

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 5 July 2022 in the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00 pm.

Present: Councillor Milton (Chair); Councillors Barton, Cullinan, A Dearing, J Dearing, Jacques, Kohler, Leigh-Hunt, Redford and Syson.

Also Present: Councillor Day – Leader of the Council, Councillor Grainger – Portfolio Holder -Neighbourhood & Leisure, Councillor Hales – Portfolio Holder - Resources, Councillor Rhead, Portfolio Holder – Climate Change, Councillor Tracey, Portfolio Holder - Transformation, and Councillor Bartlett, Portfolio Holder – Economy & Culture.

14. **Apologies and Substitutes**

- (a) An apology for absence was received from Councillor Davison.
- (b) There were no substitutes.

15. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

16. **Work Programme Update – Digital Update**

The Committee were due to have an update on the Digital Strategy from the Head of ICT, but as he was unable to attend the meeting the Chair agreed that this update would be moved to the 9 August meeting, and the Work Programme was updated accordingly.

17. **Cabinet Agenda (Non-Confidential items and reports) – Wednesday 6 July 2022**

The Committee considered the following items which would be discussed at the meeting of the Cabinet on Wednesday 6 July 2022.

Item 5 – New Projects for the Leisure Development Programme

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee supported the recommendations in the report. Members were keen to ensure the individual projects were referred to the Programme Advisory Boards.

Some broad comments were made about the provision of sports facilities across the District and the Committee recommended to Cabinet that these should be discussed at the Programme Advisory Boards (PAB's).

The Committee wanted to see the ongoing use of project management reviewed and expressed a keenness to ensure these would be looked at to help deliver a range of projects moving forward.

Item 6 & 13 – Continuation of Hydrogen Hub Project and Confidential Appendix

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee supported the work going forward and was keen to see the business case develop, particularly relating to the return on investment and the case for electric vehicles vs hydrogen vehicles and how these technologies evolved over time.

Item 7 – South Warwickshire Electric Vehicle Charging (EV) Strategy

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommended that this item continued to be discussed by the Climate Change Programme Advisory Board (PAB) in order to shape the strategy before it returned to Cabinet.

Item 9 – Supporting our Communities

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee supported the recommendations in the report. Members wished to reinforce their appreciation of the outstanding effort of officers and Members, recognising the work that had been put in to keep services going to residents throughout the last two years.

The Committee also recommended that Members took part in a public round of applause for staff at the next full Council meeting on 28 July.

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee welcomed the service area plans. Members recognised the amount of that work that had gone into them and expressed a desire to see these in the context of historical data.

Members also recognised the high amount of information received and requested that attention was paid to how best to communicate changes to key performance indicators.

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommended to Cabinet that

- (1) officers could look at other ways to distribute the information in the Energy Price Rise Leaflet (appendix 3 to the report) via Parish/Town Councils / District Councillors;
- (2) The Committee asked officers to produce a definition of the RAG status to be used across the Council for consistency; and
- (3) The Committee asked that the performance measures were reviewed by the PABs to ensure they measured things of importance and were clear in what they were measuring.

18. **Update on the Cessation of the Proposed Merger with Stratford-on-Avon District Council**

The Committee considered a report from the Chief Executive which provided an update on the implications of the cessation of the proposed merger with Stratford-on-Avon District Council. It reported the progress against the 12 recommendations agreed in May 2022 and set out at Appendix 1 to the report, the statement issued by the Group Leaders on the circumstances leading to the decision to cease the merger process.

The Chairman asked Members if they had a desire to continue receiving updates on the cessation of the proposed merger, and Members were content not to receive further updates.

Members wished to thank the Chief Executive and other officers keeping the Committee up to date on the progress of the proposed merger and the cessation of the proposed merger.

19. **Work Programme, Forward Plan and comments from the Cabinet**

The Committee considered its work programme for 2022 as detailed at Appendix 1 to the report. Appendix 2 gave responses from the Cabinet to the comments and recommendations the Committee had made to Cabinet reports it had scrutinised.

The Chairman advised that he had a meeting with the Democratic Services Manager & Deputy Monitoring Officer and the Chair of Audit & Standards Committee regarding two training courses which would be arranged, one specific for the Audit & Standards Committee and one for Overview & Scrutiny Committee, particularly focused on the finance issues that were now part of the Committee's remit. Both courses would be open to both Committees.

In response to a question from Councillor Kohler, the Chairman stated he would consult with the Democratic Services Manager & Deputy Monitoring Officer as to whether substitute Members would also be included in these training sessions. It was confirmed following the meeting that they would not initially be invited, however if there were spaces on these sessions the invite might be opened out for substitutes.

The Chairman advised that he and the Chairman of Audit & Standards Committee and Democratic Services Manager & Deputy Monitoring Officer had discussed how best to scrutinise the Fees and Charges report in November, and rather than holding a joint meeting of the two Committees, a working party would be put together consisting of three or four Members from each Committee. The Working Party would meet on 2 November at the Town Hall, and the meeting would be broadcast via the Council's YouTube Channel.

Councillors Milton, Cullinan, Syson and Redford volunteered to join the Working Party to be held on 2 November 2022.

The Chairman pointed Members towards the update from the Task & Finish Group which had been circulated prior to the meeting, and this update was attached as appendix 1 to these minutes.

The Chairman advised that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee made comments to the Joint Cabinet meeting on 29 June, and the responses made to these would come back to Members at some point. There were some discussions at that meeting as Stratford-on-Avon District Council (SDC) Overview & Scrutiny Committee had decided not to scrutinise the South Warwickshire Local Plan report. The Democratic Services Manager & Deputy Monitoring Officer had reached out on the Chair's behalf to the Stratford-on-Avon Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting and they had

now scheduled a meeting where they would provide comments to the next Joint Cabinet meeting.

The Leader advised that he was pursuing the Leader of SDC for comments and his support. It was difficult at the Joint Cabinet meeting to not have the Scrutiny Chair from SDC or a substitute present and given the work the Overview & Scrutiny Committee did in scheduling an additional meeting, it was important he let the Leader of SDC know that the Council would like to encourage them to do something similar.

Councillor Kohler wished to add an item to the Work Programme for the 9 August meeting, specifically around the reporting from the Service Plans to get an update on progress and an update around the Project Report.

Resolved that

- (1) appendices 1 and 2 to the Work Programme report be noted;
- (2) a service area / project report update be added to the Work Programme for the 9 August meeting; and
- (3) Councillors Milton, Cullinan, Syson and Redford be appointed to the Working Party to be held on 2 November 2022.

(The meeting ended at 7.50pm)

CHAIR
9 August 2022

Appendix 1

Task & Finish Group – Equality & Diversity report for O&S July 2022 Update on Phase 1

The recommendations from the WDC Task and Finish Group – ‘The Council’s approach to equality and diversity, especially with regard to race’ is aligned to Transformation PAB with a key remit in 2021/22 to take the work forward with SDC. As of May 2022 this recommendation is no longer paramount to continue, although we will of course continue as we always have, to work with other LA’s to support the EDI agenda.

It is important to note that work on EDI continues within the Council as part of our existing action plan: Continued awareness campaigns including ‘Race Equality Week’ forms part of our overall communication plans; ongoing training includes over 800 staff participating in training relating to EDI from 2018 to 2021 which includes Equality Diversity & Inclusion, Social Media, Black History Awareness, LGBTQ+ Inclusion, Recruitment & Selection; Equality Impact Assessments and HR for non HR Managers. We also continue to promote awareness of EDI policies e.g Dignity at Work. We also work with the Faiths forum to produce their annual calendar of religious anniversaries, which we then publicise.

WDC is committed to providing data related to Ethnicity Pay Gap analysis which was recently well received by Employment Committee, JCF/MTU and our Unions in March 2022 and will be reviewed again this year. There are ongoing campaigns to encourage Staff/Cllrs to complete diversity monitoring information which is paramount to ensure the data and analysis is robust Recommendation (x) has now been completed where funding has been sourced for a 2 year specialist post and recruitment is underway. This resource is imperative to achieve the objectives and recommendations as laid out in the report from the group.

Update on Phase 2

The intention is to complete the report by December 2022 so that it can be brought to Scrutiny in February 2023 and Cabinet in March 2023.

The Group are considering a proposal from [EQuIP](#) to undertaken community engagement work to inform there work which should be completed by October 2022. This will take place in the form of an online survey and face to face engagement with community groups about experiences of the community in accessing District Council services and how they go about accessing District council services.

The Group will also be looking at the data on ethnicity from the merger survey in comparison with the current residents survey and ethnicity within the District as captured by the 2021 census to see if the Council is reaching representative levels within the District.

They have already had an initial discussion with the WDC Community Wellbeing Team Leader and the Marketing & Communications Manager and will continue to work with these teams on their work as they come forward as well as the new Equalities Officer role with the Council once they are appointed.