

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 10 August 2021 in the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00 pm.

Present: Councillor Milton (Chair); Councillors Jacques, Kennedy, Kohler, Leigh-Hunt, Morris, Nicholls, Redford and Russell.

Also Present: Councillor Cooke.

14. **Apologies and Substitutes**

- (a) apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Dearing and Margrave; and
- (b) Councillor Kennedy substituted for Councillor A Dearing and Councillor Nicholls substituted for Councillor Cullinan.

15. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made.

16. **Minutes**

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 6 July 2021 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

17. **Cabinet Agenda (Non-Confidential items and reports) – Thursday 12 August 2021**

The Committee considered the following item which would be discussed at the meeting of the Cabinet on Thursday 8 August 2021.

Item 12 – Proposed Compulsory Purchase Order – Land at Kenilworth Wardens, Glasshouse Lane, Kenilworth

This report was called in to Overview & Scrutiny Committee to trigger debate on the wider policy situation of assessing deliverability of sites when they are allocated in the Local Plan, rather than making comment on the specific contents of the report in respect of the Land at Kenilworth Wardens.

Councillor Cooke, Portfolio Holder – Place & Economy and the Deputy Chief Executive, Andrew Jones answered questions and at the end of the debate, the Committee made the following recommendation to Cabinet in respect of the wider issue of deliverability:

That a report be produced identifying learning points from work on previous Local Plans and our current experience, and that this be fed into the ongoing work on the South Warwickshire Local Plan. Main areas of focus should be:

- Site deliverability
- Viability of development
- Resources available both at the District and County Councils

- Sustainability and how this addresses climate change

(Councillor Cooke left the meeting.)

18. **Update on Joint Work with SDC**

The Committee considered a report from the Chief Executive which set out the progress of the work being done to enable effective scrutiny of the proposals to achieve joint working with Stratford-on-Avon District Council.

Both WDC and SDC had agreed a 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 April 2024.

Appendix 1 to the report detailed in diagrammatic format the arrangements for the programme organisation and governance. Appendix 2 to the report was a timetable detailing the steps and dates planned for the consultation up until 13 December in readiness for the meetings of both Councils that day to decide whether to submit a final business case to the Government for the authorisation to proceed with the merger of both Councils into a single authority.

In response to questions from Members, the Deputy Chief Executive (AJ) explained that:

- The two Councils were currently focussing on merging services. The ICT implications of ensuring this would run smoothly was critical and complicated. Currently both Councils had their own systems in place. There would be changes in hardware and software required to pull all data into one place and for staff to be able to process business as one entity. Complications that could arise might be that each Council had different contractual arrangements in place for the systems it used and that would need to be sorted and this would have influence over when the merger in service could take place or if a workaround had to be found in the interim. These issues were expected but they were not necessarily easy to resolve.
- To minimise the expense of operating on one system, it was anticipated that when the licence/contract ended on one Council's system but the other Council's continued, it was anticipated that the data would all be migrated to the continuing system and therefore the only major additional cost would be the cost of migrating the data to the one system and that cost had already been anticipated in the Deloitte report. However, savings would then be made by using one system to offset the initial investment costs to bring the two Councils' systems together. Costs involved would form part of the business case Members would be asked to consider in December.
- There was an evolving Risk Register being collated by the Programme Manager and that would be provided to the Committee in future reports.
- Both Councils outsourced the management of their leisure centres to Everyone Active, but these were separate contracts. However, there would eventually be a single Head of Service overseeing the management of both of these contracts.

At 7.08pm the meeting was adjourned for seven minutes for safety reasons whilst some participants in the meeting moved seat. A technical hitch occurred on the Council's PA system and this meant the remainder of the meeting was not streamed to YouTube or recorded internally.

Members sought assurances that in moving towards service area mergers, there would not be a loss in service for residents and asked for briefings for all Councillors on how services would be measured and how SDC currently measured its service delivery so that the future monitoring methods could be discussed. There were concerns raised that a political merger might mean democratic dilution and Members asked for a programme of briefings on the political merger implications.

19. **Review of the Work Programme, Forward Plan and Comments from the Cabinet**

The Committee considered its work programme for 2021/2022 as detailed at Appendix 1 to the report.

It was noted that the Task & Finish Group – Race & Equality report would be considered at Cabinet on 12 August.

Councillor Kohler had been asked to review the data available on the Dashboard in respect of reviewing the performance of the Climate Emergency Action Plan against its targets for carbon reduction. He explained that there were technical issues accessing the Dashboard from an iPad. Once these were resolved, he would then address the issues about how the data on the Dashboard was delivered on an iPad because currently it was unsatisfactory. Councillor Milton would liaise with the Programme Director for Climate Change on what data was required on the Dashboard.

At the July Committee meeting, the Committee had made the following recommendation to Cabinet on the A46 Link Road Next Steps report:

“any sustainability analysis that comes to this Council as part of the OBC and subsequent FBC submissions, is presented to the Climate PAB more than 30 days prior to the FBC submission so that the PAB may inform Cabinet of its views before cabinet decides whether to endorse the submission”

The Deputy Chief Executive (AJ) informed Councillor Kohler, who chaired the July meeting, that the Cabinet did not have the delegated authority to undertake the recommendation and he therefore advised that Councillor Kohler liaised with the Chairman of the Climate Emergency PAB to ask the PAB to undertake this action. Councillor Kohler reported that he had spoken to the PAB Chairman.

Members noted that the Cabinet had not accepted the recommendation for the wording of the letter to be sent to WCC (identified in point 3.46 in the report) to be amended and had agreed the report as laid out but with the amendment Councillor Cooke had detailed at the Overview & Scrutiny Committee's meeting in July.

It was noted that there was a slight delay on the half yearly CEAP report and that this would now be going to Cabinet in November. The item on the Work Programme would therefore be moved to that month but as a reminder that the Cabinet report would be called in for scrutiny.

Resolved that

- (1) appendices 1 and 2 to the Work Programme report be noted;
- (2) outstanding business not yet completed from this meeting's Work Programme be carried forward to the meeting in September; and
- (3) the CEAP report has been delayed and will now be considered by Cabinet in November and will be called in by the Committee for scrutiny.

(The meeting ended at 7.32pm)

CHAIR
21 September 2021