

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 11 February 2020 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00pm.

Present: Councillor Davison (Chair); Councillors; Boad, A Dearing, Margrave, Milton, Murphy, Noone, Redford and Russell.

Also Present: Councillor Day – Leader of the Council, Councillor Grainger, Portfolio Holder – Culture and Councillor Rhead – Portfolio Holder – Environment & Business.

66. **Apologies and Substitutes**

- (a) There were no apologies made; and
- (b) Councillor Boad substituted for Councillor Kohler.

67. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made.

68. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2019 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

69. **Public Speaker**

Mr Mond, a member of the Leamington-based group Justice for Palestinians, addressed the Committee on concerns his group had on the proposal to adopt a definition of Anti-Semitism, which was to be considered by the Executive the following evening.

70. **Executive Agenda (Non-Confidential items and reports) – Wednesday 12 February 2020**

The Committee considered the following items which would be discussed at the meeting of the Executive on Wednesday 12 February 2020.

Item 10 – Adopting a Definition of Anti-Semitism

A report from the Chief Executive which sought Executive approval to agree to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of Anti-Semitism as part of the Council's and the wider Community Safety Partnership Strategy relating to Hate Crime had been called-in by both the Green and Liberal Democrat Groups for scrutiny.

In response to questions from Members, the Chief Executive explained that:

- The Government had approached all Councils to spell out a definition of Anti-Semitism back in October 2019. Warwick District Council had not acted immediately because it had been inappropriate timing back then. The Government had then

approached Councils again and suitably impressed upon them the need to act.

- There had not been many reports of Anti-Semitism in the District.
- The policy under consideration was within the "box" on the first page of Appendix 1 to the report. Councillors could amend this if they saw fit because they set the policy.

Mindful that the wording of the policy as recommended might prevent public challenge to actions by the Israeli Government, which could potentially be deemed Anti-Semitic, the Committee made a recommendation to the Executive as follows:

"The Committee supported the recommendation in the report and recommended that the following two caveats be included in the definition of Anti-Semitism:

1. It is not Anti-Semitic to criticise the Government of Israel, without additional evidence to suggest Anti-Semitic intent; and
2. It is not Anti-Semitic to hold the Israeli Government to the same standards as other liberal democracies, or to take a particular interest in the Israeli Government's policies or actions, without additional evidence to suggest Anti-Semitic intent."

The Liberal Democrat Group was content that the issues it had raised ahead of the meeting about public consultation could be dismissed.

(Councillor Day left the meeting.)

Item 6 – Warwick District Climate Emergency Action Programme

A report from the Chief Executive and the Head of Health and Community Protection which sought agreement from the Executive to the proposed Climate Emergency Action Programme was called-in by the Labour and Green Groups for scrutiny.

In response to questions from Members, Councillor Rhead, Portfolio Holder – Environment & Business, the Chief Executive and the Head of Health and Community Protection explained that:

- The aim to improve the energy efficiency of houses in the District to get as many as possible up to at least EPC level C by 2030 would be targeted at houses and assets under the Council's control initially. In respect of privately owned, the Council could only encourage people to convert their homes. There might be grants that could be given for private homes; this would need investigation.
- Not all housing could be brought up to EPC level C easily and so caveats might be necessary for privately owned housing.
- The Council would encourage the County Council to apply for funding available for sustainable transport and cycle-ways. The Government had just announced £5bn worth of funding available. The Chief Executive informed Members that the District Council would be prepared to do the hard work involved to apply for some of this funding if the County Council would front the application.

- Businesses would be encouraged to become greener, but there were limited means to do this through financial incentives. The Council did not set business rates; it was solely responsible for collecting them. There were limited opportunities to do this through rates relief and if this were to be considered, it would have to be ratified by the Government or the County Council, with Warwick District Council's role being solely one of influencer. A grant scheme could be looked at.
- The Council had asked the County Council for an integrated sustainable transport plan and the County Council hoped to have finished this by Easter.

The Committee conveyed its thanks to the officers who had worked hard on the programme.

The Committee made the following comment to the Executive:

"The Committee supported the recommendations in the report and urged the Executive to progress them."

(Councillor Rhead left the meeting and Councillor Day returned to the meeting.)

At 7.00pm, the Chairman announced a two-minute adjournment.

71. **Chief Executive's Office – Service Area Review**

The Committee considered a report from the Deputy Chief Executive & Monitoring Officer which brought together details of performance relating to the Chief Executive's Office.

In response to questions from Members, Councillor Day - Leader of the Council and the Deputy Chief Executive & Monitoring Officer explained that:

- The format of the report for all Service Areas had changed; they were now only required to provide a narrative of how the Service Area was progressing so that Members could get an overall reflection of how the Service Area was progressing. If there was something within the Service Area the Councillors felt required more drilled-down detail, they could ask for an additional report on that.
- The performance target set for corporate properties with in date Electrical Test certificates was 100% (page 12 of the report). The reason for the actual figures being lower was that not all of the Council's properties were yet on the database, but over the course of the year this would happen.
- The Council's team that managed the website did an ongoing review of the pages published, and this was supported by the page authors who were also required to keep the pages updated.
- There was no timescale set for assisting in the appraisal, planning and delivery of the Council's major refurbishment and re-development projects across the Council's HRA and corporate stock (page 7 of the report). This was because sites needed to be identified.

- Following a senior management review, three areas would be discrete, leaving only Civic and Democratic Services within the Chief Executive's Office.

(Councillor Day left the meeting.)

72. **Review of the Work Programme, Forward Plan and Comments from the Executive**

The Committee considered its work programme for 2020, the Forward Plan and the response from the Executive to its comments in December.

Resolved that

- (1) the Comments from the Executive report attached as Appendix 2 to the report, be noted;
- (2) the fuel poverty report scheduled for March will now be a call-in for scrutiny of the fuel poverty report going to Executive that month;
- (3) the Shakespeare's England update scheduled for March 2020 will be moved back to September so that it will take in the funding year end; and
- (4) the meeting in April will include an opportunity for Members to reflect how effective scrutiny has been and what could be done to make scrutiny more effective.

(The meeting ended at 7.25 pm)