

 Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee - 11 December 2012		Agenda Item No. <div style="font-size: 2em; float: right;">7</div>
Title	Comments from the Executive	
For further information about this report please contact	Peter Dixon Committee Services Officer 01926 456114 committee@warwickdc.gov.uk	
Service Area	Members' Services	
Wards of the District directly affected	N/A	
Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006	No	
Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number	N/A	
Background Papers	Finance & Audit minutes 13/11/2012 and Executive minutes 14/11/2012	

Contrary to the policy framework:	No
Contrary to the budgetary framework:	No
Key Decision?	No
Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)	No

Officer/Councillor Approval		
With regard to officer approval all reports <u>must</u> be approved by the report authors relevant director, Finance, Legal Services and the relevant Portfolio Holder(s).		
Officer Approval	Date	Name
Deputy Chief Executive		Andrew Jones
Chief Executive		
CMT		
Section 151 Officer		Mike Snow
Legal		
Finance		Jenny Clayton
Portfolio Holders		

Consultation Undertaken	
N/A	
Final Decision?	Yes
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)	

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report summarises the Executive's response to comments given by the Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee on reports submitted to the Executive on 14 November 2012.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 The responses made by the Executive be noted.

3. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 This report is produced to create a dialogue between the Executive and the Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee, ensuring that the Scrutiny Committee is formally made aware of the Executive's responses.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 The Committee receives and notes the minutes of the Executive instead.

5. BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK

- 5.1 There is no impact on the budgetary framework. This is for the Committee's information only.

6. POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 6.1 The work carried out by the Committee helps the Council to improve in line with its priority to manage services openly, efficiently and effectively.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 As part of the new scrutiny process, the Committee no longer considers the whole of the Executive agenda.
- 7.2 Councillors are emailed at the time of the publication of the Executive and Scrutiny Committee agendas, asking them to contact Committee Services by 9.00am on the day of the Scrutiny Committee, to advise which Executive items they wish the Scrutiny Committee to pass comment on, and the reasons why.
- 7.3 As a result, at its meeting on 13 November 2012, the Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee considered the items detailed in appendix 1. The responses which Executive gave are also shown.

APPENDIX 1**Responses from the meeting of the Executive held on 14 November 2012 on the Finance and Audit Scrutiny Committee's Comments**

Item no.	4	Title	Budget Review to 30 th September 2012	Requested by	Chair
Scrutiny Comment		The Committee supported the recommendations, whilst asking a number of questions in relation to specific elements of the report. Some dissatisfaction was expressed over the running down of the Equipment Renewals Reserve. Members noted that the procurement process for St Mary's Lands was currently underway. The Head of Finance agreed to investigate whether or not Warwick Boxing Club had been given the £10,000 allocated to them, to ascertain whether the supplier of the chairs which had recently been withdrawn from use in the Town Hall had been informed that the chairs were not fit for purpose and to investigate what had happened to the large table from room 18.			
Executive Response		The Portfolio Holder for Finance expressed confidence that using the lean systems theories and working with officers to keep pressures heightened would ensure continuity with savings. He thanked F&A for its comments and assured the Committee that the Equipment Renewal Reserve would be closely monitored, whilst looking five years ahead.			

Item no.	5	Title	Council Tax Support	Requested by	Chair
Scrutiny Comment		The Head of Finance explained that, in light of a one off financial incentive from central government which would significantly benefit the district, the organisation had reappraised its preferred option and was now backing option 4 rather than option 1. The Committee supported the recommendations in the report but suggested that when the Council went out to consultation again, it should explain the reasons for the change of approach so as not to lose credibility.			
Executive Response		The Portfolio Holder for Finance agreed with the Committee's comments, assuring Members that consultation would cover all the concerns raised.			

Item no.	6	Title	City Deal	Requested by	Chair
Scrutiny Comment		The Committee did not accept the recommendations in the report. While Members recognised that the City Deal could prove to benefit Warwick District, there were concerns over the size of this Council's commitment to the project through the loss of a significant proportion of the Deputy Chief Executive (BH)'s time. Members were particularly concerned that the Local Plan was one of the biggest risks that the Council faced but that it could be neglected in the Deputy Chief Executive's absence. Members wished to emphasise to the Executive the significant increase in risk which the absence of the Deputy Chief Executive placed on the Local Plan programme, bearing in mind its critical timetable, and wanted assurance that arrangements had been put in place so that the Local Plan would not be put in jeopardy and that there would be no slippage in the Deputy Chief Executive's other work. The Committee also questioned whether a business case for the Deputy Chief Executive's involvement in City Deal			

	<p>had been made and whether Senior Managers had carried out a risk assessment.</p> <p>Officers agreed to provide all Councillors with information on the arrangements that had been put in place to enable the Deputy Chief Executive to devote a significant proportion of his time to City Deal.</p> <p>Clarification was also requested from Executive as to what the approval process would be for the final submission due to be submitted by 15th January 2013.</p>
Executive Response	<p>The Deputy Leader stated that the Deputy Chief Executive (BH) was the right person to lead on this project to help avoid the risks highlighted by the scrutiny committees. He felt that the Council needed to ensure they had a 'heavyweight' at the table to ensure the District was not overlooked or left behind other authorities. He reminded Members that this was also a career development opportunity for the DCE in question.</p> <p>With regard to concerns raised regarding the Local Plan, he assured Members that timescales would not alter and arrangements had been put in place to ensure that any responsibilities were handed over seamlessly. The Deputy Chief Executive (AJ) advised that a revised list of responsibilities had been circulated and apologised if this document had not reached all Members as yet.</p> <p>The Deputy Leader reminded Members that Warwick District was home to a number of large businesses and this would put the Council at the forefront of the project. The Executive was encouraged that the City Deal could be of benefit to the District and had confidence that neither senior officers nor Group Leaders would sign up to anything that wouldn't be beneficial to the future prospects of the District.</p>

Item no.		Title	2012/13 Portfolio Holder Statements & Fit for the Future Progress Report	Requested by	Chair
	9				
Scrutiny Comment		<p>Whilst the Committee supported the recommendations in the report, it felt that the various projects within the report (Appendix I – Locality Improvement Plans, and Appendix J – Fit for the future Key Projects and Studies) should be clearly prioritised and asked who was responsible for monitoring and prioritising them.</p> <p>Members were informed that the Action Plan to support Cultural Change was due to be produced early in 2013, with members stressing the importance that this was adhered to.</p> <p>Members pointed out a number of contradictions in the report, citing statistics relating to planning applications as an example, and were concerned over the estimated cost of £250,000 for the Kenilworth Meer feasibility study. The Head of Finance agreed to get more details about the latter. The Committee was keen to see that the location of CCTV cameras in St Nicholas's park be carefully considered, following reports of antisocial behaviour.</p>			

Executive Response	Councillor Shilton advised that additional CCTV cameras for St Nicholas Park would be installed as soon as Severn Trent Water had finished their treatment works.				
	Executive Members had concerns that some of the projects included were not a priority and had the potential to undo the savings achieved to date. Councillor Mobbs reminded them that officers were being transparent and open about future projects but suggested that additional wording be added to recommendation 2.2 to reassure Members that regular reviews of priorities were being undertaken. The additional wording was "and will continue to review and prioritise these projected items of expenditure".				

Item no.		Title		Requested by	
	10		Visitor Services Review		Chair
Scrutiny Comment	The Committee discussed whether the industry would become able to manage visitor services in the long term, sought reassurances that the industry approved of the Council's approach and supported the recommendations in the report.				
	The Committee was keen to look at trends coming out of the data collected as and when that data became available. The Economic Development and Regeneration Manager agreed to provide Members with the Destination Management Organisation prospectus and other relevant information.				
Executive Response	Councillor Hammon thanked the Scrutiny Committees for their comments and was certain that working with Warwick Town Council would be beneficial for all parties. In addition, he felt that it was important to keep the private tourism industry involved to keep the momentum going.				

Item no.		Title		Requested by	
	11		Sustainability Delivery Plan		Chair
Scrutiny Comment	The Head of Environmental Services agreed to ascertain whether the plan had been drawn up in accordance with the Committee's expectations and to email a response to the Committee.				
	The Committee was keen for the person who was appointed to manage the Sustainability Delivery Plan to do so in such a way that it would be incorporated into the local plan. However, Members were dismayed by the suggestion that the proposed temporary post might not be filled before April 2013 and therefore recommended that the Executive take steps to ensure that the post be filled as soon as possible and that, if necessary, a special meeting of the Employment Committee be convened to expedite this. The Committee also recommended that, once the Sustainability Delivery Plan was approved, training be arranged for Councillors in order that they could better understand this complex issue.				
Executive Response	The Deputy Chief Executive (AJ) advised that the Chief Executive had the authority to recruit and that the post would be offered to any individuals in the 'at risk' group first. Councillor Coker explained that the job description was being worked on but that finalisation might have to wait until a decision had been received from the HAY panel.				

Item no.	12	Title	Website CMS Replacement	Requested by	Chair
Scrutiny Comment	The Committee recognised that Local Authorities did not always have a good track record when it came to procuring computer software and therefore asked a number of questions in respect of the approach taken so far to identifying an appropriate Content Management System and sought assurances that the procurement process would continue to be followed. There was some discussion over whether there was a need to tighten up the measurability of value for money, but the Committee accepted the report and supported the recommendations within it.				
Executive Response	Councillor Mrs Grainger endorsed the report and praised the Website Manager for his work on the project. She felt that he and his fellow officers would ensure the Council ended up with the best service possible. Councillor Mrs Grainger welcomed the Scrutiny Committees' comments and accepted changes to the recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.				

Item no.	15	Title	New Street Car Park - Sale of Parking Spaces and Access Rights	Requested by	Chair
Scrutiny Comment	The Committee was pleased to support the recommendations in the report. The Committee recommended that the Executive consider further improvements to Linen Street Car Park and an extension to its opening hours to a more useful, later, time in the evening.				
Executive Response	The Recommendations as set out in the report were agreed.				