

 Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee - 13 November 2012		Agenda Item No. <div style="font-size: 2em; float: right;">8</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Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006	No	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 09/10/2012 and Executive minutes 10/10/2012	

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 10 October 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 9 October 2012, the Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee considered the items detailed in appendix 1. The responses which Executive gave are also shown.

Responses from the meeting of the Executive held on 10 October 2012 on the Finance and Audit Scrutiny Committee's Comments

Item no.	4	Title	Fees & Charges 2013/14	Requested by	Chair
Scrutiny Comment		<p>The Committee was reassured as to the level to which the Maximisation Working Party had been involved in the fees and charges process.</p> <p>Members were concerned that no increase to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licensing fees could have a detrimental effect on the district, as the Planning Committee had seen a number of applications for HMOs and was worried about the social impact of a large number of HMOs in one place, such as in Leamington Spa.</p> <p>While some concern was expressed over the crematorium's ability to meet targets in light of a fall in the mortality rate and the possibility of increased competition from a crematorium to be built in Rugby, the Committee noted that the Executive had recently agreed investment in Oakley Wood and that cremation charges for both residents and non-residents of the district had been equalised and were now just below the national average.</p> <p>Subject to clarification in respect of the surcharge for burials, referenced at the bottom of page 65 of the report, the Committee supported the recommendations.</p>			
Executive Response		<p>The Leader proposed that reductions in fees were considered as part of the budget setting process and asked the Section 151 Officer to bring forward details in his December report of the impact on the Council's finances should a £25 concession be granted to local residents for Cremations and removal of the surcharge for former residents in respect of cemeteries. This was accepted by the Executive.</p> <p>The Leader accepted the Committee's view that the Income Maximisation Working Group needed to be rejuvenated and stated that charging for burials would be considered as part of the budget process. Additionally, he explained that the number of HMOs was as a result of having a successful University in the District and pointed out that the residents of the HMOs spent their money in the District. The Portfolio Holder for Development Services reminded the Executive that a report was due to be submitted to the Executive on HMOs in the near future.</p>			

Item no.	5	Title	Use of G4 Powers for Chase Meadow Community Centre Funding	Requested by	Chair
Scrutiny Comment		The Committee noted that the Chief Executive had exercised his emergency powers to permit funding for the development. Members were pleased to see that the report emphasised that there would be no further funding from the Council (paragraph 3.10 under the "Note for Group Leaders – Chase Meadow Community Centre") and were assured that Sport England's funding would be released if the project were up and running by September 2013, which officers were confident it would be. Therefore the Committee supported the recommendations in the report.			
Executive Response		The Leader thanked the Committee for its support.			

Item no.	6	Title	Business Rates Retention - Pooling	Requested by	Chair
Scrutiny Comment		The Committee sought reassurance from officers that the Executive recognised the risks should there be a significant decline in business rate income, noted that for some time local business rates had been stable year on year and supported the recommendations in the report.			
Executive Response		The Leader thanked the Committee for its support.			

Item no.	7	Title	Outcome of Warwick District Council's Peer Challenge	Requested by	Chair
Scrutiny Comment		The Committee supported the recommendations in the report and agreed that the quarterly budget review reports made to the Committee by the Head of Finance should reference the peer challenge improvement programme in order to assist members in monitoring progress. The Chair also asked members of the Committee to reflect on any improvements they could think of to make the Council even better.			
Executive Response		The Leader thanked both Scrutiny Committees for their comments and explained that there were no capacity issues at present but if Councillors became aware of any issues they should report these to senior management. He also agreed with the views of Finance & Audit and proposed both of these points to the Executive along with additional recommendations.			

Item no.	9	Title	Play Area Improvement Programme	Requested by	Chair
Scrutiny Comment	The Committee supported the recommendations in the report.				
Executive Response	The Executive welcomed the Committee's support.				

Item no.	11 A	Title	Significant Business Risk Register	Requested by	Chair
Scrutiny Comment	<p>The Committee was keen to reemphasise the responsibilities of members as set out by the Audit Commission in paragraph 7.1 in the report; for the Executive to take ownership of the register rather than it being officer led. The Committee felt that the register should identify the highest risks to the Council at a given time and include strategies to address risks, action plans, preventative measures and information on where risks changed. The Committee had struggled to engage with the document and suggested that it should be more like the Neighbourhood Services Risk Register in how it was presented. Some members also expressed a desire for the register to be presented to the Committee by the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive in line with the presentations the Committee was receiving as part of the review of Service Risk Registers, and wanted reassurance that the register's value as a management tool was appreciated.</p> <p>The Committee supported the recommendations in the report and looked forward to feedback on the outcome of the Executive's review.</p>				
Executive Response	<p>The Leader welcomed the Committee's comments and agreed to attend the meeting next time the report was considered along with the Chief Executive. He also agreed that trend analysis would be useful in the report and asked for officers to look at this possibility.</p> <p>The Executive also assured the Scrutiny Committee that, in their roles as Portfolio Holders, they considered the risks within their service areas regularly and how these impacted on the corporate risk overall. The Executive as a group also reviewed the risk register at regular intervals.</p>				