PRESENT:

Members of the Board:
Councillors Helen Walton (Vice-Chairman in the Chair), Buckley (substitute for Councillor Miss Lawrence), G Francis, Keeling, Mistry (substitute for Councillor Mahoney), Roodhouse and Dr Shera.

Officers:
Andrew Gabbits, Executive Director; Adam Norburn, Executive Director; Paul Ansell, Scrutiny Officer; Debbie Dawson, Scrutiny Officer; Linn Ashmore, Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer

On behalf of the Board, the Chair welcomed Adam Norburn as newly appointed Executive Director to the meeting and thanked Councillor Dr Shera for his hard work as former Chairman of the Board and welcomed his continuing involvement at future meetings.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 17 March 2014 and 5 June 2014 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

5. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs Garcia, Miss Lawrence, Mahoney and Stokes.

6. TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF CRIME AND DISORDER COMMITTEE, CUSTOMER AND PARTNERSHIPS COMMITTEE AND CORPORATE PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

The minutes of the meetings held by Crime and Disorder Committee on 13 March 2014, Customer and Partnerships Committee on 3 April 2014 and Corporate Performance Committee on 10 April 2014 were noted.

7. OVERVIEW AND SCUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

The Board considered the report (Part 1 – agenda item 6) concerning the draft Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2013/14.

The Board reviewed the annual report and agreed its submission to Council.

Members were invited to submit any additions or amendments to the report to the Scrutiny Officer.
Members were informed that once the report had been finalised and published in the usual A5 booklet format it would be circulated to all members and appropriate public places.

**RESOLVED THAT** – the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report be submitted to Council.

8. **REVIEW OF FIXED-TERM TENANCIES**

The Board considered the report (Part 1 – agenda item 7) concerning a review exploring the possibility of the council implementing new provisions in the Localism Act 2011 to offer fixed-term tenancies to new tenants.

The Chairman of the task group was unable to attend the meeting but the Scrutiny Officer informed members that the review report had been considered by Cabinet and the recommendations of the review were all accepted.

The task group had considered a lot of evidence and, while there was some support for the concept, it concluded there was not enough evidence to warrant the introduction of fixed-term tenancies at this time.

The administrative costs were high and the task group members had agreed on the importance of understanding the related costs and the experiences of other local authorities. The fixed-term tenancies introduced elsewhere would be due for review after five years and at that time the true costs would become more apparent. During this period officers will explore alternative ways of encouraging tenants to move on from council properties where they are able.

A member of the task group commented that the group had felt disappointed with the evidence provided by some officers and the lack of response from another nearby housing authority.

**RESOLVED THAT** – the report be noted.

9. **DISESTABLISHMENT OF CRIME AND DISORDER COMMITTEE**

The Board considered the report (Part 1 – agenda item 7) concerning the decision of Council to disestablish the Crime and Disorder Committee.

On 5 June 2014 Council resolved to disestablish the Crime and Disorder Committee and transfer its functions to the Customer and Partnerships Committee.

The Board discussed the implications of this decision and the wider implications on the remits of the scrutiny committees and their future work programmes. The following points were made:

The Council is currently seeking a reduction in its size and as part of this process is reviewing ward boundaries and the governance structure. It is important that scrutiny remains fit for purpose for the future. In view of this it was suggested that the Board should hold a workshop style meeting to consider the future governance arrangements.

Currently there is an imbalance in the workloads of the scrutiny committees.
Some questions raised included:

- Should we retain the current structure of a Board and two scrutiny committees?
- Is it necessary for each scrutiny committee to have a rigidly defined remit?
- Should the Board continue to be responsible for managing the overview and scrutiny work programme and the distribution of work to the scrutiny committees?
- Is an overarching Board necessary?

The current scrutiny structure is top heavy in comparison with other local authorities’.

The workload of the scrutiny committees is artificially split at the moment and it may be preferable to allocate work on a resource and capacity basis.

A thorough review of the future structural requirements should take place.

Scrutiny has evolved for the better since the current structure was introduced a number of years ago. During that time task groups have become more powerful in delivering results.

There is a need to carry out a thorough review of the number of councillors and ways of refining the Council in order that it operates effectively.

Task groups report to Cabinet via their parent scrutiny committee and then to the Board, meaning there is an additional layer that is arguably unnecessary.

A further report on the council size will be considered by Council in September. That report should include information on future governance arrangements and how a council of the suggested size should be supported.

A workshop style meeting, to be held in August, would allow members to discuss future arrangements in an informal cross party manner and provide an opportunity to review all the pros and cons. Initial feedback on the size of the council should be known by then.

All options will be open to discussion, including a return to the committee structure.

The scrutiny officers, with the Head of Business Transformation, were requested to prepare a discussion paper on the key issues and options available to form part of the agenda.

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on 11 August 2014 should take the form of a workshop and all members of the Board, the Chairmen and Vice-Chairman of the scrutiny committees, group leaders, a member of Cabinet and senior officers should be present.

**RESOLVED THAT –**

(1) the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board should take the form of a workshop to discuss the future governance arrangements and the overview and scrutiny structure; and
(2) all members of the Board, the Chairmen and Vice-Chairman of the scrutiny committees, group leaders, a member of Cabinet, and senior officers should be present.

10. **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME PROGRESS REPORT**

The Board considered the report (Part 1 – agenda item 9) concerning the progress of task group reviews, the work programmes of the scrutiny committees, suggestions for Warwickshire County Council review topics and the Board’s future work programme.

During discussion the following points were raised:

Memberships are currently being sought for three new scrutiny reviews due to commence work in the near future including Fees and Charges, Rugby Business Improvement District and Hackney Carriage Stands. The Scrutiny Officer reported that places were still available and a further call-out will be sent by email to members.

Members were asked to submit any suggestions for the Warwickshire County Council (WCC) scrutiny work programme to the scrutiny officers. The Customer and Partnerships Committee will collate suggestions at its meeting on 26 June to forward to WCC.

**RESOLVED THAT –**

(1) members be requested to submit any suggestions for the WCC scrutiny work programme to the scrutiny officers; and

(2) the progress of task group reviews and the work programmes of the scrutiny committees be noted.

**CHAIRMAN**