Present:

Members of the Board:
Councillors Mahoney (Chairman), G Francis, Mrs Garcia, Miss Lawrence, Roodhouse, Sandison (substitute for Councillor Keeling), Stokes and Dr Shera

In attendance:
Councillors Birkett, Ms Edwards, Mrs O’Rourke, Mistry, Mrs Roberts and H Roberts

Officers:
Ian Davis, Executive Director; Adam Norburn, Executive Director; Sean Lawson, Head of Environmental Services; Paul Ansell, Scrutiny Officer; Debbie Dawson, Scrutiny Officer; Linn Ashmore, Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer

11. Minutes
The minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2014 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

12. Apologies
Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Keeling and Helen Walton.

13. Motion from Council – Hunters Lane Recycling Centre
The Board considered the report (Part 1 – agenda item 4) concerning a motion referred by Council on 22 July to the Board.

During discussion the following points were made:

Aspects of the Hunters Lane recycling centre operation were scrutinised as part of the Local Recycling Centres and Household Waste Services in New Developments reviews which took place last municipal year, and the recommendations made by the task group were approved by Cabinet on 7 April 2014.

Members questioned whether any further action was necessary at this stage when the outcomes of the recommendations made by the task group were still awaited.

The WCC Portfolio Holder has powers to request a joint cross party review. It is two years since their review of opening hours was completed and this should be revisited.
A member observed that performance indicators reported to Cabinet gave evidence of an increase in contamination in recycled waste and an increase in flytipping, which WCC policies were doing little to help.

Councillor O’Rourke, who submitted the motion on notice, acknowledged the work of the task group and informed the Board that as a county councillor she was addressing the matter of a joint scrutiny exercise at a county level. The aim of this was to carry out further consultation with residents and consider whether funds from the New Homes Bonus could be used to fund additional opening hours at the Hunters Lane site.

The Board asked whether the letter to WCC expressing the points of concern raised at the evidence gathering meeting held by the task group had been sent. The Head of Environmental Services confirmed that written representations had been made but no formal response had been received.

Meetings of the Warwickshire Waste Partnership are held on a regular basis and this topic is included in its discussions.

It was apparent at the evidence gathering meeting of the task group attended by the WCC Portfolio Holder that the county council’s view was that a survey of Rugby residents had been carried out and the results of this showed they were content with the opening hours.

Ward members could refer constituents who wished to complain about the opening hours at Hunters Lane, or the service provided, direct to WCC and this would be a means of building an evidence-base to demonstrate public concern.

It was important not to duplicate the work of the task group reviews but WCC should be chased for a formal response. One of the review recommendations related to better communication and partnership working with WCC.

The Board agreed that another attempt to address the issue should be made and requested that another more strongly worded letter should be sent to the WCC Portfolio Holder that should also suggest a joint scrutiny exercise. A copy of the letter should be sent to the Leader of WCC.

**RESOLVED THAT** – The Sustainable Environment Portfolio Holder be requested to send another, more strongly worded letter, to the WCC Portfolio Holder with a copy to the Leader of WCC.

14. **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY – FUTURE STRUCTURE**

The Board received a report (Part 1 – agenda item 5) concerning discussions around the future governance arrangements and the overview and scrutiny structure.

The Scrutiny Officer corrected an error in the report. It would be legally possible to revert to an “old style” committee system as early as May 2015. The date of May 2016 stated in the paper was based on the assumption that, in the event of the Council being minded to make such a change, it would not do so until any reduction in council size had taken place.
The Board considered three key areas:

- The remit of Corporate Performance Committee and Customer and Partnerships Committee
- The number of committees
- The role and membership of Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

There followed a wide-ranging discussion, during which the following diverse points were made:

- The recent resignation of the Leader of the Council could result in further changes at management level meaning it may be advisable to defer discussion of the future structure.

- A suggestion was made that the titles of the scrutiny committees should be changed and scrutiny work should be shared equally between them, keeping the Board in place as gatekeeper. Members of the scrutiny committees would not sit on the Board.

- There are a number of changes on the horizon but the scrutiny function is important. There was a danger that if the number of committees were reduced the council could become less accountable.

- It was too soon to make a decision at this stage. Once the bigger picture becomes clearer then a decision can be made on the level of scrutiny required and also how members should discharge all their responsibilities.

- Both of the scrutiny committees perform vital roles. The current structure should only change if it is not working, or not without proper justification.

- In the longer term, if the number of members were reduced, the capacity would need to be addressed by reviewing the overall governance structure, including regulatory committees.

- There was an opportunity to make changes and a more streamlined scrutiny structure could offer the advantage of releasing officer time and resources. There should be more focus on ambitious scrutiny.

- Timing is important but making changes at a scrutiny level in isolation is pointless and not a good use of time when there are bigger issues to deal with.

- The committees have work programmes in place for the rest of this municipal year and it is too soon to make changes.

- Each scrutiny committee has developed expertise in particular areas and this is valuable. Committees undertake an important evidence-gathering role to inform identification of areas for more in-depth scrutiny work by task groups.

- The removal of the board has been mooted before because it creates an additional layer. The workloads of the two scrutiny committees are imbalanced and this should be addressed.
There are a number of alternative options for the future scrutiny structure, including whether to retain the board or have a third scrutiny committee.

In conclusion, there was a broad consensus that discussions on this topic should continue once the constitutional changes are known and there is a clear understanding of the resulting effects on members’ workload. In addition, a new Leader may be appointed at the next full Council meeting on 23 September and after this meeting would be the right time to explore matters further.

It was agreed the item will be discussed again, based on the same discussion paper, at the next meeting of the board on 13 October 2014.

RESOLVED THAT – the item on the future structure of overview and scrutiny be included on the agenda of the next board meeting on 13 October 2014.

CHAIRMAN