CUSTOMER AND PARTNERSHIPS COMMITTEE – 3 APRIL 2014

A meeting of the Customer and Partnerships Committee will be held at 5.30pm on Thursday 3 April 2014 in Committee Room 1, Town Hall, Rugby.

Councillor Claire Edwards
Chairman of Customer of Partnerships Committee

A G E N D A

PART 1 – PUBLIC BUSINESS

1. Minutes.

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2014.

2. Apologies.

To receive apologies for absence from the meeting.

3. Declarations of Interest

To receive declarations of -

(a) non-pecuniary interests as defined by the Council’s Code of Conduct for Councillors;

(b) pecuniary interests as defined by the Council’s Code of Conduct for Councillors;

(c) notice under Section 106 Local Government Finance Act 1992 – non-payment of Community Charge or Council Tax.

Note: Members are reminded that they should declare the existence and nature of their non-pecuniary interests at the commencement of the meeting (or as soon as the interest becomes apparent). If that interest is a pecuniary interest, the Member must withdraw from the room unless one of the exceptions applies.
Membership of Warwickshire County Council or any Parish Council is classed as a non-pecuniary interest under the Code of Conduct. A Member does not need to declare this interest unless the Member chooses to speak on a matter relating to their membership. If the Member does not wish to speak on the matter, the Member may still vote on the matter without making a declaration.

4. Call-Ins.

To receive any Call-Ins from Cabinet.

5. Rugby Youth Council update – standing item.

6. Health and wellbeing update – Warwickshire’s Sexual Health Commissioning Manager will attend the meeting to give an overview of sexual health services in the borough.


9. Committee Work Programme.

Any additional papers for this meeting can be accessed via the website.

The Reports of Officers (Ref. CUSP 2013/14-06) are attached.

Membership of the Committee:

Councillors Ms Edwards (Chairman), Allen, G Francis, Mrs Garcia, Hazelton, Mrs New, Mrs O’Rourke, Sandison and Mrs Watson

If you have any general queries with regard to this agenda please contact Linn Ashmore, Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer (01788 533522 or e-mail Linn.Ashmore@rugby.gov.uk). Any specific queries concerning reports should be directed to the listed contact officer.

If you wish to attend the meeting and have any special requirements for access please contact the Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer named above.
AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Meeting Customer and Partnerships Committee

Date of Meeting 3 April 2014

Report Title Health and wellbeing update

Ward Relevance None

Contact Officer Debbie Dawson, Tel: 01788 533592

Summary Warwickshire’s Sexual Health Commissioning Manager will be attending the meeting to give an overview of sexual health services in the borough. The council’s Health Champion and representative on the Warwickshire Health and Wellbeing Board and the Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee will also provide a verbal update to the meeting.

Financial Implications There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Risk Management Implications There are no risk management implications arising from this report.

Environmental Implications There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

Legal Implications There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Equality and Diversity No new or existing policy or procedure has been recommended.
Health and wellbeing update

Summary
Warwickshire’s Sexual Health Commissioning Manager will be attending the meeting to give an overview of sexual health services in the borough. The council’s Health Champion and representative on the Warwickshire Health and Wellbeing Board and the Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee will also provide a verbal update to the meeting.

1. INTRODUCTION

It was agreed by the committee in April 2012 that health and wellbeing would become a standing item on the committee’s agenda.

At a previous meeting of the committee, concerns were raised about sexual health services in the borough, and about the latest sexual health figures for young people in Rugby reported in the latest Joint Strategic Needs Assessment update. Further to correspondence with the Director of Public Health on this matter, the Committee decided to invite the county’s Sexual Health Commissioning Manager to a meeting of the committee.

As always, the council’s Health Champion and representative on the Warwickshire Health and Wellbeing Board and the Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee will also provide a verbal update to the meeting.

2. SEXUAL HEALTH SERVICES IN RUGBY

Etty Martin, the county’s Sexual Health Commissioning Manager, has been invited to give an overview of what sexual health services are available in the borough and how public health commissioners are addressing the latest sexual health figures for young people in Rugby.

The JSNA update report for the borough stated that the rate of under-18 conceptions in Warwickshire for 2011 was 30.9 per 1,000 females aged 15-17, which equates to 299 conceptions. Although the rate is declining, this still represents one of the highest figures in comparison with statistical neighbours. In Rugby the rate is 24.3 per 1,000 females aged 15-17.

With regard to the sexual health of young people, it was reported that Rugby has the highest rate in the county for both genital warts and gonorrhoea amongst 16-24 year-olds (see table below).
Rate of STIs in Warwickshire per 10,000 population aged 16-24 by District / Borough, 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Warwickshire</th>
<th>North Warwickshire</th>
<th>Nuneaton &amp; Bedworth</th>
<th>Rugby</th>
<th>Stratford</th>
<th>Warwick</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chlamydia</td>
<td>94.9</td>
<td>92.3</td>
<td>137.2</td>
<td><strong>103.2</strong></td>
<td>88.6</td>
<td>61.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genital Warts</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td><strong>32.7</strong></td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gonorrhoea</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td><strong>30.7</strong></td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Public Health England

The Council’s Children and Young People’s Champion has also highlighted an issue raised by a local resident about the availability of home HIV test kits. The point was made to her that some health authorities provide home test kits, which have the benefits of offering fast results and, of course, enabling tests to be undertaken discreetly and anonymously. The Committee is interested to learn whether this something that has been considered in Warwickshire.

A briefing note about sexual health services in Rugby received from the Director of Public Health in response to concerns raised by the Committee Chairman in November, and recently updated by the Sexual Health Commissioning Manager, is attached for reference at appendix 1.
Name of Meeting: Customer and Partnerships Committee
Date of Meeting: 3 April 2014
Subject Matter: Health and wellbeing update

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are no background papers relating to this item.
Briefing Note on Rugby Sexual Health Issues

Sexual Health Preventative Services are commissioned through the Respect Yourself Programme, which is a long-term programme, committed to giving young people the power to confidently make positive informed decisions about their relationships and sexual health by building their knowledge and self-esteem. It is coordinated and commissioned by Public Health but delivered by numerous agencies across the county.

Public Health has focused on looking at news ways to deliver training and has embraced new technologies to support with a blended approach to learning to allow flexibility but ensure that the key messages of the campaign remain consistent. WCC’s new Learning Pool will now be the platform for all RSE training and this is currently being developed.

Access to sexual health and contraceptive services has significantly increased across the county since the introduction of the new Respect Yourself website and app (www.respectyourself.info). This has been fully evaluated and has demonstrated an increase, particularly amongst boys and young men. For up to date service provision in Rugby please visit the ‘services’ section of the website.

Rugby District has seen a steadily falling under-18 conception rate (44%) since records began in 1998 to 2012. In 1998, there were 43.1 conceptions per 1000 females aged 15-17 and in 2012, 20.8. Currently, Rugby still has the lowest under-18 conception rate in the five districts and boroughs of Warwickshire.

The Rugby Sexual Health needs assessment conducted in 2011 identified the following key issues:

- concern of professionals in terms of how young women perceive themselves – low self-worth, lacking confidence, not assertive, - and how this influences their behaviour – not attending school; having older men for boyfriends in their teenage years; allowing themselves to be subject to domestic or sexual abuse.
- Alcohol and drugs were also seen to influence behaviour, as was the media, social media and the young person’s peer group. It was noted that young men were expected to portray a macho image.

As a result of the needs assessment and discussions with local professionals it was agreed to develop a secondary school resource based around the evidence-based website and building on the success of the primary school programme, Spring Fever. The package is being developed across the county and work has begun on this project.
Rugby Borough have been very proactive regarding teenage pregnancy and sexual health with Avon Valley School being instrumental to Warwickshire’s local, regional, national and international success with the website and app. This was shortlisted in the National sexual health awards.

Public Health continue to support and develop the Respect Yourself with the appointment of Luke Carter the Respect Yourself programme manager. We are currently working with Avon Valley School who form part of four RSE boards across the county on the following developments:

Apps and features on the [www.respectyourself.info](http://www.respectyourself.info) website that have been identified as priorities for young people in Rugby
- Pornography
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Consent
- Domestic Abuse.

Work continues to develop Relationship and Sexual Education in primary schools following the successful pilot of Spring Fever in Rugby last year.

Sexual Health Services – Review taken place of SH services in Warwickshire and agreement to commission integrated SH services to increase access and reduce teenage pregnancies and STIs.
AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Meeting          Customer and Partnerships Committee
Date of Meeting          3 April 2014
Report Title             Universal Credit and Welfare Reform Task Group – Interim Review Report
Ward Relevance          None
Contact Officer          Debbie Dawson, Tel: 01788 533592

Summary
Following the task group reviews relating to welfare reform undertaken in 2012/13, members agreed to establish a standing task group to take an accountability and oversight role in relation to the impact of the reforms on the council and the local community and how this is being managed by the council and its partners.

The Committee agreed a one page strategy for the task group in April 2013 and this stated that a progress report should be presented to the Committee in April 2014, and that the one page strategy would be reviewed at this time. The task group has therefore prepared an interim report presenting its findings to date.

Financial Implications
There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Risk Management Implications
There are no risk management implications arising from this report.

Environmental Implications
There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

Legal Implications
There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Equality and Diversity
No new or existing policy or procedure has been recommended.
Summary
Following the task group reviews relating to welfare reform undertaken in 2012/13, members agreed to establish a standing task group to take an accountability and oversight role in relation to the impact of the reforms on the council and the local community and how this is being managed by the council and its partners.

The Committee agreed a one page strategy for the task group in April 2013 and this stated that a progress report should be presented to the Committee in April 2014, and that the one page strategy would be reviewed at this time. The task group has therefore prepared an interim report presenting its findings to date.

1. INTRODUCTION

During the development of the overview and scrutiny work programme for 2013/14 it was agreed that there was an ongoing role for elected members as the welfare reform policies began to take effect. A standing task group was therefore established to take an accountability and oversight role in relation to the council’s work on welfare reform and the wider financial inclusion agenda.

The Committee agreed a one page strategy for the task group in April 2013 and this stated that a progress report should be presented to the Committee in April 2014, and that the one page strategy would be reviewed at this time.

2. INTERIM REPORT

The task group has prepared an interim report presenting its findings to date and the task group chairman, Councillor Tom Mahoney, will attend the meeting to present the report. The task group is still very much in the process of gathering evidence and maintaining an overview of the impact of the welfare reforms in the borough. The group is not therefore in a position to draw any firm conclusions or make recommendations at this time.

3. ONE PAGE STRATEGY

It is anticipated that the task group’s role will extend until 2015 and potentially longer, and the one page states that the ongoing role and necessity for the task group should be reviewed annually as part of the overview and scrutiny work programme process. This was confirmed at the work programme workshop on 3 March 2014.
The one page strategy is included within the report (pages 4-5). The committee is asked to review the strategy in the light of the interim report and consider whether it remains relevant or requires any amendment.

4. FUTURE WORK

The task group met on 20 March to gather further evidence from voluntary sector groups, to receive an update on the data measures on the impact of the welfare reforms and to agree the group’s interim report. Prior to the meeting, task group members also went through a demonstration of the online universal credit application process.

Having reviewed the evidence recorded in the draft interim report, the group identified several areas about which it wishes to gather further evidence over the coming months. These include:

- Consultation on revised council tax reduction scheme
- The effectiveness of communication of the welfare reforms to those affected, including vulnerable groups
- Opportunities for partnership working to provide training for frontline workers who interact directly with those affected
- Roll-out of Universal Credit in Rugby
- Evidence from local Jobcentre Plus staff about the practical implementation of benefit reforms in the borough, including use of sanctions
- Evidence from the health sector on any impacts of the welfare reforms that they are identifying within their service.

5. CONCLUSION

The Committee is asked to:

- note the work and findings of the task group to date as presented in the interim report; and
- review the one page strategy and proposed future work programme for the task group.
**Name of Meeting:** Customer and Partnerships Committee  

**Date of Meeting:** 3 April 2014  

**Subject Matter:** Universal Credit and Welfare Reform Task Group – Interim Review Report

### LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document No.</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description of Document</th>
<th>Officer’s Reference</th>
<th>File Reference</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>June 2013 – March 2014</td>
<td>The agendas, reports and minutes relating to this review can be found online at <a href="http://www.rugby.gov.uk">www.rugby.gov.uk</a>, following the links to the Committee Papers system and then clicking on Universal Credit and Welfare Reform Task Group</td>
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UNIVERSAL CREDIT AND WELFARE REFORM
TASK GROUP

Interim Report: March 2014
TASK GROUP MEMBERSHIP

The Task Group consists of the following members:

Councillor Tom Mahoney (Chairman)
Councillor Claire Edwards
Councillor Mrs Belinda Garcia
Councillor Mrs Noreen New
Councillor Jerry Roodhouse
Councillor Helen Walton

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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tel. 01788 533524
e-mail: claire.waleczek@rugby.gov.uk

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Group would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the review so far, in particular:

Gary Hardy and Neil Whittenbury, Midland Heart Limited
Alan Barwick and Nick Griffiths, Orbit Heart of England
Martin Buxcey and Tim Mazzucchi, Department for Work and Pensions
Councillor Leigh Hunt, Rugby Local Strategic Partnership
Laurie Bird, Rugby Credit Union
David Gooding, Bedworth, Rugby and Nuneaton Citizens Advice Bureau (BRANCAB)
Joyce Woodings, Benn Partnership Centre
Andrew Lewis, Christians Against Poverty, Rugby

The Group would also like to thank officers from the council's benefits and housing services for their contributions and support to date. Particular thanks are due to Liz Dunlop, Dave Wortley, Penny Jeffers and Matt Taylor.
1. OBJECTIVES

1.1 Background

There was a consensus emerging from the task group reviews relating to welfare reform undertaken in 2012/13 that there was an ongoing role for elected members as the welfare reform policies began to take effect. During the development of the overview and scrutiny work programme for 2013/14 members therefore agreed to establish a standing task group to take an accountability and oversight role in relation to the council’s work on welfare reform and the wider financial inclusion agenda. The task group was expected to be in place for at least 2 years.

The remit of this task group was to be wider than the previous reviews, looking at the impact of the welfare reforms on both the council and the local community and exploring how this was being managed by the council and its partners.

Customer and Partnerships Committee agreed a one page strategy for the review in April 2013, and the first meeting of the task group took place on 5 June 2013.

1.2 The One-Page Strategy

The one-page strategy is the name given to the scoping document for the review. It defines the task and the improvements being aimed for and how these are going to be achieved. The review’s one-page strategy is as follows:

What is the broad topic area?
Impact of welfare reforms on the council and the local community and preparations for the introduction of universal credit.

What is the specific topic area?
This task group will have a watching brief over the council’s corporate approach to managing the impact of the welfare reforms on the council and the local community. The task group’s role is one of oversight and accountability, and its remit does not extend to policy development and problem-solving in response to issues identified through its monitoring work.

The task group will monitor the effectiveness of the measures put in place by the council and partners to prepare for benefit changes and prevent significant detrimental impacts. Such measures include:
- communications strategy
- discretionary financial support
- activities to promote financial inclusion delivered through the new community SLAs
- other advice and support, for example relating to employment and budgeting skills
- redesignation of council housing

It will also consider the extent to which the work of partners in relation to welfare reform is being effectively coordinated to make optimum use of available resources. In the longer-term the task group will consider the outcomes of the planned reviews of
the council’s rental and allocations policies. It will also review preparations for the phased introduction of universal credit, which is unlikely to have a significant effect in the borough before 2015.

**What is the ambition of the review?**
To ensure that the council and its partners effectively support the implementation of welfare reforms within the borough and work to mitigate the risk of negative impact on vulnerable residents.

**How well do we perform at the moment?**
The LSP is understood to be taking a lead role in coordinating work related to the welfare reforms in the borough. A corporate officer welfare reform group has also been established.

The first task of this group will be to work with those officers to identify a set of measures that can demonstrate the impact of the welfare changes on individuals and on the council, and help identify where the council should be targeting its interventions. The group will use these measures as the basis for ongoing monitoring.

Who shall we consult about the current service and about how we can improve it?
The group will have ongoing engagement with members of the council’s corporate welfare reform officer group, and with the Sustainable and Inclusive Communities Portfolio Holder and Local Strategic Partnership Chairman.

The task group may, as appropriate, consult with local residents affected by the welfare reforms, statutory and voluntary sector partners, registered social landlords, private sector landlords and tenant representatives, where this would provide useful evidence in assessing the impact of the reforms and the effectiveness of the measures in place.

**What other help do we need?**
The group will need a clear understanding of the welfare reforms, regular updates on the national policy context and local implementation of the reforms, and clarity about the council’s statutory responsibilities in relation to those affected by the changes.

The group’s membership will be drawn from members of previous task groups relating to the welfare reforms, so a level of prior knowledge will be assumed.

**How long should it take?**
The task group will begin its work as early as possible in the 2013/14 municipal year and is expected to meet every 6 weeks. As the reforms are being phased in over several years, it is anticipated that the task group’s role will extend until 2015 and potentially longer. The ongoing role and necessity for the task group will be reviewed annually as part of the overview and scrutiny work programme process.

A progress report should be presented to Customer and Partnerships Committee in April 2014 and the one page strategy will be reviewed at that time.

**What will be the outcome?**
The task group may make recommendations to Cabinet, through Customer and Partnerships Committee, if it identifies a need for new interventions or different approaches to minimise detrimental impacts of the reforms.

More generally, the task group’s ongoing scrutiny should help to support the effective implementation of welfare reforms in the borough by giving clarity and consistency of focus to those responsible for their delivery.
2. METHODOLOGY

At the first meeting of the task group members were briefed by officers about the latest developments with regard to the welfare reforms together with statistics demonstrating the local impact of the changes introduced in April 2013. At this meeting the task group also agreed a set of performance measures to be used to monitor the impacts of the reforms in the borough on an ongoing basis. These were:

- Number of customers affected by the social housing under occupation charge and benefits cap
- Housing rent arrears for those tenants affected by the social housing under occupation charge
- Housing rent arrears for those tenants affected by the benefit cap changes
- Council Tax collection figures and number of summons issued for non-payment compared to 2012
- Tracking of sample of 40 customers affected by the council tax reduction scheme (number on target with payments)
- Discretionary award applications and awards made
- Case studies of 40 council tenants affected by the social housing under-occupation charge identified as in receipt of full Housing Benefit with no rent arrears at the beginning of April 2013
- Detail of council tenants who have been assisted by moving to other properties

The task group agreed a programme of work, with further meetings in September 2013, November 2013 and January 2014. These meetings included:

- Regular updates on the data measures monitoring the impact of the reforms, agreed by the task group at their first meeting
- Regular policy updates on the welfare reforms
- A select committee-style meeting with relevant council officers and key partners and agencies to receive evidence of the work being undertaken in relation to the welfare reforms
- A call for evidence and select committee-style meeting with voluntary and community sector representatives, taking evidence to provide a reality check on the impact of the welfare reforms on borough residents and the effectiveness of measures being taken by the council and its partners to mitigate against negative outcomes.

These submissions can be found in the task group review papers which are all available online at www.rugby.gov.uk in the section ‘agendas, reports and minutes’.

The remainder of this report presents the findings of the task group to date. As the task group is still in the process of gathering evidence and maintaining an overview of the impact of the welfare reforms in the borough it is not yet in a position to draw any firm conclusions and does not wish to make any recommendations at this time.
3. FINDINGS

3.1 What have we learnt about welfare reform policy and local implementation?

A number of welfare reforms have been implemented from April 2014.

3.1.1 Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme

In Rugby, from April 2014, all customers of working age were required to pay at least 15% towards their council tax bill, and the second adult rebate was removed. In Rugby 3,800 working age customers were affected and saw a reduction in the amount of support received towards payment of their council tax.

The existing scheme has been approved for 2014/2015 and work has also commenced on a possible revised scheme for 2015/2016, the aim of which will be to reduce administration costs incurred.

3.1.2 Social housing under-occupation charge

From April 2014, all social housing tenants deemed to be ‘under-occupying’ their property by one or more bedrooms faced a reduction in the housing benefit they received. The rent figure on which their benefit payment is based is reduced by 14% if they are under-occupying by one bedroom, and 25% if they are under-occupying by two or more. Changes to the original scheme have been made, allowing additional bedrooms for disabled children unable to share and for households with foster children.

In November it was reported to the task group that the council had had one case considered by the Appeals Service, and that the decision of the council to apply the reduction had been upheld.

Early in 2014 it was announced that housing benefit claimants who had been continuously in receipt of housing benefit from 1996 were exempt from the social-housing under-occupation charge. The council was working to identify cases affected. It had been announced that this “loophole” would be closed from April 2014 and therefore the under-occupation charge would then be reinstated.

3.1.3 Benefits Cap

From 15 July 2013 the benefits cap was introduced. The amount of benefits overall that a household is able to receive has been capped at:

- A maximum of £500 per week for a couple, or a lone parent with a child
- A maximum of £350 per week for a single person without children

Where a customer is receiving combined benefit payments over this amount, housing benefit is reduced to bring their total benefit income in line with these limits.
3.1.4 Universal Credit

Universal Credit is a single monthly payment to a household paid in arrears. Its purpose, according to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), is to ‘make work pay’ and ‘eliminate financial hardship’.

Rugby was selected as one of six new pathfinder sites for the Universal Credit from autumn 2013, and it began to be rolled out in parts of the borough on 25 November 2013. This was limited to specific postcode areas (CV21 1, CV21 2, CV21 3, CV21 4, CV21 9, CV22 5, CV22 6, and CV22 7) predominantly within the urban area, as shown on the map below:
Universal Credit is currently restricted to newly unemployed single people without dependents but this will be extended to couples in summer 2014 and families from the autumn 2014. In January 2014 it was reported to the task group that to date around 100 claims had been made in the borough.

Nationally it is intended that full migration to Universal Credit will be completed by the end of 2017.

The DWP target is for 75% of Universal Credit applications to be undertaken online. Claimants are required to answer a number of initial questions when applying online and to provide certain documentation, which is listed on a checklist. This data is sent to the Universal Credit Service Centre, who contact the claimant to arrange a face-to-face interview where their identity is verified. In time it is intended that an online identity verification facility will be developed. Claimants are unable to save data and return to their application. Claimants can also apply for universal credit by telephone.

The task group was advised by DWP representatives that claimants on short-term contracts would not be adversely affected by Universal Credit. Each account remains live for six months and the scheme makes it easier for previous claimants to reapply. The payments are based on information received directly from HMRC meaning that, where monthly earnings fluctuate, payments will be received for the months where earnings are low.

Alternative payment arrangements are available for vulnerable claimants. It was initially estimated that 5% of claimants would require assistance and support with personal budgeting, but the evidence from the demonstration projects has indicated that 20-25% will require support. It is accepted that some people will need alternative payment arrangements from the outset.

With regard to the live roll-out of Universal Credit in Rugby, DWP advised the task group that Jobcentre staff in the town had been fully trained in the system and the office was equipped to support online applications. The DWP reported they had built a good working relationship with council officers to provide local support for claimants. The Claimant Commitment was being introduced and work service coaches were now working with claimants to identify barriers to work.

3.1.5 Personal Independence Payments

Although this has not been a particular focus of the task group, Rugby Citizens Advice Bureau highlighted the work of its Disability Rights Unit which supports disabled people in making Personal Independence Payment claims. They were trying to track outcomes and reported in January 2014 that, to date, they were not aware of any successful PIP claims since July 2013, due to the tighter rules now in place.
3.2 What are statutory agencies doing to manage and implement the reforms?

3.2.1 Rugby Borough Council

The Council has a number of measures in place to manage and implement the reforms, as detailed below.

3.2.1.1 Role of welfare reform officers

The Council’s Welfare Reform Officers have been working proactively to contact and support all council tenants affected by the welfare changes. They attempted to visit all affected tenants (458) before the social housing under-occupation charge took effect and had completed 347 visits by 25 March 2013. As well as providing support and advice, officers also took the opportunity of these visits to capture information about potential future support needs (eg. access to banking, internet access, budgeting and online support needs).

These visits are ongoing and the list is updated monthly. By November 2013 officers had visited 541 properties.

The officers have also compiled detailed information about the benefits changes for the council website and produced leaflets for tenants, as well as other communications.

3.2.1.2 Discretionary Housing Payments

Rugby Borough Council received £111,000 in 2013/14 from central government to fund Discretionary Housing Payments to protect disadvantaged groups. DHP is a short-term payment, initially offered for three months. The criteria applied by the council aims to support people who are ‘doing the right thing’. This means that the council will only make Discretionary Housing Payment awards in cases where the applicant is trying to improve their financial situation.

Contrary to initial expectations, the fund has significantly underspent (see section 3.3.4 below). Claims have been rejected where customer budgets indicated an amount of disposable income that was unaccounted for. It was reported in January 2014 that the council had sent 500 letters inviting tenants in target groups to apply for DHP, as any underspend in the DHP fund would be lost by the council.

Housing officers have supported potentially eligible council tenants to make applications for DHP.

3.2.1.3 Helping to facilitate moves

Officers have been working to identify suitable properties for council tenants wishing to downsize. 50% of the council’s general needs vacancies are being offered first to those affected by the under-occupancy rules who have indicated a desire to move. In addition, all of the properties within the redesignation phase 2 project are being offered first to those affected by the under-occupancy charge. Officers have also
supported tenants to make applications to the Alleviation Fund for those affected by the under-occupation reduction, to assist in their move.

The council also held a mutual exchange event at the Benn Hall in June 2013 to which all tenants who had expressed an interest in moving property had been invited. This also involved Preferred Partners Housing Associations.

It was noted that the council’s allocations policy restricts the ability to rehouse people with arrears. This is to be reviewed as part of a wider review of the allocations policy later in 2014.

3.2.14 Delivery Partnership Agreement

The DWP is looking to local authorities to deliver face-to-face support services for claimants, together with help in complex cases and for vulnerable claimants. This will be delivered through a local service framework.

The council currently has a Delivery Partnership Agreement with the DWP to provide personal budgeting support to any claimants referred by the DWP (and meeting their criteria). As of January 2014 there had been no referrals in Rugby, and only about 20 claimants nationally had been supported in this way. The council is only able to draw down funding from the DWP as expenses are incurred. When the local service framework is established it will operate on a payment by results basis.

3.2.2 Warwickshire Local Welfare Scheme (WLWS)

The government abolished the system of discretionary payments from the Social Fund (Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans) from April 2013 and in their place introduced a new local provision administered by local authorities. Warwickshire County Council implemented the WLWS, aimed at supporting those in greatest need. The scheme comprises a reactive element for immediate and short-term provision and a pro-active element of planned support to people requiring assistance – for example those leaving care or resettling in the community, as part of a programme of support in place with appropriate agencies.

Cash awards are not part of the scheme. The scheme works with foodbanks and a small number of providers where vouchers are issued for assistance with food needs, and can issue vouchers that are accepted by any of the main energy suppliers to provide help with heating. They also signpost people to other means of support and can provide a limited range of essential items which cannot be provided by other agencies.

There are strict and limited eligibility criteria, and a number of exclusions, including people who are subject to benefit sanctions.

Grant funding is also available through the scheme to support projects aimed at preventing vulnerable people from getting into crisis situations by ensuring they are offered the right support at the earliest opportunity.
In November 2013 the scheme manager reported that actual expenditure on immediate need budgets in the first six months had been less than anticipated but there was an expectation that demand would increase in the winter quarter. 15.5% of applications to the scheme in the county had come from Rugby borough – compared with 32.8% from Nuneaton and Bedworth and 23.3% from Warwick District.

Headline data regarding applications to the scheme are presented in section 3.3.5 below.

### 3.2.3 Housing Associations

Local Housing Associations have their own measures in place to manage the impact of the welfare reforms amongst their own tenants. The task group received evidence from Midland Heart and Orbit in November 2013 about their response to the reforms. Both had identified digital inclusion as a key concern and were carrying out specific work to address this issue.

Other specific measures put in place by each of these housing providers are detailed below:

#### 3.2.3.1 Midland Heart

Following the implementation of the under-occupancy rules in April 2013, 48% of Midland Heart’s tenants made no contribution to any shortfall in their rent. All those affected were contacted and this figure had since reduced to 13%.

MH had amended its allocations procedure to allow tenants to move if they had rent arrears, providing there had been an attempt to pay these over a 13 week period. The organisation had also made changes to its income collection policy to offer rehousing in some cases at pre-court stage.

MH had recently signed up to a partnership with Six Town Credit Union which had released a product suitable for claimants of Universal Credit. This was a ‘jam jar’ current account which segregated the account holder’s rent element. Only ‘soft touch’ checks were required.

MH had doubled the size of their money and debt team and had distributed leaflets on financial management to all affected tenants, as well as providing support with applications for discretionary housing payments. They were continuing to visit tenants directly who had yet to contribute to any shortfall in rent.

MH did not have enough suitable properties in its housing stock to rehouse tenants affected by the under-occupancy rule. To address this it had become a part of a regional partnership of 12 landlords (West Midlands Best Use of Stock group) which operated a choice-based lettings system and there was a shared understanding amongst the landlords that those with arrears would be permitted to move.

#### 3.2.3.2 Orbit (Heart of England)

Orbit had previously tried to address child over-population in particular neighbourhoods through their allocations policy for new build properties and consequently many of these families were now under-occupying. There was an
issue regarding the suitability of the available smaller properties for younger families, as they were often upper floor flats.

Orbit had also amended its transfer arrears policy to allow tenants to move if their arrears were as a result of benefits changes only. It had also revised its allocations policy to ensure that tenants were offered properties which would not result in under occupation.

Orbit was focusing on increasing tenants’ income to enable them to stay in their property. To this end they had appointed an Employment Development Officer to work with tenants to increase their employment opportunities. It was also working on fuel efficiency to reduce costs for tenants.

3.2.4 Rugby Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)

Welfare reform is the focus of the new Regeneration Strategy which will drive the LSP’s future activity. The key themes of the strategy are:

- Financial inclusion - or Affording to live
- Employment and training
- Lifestyle management

A key part of the development of the new strategy has been engagement with other organisations and with members of the public. The LSP invited a range of statutory and voluntary sector organisations to attend LSP meetings to help develop an understanding of what the issues actually are, and how the LSP partners can offer support or other help.

The LSP has also issued a leaflet (also available electronically) giving details of agencies, organisations and services that can assist those in financial difficulty or can offer support to help people live healthier and more affordable lives. This has been circulated widely through partners, including doctors' surgeries and children's centres.

3.3 What are the data measures telling us?

3.3.1 Council Tax Reduction Scheme

Comparison of collection rates for 2012 and 2013

The table below demonstrates that council tax reduction rates have been consistently slightly down on the previous year’s figures. However, it was reported that the monthly rates were affected by changes in the tax base and an increase in residents moving to 12 monthly payments, and that the year-end figures would provide a clearer picture.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collection Rate</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>11.14%</td>
<td>10.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>20.59%</td>
<td>20.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>29.96%</td>
<td>29.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>39.24%</td>
<td>38.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>48.78%</td>
<td>48.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>58.43%</td>
<td>57.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>68.22%</td>
<td>67.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>77.88%</td>
<td>76.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>87.59%</td>
<td>85.98%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comparison of summons issued for non-payment**

A higher number of summons for non-payment have been issued in 2013. However, this increase was not considered significant in the context of the high number of customers affected by the scheme (3,800 working age customers).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summons issued</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>1267</td>
<td>1813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>579</td>
<td>722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>653</td>
<td>562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>388</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Note, summons are not issued every month)

**Tracking of 40 customers affected by Council Tax Reduction scheme**

It is not currently possible to report on council tax collection rates for all customers affected by the migration to the council tax reduction scheme, although this has been raised with the council’s IT supplier. In the meantime the task group has been tracking a random sample of 40 affected customers to understand the numbers on target with payments and any trends over time. The number of those on target fell to 19 by July 2013 but has since risen again. It had been anticipated that those who paid in the initial months would continue to keep up with their payments, but this has not been the case in this sample. Officers work with customers to re-profile payments to encompass arrears.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>On target with payments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3.2 Social Housing Under-Occupation Charge

Customers affected

The number of borough residents affected by the social-housing under-occupation charge since April 2013 is detailed in the table below. The numbers have reduced over time as mitigation measures have begun to take effect.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Total Number of cases</th>
<th>Council Tenants</th>
<th>Housing Associations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April (start)</td>
<td>730</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April (end)</td>
<td>706</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>685</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>661</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>652</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>620</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>602</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>575</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>592</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Council Rent Arrears

The pattern in overall council rent arrears has been tracked by the task group, as outlined below.

In September 2013 it was reported that the increase in arrears of £7,073 would at least in part be attributable to the introduction of the under-occupation charge. It was noted that other local authorities were reporting a more significant impact.

Since then the situation has reversed and the latest position shows a reduction of £9,060 compared with the 1 April 2013 situation. It has been reported that the reduction is due to the fact that some customers have moved or changes in circumstances mean that they are no longer affected and consequently any arrears are no longer included in this figure.

No council tenants in Rugby have as yet been evicted as a result of the social housing under-occupation charge.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rent Arrears</th>
<th>1 April 2013</th>
<th>30 August 2013</th>
<th>31 October 2013</th>
<th>17 January 2104</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under-occupying tenants</td>
<td>£63,960</td>
<td>£70,997</td>
<td>£54,260</td>
<td>£54,900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Case Studies

The task group has been monitoring the impact of the reforms on a random sample of 40 council tenants affected by both council tax and housing benefit changes. These customers were all in receipt of full housing benefit with no rent arrears at the beginning of April 2013.

Members expressed concern in January 2014 about the five tenants listed with whom there had been no contact. It was explained that welfare reform officers made several visits to each affected tenant, but that some tenant refused to engage with the council until they were encountering severe financial difficulties.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary of Case Studies</th>
<th>June 2013</th>
<th>Sep 2013</th>
<th>Nov 2013</th>
<th>Jan 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paying</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contacted and not paid</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referred for budgeting advice (not paid)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No contact and no payment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrangement/Promise to pay</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeal on bedroom/disabled child</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S/O set up</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Debit set up</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DHP application awarded</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DHP application in progress</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moved (Mutual exchange- still under occupied)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moved (Mutual exchange- downsize)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moved (Downsized- 50/50)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pension age (no longer affected)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-dependant moved in (no longer affected)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Council Tenants wishing to move

The table below shows the position up to January 2014 relating to council tenants affected by the under-occupation charge who wish(ed) to move as reported to the task group over the year. At each reporting point the figures are the latest position and reflect the position ‘to date’ (ie. since April 2013).
The following table shows the number of tenants awaiting properties and the types of properties they require(d) as reported to the task group over the year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Council tenants awaiting properties</th>
<th>1 bedroom</th>
<th>2 bedroom</th>
<th>3 bedroom</th>
<th>Not known</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan-14</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov-13</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep-13</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun-13</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As of January 2014:
- 6 tenants had been removed from the list as they had refused properties
- 15 tenants were unable to move due to significant arrears prior to April 2013
- 8 had withdrawn their requests
- 1 had passed away.

Discretionary Housing Payment awards have been used to facilitate moves where tenants had a small level of arrears, but for the 15 tenants whose arrears were significant, the council was first working with them to help them to reduce their arrears.

### 3.3.3 Benefits Cap

The council was originally informed that 37 customers would be affected by the benefits cap. All potential cases were checked and 15 customers were affected at the time the cap was introduced in July 2013. This figure has reduced to 11 during the year, though the reasons for this decrease have not been provided to the task group.

The following table outlines the reported position relating to borough residents affected by the benefits cap at the various reporting points through the year:
Impact on rent arrears

The task group has received data on the total increase in rent arrears for council tenants affected by the benefits cap since its introduction:

January 2014: increase in rent arrears of £703 for 3 council tenants affected
November 2013: increase in rent arrears of £1,400 for 5 council tenants affected
September 2013: increase in rent arrears of £506 for 5 council tenant affected

3.3.4 Discretionary Awards

The latest statistics presented to the task group in relation to its discretionary awards scheme are outlined below:

£54,632 awarded up to the end of December for help towards payment of rent
£5,109 awarded up to the end of December for help towards payment of council tax
383 cases had been received up to the end of December
268 cases awarded additional help with rent
133 cases awarded additional help with Council Tax

Breakdown of expenditure by category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Awards made</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benefits Cap</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>£5,759</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Housing Allowance</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>£3,333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reforms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under-occupation</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>£33,103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>£12,437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council Tax</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>£5,109</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Officers have consistently reported an under-spend against the allocated budget and most other districts and borough across the county are in the same position. Initially there was a high refusal rate (93 out of 255 cases received up to the end of August 2013) in relation to applications for Discretionary Housing Payments, and this was
attributed to a large number of applicants having disposable income available to meet the shortfall in rent payment.

3.3.5 Warwickshire Local Welfare Scheme

The headline data below was received with regard to applications to the WLWS. The figures are county-wide.

Demand

This table details the total number of telephone contacts handled by the team between April and September 2013, and shows the breakdown between the different elements of the scheme.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applicants to WLWS April – Sept 2013</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Applications</td>
<td>2487</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General enquiries</td>
<td>1252</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow up calls (Planned Need)</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4024</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Breakdown By Type</th>
<th>Received</th>
<th>Eligible</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Applications</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate Need</td>
<td>2270</td>
<td>1472</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planned Need</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reasons for application

This table shows the breakdown of circumstances causing applicants to apply to the scheme for support.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for Immediate Need</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Reasons for Planned Need</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No access to food or heating</td>
<td>78.3</td>
<td>Homeless</td>
<td>47.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families under exceptional pressure</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>Domestic abuse</td>
<td>17.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits Wages Changes or Delay</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>Leaving prison</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Abuse</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Leaving care</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeless</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>General support</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost Money</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>Leaving hospital</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flood or Fire or Gas explosion</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>Leaving supported living</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stolen Money</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budgeting Loan Refused</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexpected death of relative</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Type of Support Awarded

This table shows the breakdown of what the scheme has provided. Food, energy, both food and energy, or emergency items for immediate need; and household goods for planned need.
### 3.4 What are the key messages from those working ‘on the ground’?

Headline messages from voluntary and community sector groups working directly with those affected by the reforms are detailed below.

#### 3.4.1 Communication

The factsheets and leaflets produced by the Council in relation to the welfare reform changes are helpful to clients. However, there is concern that vulnerable people still sometimes struggle to understand the material. They can be anxious about the implications but nervous about seeking clarification or further advice and tend to feel safer approaching voluntary sector groups for support rather than statutory agencies. Evidence suggests that people are unlikely to identify a need for help until they have fallen into significant arrears.

#### 3.4.2 Coordination of activities

The voluntary sector would welcome better strategic co-ordination of partnership working between statutory and voluntary sector agencies. They argue that a current lack of strategy has led to duplication of effort and a lottery of services. It was reported that there had been little engagement with the not-for-profit sector to coordinate activities to address the impact of welfare reform and the sector felt ‘out of the loop’ in terms of communication. The Financial Inclusion Partnership was due to investigate this matter as a countywide initiative, but there was an important role, locally, for Rugby Local Strategic Partnership.

#### 3.4.3 Digital inclusion

Digital inclusion was suggested by voluntary sector groups as the biggest issue to tackle in relation to welfare reform. This concern was also raised by Housing Association representatives, who were working on digital inclusion strategies, particularly in relation to clients in rural areas.

A national survey carried out in Universal Credit pathfinder areas by the Citizens Advice Bureaux found that 47% of those surveyed did not have internet access at home and 49% were not equipped for claiming online and would require help to complete online forms. While younger benefits claimants are more likely to have the skills to apply online, it is not practical to use smart phones to make applications and
so access to computers remains an issue for them. Voluntary sector groups are filling gaps by providing cyber cafés and other internet access, sometimes with individual mentoring support for clients.

It was suggested to the task group that a mapping exercise needed to be undertaken to establish how many PCs were available in the borough for public use.

3.4.4 Support needs

Welfare benefits have now replaced debt as the most common issue for people seeking support from the CAB. It was reported that Rugby CAB deals with 10 new debt cases each week.

It was suggested that people who were used to managing ad hoc income (perhaps from agency work) did not have experience of monthly budgeting and would need support to make this transition. Voluntary sector groups were gearing up to offer financial advice to clients as far as legally possible.

Rugby Credit Union had yet to be asked to deal with any cases as a result of the welfare reform changes. However, it was expected that this would change once Universal Credit had been rolled out further in future years and they would require employed staff to deliver budget accounts on a wider scale.

Rugby Foodbank continued to provide emergency food parcels for those in need, particularly those who had been subject to a delay in receipt of their benefits and those who had been made redundant.

3.4.5 Warwickshire Local Welfare Scheme

Concerns were expressed about the eligibility criteria for the Warwickshire Local Welfare Scheme and the significant underspend in the scheme.

3.4.6 Universal credit applications

It was reported that the online system for Universal Credit applications is not user friendly. It created frustrations as it seemed to frequently crash and did not allow the user to save any data. The online job search system was also difficult to use. The Benn Partnership Centre had sought funding for the provision of memory sticks for clients in order that their data could be saved securely to overcome problems with software systems.

Voluntary sector representatives cited the following example of one user’s experience of applying for universal credit. They indicated that this was representative of the experience of many other clients, a view also shared by other groups:

*The client was living in a one-bedroom local authority flat and had long-term mental health problems. Their application for Employment and Support Allowance had failed and so they had attended the Jobcentre to make an online claim for Jobseekers Allowance. They were advised that their postcode meant that they must apply for Universal Credit. However the Universal Credit application failed when the client responded positively to the requirement for support for housing.*
The client was then advised to apply by telephone, but there was no telephone available at the Jobcentre and they did not have access to a personal telephone. The client was confused and approached the CAB for support. They spent 3.5 hours with an adviser at the CAB before a telephone benefits claim was finally accepted.
AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Meeting        Customer and Partnerships Committee
Date of Meeting       3 April 2014
Report Title          Committee Work Programme
Ward Relevance        None
Contact Officer       Debbie Dawson, Tel: 01788 533592

Summary
The report presents the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board for the committee’s future work programme, following the annual work programme planning process. The report also updates the Committee on the progress of task group reviews within its remit and details the Committee’s forward work programme.

Financial Implications
There is a budget of £500 available to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board in 2013/14 to spend on the delivery of the overview and scrutiny work programme.

Risk Management Implications
There are no risk management implications arising from this report.

Environmental Implications
There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

Legal Implications
There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Equality and Diversity
No new or existing policy or procedure has been recommended.
1. PROGRESS ON SCRUTINY REVIEWS

1.1 Universal Credit and Welfare Reform

The interim report on the work of the task group is a separate item on the agenda for this meeting.

1.2 Fixed-term tenancies

The task group met on 6 March to consider further evidence and conclude its work. The report of this task group is a separate item on the agenda for this meeting.

1.3 Alcohol and Health

The membership of the task group that will be undertaking this light touch review is as follows:

Councillors Claire Watson, Belinda Garcia, Jerry Roodhouse, Howard Avis, Richard Dodd, Robin Hazelton and Neil Sandison.

They will be holding a select committee-style meeting on 24 March 2014 to which key partners will be invited to give evidence. The task group chairman will report to the meeting on the outcomes of this light touch review.

2. REVIEW PROPOSALS AND COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2014/15

2.1 Task group reviews

The Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme Workshop took place on 3 March 2014, to draw up a programme of scrutiny reviews for 2014/5. The outcomes of the workshop were considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on 17 March 2014 and the following reviews were allocated to this committee:
### Ongoing Review

| Universal Credit and Welfare Reform | The task group will continue to oversee the council’s corporate approach to the welfare reforms and monitor the impact of the reforms on the local community. The review is expected to last at least until the end of the 2014/15 municipal year. |

### New reviews

| Promoting independent living | This review will look strategically at how the council supports independent and healthy living, primarily focusing on older people and people with disabilities. This will not include wider healthy lifestyle issues. |
| Hackney carriage stands | The pedestrianisation scheme has been put on hold for the time being and this is an opportunity to review whether the existing ranks met the needs of the public and the trade and to identify additional sites for ranks if necessary. |

### Light Touch Reviews

| Rugby town centre Rugby First/BID vote | This review is to commence at the earliest opportunity and be completed within three meetings. It is suggested that it is scoped in June 2014 and that a special meeting is held in July 2014. |
| Ambulance service restructuring | To be considered after the changes in the service have taken effect |

### Deferred item

| Sustainable urban drainage systems | The need for this proposed review is to be considered after a WCC flooding summit due to be held in the summer. (This review topic was narrowed down from a proposal on sustainable infrastructure and the growth agenda). |

It is proposed that a draft one page strategy for the light touch review on the Rugby BID will be brought to the next meeting of the committee for consideration. It is also provisionally intended to bring a one page strategy for the task group review on hackney carriage stands to that meeting. It is suggested that the review on promoting independent living will be scoped at the committee’s September meeting.

### 2.2 Committee overview items

The committee continues to include the following routine items on its meeting agendas:

- Six-monthly review of progress against scrutiny review action plans (June and November)
- Standing update from Rugby Youth Council
- Standing health and wellbeing update, including feedback from the council’s representative on the Warwickshire County Council Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and Health champion
- Air quality monitoring annual report
- Feedback from the council’s Children and Young People’s Champion
The committee is asked to confirm these future work programme items, as detailed in appendix 1.

3. **PLANNING FOR NEXT MEETING**

The committee’s future work programme is attached at appendix 1 for approval. The items in the work programme for the committee’s meeting on 26 June 2014 include:

**Inward Investment and Rugby World Cup 2015 Update**

In November 2013 the committee decided that the Economy Development and Culture Portfolio Holder should be invited to a future meeting to brief members on inward investment. It was subsequently agreed that this would also include an update from the Leader of the Council on the work of Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership. Members are asked to identify any specific questions or issues they would like the Portfolio Holder and Council Leader to address.

In January 2014 the committee also requested a future update from the Steering Group on progress in their plans to mark the RWC2015 in Rugby. An event management organisation has been appointed to help the Steering Group design, deliver and market the borough’s Rugby World Cup 2015 activities and it should be possible to report on the programme they have developed in June.

**Air Quality Progress Report**

The Committee will consider the council’s annual air quality progress report which should have been submitted to the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs by that time.

It was originally intended to scope the light touch review of neighbourhood planning at the next meeting of the committee. However, the light touch review of Rugby BID is now more pressing and will take precedence, and so it is proposed that the neighbourhood planning review should be scoped at the committee’s September meeting.

4. **CONCLUSION**

The committee is asked to determine and approve the future work programme.
Name of Meeting: Customer and Partnerships Committee
Date of Meeting: 3 April 2014
Subject Matter: Committee Work Programme

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document No.</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description of Document</th>
<th>Officer’s Reference</th>
<th>File Reference</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>17 March 2014</td>
<td>Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, agenda and minutes</td>
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</table>
### Customer and Partnerships Committee – Forward Work Programme

3 April 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Who to involve</th>
<th>Budget considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rugby Youth Council</td>
<td>Standing item</td>
<td>Councillor Health Champion and council representative on WCC Adult Social Services and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Etty Martin, Sexual Health Commissioning Manager for Warwickshire</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and wellbeing update</td>
<td>Standing item Sexual Health Commissioner from WCC invited</td>
<td>Councillor Health Champion and council representative on WCC Adult Social Services and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Etty Martin, Sexual Health Commissioning Manager for Warwickshire</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal credit and welfare reforms review</td>
<td>Interim report from task group</td>
<td>Cllr Tom Mahoney, Chairman</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixed-term tenancies review</td>
<td>Review report</td>
<td>Cllr Belinda Garcia, Chairman</td>
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<td>Councillor Health Champion and council representative on WCC Adult Social Services and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Air Quality Progress Report</td>
<td>To consider the Council’s annual submission to Defra</td>
<td>Regulatory Services Manager</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inward Investment</td>
<td>Update on inward investment activity in the borough and the work of Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership</td>
<td>Economy, Development and Culture Portfolio Holder and Leader of the Council</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback from Rugby World Cup Steering Group</td>
<td>To receive an update from the Steering Group on progress in their plans to mark the RWC2015 in Rugby</td>
<td>Economic Investment Officer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of Rugby BID one page strategy</td>
<td>To agree a one page strategy for this light touch review to be undertaken at a special meeting of the committee</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scrutiny review action plans</td>
<td>Routine report on progress against scrutiny review action plans within the committee’s remit.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health and wellbeing update</td>
<td>Standing item West Midlands Ambulance Service to be invited to talk to the committee about their emergency and community transport services in Rugby</td>
<td>Councillor Health Champion and council representative on WCC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feedback from Children and Young People’s Champion</td>
<td></td>
<td>Children and Young People’s Champion, Cllr Belinda Garcia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbourhood planning – light touch review</td>
<td>Scoping this light touch review, which will capture learning from the Coton pilot about the benefits and resource implications of supporting local areas to produce a neighbourhood plan and help to inform the council’s approach to neighbourhood planning across the borough.</td>
<td>Head of Planning and Culture Development Strategy Manager Economy, Development and Culture Portfolio Holder</td>
<td>The committee might consider undertaking this light touch review in Coton or another ‘neighbourhood’ setting, which may incur costs of room hire etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rugby BID review</td>
<td>To review evidence received at special meeting and conclude review</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback from Warwickshire County Council Flooding Summit</td>
<td>Feedback from the summit (date tbc) to inform decision regarding the need for a scrutiny review on Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems</td>
<td>Head of Planning and Culture Cllr Peter Butlin (WCC Portfolio Holder)</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
## Appendix 1

### 13 November 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>Routine report on progress against scrutiny review action plans within the committee’s remit.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Light touch review of neighbourhood planning</td>
<td>To capture learning from the Coton pilot about the benefits and resource implications of supporting local areas to produce a neighbourhood plan and help to inform the council’s approach to neighbourhood planning across the borough.</td>
<td>Head of Planning and Culture Development Strategy Manager Economy, Development and Culture Portfolio Holder</td>
<td>The committee might consider undertaking this light touch review in Coton or another ‘neighbourhood’ setting, which may incur costs of room hire etc.</td>
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### 12 January 2015

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</table>

### 26 March 2015

<table>
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## Customer and Partnerships Committee – Programme of Reviews 2013/14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Review title</th>
<th>Start date</th>
<th>Progress</th>
<th>Expected report date</th>
<th>Budget considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Universal credit and welfare reforms</td>
<td>June 2013</td>
<td>Task group last met on 25 November 2013 with partners/agencies to gather evidence of work being undertaken in relation to the welfare reforms and receive an update on the measures being used to monitor the impact of the reforms. Next meeting planned for 22 January 2014 – meeting with stakeholders to gather evidence to provide a reality check on the impact of the welfare reforms on borough residents and the effectiveness of measures being taken by the council and its partners.</td>
<td>April 2014</td>
<td>This is a standing task group. As the reforms are being phased in over several years, it is anticipated that the task group’s role will extend until 2015 and potentially longer. A progress report will be presented to Customer and Partnerships Committee in April 2014 and the one page strategy will be reviewed at that time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixed-term tenancies</td>
<td>October 2013</td>
<td>One page strategy agreed by Committee on 20 June 2013 and membership recruited. Meetings held on 2 October and 12 December to gather further evidence. Further meeting arranged for 6 March to consider further data and evidence from other similar councils.</td>
<td>April 2014</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol and Health in Rugby</td>
<td>Q4 2013/14</td>
<td>On 14 November CUSP agreed a one page strategy for a short, light touch review to be carried out by a small task group of CUSP members. Meeting to take place on 24 March 2014.</td>
<td>tbc</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road surface condition and response of Warwickshire County Council, and footpath and pavement repairs.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Submitted to the workshop for consideration for inclusion in the 2014/15 O&amp;S work programme, along with a review on unadopted roads. The workshop rejected these proposals.</td>
<td>Reviews not to be undertaken.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>