

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 9 August 2022 in the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00 pm.

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

Also Present: Councillor Day – Leader of the Council, Councillor Falp – Portfolio Holder – Health & Community Protection, and Councillor Tracey, Portfolio Holder – Transformation.

20. **Apologies and Substitutes**

There were no apologies for absence made and there were no substitutions.

21. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made.

22. **Minutes**

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings held on 27 June 2022 and 5 July 2022 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

23. **Work Programme Update – Digital Update**

The Committee considered a report from the Head of ICT which summarised the current progress being made towards Digital Transformation and the Council's Digital Strategy.

In December 2021, both the Cabinet at Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Warwick District Council considered and approved the creation of a joint digital strategy for South Warwickshire, with the aim to embed digitisation as a component of service integration, to ensure that as services from both Councils were brought together, digital was at the forefront of the revised delivery methods.

The strategy focussed the Council's activities on customer centric digital outcomes, through investment in service design, training, infrastructure, effective operational technology, and several key digitisation initiatives.

When the merger process was aborted in April 2022, the joint strategy was ended. The report gave an update on the key workstreams which were undertaken, the ongoing workstreams at the Council and key items that would be considered in a revised Digital Strategy.

In response to questions from Members, the Head of ICT and Councillor Tracey, Portfolio Holder – Transformation explained that:

- All options were still being explored in respect to a phone answering service at the Council; a decision on the type of system had not yet been made.
- ICT did have a certain amount of additional capacity which could be repurposed for supporting the Digital Strategy, particularly on the development side. Some staff resource had been moved to support project management elements, but when the report goes before Cabinet, there would be a request for additional staffing resource to support project management and the business analysis processes. The specific Service Areas did not have capacity to support those areas.
- When the work was ongoing during the merger process, the emphasis was on removing duplication in processes. Now, the emphasis was working on system replacements that would have the most impact and where the contracts were ending; an example given was the Acolaid system that would end in 2024. It was possible that in seeking a system to replace Acolaid, a lot of the providers would also offer solutions to other systems the Council used, providing opportunities to consolidate systems to reduce the number of systems in operations.
- The Finance team was helping with the financial figures required for the business case. There would be plenty of opportunity to scrutinise the business cases and challenge the figures.
- Work was ongoing in liaison with the Council's Risk Management team to see if the Risk Register system could be used by a wider audience across the Council. If this proved to be a useful tool, then the system could cope with it with relevant levels of access.
- Currently the Council did not have a CRM system to manage all of the interactions with customers although some Service Areas did have their own systems that managed interactions with their customers such as Revenues and Benefits. The primary base to populate the system would be properties, populating the system with all addresses in the District, and then as customers contacted the Council, their details would be collated and added. Over time, the database would grow; other information such as the Electoral Roll could be used to continue to increase the database.
- The intention was to implement end to end systems, and these would be designed to suit customers/users whichever method they used to access Council services.
- Before long, the majority of people accessing Council services would have grown up in the digital age, who consumed services online and expected to conduct business online. Current services offered by the Council fell short of enabling this to happen completely. Increasing use would be made of online platforms, not just to raise service requests, but also to interact with staff and councillors. The App launched with the new waste collection service had a lot of potential to widen its scope, such as sending out notifications for example. However, those residents not so comfortable with conducting their business online would be catered for.
- ICT was already involved in the apprenticeship scheme, and one of the project managers was on a degree apprenticeship scheme. The Council was also in-house training its cyber resources.

The Committee asked for its thanks to be entered into the minutes for the work done by officers shown in the report and the continuing progress it represented, noting the additional workload officers had covered recently

to support the IT needs of the Commonwealth Games and the introduction of the 123+ refuse service.

(Councillor Tracey left the meeting.)

24. Cabinet Agenda (Non-Confidential items and reports) – Wednesday 10 August 2022

Item 4 – Net Zero Carbon Development Plan Document – Submission

This report was not called in for scrutiny by the Committee because it had reviewed the draft Net Zero Carbon Development Plan Document at previous meetings; the Committee had also previously reviewed the Climate Change Action Programme. Minutes of a meeting when it was last reviewed had been circulated to Members ahead of the call-in deadline.

The Committee, in recognition of the importance of the work to the community and Council, expressed its thanks to officers for the work being done and supported the DPD.

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

Item 5 – Future Delivery of Noise Nuisance Investigations

The Committee thanked officers for their work on the policy and supported its implementation going forward.

Members would welcome the Council collaborating more closely with the local Police to secure their support in addressing the issue of noise nuisance in the District.

The Committee agreed to review the policy and service area's performance in respect of all forms of noise nuisance more generally at its meeting in December 2022 because of the importance of the subject to residents.

(Councillor Falp left the meeting.)

(At 7.33pm the meeting was adjourned for a comfort break. The meeting resumed at 7.41pm.)

Item 7 – Levelling Up Approach and Devolution Deal for Warwickshire

The Committee welcomed the engagement with parish and town councils and requested regular updates and engagement with District Councillors at appropriate times.

In reference to Recommendation 6 in the report, Members requested that the Bid submissions were made available to Councillors.

The Committee recommended that Cabinet formally noted, and made appropriate representations about, the lack of reference to Sustainable Futures in the WCC Leveling Up objectives, despite it representing one of the high-level elements and having strong support from residents; and the lack of metrics (e.g. energy efficiency of housing stock) in the

Evidence Base for gauging the potential for different districts and boroughs to achieve a sustainable future.

The Committee asked that Cabinet made these representations to the County Council.

Item 8 – Significant Business Risk Register

The Committee:

- welcomed a review of the inflation rate coming forward as soon as possible;
- Risk 7 – requested clarity on the reference to increased legal challenges; and
- requested more precision on events of national significance.

The Committee recommended that Cabinet considered the addition of the following two points on the Register:

1. Local Government re-organisation – should be a risk in itself; and
2. the potential for disruption from industrial action – should be a trigger to be included in a number of risks (officers to review).

25. **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 to the report gave responses from the Cabinet to the comments and recommendations the Committee had made to Cabinet reports it had scrutinised.

The Chair informed Members that he had asked officers to provide training ahead of the financial aspects they were being asked to scrutinise in coming months so that the Members understood how the Council's finances worked so that they were in a position to scrutinise the reports.

It was reported that the Task & Finish Group – Equality & Diversity membership had received the quotation from EQuIP for the consultation work with members of the Public and the members of the Group had been asked to submit questions they wished asked as part of the consultation.

The Deputy Chief Executive & Monitoring Officer gave an update on Service Area Projects. He advised that the service area plans were available for Councillors to view, and a link should have been provided. Individual training would be available to Councillors so that they could interrogate the measures. He had not yet got the information on Corporate Projects that had been requested and would provide this at the next meeting of the Committee.

Resolved that

- (1) appendices 1 and 2 to the Work Programme report be noted;
- (2) carry forward the outstanding update on Corporate Projects for the Deputy Monitoring Officer to give at the September meeting; and

(3) the following items be added to the Work Programme:

- a. February 2023 – the final report from the Task & Finish Group – Equality & Diversity to be considered ahead of its consideration at the March meeting of Cabinet; and
- b. November 2022 – half-year Treasury Management Activity report.

(Councillor Day left the meeting during this item.)

(The meeting ended at 8.30pm)

CHAIR
28 September 2022