

Response from the meetings of the Joint Cabinet and WDC's Cabinet on the O&S Committee's Comments – 7 December 2022

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee raised a general concern that subsequent to it becoming responsible for what was much of the remit of the former Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee, Members had found the volume of items requiring attention had significantly increased. A consensus was that this led to less effective scrutiny and was no longer tenable.

The Chair, Overview & Scrutiny Committee was asked to inform Cabinet of these concerns and to request that officers should be asked to review the situation and provide options for improvement going forward.

The Leader agreed with the concerns raised by the Committee, and he would follow this through with the Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer to see what arrangements could be done to support the scrutiny process.

Item Number 5 – South Warwickshire Local Plan Part 1 – Issues and Options Consultation

Scrutiny Comment:

1. The way that the reports were published (as one block, rather than as separate documents) created practical problems for Members in reviewing and scrutinising the content. Whilst recognising that the report was a technical topic, it was requested that the report should be better divided and structured to make it easier to manage.
2. Concerns were raised about the robustness of the process of the Sustainability Assessment and therefore the conclusions drawn from this. The Committee looked forward to feedback from the consultants in this regard.
3. Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommended that wording, process and navigation for the consultation is tested using a broad range of people to ensure that the type of responses are what would be expected.

Joint Cabinet Response:

The recommendations in the report were approved, subject to the addition of the following recommendation from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee:

"that wording, process and navigation for the consultation is tested using a broad range of people to ensure that the type of responses are what would be expected".

The Committee noted the advice from officers that a user guide would be sent round to a selected group of Councillors in order to pilot the consultation document to check it is easy to navigate.

The Committee also resolved that an 8-week consultation period was appropriate.

Item 5 – Quarter 2 Budget Report

Scrutiny Comment:

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee thanked officers for their work and noted the report. Concerns were raised about the continuing issues relating to staff recruitment.

Whilst these issues meant that the Council's budget position had improved, recruitment had not.

Cabinet Response:

The recommendations in the report were approved.

Item 8 – Draft Local Transport Plan – Consultation Response

Scrutiny Comment:

The Labour Group had called this report in for scrutiny but the Overview & Scrutiny Committee Chair decided that because it did not concern a Warwick District Council policy, but instead was for a response from this Council to a County Council consultation exercise, a better approach would be for Councillor Cullinan to consult with officers and bring forward to Overview & Scrutiny Committee proposals for comments to be made to Cabinet.

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee:

1. Requested that the report should clarify that the reference to road planning in planning applications related to safety assessments and not the planning of routes.
2. The Council should make clear in its response that it is supportive of the proposals on pedestrian active travel rather than giving no comment.

Cabinet Response:

The recommendations in the report were approved.

Item 9 – HEART Shared Service Partnership

Scrutiny Comment:

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee thanked officers for their work. Members noted that it was a complicated service to get right and recognised that it was heading in the right direction.

Corrections were required to reflect the reasons for the underperformance at that time at 1.3.1 in the report.

The Committee welcomed the commitment to some form of a continued Break Clause in the contract going forward.

Cabinet Response:

The recommendations in the report were approved.

Items 13 – Asylum Seekers Dispersal Scheme

Scrutiny Comment:

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee thanked officers for their work and noted the report.

Cabinet Response:

The recommendations in the report were approved.