



Finance & Scrutiny Committee
22 September 2021

Title: Update on Joint Work with SDC
Lead: Chris Elliott
Portfolio Holder: Andrew Day
Public report
Wards of the District directly affected: All

Contrary to the policy framework: No
Contrary to the budgetary framework: No
Key Decision: No
Included within the Forward Plan: No
Equality Impact Assessment Undertaken: No
Consultation & Community Engagement: No
Final Decision: No
Accessibility checked: Yes

Officer/Councillor Approval

| Officer Approval | Date | Name |
|----------------------------------|-------------|--|
| Chief Executive | 13/9/2021 | Chris Elliott |
| Transformation Programme Manager | 13/9/2021 | Tim Oruye |
| CMT | 13/9/2021 | Chris Elliott, Andrew Jones, Dave Barber, Tony Perks |
| Section 151 Officer | 13/9/2021 | Mike Snow |
| Monitoring Officer | 13/9/2021 | Phil Grafton |
| Finance | 13/9/2021 | Andrew Rollins |
| Portfolio Holder(s) | 13/9/2021 | Andrew Day |

1. Summary

- 1.1. It was agreed at a previous meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and of the Finance and Audit Committee that a report would be brought to each meeting to set out the progress of the work being done to enable effective Scrutiny of the proposals.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the contents of the report and appendices are noted and any comments arising are presented to the Cabinets of both Councils and the Joint Advisory Steering Group (JASG).

3. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 3.1. This report re iterates the vision agreed by both Councils and the reasons for undertaking this approach; sets out work done to date; the next steps; the key benefits; and the key milestones and intended overall outcome.
- 3.2. Vision – both SDC and WDC at their respective Full Councils agreed the following vision:

To create a single statutory South Warwickshire Council covering all of the activities currently carried out by Stratford on Avon District Council and Warwick District Council by 1st April 2024.

- 3.3. Reasons for undertaking this approach:

- Both Councils have significant financial pressures
- Both Councils wish to continue to provide valued services to residents/businesses/local communities and improve them if we can
- The two Councils have a good track record of partnership
- There is a shared economic geography between the two Councils
- There is a shared sense of community between the two Councils' areas
- There is a very strong political relationship in place
- The two Councils are within the same County Council area.

- 3.4. Work done to date (including ongoing work) includes:

- Deloitte Report commissioned and agreed by both setting out the high level business case for the creation of a single South Warwickshire Council
- Vision stated above (para 3.2) agreed by both Councils
- The Cabinet portfolios for both Councils are fully aligned
- Jointly Tendering for the Refuse and Recycling Contracts
- Developing jointly a South Warwickshire Local Plan
- Developing a joint Regulatory Services Enforcement Policy
- Developing a South Warwickshire Economic Strategy
- Agreed a shared set of ambitions regarding the Climate Emergency
- Joint Staff/HR policies agreed
- Agreed and have appointed a Transformation Programme Manager and Programme Support Officer
- Established a governance regime via the creation of an officer Programme Board (which meets weekly) and the Councillor led Joint

Arrangements Steering Group (Reports and Notes of meeting available on the South Warwickshire Together Hub)

- Work on due diligence financially undertaken by LGA consultant and reported to JASG
- Regular meetings with Unison (both branches) on a fortnightly basis
- Communication Hub for all Staff and Councillors of both Councils established – South Warwickshire Together Hub
- Leaders and CEOs meet fortnightly
- Joint Management Team meets weekly (started from 2nd August with Head of Place and Economy appointed on 4th August – (2 vacancies immediately saved)
- Discussions have started with the Government regarding the creation of a single South Warwickshire Council
- Agreed paper for public consultation proposals
- Sharing experience and likewise gaining experience from joint work of other Councils including those who have merged and those who are also considering the same step
- Update presentations given to Councillors, members of staff and Service Managers
- Scrutiny Chairs of SDC/WDC have met
- Start of public consultation on proposal from 6th September to 24th October – 600 representatives of the community directly surveyed; open form available for all to make their comments; stakeholders notified and asked for comments; focus groups for local residents; parish/town council; community/voluntary; business.

3.5. The next steps include the following:

- Programme of Service Integration is subject to a separate report that will be considered by WDC's Cabinet on 23rd September and SDC's Cabinet in early October.
- Business Case for Joint Legal Service integration is subject to a separate report that will be considered by WDC's Cabinet on 23rd September and SDC's Cabinet in early October.
- Joint Policy for Enforcement and Business Regulation is subject to a separate report that will be considered by WDC's Cabinet on 23rd September and SDC's Cabinet in early October.
- Both Councils to consider the decision to make a formal application to merge the two organisations to create a single South Warwickshire Council – on Monday 13th December

3.6. The expected benefits include:

- Delivery of significant net savings as envisaged in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy
- Enhanced partnership working
- Increased presence, influence, and strategic voice
- Increased service resilience
- Improved customer experience – residents and business
- Strengthened workforce opportunities arising from a larger workforce

3.7. The key milestones are:

- Agreement to the business case to be submitted to Government on 13th December 2021
- Approval granted by the Secretary of State within a year of the submission date
- Shadow Council in existence from April 2023 – elections inc. those of Parish deferred for a year
- All services merged by March 2024 having started the process in November 2021
- New Council comes into life on 1st April 2024
- Elections to new Council in May 2024

3.8. The overall outcome will be that a new South Warwickshire Council which has a sustainable financial foundation and so is able to deliver better, transformed, and relevant services for the residents, businesses, and communities of the area.

4. Policy Framework

4.1. Fit for the Future (FFF)

4.1.1. The Council's FFF Strategy is designed to deliver the Vision for the District of making it a Great Place to Live, Work and Visit. To that end amongst other things the FFF Strategy contains several Key projects.

4.1.2. The FFF Strategy has 3 strands, People, Services and Money, and each has an external and internal element to it, the details of which can be found [on the Council's website](#). The table below illustrates the impact of this proposal if any in relation to the Council's FFF Strategy.

4.2. FFF Strands

4.2.1 External impacts of proposal(s)

People - Health, Homes, Communities - The report will have no direct impact for the community at this stage, but the overall programme will assist with the ability to continue to provide services.

Services - Green, Clean, Safe – As above.

Money- Infrastructure, Enterprise, Employment – As above.

4.2.2. Internal impacts of the proposal(s)

People - Effective Staff – The joint work will offer better protection to staff than the alternatives and by being part of a larger workforce it will offer more opportunities for training and progress.

Services - Maintain or Improve Services – The joint work is intended to enable the two Councils to maintain or improve their services.

Money - Firm Financial Footing over the Longer Term – It is intended that the work does provide for a firm financial footing over the longer term.

4.3. **Supporting Strategies & Changes to Existing Policies** – The joint work will impact on the two Council's policies across the piece. Part of the Programme of work will be to bring the policies of the two Councils into line over the period to 2024 and in some cases beyond that.

4.4. **Impact Assessments**

High level impact statement prepared in conjunction with public consultation. Can be seen on the consultation website and will also be published on the South Warwickshire Together Hub.

5. Budgetary Framework

5.1. This report does not impact on the budgetary framework or budget, but the subject matter of the report will have an impact.

6. Risks

6.1. A risk register for the joint work is being developed.

7. Alternative Option(s) considered

7.1. Strategic options were evaluated as part of the work done for the public consultation and can be seen at the hub.