

Pre-Scrutiny Questions and Answers – Overview & Scrutiny Agenda 19 September 2023

Report Title: Corporate Strategy

Report Author(s): Graham Leach

Councillor Richard Dickson:

In any organisation of any size, writing a strategy is – hard work though it may seem at the time – the easy part. How it gets used to influence both day-to-day and longer-term decisions for the better provision of services is the key thing.

So,

- 1) How will the new corporate strategy be used when considering reports and proposals brought to future Council, Cabinet, O&S and A&S Committee meetings? Will, for example, there always be a statement on all reports to advise how the proposal(s) is(are) consistent with strategy?

Response:

These will be set out within "Section 5 Business Strategy" (although it will be amended to Corporate Strategy) of each report.

- 2) Inevitably there will be times when there is tension between corporate strategy objectives, so how will this get resolved? For example, what will happen when delivering low cost, low carbon energy conflicts with putting Council finances on a firm, stable and sustainable footing? Is there a priority of objectives?

Response:

This will be an on-balance decision based on advice from officers, often in consultation with Portfolio Holder ahead of reports coming forward then it will be a matter for the relevant decision-making body to consider and apply weight to.

- 3) Is it an inadvertent omission that there's no mention of how the culture of the Council fits with the strategic objectives? As we were reminded with the failed merger, the former eats the latter for breakfast.

Response from Graham Leach:

I will need to defer to Councillor Ian Davison as Leader on this point. However, I will say that at present the information in front of you are Draft Strategic Goals and there will also be the outcome of the peer review to consider as well.

Addition to response from Graham Leach from Chris Elliott:

The Peer Review Report refers to the culture of the organisation and that we should re connect with staff and would mean that once the corporate strategy is agreed we can work on how we frame that and what it is that we think we need to change if anything. My observation is that I am not sure huge changes are needed.

Further response from Councillor Ian Davison:

As your points indicate, Richard, writing words about organisational culture are unlikely to be effective. However, the draft corporate strategy that will go to O&S on 1st November, will include 'Values' which should describe important aspects of how we aspire to interact with others.

- 4) There's lots of good mention of the Council working with external partners, but why is there far less reference to how Councillors will work in partnership with each other. In delivery of the corporate strategy?

Response from Graham Leach:

This will be a point that Councillor Ian Davison as Leader needs to respond to.

Addition to response from Graham Leach from Chris Elliott:

I think it's also something that every Cllr needs to consider – you can't work in partnership in isolation everyone needs to be involved and contribute which also means they have to take some responsibility.

Further response from Councillor Ian Davison:

Section 1.2 gives the timetable for engagement with the corporate strategy. However, I think you're asking a broader, interesting question: this could be seen as the same as your previous question i.e. about values, but words have little impact. It could be added as a strategic goal or seen as something to work on via other means.

Clearly at the last full council meeting, there were sharply divided opinions on advisory groups. Cabinet is still committed to providing councillors opportunities to contribute to policy development, and I hope we can find ways forwards to work more effectively together. Incidentally, it's proving extremely difficult to set up an advisory group to review the climate change action programme: it may be best to aim for a fresh start in the New Year, but that would be for group leaders to discuss.

- 5) On a technical issue, given the importance given to 'the biodiversity of the District' and 'crime and the fear of crime' why are Warwickshire Wildlife Trust and Warwickshire Police respectively not listed as consultees in Appendix 3?

Response:

An error on my behalf, Warwickshire Police were sent a copy. The consultees were the same as used for the Peer Review, in terms of key strategic partners. As set out in the report O&S Committee can undertake further consultation not duplicating

any undertaken by the Cabinet, within the timescale set by Cabinet. So, O&S could ask that a copy is sent to Warwickshire Wildlife trust to comment on, but a response would be required by the next O&S meeting on 3 October.