

Title: Update on Joint Work with SDC  
Lead Officer: Chris Elliott (01926 456000)  
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Hales  
Wards of the District directly affected: All

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### **Summary**

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.

### **Recommendation**

- (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).
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## **1 Background/Information**

1.1 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. The changes from the last report are set out in italics.

1.2 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 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024.

1.3 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
- 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.

1.4 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 (paragraph 1.2) agreed by both Councils
- The Cabinet portfolios for both Councils are fully aligned
- Joint contract awarded for the Refuse and Recycling Service
- 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 (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 6<sup>th</sup> September to 24<sup>th</sup> 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.
- *CEOs have held a consultation session with over 50 Parish/Town Councils; and with business representatives of the Chamber of Commerce; almost 600 staff have attended CEO briefing sessions. All 3MPs have been briefed.*
- *Programme of Service Integration and about principle of sharing an HQ was subject to a separate report that has been agreed by both Cabinets.*
- *Business Case for Joint Legal Service integration was agreed by both Cabinets.*
- *Report to Employment Committee re use of Section 113 Agreements for the Service Integration process.*

#### 1.5 The next steps include the following:

- 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 13<sup>th</sup> December

1.6 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

1.7 The key milestones are:

- Agreement to the business case to be submitted to Government on 13<sup>th</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024
- Elections to new Council in May 2024

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

**2 Alternative Options available to (name of Committee/Cabinet etc.)**

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

**3 Consultation and Member's comments**

3.1 The purpose of this report is to enable Members to make comments.

**4 Implications of the proposal**

**4.1 Legal/Human Rights Implications**

4.1.1 If so decided by Members, and then by the Government, the proposal will have very significant legal implications in that both SDC and WDC will cease to exist and a new legal identify will come into being.

**4.2 Financial**

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

**4.3 Council Plan**

**4.3.1 Fit for the Future (FFF)**

4.3.2 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.

4.3.2 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.

#### 4.4 **FFF Strands**

##### **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.

##### **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 better 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.

**Supporting Strategies & Changes to Existing Policies** – The joint work will impact on the two Council's policies. 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.

#### 4.5 **Environmental/Climate Change Implications**

4.5.1 The Councils have agreed a common set of priorities on Climate Change.

#### 4.6 **Analysis of the effects on Equality**

4.6.1 A 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.

#### 4.7 **Data Protection**

4.7.1 Not applicable.

#### 4.8 **Health and Wellbeing**

4.8.1 An indication of what might be possible is set out in a separate report on the November Cabinet agenda.

### **5 Risk Assessment**

5.1 A risk register for the joint work is being developed and is attached as Appendix 1 for consideration and comment.

### **6 Conclusion/Reasons for the Recommendation**

6.1 This report sets out current position on the work being done jointly with SDC.

### Report Information Sheet

Please complete and submit to Democratic Services with draft report

<b>Committee/Date</b>	Overview and Scrutiny/Finance and Audit Committee 2nd/3 <sup>rd</sup> November 2021	
<b>Title of report</b>	Update on Joint Work with SDC	
<b>Consultations undertaken</b>		
<b>Consultee *required</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Details of consultation /comments received</b>
<b>Ward Member(s)</b>	-	
<b>Portfolio Holder WDC &amp; SDC *</b>	18.10.21	Cllr Hales
<b>Financial Services *</b>	18.10.21	Mike Snow
<b>Legal Services *</b>	18.10.21	Phil Grafton
<b>Other Services</b>	-	
<b>Chief Executive(s)</b>	18.10.21	Chris Elliott
<b>Head of Service(s)</b>	-	
<b>Section 151 Officer</b>	18.10.21	Mike Snow
<b>Monitoring Officer</b>	18.10.21	Phil Grafton
<b>CMT (WDC)</b>	18.10.21	Chris Elliott, Andy Jones, Dave Barber, Tony Perks
<b>Leadership Co-ordination Group (WDC)</b>	-	
<b>Other organisations</b>	18.10.21	SDC
<b>Final decision by this Committee or rec to another Ctte/Council?</b>		Recommendation to Overview and Scrutiny Committee/ Finance and Audit Committee
<b>Contrary to Policy/Budget framework</b>		No
<b>Does this report contain exempt info/Confidential? If so, which paragraph(s)?</b>		No
<b>Does this report relate to a key decision (referred to in the Cabinet Forward Plan)?</b>		No
<b>Accessibility Checked?</b>		File/Info/Inspect Document/Check Accessibility