a Council are promoting and joining up this challenging agenda as well as excellent results.

3.1.3 Members have made ongoing commitments to fund the Financial Inclusion Officer post until March 2014, B.O.B bus to March 2013, as well as financial support for the setting up of the B.O.B Hubs which it is hoped will be recovered in part by the making of successful bids for external funding which have been submitted.

3.2 Safer Communities Implications

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

3.3 Environment and Sustainability Implications

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

3.4 Human Resources Implications

3.4.1 Ascertaining the right level and type of resources needed to deliver financial inclusion is under regular review. Internal resources will again be considered by the Assistant Chief Executive (Community Services) and the Assistant Director (Housing) by July 2012 in considering the full impact of the forthcoming Welfare Reform changes which will have a significant impact on all current non pensioner benefit claimants and tenants. A report will be brought to this board at this time.

3.5 Risk Management Implications

3.5.1 Failure to provide appropriate levels of customer support could have a detrimental impact of many areas on Council activity and lead to an increase in costs of collection or support being incurred. The Councils current approach enables us to be proactive as opposed to reactive in our response to issues or circumstances. The risk of stopping or reducing levels of activity has to be considered on a case-by-case basis but in general terms it is generally accepted that there will be increased risks if such current services are withdrawn in the current climate.

3.6 Portfolio Holder, Shadow Portfolio Holder and Ward Member's Consultation

3.6.1 The establishment of B.O.B hubs is being overseen by a cross party task and finish group and the work of the wider B.O.B activities by the Local Strategic Partnership and Financial Inclusion Forum on which Members are represented.

3.7 Links to Council's Priorities

3.7.1 The wide ranging activities undertaken under the overall Financial Inclusion approach cuts across virtually all Council priorities and in particular supports the three key corporate priorities of improving access to services, improving health and well being and raising education levels and aspirations.

3.8 Equalities Implications

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

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

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**

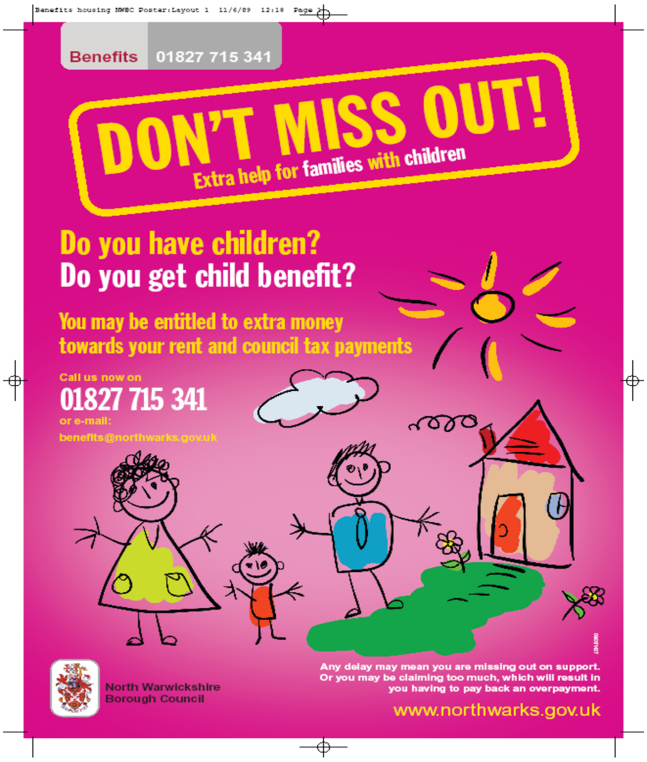
IRRV Performance Awards 2011

NORTH WARWICKSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXCELLENCE IN SOCIAL INCLUSION

REVENUES AND BENEFITS DIVISION

IRRV AWARDS SUBMISSION 2011



Benefits housing NWBC Poster:Layout 1 11/6/09 12:18 Page 1

Benefits 01827 715 341

DON'T MISS OUT!

Extra help for families with children

Do you have children?

Do you get child benefit?

You may be entitled to extra money towards your rent and council tax payments

Call us now on

01827 715 341

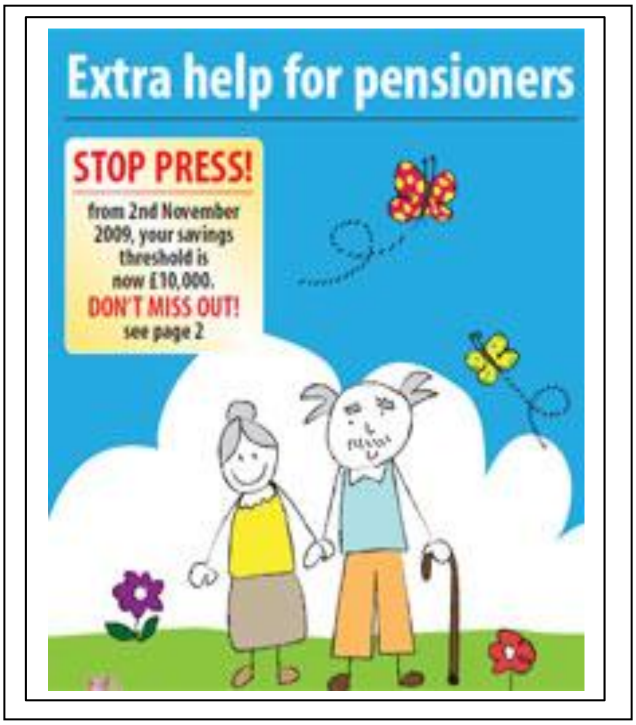
or e-mail:

benefits@northwarks.gov.uk

North Warwickshire Borough Council

Any delay may mean you are missing out on support. Or you may be claiming too much, which will result in you having to pay back an overpayment.

www.northwarks.gov.uk



Extra help for pensioners

STOP PRESS!

from 2nd November 2009, your savings threshold is now £10,000.

DON'T MISS OUT!

see page 2

Frontline workers TOOLKIT

'Helping you to help others'

together we can make a difference

Promoting Financial Inclusion to address Child Poverty

A publication promoted by Warwickshire Financial Inclusion Partnership

working together in Warwickshire
family information service warwickshire
CDA
North Warwickshire Borough Council
Warwickshire County Council
RUGBY
WARWICKSHIRE WELFARE RIGHTS ADVICE SERVICE
Nuneaton & Bedworth United to Achieve
WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL

North Warwickshire
Borough Council

Summary of the main features of our submission

This submission is submitted by a Revenues and Benefits service that has delivered consistent very high upper quartile performance in a customer focused and innovative environment. Evidence of this claim can be demonstrated by the excellence in choice and quality being delivered to everyone who comes into contact with our services recognised in our success of winning numerous National awards and featured in Government case studies in recent years.

North Warwickshire is a rural area covering 110 square miles, with a population of nearly 62,000 and has a caseload of 5,284, which has increased by 15% on 18 months ago. We are a former mining area which is on average 156th most deprived in the CLG deprivation index of 354 Councils and our challenges arise from delivering inclusive services in a rural location, where the problem is not only unemployment but the poor quality of jobs on offer to local residents.

The Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services team is responsible for the collection of £28.5 million from 26,700 Council Tax customers and £39m from 2,000 NDR customers. We have a Benefits caseload of 5,300 with an annual budget of £14 million and assist in the collection of Council Rents from 2,857 customers. All this work is undertaken by 24.7 f.t.e dedicated staff and a particular feature of our approach is how we work we partners both public, private and third sector to develop holistic services and build the necessary capacity to deal with customers as individuals and not numbers.

By working in partnership with like-minded partners, this has given us the ability to deliver real service improvements and cost savings to our customers. This approach has enabled us to keep our small company soul and speed but benefit from the synergy and economies of our larger counterparts. In spite of deprivation in the area, the council is recognised as being one of the most consistent and best performers nationwide, not just in its performance levels but in recent years it’s joined up approach to customer service. This has seen it work closely alongside the private, statutory and third sector organisations address issues around social and financial inclusion.

Our whole customer ethos has matured in recent years and we have listened to our customer’s needs and expectations of our service and looked to innovative ways to identify funding, and utilise new working procedures and practices to make use of our existing resources and take our service delivery approach and choice to new levels– whilst ensuring this is of no additional cost to the council.

This has seen NWBC begin to use customer data in a more targeted way and develop real partnerships in practice not on paper to ensure income and benefits are maximised and complimentary services being referred to as a matter of course rather than luck.

Just in the last year, the service driven by the Assistant Chief Executive who is not only the Councils lead officer but also the unofficial county lead has secured over £1 million of external funding locally and countywide to improve our service delivery and accessibility to our services for our hard to reach and disadvantaged areas of the borough. This funding has begun to help address some of the barriers that customers living in rural communities face everyday and ensured people in poverty for whatever reason are given the right help and advice.

As such, the principles of social and financial inclusion have been driven and led, not only at a borough and county level but also at a regional level, by what is a District Council and everyone who comes into contact with our service is always impressed by our “can do” attitude, energy, commitment to partnership working and opportunistic approach to finding solutions that make a real difference.

This approach has been recognised Nationally by Ministers and independent bodies e.g. the DFE, FSA, CAB and DWP Financial inclusion champions as 'best practice' and has culminated in the delivery of presentations on service initiatives to other authorities and organisations across the country.

This submission highlights both the culture and values of the division and its staff, as well as the innovative approaches that we have adopted in these challenging economic times which we hope will mean we are selected by the IRRV as delivering Excellence in Social Inclusion.

Key points of the submission are:

- **An ethos of "Always Putting Our Customers First**
- **Track Record of Successfully Delivering Process, Cultural and Legislative Change**
- **Multi Award Winning Service Delivery across Revenues, Benefits and Customer Service**
- **Developing new and existing partnerships and services to meet the changing agenda**
- **Development and delivery of an inclusive outreach service**
- **Customer and Stakeholder satisfaction**
- **Maximising our Potential by "Thinking outside the Box**
- **Seeking out funding and making it a central to the development of services**
- **Leading by example and "raising the bar"**
- **Demonstrating Excellence through Partnership**
- **Responsive to government**

Local and national public awards for service delivery

The Council achieved accreditation to the Investors in People Standard in May 1999 and passed a re-assessment in 2000, 2003, 2006 and again in 2009.

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

The Customer Service, Benefits and Revenues division has been awarded the governments' new Customer Service Excellence standard in May 2010.

The Benefits Service was shortlisted on four previous occasions for IRRV awards, the Benefits Team of the Year award in 1998, 2006 and 2007, in the latter when it was Highly Commended and the New Initiative of the Year in a joint bid with CAPITA and Amber Valley D.C in 2003. The Service was duly successful in winning the title of Benefits Team of the Year in 2010. It was part of the winning Excellence in Customer Services award in 2007 and a contributor to the successful winning with Coventry CC and Rugby BC of the Excellence in Fraud award in 2009. In 2011 NWBC, in partnership with CAB and the Credit Union, have been shortlisted by the Institute of Money Advisers for 'Best Partnership' award.

The Finance Division won the LGC Finance Team of the Year in March 2007 in a submission based 85% on Revenues, Benefits and Customer-related achievements.

Local / National Performance Indicators

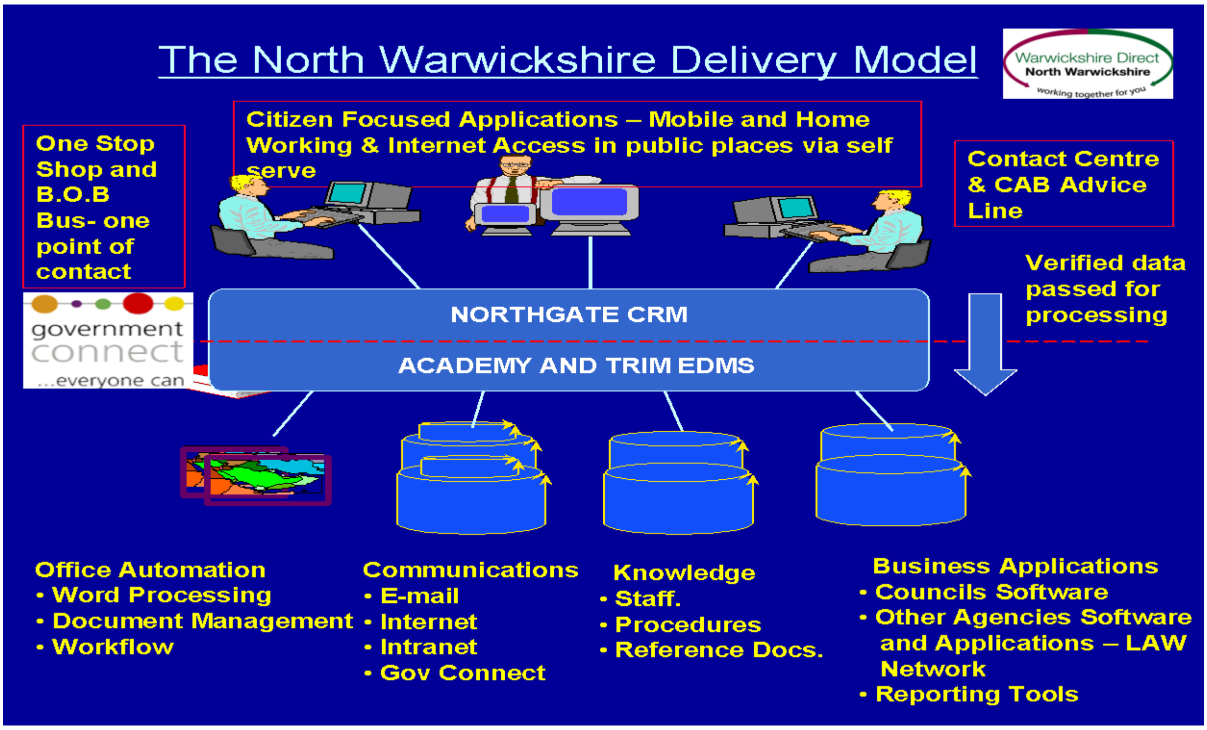
The tables below confirm the continued very high performance of the Council against a backdrop of an ever-increasing caseload. The service has responded to these challenges by continuing to deliver excellent and responsive services and ensuring processing times and continued high collection rates have been achieved in a personalised and empathetic way.

Much of this improvement is down to all staff taking personal pride and ownership for the work they do and much of our success can be directly attributed to the outreach work and partnership working which we have put in place over a number of years recognised in our national success in winning IRRV Revenues and Customer Service, being twice finalists in the Benefits Team of the Year award and finally winning in 2010. However, the last 18 months has seen us raise our commitment even higher in seeking to find innovative and personal solutions as part of our initiative to tackle financial and social exclusion across the borough and to contribute towards more cohesive communities within the region.

Whilst this work is being delivered in a corporate and county framework of LAA and LSP’s, this whole agenda has been driven by the Assistant Chief Executive and senior staff to seek out funding opportunities, develop existing partnerships and engender new relationships. The framework set up has now become the blueprint for the rest of the county to follow and beyond.

Comparative Groups and Process Benchmarking

Comparison is undertaken against a variety of groups and we consistently deliver excellent upper quartile performance in all national benefit and revenue indicators reported by the DWP and CLG both nationally and in our family group of Councils. Our overall performance places us in the top 10 Councils nationally which we have achieved consistently since 2005. This has been achieved in spite of our higher than average deprivation and with no new resources. The results that stem from the front office of our award winning one stop shop and contact centre working hand in hand with field and back office staff has been a model that has delivered seamless tell us once services as outlined below.



The North Warwickshire Delivery Model

One Stop Shop and B.O.B Bus- one point of contact

Citizen Focused Applications – Mobile and Home Working & Internet Access in public places via self serve

Contact Centre & CAB Advice Line

Verified data passed for processing

NORTHGATE CRM

ACADEMY AND TRIM EDMS

Office Automation
- Word Processing
- Document Management
- Workflow

Communications
- E-mail
- Internet
- Intranet
- Gov Connect

Knowledge
- Staff.
- Procedures
- Reference Docs.

Business Applications
- Councils Software
- Other Agencies Software and Applications – LAW Network
- Reporting Tools

Our monthly performance report is produced every month and the figures below show how we are providing excellent results in a joined up, holistic and quality customer experience.

Benefits	2008/2009	2009/10	2010/11
Council Tax Collected	98.54%	98.52%	98.4%
NDR Collected	99.45%	99.35%	99.4%
Council Tax Payments by Direct Debit	75.42%	75.67%	75.92%
NDR Payments by Direct Debit	64.1%	65.71%	65.32%
Average days to process new claims	19.6	17.9	20.7
Average days to process COC	5.5	3.5	3.9
RTI (NI 180)	8.83	5.11	5.78
New Claims Processed in 14 days	96.7%	97.78%	96.24%

But excellence is not just about P.I's?

A fundamental part of demonstrating excellence is the results of customer and stakeholder satisfaction and the division has continued to issue surveys to stakeholders and customers alike both via the telephone, post and exit polls which indicate very high satisfaction in the services provided and comments have been made by landlords, government agencies and housing associations "that the service and the staff are the best they deal with".

Since June 2009, the service implemented the Gov Metric customer satisfaction software to track satisfaction across its face-to-face, telephone and web channels and these have consistently shown the service is providing the highest level of service. Where scores less than good were given, there is a very strong correlation to cases where customers have not qualified.

We will share our Gov Metric reports with the inspection team should we be successful in receiving an inspection visit.

Good
Average
Poor

External Recognition

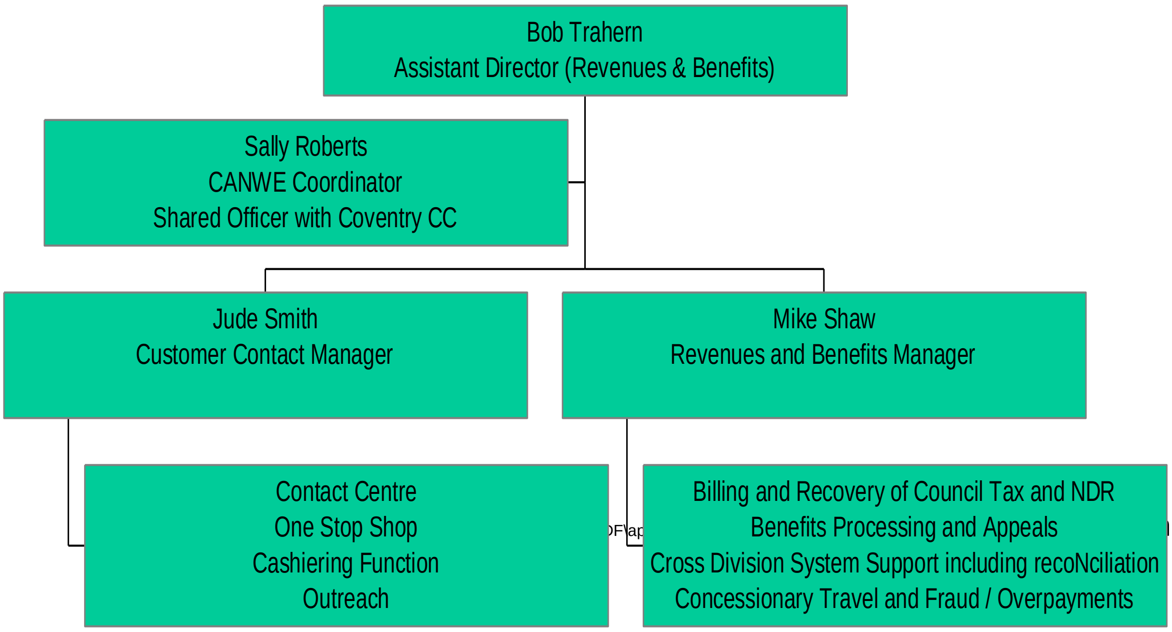
The service is very highly regarded by our Members, Chief Executive and most importantly our customers and stakeholders who recognise the work of the division and its contribution to wider corporate agendas which has developed into some extensive financial inclusion work, outlined in greater detail in our Social inclusion submission.

We have been externally recognised by the Audit Commission through audits, and via Direction of Travel and Use of Resources reviews, as providing high quality, VFM services and innovative services as well as been included as a case study in a range of Government publications. Our self-assessment under the KLOES demonstrates we are complying with many of the expectations it has made of us.

How is the Team Managed?

The structure of our division as shown below changed 2 years ago, when we adopted a shared working arrangement with Coventry. The Assistant Chief Executive has also taken on the corporate responsibility to deliver financial inclusion with great success. This has been greatly assisted by the services relationship with Coventry City Council in terms of the officer we share has helped deliver greater capacity in this critical area

We know from recent benchmarking that the revenues and benefit service operates its high quality of service at average benchmarks and from Audit Commission data, is a “below average cost” service and that is despite delivering the “extra mile services” we strive to deliver.


Bob Trahern
Assistant Director (Revenues & Benefits)
Sally Roberts
CANWE Coordinator
Shared Officer with Coventry CC
Jude Smith
Customer Contact Manager
Mike Shaw
Revenues and Benefits Manager
Contact Centre
One Stop Shop
Cashiering Function
Outreach
Billing and Recovery of Council Tax and NDR
Benefits Processing and Appeals
Cross Division System Support including recoNciliation
Concessionary Travel and Fraud / Overpayments

What makes the Service so good?

The Benefits, Revenues and Housing teams sit in the same open plan office ensuring excellent liaison arrangements between them in coordinating liability changes and claims administration. We also have 8 permanent homeworkers and 1 permanent visiting officer. In addition, the benefits, overpayment and appeals, and fraud staff work very close together ensuring a coordinated approach to the sharing of information, and knowledge which is a very unusual arrangement. This is possible because of the size of the Council but it does provide a seamless approach to the customer who receives a true "tell us once"service.

How are we raising the standard?

Our service is about the team, our "can do" culture and our professionalism/knowledge of the marketplace and whilst money helps, it is not the key factor as has been proven by our excellent performance in recent years. We are not a wealthy Council and everything has to be done at "neutral" or "on invest to save" principles. Whilst DWP funding has helped, most of our success can be attributed to the team embracing and championing that change is inevitable to keep our position as an excellent performing Council. Our desire to improve is best evidenced by always seeking to make the service better and cheaper demonstrated by us challenging our approach and service and each year adopting a very full service plan.

Our Management Approach

In summary, our style is "hands on", about "leading from the front", organising our view of the future and taking people there. This management ethos has allowed us to provide resilience and support particularly at busy times and enabled us to achieve upper quartile performance across the whole service.

Set out the main qualities of your Organisation in this area

In terms of delivering the Council's many aims we are making a significant contribution to issues surrounding health and well being, and alleviating poverty by our proactive activities via joint promotional work with the county council, the water board, the CAB and Credit Union to raise awareness of both local and welfare benefits and through working as one Management Team in delivering the best customer responsive services via the corporate contact centre, one stop shop and the BOB initiative. This is enabling us to cut across the two-tier Local Government system and provide access to many complimentary services around benefits with the one key aim of raising our already very high levels of customer service to which we are committed. This contribution is acknowledged and recognised by our members, Chief Executive, Government Departments and most importantly, our customers.

We are committed to providing excellence

- The service works closely to meet Corporate Priorities and leads the way internally and across Warwickshire in many areas (e.g.) identifying, leading and driving partnership working both across Warwickshire and with Coventry via our CANWE partnership, home and flexible working, promoting financial inclusion and being successful in obtaining external funding.

- We provide a coordinated welfare & visiting service to advise on, and maximise customer's entitlement to all types of benefits working closely with other stakeholders, in particular the Pension Service.
- The Division has good modern technology that it uses well and is a key reference site for ACADEMY, INTEC, its NORTHGATE CRM and the corporate TOWER document management system.
- The service has developed a good website allowing direct access to customers to obtain information and apply for benefit on-line. We have also developed our own mobile working technology over the last five years that we utilise in people's homes, on the BOB bus (our outreach service) and at roadshow events.

We are a partner people want to work with

- Considerable joint working on procedure, process and leaflet design, and the joint letting of contracts with a variety of different partners including the other Warwickshire Councils
- In 2006, we developed front-end processes and service forms which have been used in our contact centre and customer service area.
- We have been a successful pilot site for many DWP initiatives being the first Council in the Midlands to go live with GCSX technology, assisted in the development of the Tell Us Once and In and Out of Work initiatives.
- We work closely with local strategic partners, in particular, the CAB, Credit Union, DWP, Colleges, Schools, Children Centres and Warwickshire Welfare Rights to target take up campaigns both at surgeries and on the road via our BOB initiative delivered jointly with Housing, and third sector partners ensuring we provide "joined up" services.

The '*Branching Out Bus'* (BOB) – Tackling Child Poverty

In February 2009, the Department for Children, Schools and Families announced that the Council had been successful in bidding for £170,000 as one of ten National Pilots for funding for innovative projects to be undertaken with the aim of helping alleviate Child Poverty. The basis of North Warwickshire Borough Council's bid was to work in partnership with the CAB, Credit Union, County Council and other agencies to purchase a vehicle and provide outreach services to complement the very successful and award winning hub in Atherstone where the One Stop Shop and Contact Centre are located.

The pilot solution was designed to concentrate initially in the 4 most deprived areas in the borough where services could be delivered, promoted and provided on an agreed and regular basis to what is traditionally hard to reach groups.

However, it is also the intention to take services on a more ad-hoc basis into other less deprived areas of the borough to promote and signpost customers to the same services at fetes, organised multi agency events, and using Mosaic data to target pockets of deprivation in what are perceived more affluent areas.

The funding for the project was obtained to purchase and equip a mobile vehicle – The 'Branching Out Bus' (BOB), in order to promote the service both locally in the areas by a variety of existing and new mediums. The project funds a full-time officers post to provide advice on debt, benefits and financial literacy as well as having a clear role to signpost to other services to maximise customer's income and raise awareness. This enables customers to access services to equip them to maximise their quality of life and play a positive and proactive role in achieving this aim.

Our BOB solution provides a new approach in North Warwickshire and the first in the County by addressing financial inclusion via a mobile outreach service and it is the intention that a key objective of the project is to build sustainability into the model to ensure it can continue as an ongoing service.

The work undertaken has clear and demonstrable links with the Countywide Child Poverty Strategy and assists in addressing a key element of one of its key themes around promoting income maximisation and financial inclusion but it also has a key impact on assisting in the addressing and signposting of customers to services to alleviate barriers to work and promote educational attainment.

Our BOB project seeks to assist in addressing issues that are central to the causes and consequences of child poverty and contributes towards meeting the Government's Child Poverty agenda by covering the following themes:

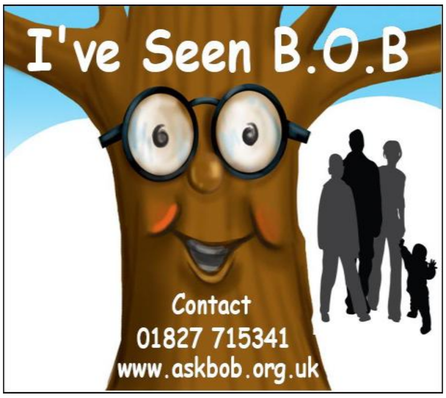
- Increasing parental employment
- Raising family income
- Narrowing the gap in outcomes between children in low income families and their peers
- Promoting economic regeneration focused on families and tackling deprivation at a community wide level.
- Building capacity of communities to tackle poverty. A key deliverable to increase the volunteer base to operate activities within their local communities (e.g.) school banks, money advisors.

The BOB Delivery Model

The Branching Out Bus (BOB) operates on a 4 day per week basis, Monday to Thursday, offering an outreach service to 8 of North Warwickshire's rurally isolated communities. Friday is a 'flexible' day enabling The BOB to attend community events, such as school fetes and fun days. The BOB has a permanent driver / adviser providing information and advice on all service areas. This role is complemented by the full time presence of a CAB adviser offering customer's appointments on BOB itself but also with the option of a home visits within the localities when necessary. The BOB project has also secured CAB presence at a permanent site within a school in the Coleshill area on a weekly basis. The role of the Credit Union (CU) and Coventry and Warwickshire Cooperative Development Agency (CWCDA) adds a unique aspect to the BOB partnership delivery model with the attachment of the BOB 'Schools Banking' project. This has proved to be very successful and popular amongst school heads and the children themselves. The school bank enables children to open a credit union account, manage the bank with the help of volunteers and most importantly understand the value of saving. School banks are now available in 23 schools across the borough and there is currently a waiting list of schools for this service to be provided! The School Banks continue to evolve and develop and now provide basic money management workshops to children in years 5 and 6. This is currently operational in 8 schools across the borough. However, the school bank element is not exclusive to the children alone but families are also encouraged to access advice, open accounts and information with regard to savings and borrowing through this outreach medium. This has proved successful and has been embraced and welcomed by both the schools and families.

The BOB delivers on a unique partnership model. The BOB has gone from strength to strength and is successfully embedded within our rural communities. The BOB brand is recognised and trusted by customers and is seen across the borough as a vehicle for the delivery of Financial Inclusion initiatives with a multi-agency approach.

Are you benefiting?
Do you need housing?
Do you need a job?
Do you have a question?
Contact number
01827715341
www.askbob.gov.uk
FJ09 HPO


I've Seen B.O.B
Contact
01827 715341
www.askbob.org.uk

BOB Results

Completed Referrals from BOB	Number of customers surveyed (within 5 days)	% of customers contacted within 5 days	% satisfied with the service received on BOB	% of enquiries with direct resolution on BOB
1260	**441**	**35 %**	**99 %**	**97 %**

Customer Satisfaction, Comments and Feedback

Customer Satisfaction:

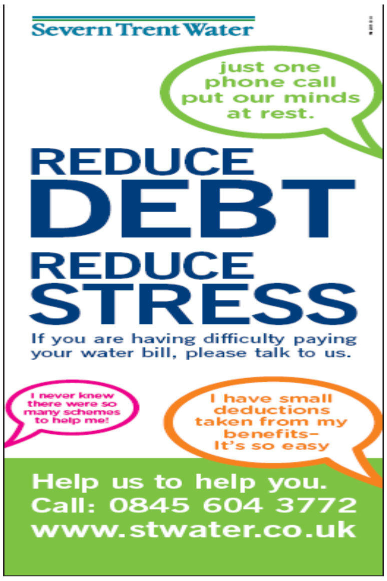
An average sample of 35% of all customers that visited the BOB during June 09 and January 11 have been telephoned, within 5 days of their visit, for their comments and feedback. Of this sample **99%** were completely satisfied with the service that they received.

BOB customer comments and feedback:

> *"Excellent services received"*
> *"Good service"*
> *"No need for any improvements"*
> *"knowledgeable friendly staff"*

Take Up Activity - Promoting Benefits and other related schemes

The partnership has been very proactive promoting take up of Housing, Council Tax and other welfare benefits by a number of targeted campaigns which we have delivered via various databases and information and through Mosaic Public Sector. This has seen us working with children centres, the local schools, colleges, the PCT and a number of third sector and private partners including Severn Trent Water to promote not just our benefits but a wide variety of key information around health, housing, debt and fuel poverty. This has supplemented activity in the media and radio interviews.

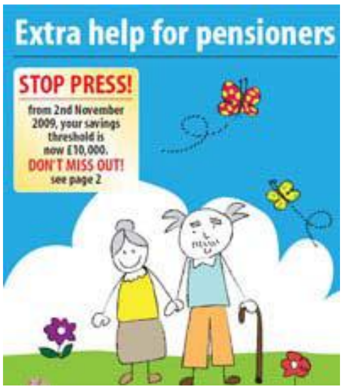

Severn Trent Water
just one phone call put our minds at rest.
REDUCE DEBT
REDUCE STRESS
If you are having difficulty paying your water bill, please talk to us.
I never knew there were so many schemes to help me!
I have small deductions taken from my benefits– It's so easy
Help us to help you.
Call: 0845 604 3772
www.stwater.co.uk

This year we will be focusing on carers, disabled people and those suffering fuel poverty. As a Council we are keen to make financial inclusion a core value of everything we do and under the BOB brand we ran a very successful financial inclusion day attended by 130 people from each department and from outside agencies to promote information around debt, saving, fuel poverty and things available to help customers in the area. We also produced 20,000 z cards which all our blue collar workforce and customer facing staff carry with key contact details to provide an easy reference to help. This has ensured this agenda is understood and owned from the top to the bottom and identified some new opportunities we are currently exploring.

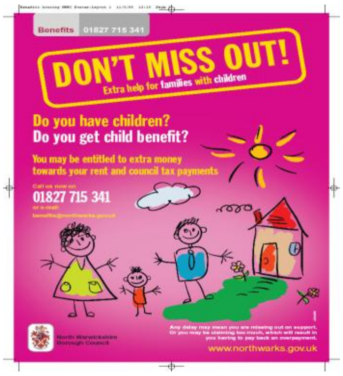
We run regular articles in the Councils corporate magazine delivered free to every household. We have produced special editions focussing on the recession and help for customers and businesses; with advice on all financial aspects alongside employment , training and skills advice, all in conjunction with our partners.

A credit crunch seminar was also be held in the Council's offices last year organised by the County Council, Borough Council, the Chamber of Commerce and Business Link where specific help was offered to businesses and we have run a number of sessions and issued mail shots on rate relief's and schemes available.

We have commissioned officers initially funded by successful DWP bids, and more recently County Council funding after a successful bid to deliver countywide take up work coordinated through officers directly employed by Warwickshire Welfare Rights, with whom we have developed excellent working links. As part of our initiative to target child poverty and maximise family income we developed a comprehensive 'Family Friendly Facts' booklet that was issued to every school age child across the borough; approx 10,000 circa via their school. The booklet provided practical information for parents on benefits, finances, debt, childcare, energy saving, health, leisure, advice services, legal advice, parental support and recession advice. A similar product was also produced for our older community – The ‘Extra Help for Pensioners’ booklet which was issued via our concessionary travel database and promoted via adverts on buses; targeting some 9,000 older people. Both of these products complement the commitment that the partnership has with regard to Income Maximisation for its communities. We recognise the importance of income maximisation, not just for the household itself with the obvious benefit of having more disposable income but also for the local economy and the benefits that this has on the regeneration of our community. We also worked with Severn Trent Water and Credit Union via mail shots to target the most vulnerable groups in a very innovative use of data sharing that we are seeking to develop further this year.


Extra help for pensioners
STOP PRESS!
from 2nd November 2009, your savings threshold is now £10,000.
DON'T MISS OUT!
see page 2

Issued to 9,000 older people


Benefits 01827 715 341
DON'T MISS OUT!
Extra help for families with children
Do you have children?
Do you get child benefit?
You may be entitled to extra money towards your rent and council tax payments
Call us now on
01827 715 341
or e-mail
North Warwickshire Borough Council
Any delay may mean you are missing out on support. Or you may be claiming too much, which will result in you having to pay back an overpayment.
www.northwarks.gov.uk

Issued to 10,000 school children

In response to the current economic climate and the cuts in budgets across all sectors, we have trained key front-line staff within North Warwickshire to equip them with the knowledge and skills to signpost all customers to the most appropriate and relevant service and organisation to support their needs. This has resulted in new partnerships being developed with the Money Advice Service through their moneymadeclear website and the Energy Saving Trust (EST). Direct referral processes have been established that allow members of staff to directly refer customers’ through their website and a commitment has been made, by both organisations, to contact customers within 24 hours of the referral. Both the Money Advice Service and EST will assess the customer’s needs and provide the necessary advice and support. This has proved to be a positive process for customers, as many fear ‘taking the first step’ but this is a solution which takes that initial step for them and very often simply removes some of the pressure that they feel. Customers are continually supported by the organisations and receive follow up calls on a monthly basis to discuss progress.

energy saving trust®

Moneymadeclear™
No selling. No jargon. Just the facts.

Other activity for which funding has been won

School Banks

An award was made of £27,434 in January 2010 and is enabling full time resources to be deployed on school banking initiatives for 2010/11 by the Credit Union. We have set up 23 school banks already with over 1000 savers and have far exceeded the original target set!

Promotion of Well-being amongst the low paid

We have successfully bid for £50k from the DWP to work with low paid staff. We are working on this project with members of staff from Linden Lodge (a local residential care home),some CAB and Credit Union volunteers / employees and will be incorporating financial inclusion messages within this programme being delivered by The Holistic Company.

Leader Funding

As a division we have been integral in successfully bidding for £1m of European funding to improve access to services. This will mean we can build sustainability into many of the initiatives we have started and the future is very exciting in terms of ideas we have to develop our outreach model wider.

We are currently finalizing arrangements for the placing of 4 officers in 2 libraries which will deliver two satellite face to face outlets offering the BOB brand as part of the library network. We are also currently evaluating the customer implications of the FI agenda and are seeking to see how, in any restructure proposals, housing policy and revenues and benefits can be more closely aligned.

Countywide Child Poverty Funding – Frontline Workers Toolkit

As a follow-up to our successful events in North Warwickshire with regard to frontline workers training, the distribution of the Family Friendly Facts booklet to 10,000 school children in the borough and our 3 themed partnership days covering; Access to information and Services, Health and Raising Aspiration, Educational Attainment and Skills the county have awarded £50k through the Child Poverty funding to develop the Frontline Workers Toolkit countywide. This consists of a hard copy manual for frontline workers, the development of a website, a Z-card local to each district, 5 launch events and 25 additional training sessions for specific service areas. The aim of the toolkit is to enable all those that work on the frontline, with families and children, to have access to information on a variety of services at the first point of contact. This approach takes an holistic look at a families wider situation and circumstances and will enable frontline workers to signpost more effectively and get the appropriate help and support much more quickly to families. The development of the products has been undertaken in partnership with NWBC, CAB, Credit Union, Warwickshire Welfare Rights and the Family Information Service and is promoted by the Financial Inclusion Partnership.

Frontline workers TOOLKIT

'Helping you to help others'
together we can make a difference

Promoting Financial Inclusion to address Child Poverty
A publication promoted by Warwickshire Financial Inclusion Partnership

working together in Warwickshire
family information service warwickshire
CDA
North Warwickshire Borough Council
Warwickshire County Council
RUGBY
WARWICKSHIRE WELFARE RIGHTS ADVICE SERVICE
Nuneaton & Bedworth United to Achieve
WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL

A New Approach to Social and Financial Inclusion

Support and Money Advice for Residents and Tenants (SMART) Scheme

As part of our commitment to Social and Financial Inclusion we have established a project called the ‘SMART scheme’ which specifically deals with the needs and issues of our 20 worst debtors with regard to Council Tax and Council Rent. The project aims to achieve greater financial support for customers, particularly families in line with the governments' agenda for Welfare Reform, Financial Inclusion and action against Child Poverty. NWBC work closely with partners, such as the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), Coventry and Warwickshire Development Agency (CWCDA), The Money Advice Service and Severn Trent Water (STW) in an attempt to reduce the amount of personal debt and to provide on-going financial capability and literacy support to ensure that customers are well informed to enable them to make better financial choices in the future. This approach will help customers avoid homelessness, court action and additional costs to prevent future indebtedness and increase collection rates and performance for NWBC and STW. Although the main emphasis of this initiative is to support and increase financial capability it is also recognized that many people in debt have other underlying issues. It is through training and development of our staff on wider social issues and service availability, that we are also able to ensure that we signpost and contact other relevant agencies who may need to be involved and support people, such as social care referrals, counselling services, relationship services, community drugs and alcohol teams.

You Make the Difference Day

As our partnership and working initiatives have grown and developed with other service areas such as Community Development, Schools and Children’s Centres we are ‘piloting’ an initiative in a local primary school to raise aspiration and financial awareness. The day will be open to children and their families to help look at potential career opportunities and highlight financial capability. The children will be able to talk to a variety of organisations available to discuss career / jobs for the future, attend interactive sessions with regard to healthy eating, the importance of exercise whilst their parents will be able to attend sessions on energy saving tips, CV writing and financial capability. This initiative will reach out to 400 children and their families; a model which we hope to replicate throughout the borough. This initiative is driven by our financial and social inclusion agenda and will meet objectives identified and set out through our recent Partnership theme days.

YOU MAKE THE DIFFERENCE
HEALTH
SKILLS
FINANCE
LEARNING
WORK

Financial Inclusion Partnership (FIP)

Based on all the excellent work we have undertaken, the division has set up its own Financial Inclusion Partnership (FIP) in NWBC to coordinate and seek to formalise the multi-disciplinary work being taken to tackle financial inclusion and as a result of this, the Assistant Chief Executive coordinated a bid with partners to the County Council LSP and we were awarded £768,000 to address narrowing the gap issues

The partnership developments at the heart of this take us all to a new level. The Financial Inclusion Partnership has been built on the good practice established in North Warwickshire Borough Council, particularly in relation to their FIP and BOB Bus project.

Promotion of the Service

The service has worked hard to promote itself both through regular articles in its corporate magazine, through the talking newspaper, on which a number of the staff are regular readers, through mailshots (e.g.) benefit take up campaigns and some very positive media coverage, both locally and nationally, in recent years. Staff are happy to “do whatever is necessary” to ensure the message of “identifying and providing help and support” is easy to understand. In summary, staff are proud of the services that they deliver and want to be associated with success.

To address the issue of restricted face-to-face access to the service outside Atherstone, a number of initiatives undertaken with the CAB, DWP and Warwickshire Welfare Rights resulting in benefits staff being available to give advice and guidance at organised events held in various outreach locations. A number also volunteered and have supported the visiting officer by seeing people in their homes using tablet technology. Staff have also played an active role in our Customer Service Weeks and Dickens Night which has involved taking market stalls, working with library staff and “hitting the streets on the BOB bus” to spread the word, and galvanising other Council divisions to get involved which has received excellent publicity in the local media.

In the Councils one stop shop we are an accredited outlet for the Credit Union and Pension Service and are able to provide advice and process claims on behalf of a number of agencies via our shared CRM. We can validate information for entitlement to free school meals, identify and processing applications for the blue badge disabled scheme, for low level social services support and other supporting people activities

Contributing to the Service Success and the future looks bright!

Staff at all levels of the benefits service have contributed significantly to the services ongoing success both on internal and on cross-divisional projects.

This has led to major improvements in the service around ICT, process and efficiency and efficiency gains on top of the innovative and proactive work to alleviate poverty in ensuring benefits and help are maximised. This approach achieves our key aim, which is ensuring our customers receive the best and most joined up service possible quickly and at the lowest possible cost. Partnership and Collaborative working has been the cornerstone on which our divisions very high performance levels and award winning status has been achieved against falling costs and our service plan outlines ongoing commitments to deliver corporate, LAA as well as divisional targets.

However, we don’t stand still here at NWBC. Given the financial pressures that customers face there is still a great deal of work to do, and the challenging economic times continues to require us to continue strive to adapt our services to meet the needs of all. We will be looking to establish Community Hubs with partners in the borough to enable more access points for customers and to complement our already successful outreach service through the BOB – the future looks bright!

Appendix B

FINANCIAL INCLUSION COMMUNICATIONS AND CONSULTATION MATRIX 2011/12

This document describes the key outcomes and work programmes developed with regard to Financial Inclusion agenda undertaken during 2011/12 and the also highlights the main priorities to be undertaken going forward.

It supports and builds on the highly effective being undertaken in this area since 2009 which is largely captured in the awards submission also attached at Appendix B that outlines how the county is organising and developing work in this important area.

Work Programme	Highlights of 2011/12
Welfare Reform	➢ **Discussion, impact evaluation and planning for the impact of Welfare Reform on Housing and its tenants** ➢ **National Advisor Role played by the Assistant Chief Executive to the DCLG and DWP on Welfare Impacts and Changes** ➢ **Regional coordination of promotional activities and campaigns** ➢ **Presentations on the impact of changes to Borough and County Members as well as the Third Sector**
Mosaic Profiling	➢ **Whole of the North Warwickshire area customer profiled in March 12** ➢ **Schools in Free School Meal pilot are being re-profiled by Warwickshire Observatory and parents targeted – resulted in free school meals being identified and payment of pupil premium** ➢ **Community Group support for identifying communities who require face to face support in partnership with the Warwickshire observatory**
Children's Trust	➢ **Established good working relationship from this group which are positive and pro-active. A route into future working with regard to Financial Inclusion through children's centres and schools along with potential for specific take up projects and also a potential contributor towards an access strategy** ➢ **Due to give a presentation on welfare reforms and their impact at meeting on 2nd Feb 11** ➢ **Financial Inclusion work forms part of their action plan and reporting mechanism from 2011**
Citizens Advice Bureau	➢ **Ongoing financial support of CAB - £73k plus rate relief on premises. Working alongside on a number of projects and results of CAB work have already formed the basis of separate reports to the Community & Environment Board. Supported projects include;** ➢ **The BOB project** ➢ **Social Policy document – '*Still Soldiering on'* highlighted the ongoing issues in NW** ➢ **Financial Capability work being delivered**

	➢ Part of the Legal Advice Warwickshire (LAW) project ➢ Financial Inclusion Partnership work ➢ Active participation in the Big Energy Week ➢ Meeting HRH Princess Anne in recognition of achievements ➢ Ongoing development of referral protocols and delivery of outreach in partnership
Coventry and Warwickshire Cooperative Development Agency and Credit Union	➢ North Wwarwickshire works project o 170 people engaged o 100 people given employment advice o 28 business start ups o 8 found employment ➢ Financial Advice o 75 advised ➢ School Banks o 19 School banks supported o 3 new banks opened in 2011/12 o 80 new junior accounts opened ➢ New Way CU amalgamated with Coventry West CU - New name to be launched in Apr 12 as New Central . New functionality and many more services will be available including online banking and debit cards – Promotion campaign to be developed to start in June 2012 ➢ Future development work with regard to tenants and residents with the introduction of Universal Credit ➢ Ongoing work continues in raising awareness of loan sharking (see later) and affordable loans
Consumer Financial Education Body / AKA Money Advice Service	➢ Money Advice Service advertised to all staff and encouraged to undertake 6 monthly financial health checks ➢ Visible on our intranet and internet – hits monitored by Money Advice Service if through our website ➢ Christmas / New Year / Spring campaigns promoted ➢ Money Advice Service are central to our Financial Inclusion work as products are free and we can refer customers via the internet ➢ Money Advice Service being reduced in service from Apr 12 – some redundancies and no longer any face to face advice ➢ Literature being amended to produce cheaper and smaller products – to follow
Energy Saving Trust	➢ Energy Saving Trust have been very supportive and we have made over 50 referrals to them around insulation etc – in partnership with Environmental Health ➢ From April12, unfortunately part of the telephone service will cease and they will only be dealing

	with the Green Deal agenda
Financial Inclusion Forum	➢ North Warwickshire Borough Council Financial Inclusion Forum continues to grow in terms of membership – up to 20 organisations now attend and representatives from all key groups ➢ Main concerns of the group are lack of funding/ increasing debt problems and no provision / loan shark activity and impact of welfare reform ➢ These issues need to remain high on the agenda in 2012 onwards ➢ We need to continue to work in partnership and support each other where possible ➢ Utilise all opportunities for joint funding
Child Poverty	➢ A variety of activity to tackle child poverty outlined in other sections of this document – i.e. Free School Meals / Frontline Workers Toolkit ➢ Ongoing coordination with County Council via the Financial Inclusion Partnership chaired regionally by the Assistant Chief Executive (Community Services)
BOB Project	➢ Footfall has increased considerably during 2011 ➢ BOB used to support specific initiatives / projects on Fridays – planning, housing, community development ➢ Coventry and Warwickshire Cooperative Development Agency presence has been very popular this year re employment advice and support ➢ Brand and recognition of service continues to grow – developing name into development of hubs ➢ Project identified as one of only 5 transformational best practice examples by the Cabinet Office following our reassessment for Customer Service Excellence accreditation in May 2011
Severn Trent Water	➢ Active Partner on Financial Inclusion Forum ➢ No specific targeted work undertaken in 2011 but ongoing work planned for 2012 onwards
Financial Awareness Training Sessions	➢ Awareness sessions have continued during 2011 on Welfare Reform / Energy Best Deals / Frontline Worker Training for all council and key staff
NW Area Extended Services Partnership – AESP (School Cluster Co-ordinators)	➢ With the demise of these positions in late 2011 I now only have contact with the Coleshill Cluster coordinator through the Area Extended Schools Partnership which continue to be positive meetings. ➢ We have met with the heads at the Coleshill cluster schools Mar 12 to promote / raise awareness of NWBC it's services and support that could be offered to the schools ➢ Heads are keen on working together and have signed up for most things! ➢ Heads were not aware of the two tier system and were keen to establish a relationship with the borough particularly around the promotion of Free School Meals that could see them buying services from the Council and partners direct in 2012 onwards

SNAPS (Housing)	➢ This group meet as and when required ➢ Next meeting planned for March 2012 - this will be specifically around homelessness which is on the increase and likely to continue as welfare reforms take hold.
Top 20 debtors PID	➢ Much background and analysis work has been undertaken ➢ Evident that rent arrears also means many have Council Tax arrears and owe benefit overpayments ➢ Initial visits to tenants highlighted underlying issues, such as relationship breakdown, bereavement, mental health ➢ Needs further investigation and thought on how to continue – resource intensive and wider issue than just debt – welfare debt advice staffing proposal currently being evaluated
Making a Difference Day	➢ 1st Secondary school “Making A Difference” day at Hartshill School held on 22 November following up the junior school event at Water Orton in May 2011 in partnership with community development ➢ Opportunity to promote: Financial Inclusion messages to families through the children / raise awareness of money management to the children / raise awareness of BOB ➢ Request made from school for sessions to be delivered on Money Management – passed to Citizens Advice Bureau and Coventry and Warwickshire Cooperative Development Agency ➢ A borough wide event is being arranged for Sept 2012 – we need to have Financial Inclusion partners available to attend
North Warwickshire Borough Council Schools	➢ Schools appear to cut across a lot that we do – this relationship is vital to develop further ➢ Proposal to have a half yearly meeting with all heads or representatives ➢ Through the Childrens Trust this we will be inviting heads to NWBC to discuss our remits / what we can offer / how we can help, support schools – due to take place in June 2012 ➢ Our experience and talks with heads is that they don’t understand the two tier and aren’t aware of the functions of NWBC and therefore dismiss emails – being addressed as once the dialogue is created they are very keen for NWBC to support etc
Landlords Forum	➢ We need to re- establish the landlords forum in preparation of Universal Credit – lack of interest from landlords in past but with emergence of welfare changes and changes to way empty properties and second homes are treated this is likely to increase demands for information.
Financial Inclusion Newsletter (Council Tenants)	➢ Financial Inclusion section in the tenants newsletter was distributed 2011 ➢ Discussions around developing community hubs in community rooms and running financial inclusion sessions
ICT Community Hubs or B.O.B Hubs	➢ During 2011 preparation / planning / consultation with community groups and members regarding establishing B.O.B hubs ➢ During 2012 the opening of strategic video conferencing hubs at Polesworth / Coleshill / Hartshill

	/ kingsbury and ICT hubs at Mancetter / Baddesley / Birchmoor / New Arley / Water Orton / ➢ A number of schools have expressed an interest in becoming involved with the Hubs project – for future development ➢ Advertising and recruiting volunteers for the hubs ➢ Supporting community groups to bid for additional match funding ➢ Exploring the options available within communal rooms to establish BOB Hubs for tenants – potential to open for all of the community ➢ Very supportive discussions with Job Centre plus, the CAB, Adult and Community Learning,and PCT around how we may engage with them to deliver targeted programmes pout of the hubs.
Debt Strategy development	➢ Consideration and review of the corporate Debt Strategy to align systems in housing / revenues / benefits – building on work undertaken in recent years and changes introduced to assist customers. ➢ This will also need to be undertaken as part of the work regarding the impact of the Welfare Reform agenda
Children's Centres	➢ Positive OFSTED outcomes of Financial inclusion work being coordinated ➢ Established positive links with North Warwickshire Citizens Advice Bureau for better coordination of support around families ➢ Developed links with Social Care and established Common Assessment Framework. Gives greater support for most vulnerable families
County Financial Inclusion Partnership	➢ £50k of County child poverty funding was used countywide for the development of Frontline Workers Toolkit – manual / website / z-cards / launch events / bespoke training. This was developed on the best practice developed at North Warwickshire ➢ 15 cross agency full day awareness sessions to be delivered by Mar 2012. Feedback has been very positive with attendees being offered ongoing support via the website and refresher sessions ➢ Remit of the county Financial Inclusion Partnership is to consider actions or wish list and to identify potential funding streams for specific projects. Its main objectives are : Welfare Reform / Free School Meals / supporting the Affordable Warmth agenda
Frontline Workers Toolkit Training	➢ Developed a new Frontline Workers Toolkit – manual / website / z-cards specific to each borough and district ➢ Amendment undertaken and acknowledgment of NHS in manual ➢ 5 launch events – delivered by all partners ➢ 70 bespoke training sessions – delivered by Bedworth Rugby And Nuneaton Citizens Advice Bureau (BRANCAB) / NW Citizens Advice Bureau / Coventry and Warwickshire Cooperative Development Agency

	➢ 53 frontline staff at NWBC have attended training
Promotional	➢ Supported citizens Advice Bureau Big energy week ➢ Used BOB for promotional in fuel poverty areas : Curdworth and Fillongley ➢ Rockwarm attended the BOB too to promote our joint offer of free roof and cavity wall insulation ➢ Positive exposure in local press in January 24. ➢ Presence at Dickens Night, Love Parks event in Polesworth and 5 other summer fetes / housing events during 2011
Energy Best Deal training	➢ 34 Frontline staff at NWBC trained in Energy Best Deals during January / February 2012
BOB Service	➢ Continues to go from strength to strength ➢ Current timetable seems strong with most popular area being Water Orton ➢ Number of customers 20010/11 = 2400 ➢ Number of customers 2011/ feb 12 = 2700 ➢ Citizens Advice Bureau customer s = 400 ➢ Funding agreed up until March 2013 for core service to continue (i.e.) bus and driver ➢ Developing and increasing advice and access to services (by providing benefit evidence, getting free vegetables) as an enhancement of the delivery model
Debt Session at Kingsbury Secondary School	➢ As part of the year 9 curriculum delivered a session on Debt ➢ Students had to understand what debt is in order to produce a poster in line with their qualification ➢ Positive feedback and interesting how little the students understood with regard to finances – something for the future?
Free School Meals	➢ Relatively low take-up of Free School Meals and poor attainment outcomes of those that do ➢ To tackle the gap in attainment – Free SM project ➢ Not only supports family income but also the school with advantageous changes to the new pupil premium ➢ LPSA2 take up funding used to support Free School Meals campaign ' have your cake and eat it!' ➢ 6 schools in pilot – Race Meadow / Outwoods / Woodlands (special school)/ Hurley / Dordon / Water Orton ➢ Unique branding for project seems to be working – less stigma ? ➢ Working in conjunction with Warwickshire Welfare Rights Advice Service ➢ Using BOB at the schools to interact with parents – every school attended in some capacity for promotion

	➢ Free goody bags – inclusive of other Financial Inclusion messages and healthy eating ➢ Free entry into a Healthy hamper draw on completion of some consultation and feedback questions ➢ Table mats for kids with branding and Free School Meals info on reverse ➢ Have been asked by Hartshill secondary and the 3 feeder schools to replicate! ➢ Seeking ongoing funding via County Council to replicate in other schools
Healthy Start Vouchers – for families with children under 5 years	➢ Poor take-up levels in North Warwickshire -Promoting vouchers alongside Free School Meals ➢ Atherstone Early Years included in the Free School Meals project and referrals to Warwickshire Welfare Rights Advice Service ➢ Have been requests from Mancetter to replicate – currently seeking funding to enable to do
Warwickshire Welfare Rights	➢ 69 take up clients referred to Warwickshire Welfare Rights Advice Service ➢ Total benefit identified and claimed £97,812 with £68,310 for disability / carers
Affordable Warmth Steering Group	➢ A member of the countywide Affordable Warmth Steering Group ➢ County awarded £68,600 fro Department of Health in January 2012 which will enable us to work in partnership over next 12 months to deliver the aims and objectives of the project and reduce levels of fuel poverty
Loan Sharks	➢ £500 from the Proceeds Of Crime Act and match funding from county to undertake initiative to raise awareness of loan sharks. Fom Apr 12 will be having beer mats produced – loan sharks side 1 and new Credit Union details side 2 ➢ Will undertake resident initiatives and highlight dangers of loan sharks in the 4 ‘hotspot’ areas identified by the Warwickshire Observatory ➢ Ongoing work in our hotspot areas in Mancetter and Atherstone with CDA.
Dig in Project	➢ Aim – to combat social isolation and healthy eating ➢ Residents grow their own vegetables in a successful project developed by Community Development
Community cafe	➢ As a result of the dig in project a community cafe has been established using a local supplier for food / supplies in Alexandra Court ➢ Due to it’s success this is being considered for other areas
Garden buddy scheme	➢ Run in conjunction with the volunteer centre ➢ Volunteers tend to the gardens of older people ➢ Helps with self-esteem / job opportunities / skills and experience / company for the older person
Cook and Taste sessions	➢ Sessions delivered throughout the borough ➢ Working in schools with families and community groups ➢ Potential to deliver these sessions at the hubs once established

	➢ There is a Financial Inclusion element to the cook and taste which we are trying to deliver jointly – with regard to shopping and down branding etc ➢ The Vegetable Bag scheme has grown out of this initiative – again potential to establish as part of the hubs ➢ Future initiative currently being considered is the establishment of a ‘Food Bank’ – under investigation
Vegetable Bag Scheme	➢ Scheme for organisations to run within their communities / schools / workplace to promote healthy eating and 5 a day ➢ 2 sizes of vegetable bags available at wholesale cost from a local supplier ➢ Helps to support our local farmers ➢ Ensures healthy eating and meets wider aims of addressing obesity and improving educational attainment
Metal dog Media	➢ A project for 19+ year olds to make a 3 short films on different areas ➢ 10 people will be involved in each film and in the whole film making process ➢ Externally funded and media company the lead ➢ Project 1 - Baddesley Ensor BOB hub as a target group to develop a short ad to promote the BOB hubs and its benefits ➢ Project 2 – Arley Woods with community development

Document Compiled by Sally Roberts and Bob Trahern, 12 March 2012

NORTH WARWICKSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE HOUSING SUB-COMMITTEE

13 March 2012

Present: Councillor Winter in the Chair

Councillors Davis, N Dirveiks, Moore and Smith

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Johnston (Councillor Smith as substitute).

31 Declarations of Personal or Prejudicial Interests

Personal interests arising from the membership of various Town/Parish Councils of Councillors Davis (Atherstone), Moore (Baddesley Ensor) and Winter (Dordon) were deemed to be declared at the meeting.

32 Minutes of the Housing Sub-Committee held on 17 January 2012

The minutes of the meeting of the Sub-Committee held on 17 January 2012, copies having previously been circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

33 Social Housing Fraud

The Assistant Director (Housing) provided Members with information about the Government's recent consultation in respect of their proposals to reduce the prevalence of fraud within the stock of social housing.

Resolved:

That the Council's response to the Government's consultation on proposals to reduce the prevalence of fraud within the stock of social housing, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report of the Assistant Director (Housing), be agreed.

34 Empty Private Sector Homes – Enforcement and Intervention

The Assistant Director (Housing) updated Members on the action taken to implement the recommendations set out in the Housing Sub-Committee report on Empty Private Sector Homes which was considered in October 2011.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

35 Allocation of Accommodation: Guidance for Local Authorities in England

The Assistant Director (Housing) provided Members with information about the Government’s recent consultation in respect of their guidance on the allocation of accommodation and proposed a response to the questions set out in the document.

Resolved:

That the Council’s response to the Government’s consultation about their guidance on the allocation of accommodation, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report of the Assistant Director (Housing), be agreed.

36 National Housing Federation – Save Our Villages

The Assistant Director (Housing) informed the Sub-Committee about a campaign by the National Housing Federation called “Save Our Villages” and recommended that the initiative be supported.

Resolved:

That the campaign by the National Housing Federation called “Save Out Villages” be supported.

Councillor Winter
Chairman

Agenda Item No 15

Resources Board

2 April 2012

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

Requests to Purchase Land – Report of the Assistant Director (Housing)

Paragraph 1 – by reason of the report containing information relating to an individual.

Agenda Item No 17

Update on Industrial Units Scrutiny Project – Report of the Assistant Chief Executive and Solicitor to the Council

Paragraph 3 – by reason of the report containing financial details of an organisation.

Agenda Item No 18

The Arcade – Report of the Assistant Director (Streetscape)

Paragraph 3 – by reason of the report containing financial details of an organisation.

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