

To: Members of the Special Sub-Group

Councillors D Clews, Deakin, Hayfield, Jenns, Parsons and L Smith

For the information of the other Members of the Council

For general enquiries please contact Democratic Services on 01827 719221 or via email – democraticservices@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.

SPECIAL SUB-GROUP

14 September 2021

The Special Sub-Group will meet on Tuesday, 14 September 2021 at 6.30 pm in the Council Chamber at The Council House, South Street, Atherstone, Warwickshire.

The Meeting can also be viewed on the Council's YouTube channel at: [NorthWarks - YouTube](#)

AGENDA

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

4 **Public Participation**

Up to twenty minutes will be set aside for members of the public to put questions to elected Members. Questions should be submitted by 9.30am two working days prior to the meeting. A period of five minutes will be allowed for each question to be answered.

Members of the public wishing to address the Board must register their intention to do so by 9:30am two working days prior to the meeting. Participants are restricted to five minutes each.

If you wish to put a question to the meeting, please register by email to democraticservices@northwarks.gov.uk or telephone 01827 719221/719226.

Once registered to speak, the person asking the question has the option to either:

- (a) attend the meeting in person at the Council Chamber;
- (b) attend remotely via Teams; or
- (c) request that the Chair reads out their written question.

If attending in person, precautions will be in place in the Council Chamber to protect those who are present however this will limit the number of people who can be accommodated so it may be more convenient to attend remotely.

If attending remotely an invitation will be sent to join the Teams video conferencing for this meeting. Those registered to speak should dial the telephone number and ID number (provided on their invitation) when joining the meeting to ask their question. However, whilst waiting they will be able to hear what is being said at the meeting. They will also be able to view the meeting using the YouTube link provided (if so, they made need to mute the sound on YouTube when they speak on the phone to prevent feedback).

5 **Proposed Structure Change in the Benefits Team** – Report of the Corporate Director - Resources

Summary

This report proposes a change to the staffing structure of the Benefits Team, following a recent review of the service.

The Contact Officer for this report is Sue Garner (719374).

- 6 **Human Resources Section – Health & Safety Officer** – Report of the Corporate Director - Resources

Summary

This report proposes a change to the staff structure of the Human Resources section and to the role of the Council's Health and Safety Officer.

The Contact Officer for this report is Kerry Drakeley (719300)

- 7 **Exclusion of the Public and Press**

Recommendation:

To consider whether, in accordance with 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.

- 8 **Streetscape Staffing** - Report of the Corporate Director – Streetscape

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

- 9 **Polesworth Sports Centre** – Report of the Director of Leisure and Community Development

The Contact Officer for this report is Simon Powell (719352)

STEVE MAXEY
Chief Executive

Agenda Item No 5

Special Sub-Group

14 September 2021

**Report of the Corporate Director
Resources**

**Proposed Structure Change in the
Benefits Team**

1 Summary

- 1.1 This report proposes a change to the staffing structure of the Benefits Team, following a recent review of the service.

Recommendation to the Sub-Group

To approve the changes outlined in the report and the revised structure for the Benefits Team.

2 Introduction

- 2.1 The Benefits Team is responsible for the administration of Housing Benefit, Local Council Tax and Discretionary Support Schemes and the provision of Financial Support across North Warwickshire.
- 2.2 Housing Benefits are paid out in line with regulations and the requirements of the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP), who reimburse the Council for this expenditure. The DWP require the Council to submit 3 returns for each year: an estimate of expenditure in advance of the financial year; a mid-year monitoring return; and a final return after the year end which finalises the reimbursement to be made to the Council.

3 Current Structure of the Benefits Team

- 3.1 The Benefits Team is currently made up of some full time and some part time staff, so full time equivalents (FTE's) have been used below:
- 0.5 Benefits Manager (post shared with NBBC),
 - 1.22 Senior Benefits Officers,
 - 7.99 Benefits Officers,
 - 0.4 Appeals and Quality Officer (post shared with NBBC).

3.2 A review of the overall staffing mix against current work demands has been carried out, to ensure that staffing resources remain appropriate for the current mix of work. In order to confirm the final position on reimbursement due to the Council, external auditors carry out work to evidence compliance with DWP requirements. For the last two years, this has required increased staff resources to provide the necessary checks and evidence.

4 **Proposed Structure**

4.1 Although the establishment includes a shared Appeals and Quality Officer with NBBC, this existing arrangement has not enabled any sustained shared work with NBBC. Indeed, the post has been vacant for some time. The vacancy in that post has however allowed a different arrangement to be considered. As the increased compliance requirement is expected to continue, it is proposed to increase the resource for appeals and quality work to allow this to be done more efficiently throughout the year.

4.2 It is proposed to directly recruit a full time Appeals and Quality Officer for this Council, in place of the part time post. The Appeals and Quality Officer role will undertake the majority of the work required for audit purposes and will also be able to provide support for the team. The pressure on the Benefits Officers at the end of the year will reduce, allowing them to concentrate on dealing with claimants. The post will also ensure that the team continues to provide a high-quality service throughout the year, by assisting the Senior Benefits Officers to provide training and updates on DWP / audit requirements.

4.3 Having inhouse quality assurance applied to our local schemes and procedures by an officer specialising in that area will provide an important control for the Council, ensuring both consistency and accuracy. This will assist us to maximise the reimbursement or subsidy we receive from the DWP. Any shortfalls in these areas leaves us susceptible to subsidy reductions, which could be significant given the size of the budgets involved.

4.4 The role will sit between the benefits officers administering the claims and senior officers, enabling the identification of training needs and reinforcing strategies and processes. It will also increase the capacity to automate work as assurance on this element of work will also fall under the responsibilities of this role.

4.5 The reshaped Benefits Team will comprise:

- 0.5 Benefits Manager (post shared with NBBC),
- 1.22 Senior Benefits Officers,
- 7.26 Benefits Officers,
- 1.0 Appeals and Quality Officer.

- 4.6 Taking a lot of the audit work away from the Benefits Officers will increase the time available for dealing with claims, which will allow a reduction in Benefit Officer hours. As there are vacancies in this area, this can be managed without impacting on current staff.

5 Report Implications

5.1 Finance and Value for Money Implications

- 5.1.1 The Appeals and Quality Officer post has been evaluated at scale 8, one grade higher than the Benefits Officers. This will be funded through the reduction in Benefit Officer hours, so there will be no increase in the overall budget for the team.

5.2 Human Resources Implications

- 5.2.1 The reduction in Benefit Officer hours will have no impact on current staff. The Council will follow its Recruitment and Selection Policy when recruiting to the Appeals and Quality Officer post.

The Contact Officer for this report is Sue Garner (719374).

Agenda Item No 6

Special Sub-Group

14 September 2021

**Report of the Corporate Director -
Resources**

**Human Resources Section –
Health & Safety Officer**

1 Summary

- 1.1 This report proposes a change to the staff structure of the Human Resources Section and to the role of the Council's Health and Safety Officer.

Recommendation to the Board

- a That the permanent establishment is amended to include the Health and Safety Officer as a full-time post; and**
- b That the role of the post be amended so that it provides designated support for the housing management and maintenance services**

2 Consultation

- 2.1 This report has been discussed with the Unions through the Joint Negotiating Forum.

3 Introduction

- 3.1 This report provides a proposed change to the role of the Council's Health and Safety Officer and to the staff structure of the Human Resources section.

4 Background

- 4.1 The HR section's Health and Safety Officer retired on 5 November 2020, a recruitment campaign was undertaken, but unfortunately the new appointment made in January 2021 was not successful, so the post is currently vacant.
- 4.2 The Council has found the recruitment market for Health and Safety Officers to be very limited during recent recruitment campaigns and neighbouring Authorities have also had issues recruiting to health and safety roles. The vacant post provides the Council with an opportunity for a review of the requirements for health and safety across the Council.

- 4.3 The HR Section's Health and Safety Officer is currently a part-time post (18.5 hours a week), which provides a professional and effective health and safety support service and works with Managers and Directors in all the service areas of the Council to provide health and safety advice at a corporate level. The post is the designated competent person for health and safety for the Council, to ensure the Council is meeting relevant legal and regulatory requirements.
- 4.4 Within the Housing Division, the Council agreed to appoint a designated health and safety officer for the Housing Maintenance Service in 2015. The post was intended to support the Director of Housing to ensure that compliance arrangements were robust in the service and to review health and safety arrangements specifically.
- 4.5 The post was not included in the establishment and was intended to be temporary. The post is currently vacant. Over the last five years the structure of the Maintenance Service has changed, it now includes Managers and Supervisors who have a particular role to play in compliance and the delivery of health and safety arrangements. Training is provided as required. Nonetheless, given the duties and requirements on the Council connected to building safety and compliance (including gas, electrical, asbestos management, Legionella, fire safety, CDM, safe working practices for the tradesmen) a designated health and safety resource continues to be invaluable to the service.
- 4.6 In addition to the significant amount of health and safety legislation and guidance, which applies to maintenance and construction, Members are asked to note the requirements on social landlords specifically, which have been heralded in the Social Housing White Paper. This states that all landlords will be required to have a named person in the organisation responsible for compliance with their statutory health and safety duties. The Council will be expected to identify and make public a nominated person responsible for compliance; a senior person able to drive a culture of safety throughout the landlord organisation. The Director of Housing will undertake this role but will need designated support to ensure the duties are met.

5 **Proposal**

- 5.1 It is proposed that making the HR Section's Corporate Health and Safety Officer post a full-time role (37 hours a week) will enable the postholder to take the lead role for health and safety across the Council and specifically provide a designated resource for the health and safety compliance requirements for Landlord services provided by the housing management and maintenance teams.
- 5.2 The revised job description and person specification are attached at Appendix A. The proposed change to the role will allow the Health and Safety Officer to fully meet the requirements of the role, ensure that complex issues are dealt with promptly and effectively and will provide designated and proactive health and safety advice and support to the housing maintenance and management services.

6 Report Implications

6.1 Finance and Value for Money Implications

6.1.1 The post is at Scale 11. The HR section's establishment currently includes the Health and Safety Officer as a part-time role (18.5 hours a week). The Council would fund the additional 18.5 hours per week from the budget already held in the Housing Revenue Accounts Repairs Fund. The additional annual cost including oncosts is £22,060 at the bottom of the grade rising to £23,280 at the top of the grade.

6.2 Human Resources Implications

6.2.1 As detailed in the report. Greater resilience in the Human Resources section will help manage the health and safety risks to the Council.

6.3 Equality Implications

6.3.1 Under the Equality Act there are specific responsibilities specified under the public sector equality duty to ensure that local authorities meet the general equality duty. In terms of Human Resources there are specific codes of practice for employment and for equal pay which would apply to any person offered this post.

6.4 Legal Implications

6.4.1 The Council has extensive legal duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, and regulations made under it, to ensure the health and safety of its staff and any other people who may be affected by its activities. As indicated in paragraph 4.3, one of those specific duties is to ensure that one or more competent persons are appointed to assist in undertaking the measures necessary to meet all health and safety duties.

6.4.2 Given the breadth of the Council's current and future responsibilities, set out above, amending the establishment to include a full time Health and Safety Officer, and expanding the role of the postholder as recommended, should ensure that a competent person is appointed with the capacity to ensure compliance with those responsibilities.

6.5 Links to Council's Priorities

6.5.1 Effective recruitment and management of the workforce contributes to the Council's priority of making the best use of our resources.

The Contact Officer for this report is Kerry Drakeley (719300)

Background Papers

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

Background Paper No	Author	Nature of Background Paper	Date

NORTH WARWICKSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Job Description

Post Title: Health and Safety Officer

Division: Resources

Grade: Scale 11

Section: Human Resources

Responsible to: Human Resources Manager

Responsible for: None

Overall Purpose of the Position:

To provide a professional and effective Health and Safety support service. To be the competent person for Health and Safety for the Council and to ensure the Council is meeting relevant legal and regulatory requirements.

Safeguarding:

All employees at North Warwickshire Borough Council are required to positively contribute to the Borough Council's responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, young people and adults with care and support needs. It is their professional duty to be aware of the signs and symptoms of abuse and, in accordance with the Child Protection Policy and the Safeguarding Policy for Adults with Care and Support Needs, to respond appropriately to any identified concerns.

Principal Responsibilities

- 1 To keep up to date with health and safety legislation, technology and any development that may affect the Council's operations.
- 2 To develop, implement and monitor corporate health and safety policies and procedures.
- 3 To develop and provide advice to Management Team, Directors and individual staff on all matters related to Health and Safety and to ensure that the Council complies with Health and Safety legislation.
- 4 To provide designated and proactive health and safety advice and support to the housing maintenance and management services. This will include providing officers with advice about building and tenant safety and responding to residents' enquiries about compliance and health and safety requirements about their tenancies.'
- 5 To work with managers to identify hazards, assess risks and develop safe systems of work.

- 6 To manage the council's risk assessment process and to undertake, where appropriate, complex or specialised risk assessments.
- 7 To carry out regular inspections / audits to check policies and procedures are being properly implemented and are fit for purpose.
- 8 To ensure the accurate recording and reporting of incidents, accidents and dangerous occurrences, including submitting RIDDOR reports to the appropriate enforcing authority.
- 9 To take a lead role in the investigation of major accidents and to ensure that all reportable accidents are investigated.
- 10 To monitor safe working practices and provide practical and effective remedial advice where necessary.
- 11 Identify areas for health and safety improvement and make practical, cost effective recommendations.
- 12 Set up management reports and monitor and review key performance indicators, undertake trend analysis and ensure remedial actions are implemented.
- 13 Prepare reports, statistics or papers for consideration by the Human Resources Manager and the Health and Safety Working Party on specific health and safety issues.
- 14 Coach, mentor and support the organisation in the pursuit of health and safety best practice.
- 15 Design and deliver in-house training on health and safety issues and risks.
- 16 Liaise with outside bodies and other divisions of the Council as required.
- 17 Maintain a high level of responsibility and duty of care towards personal health and safety, in addition to that of colleagues and members of the public.
- 18 Carry out any other duties appropriate to the grade and post on request.

Agreed by Post Holder:.....Date:.....

Agreed by Corporate Director:.....Date:.....

NORTH WARWICKSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Person Specification - Health and Safety Officer

Category	E/D	Criteria Indicated E (Essential) or D (Desirable)	How Identified
Skills, Knowledge and Experience	E	Experience of health and safety management and providing advice within a multi-disciplined environment.	2 & 4
	E	In-depth knowledge and understanding of health and safety legislation	2 & 4
	D	Knowledge of health and safety legislation & best practice in a construction and housing maintenance	2 & 4
	E	IT literate (including Microsoft Windows applications – Excel, Word, Outlook)	2 & 4
	E	Experience of working proactively with managers to achieve desired outcomes	2 & 4
	E	Proven track record in hazard identification and risk assessments	2 & 4
	E	Good problem solving and project management skills	2 & 4
	E	Excellent interpersonal skills with ability to engage, influence and persuade at all levels	2 & 4
	E	Practical and pragmatic approach to health and safety	2 & 4
	E	Strong communication skills, both written and verbal and good presentation skills	2 & 4
	E	Able to work to tight deadlines	2 & 4
	E	Ability to collate and analyse information	2 & 4

Equal Opportunity	E	Must be able to recognise discrimination in its many forms and willing to put the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy into practice	2 & 4
Safeguarding	E	Commitment to the protection and safeguarding of children, young people and adults with care and support needs.	2 & 4
Qualifications	E	NEBOSH National General Certificate in Occupational Health and Safety (or equivalent),	2 & 5
	E	Technical Member (Tech IOSH) of The Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) (or equivalent).	2 & 5
	D	Graduate Member (Grad IOSH) of The Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) (or equivalent).	2 & 5
Attitude and Motivation	E	Methodical and attentive to detail	2 & 4
	E	Able to work on own initiative, as well as part of a team	2 & 4
	E	Organised and influential, with good interpersonal skills	2 & 4
	E	Competence and confidence to advise on action needed in situations of imminent danger or risk of serious personal injury	2 & 4
Other	E	Full valid driving licence and possess own transport	2 & 4
	E	Able to access a variety of sites, locations and workplaces	2 & 4

MEASUREMENT:

1. Test prior to short listing (i.e. all applicants).
2. From application form.
3. Test after short listing.
4. Probing at interview.
5. Documentary evidence
6. OTHER (please specify).

Criteria identified by "2", either singly or in combination with any other number, will be used for shortlisting purposes and details should appear on the application form.

Agenda Item No 7

Special Sub-Group

14 September 2021

**Report of the
Chief Executive**

Exclusion of the Public and Press

Recommendation to the Board

To consider whether, in accordance with 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 8

Streetscape Staffing – Report of the Director of Streetscape

Paragraph 2 – Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.

Agenda Item No 9

Polesworth Sports Centre – Report of the Director of Leisure and Community Development

Paragraph 2 – Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.

In relation to the items listed above members should only exclude the public if the public interest in doing so outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, giving their reasons as to why that is the case.

The Contact Officer for this report is Amanda Tonks (719221)