

Pre-Scrutiny questions and answers on reports being considered by Cabinet on 7 December 2022

(This forms part of the considerations at Group meetings before a decision is made on which Cabinet reports will be called-in for scrutiny by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee)

5. Quarter 2 Budget Report

(Report author(s): Andrew Rollins – Head of Finance)

Question(s) from Councillor Syson:

page 3 last item in the table "Budget Savings in-year underspend" - please could you explain this item.

Response:

A provision was included in the base budget to reflect in-year underspends that have been typically reported over a number of years. This was to enable for a more accurate forecast of the position going into year end to avoid reporting significant variations over what has been reported throughout the year.

Page 6 Housing repairs. It is noted that no projection for the full year outcome is possible, though expected to be OK, because of the delay in paying invoices and the current way expenditure is recorded. I note improvements to the system are being made - is it possible to say when this might be completed?

Response:

As part of the improvements to the process, a recommendation was approved in the Q1 Budget review Report (29 September – Item 4, section 1.9.2). This is the first stage of improving the process of managing repairs and maintenance process. It is also expected that any works scheduled will be completed, even if deferred until 23/24, which will be picked up as part of the year end Earmarked Reserves process to carry forward budget into the new financial year.

page 7 I note the comment "it has been assumed that any 23/24 pay award will also be able to be accommodated by underspends against the existing establishment driven by the recruitment and retention challenges currently faced." Given we are supposedly taking active measures to improve our recruitment and retention, are we relying on them not working in order to fund our future budget?

Response:

I have provided a separate email response to this. Response provided:

Tracy may be able to give an update on this when returning from leave tomorrow, but as stated in 1.1.2.7 of the report, the recruitment and retention issues currently being faced by the Council are subject to review, with work ongoing on how this is tackled going forward. Hopefully we will be in a position to give a formal update on this in the new year.

From a budgetary perspective, I have anticipated that we will not have the levels of recruitment challenges and the resultant underspend currently present in our MTFS beyond 24/25, which this year has been used to fund the recently agreed staff pay award (which equated to an average 6% increase) in addition to agency backfill where necessary, and is still forecast to achieve the favourable variance position at year end.

Therefore an assumption has been made that any recommendations may not be in place or have had sufficient time to have a significant effect during 23/24.

When O&S come to consider the budget proposals for 2023/24, please may we also have an update on our reserves position.

Response:

An update on the reserves position will be provided as part of the budget setting process. It is expected that a (draft) update will also be provided to the Finance PAB before Christmas.

Question(s) from Councillor Syson:

Page 2: General Fund Financial Position

Staffing costs Full year variation £500,000 Favourable

Page 3 sets out the reasons for this and I note that the budget already took into account an allowance for expected vacancies throughout the year, the Vacancy Factor Adjustment.

I also note that "some of the remaining underspent budget will be required to backfill where work has fallen behind due to staffing, establishment, and recruitment issues."

It is these issues which concern me, and have had an effect this year on our operations, so I would like to know what positive steps are currently being taken, and the anticipated timescale, to address these them.

Response:

The officer responsible for this area may be able to give an update on this when returning from leave tomorrow, but as stated in 1.1.2.7 of the report, the recruitment and retention issues currently being faced by the Council are subject to review, with work ongoing on how this is tackled going forward. Hopefully we will be in a position to give a formal update on this in the new year.

From a budgetary perspective, I have anticipated that we will not have the levels of recruitment challenges and the resultant underspend currently present in our MTFs beyond 24/25, which this year has been used to fund the recently agreed staff pay award (which equated to an average 6% increase) in addition to agency backfill where necessary, and is still forecast to achieve the favourable variance position at year end.

Further response:

In response to your question please note the narrative below which we have recently also discussed with Unison:

- There is recognition across the organisation that we are, and for some time have been experiencing staff recruitment and retention challenges. This is not isolated to WDC but felt across public sector based on equal challenges to remuneration. The benefits associated with working for public sector have been eroded due to a number of factors but including the:
 - a) ever increasing pressures associated with the cost-of-living crisis;
 - b) ongoing erosion of salaries in local government; and
 - c) impact on ways of working for all organisations following Covid 19 e.g. flexible working, which was a big USP, is now the norm across most organisations
- The situation varies across Service Areas, and across types of posts, however the impact is being felt at all levels of the organisation.
- There are a number of workstreams that are already in place and being acted on, many of them inter-related
For example:
 - The success of our Apprenticeship scheme is now being reviewed in how we can improve further
 - The review of our agency provision has been updated to support service areas where required
 - Our health and well being provision for staff has just been recognised with the 'Thrive' award

- Review of our 'Ways of Working' and support for agile continues to develop linked to service delivery
- Market forces and benchmarking are a key area we are developing to ensure we have policies to support recruitment
- Our benefits are wide reaching including a significant health and well being scheme and work perks (which can provide discounted vouchers to help with the cost of living crisis) which we are reviewing further

Ongoing updates are provided through our committee processes – JCF/MTU/PAB and the Workforce update (attached as appendix 1 to this document)

6. Local Development Scheme (LDS)

(Report author(s): Andrew Cornfoot – Business Manager (Policy and Sites Delivery))

Question(s) from Councillor Cullinan:

1.pp seven and eight. Para 1.48.

Q A decision is needed with some urgency on SPD v DPD with respect to PBSAs, HMOs, and H6. What can be done to speed things up and when can a review of H6 take place in order to clarify several key grey areas?

Response:

We recognise the importance of exploring and reviewing this and to have a clear direction for this work. However, the Policy team with limited resources has had to and must continue to prioritise work and other key tasks including work on the South Warwickshire Local Plan, Net Zero Carbon Development Plan Document, Housing Trajectory and 5-year housing land supply, Authority Monitoring Report and Infrastructure Funding Statement. These other policy documents and monitoring work have needed to be afforded a higher priority over other policy work.

Having recognised the importance of policy relating to student accommodation and houses in multiple occupation to councillors and residents, the proposed LDS does propose a shift to the current LDS as it affords this work greater priority over another document the team has been working on, the Canalside Development Plan Document. The LDS identifies that work will commence on this in Q1 of 2023.

The Housing Trajectory and 5-year housing land supply, Authority Monitoring Report and Infrastructure Funding Statement are expected to all be completed pre-Christmas or very early in the new year. This should free up some capacity within the team, although it must be acknowledged that the team (also including the South Warwickshire Local Plan team) will still be carrying a number of vacancies into the new year. This means priorities will need to be carefully monitored and reviewed and there will be difficulties with progressing all work as quickly as we would wish until we have a full complement of staff.

Notwithstanding the resource challenges, officers have taken on board one suggestion from councillors about Policy H6 and trying to clarify the definition on the 'main thoroughfares' exception by producing a map with roads to which the exception applies in central Leamington. A map has been produced and needs to be checked by officers before circulating to the relevant councillors that have made this suggestion. This will be shared for comment pre-Christmas.

2.1.63

In the Warwick University Masterplan there is no mention of Accommodation for Students.

Are WDC happy with this? With over 6000 students already living in Leamington Spa, not without problems and benefits, this important issue should surely be central to any plan for Growth. 4.3.7

Response:

The University have only recently commenced work on the masterplan and officers at Warwick District Council and Coventry City Council along with staff and consultants representing the University are discussing the scope of the document.

Officers at Warwick District have highlighted the need for the SPD to properly consider living accommodation for students within the Masterplan. Therefore, we would expect this to be considered within the document. Council officers will be meeting with the University on at least a monthly basis and there will be opportunities to ensure important issues such as this are appropriately considered.

Question(s) from Councillor Quinney :

Welcome deprioritising Canalside DPD work in order to bring forward more urgently work on student accommodation.

Also support the view that strengthening and clarifying the current SPD and associated guidance should be the priority (1.48). Suggest that any policy changes requiring DPD-level changes should ideally be incorporated in the emerging SWLP itself. This should minimise confusion and make better use of our limited resources.

1.63 The Warwick University Master Plan comments highlights specific work on transport, biodiversity, flood risk/drainage and sustainability/energy issues. Should not student accommodation be added to this list?

Response:

Please see answer to Question 2 above regarding student accommodation

Is there an intention to develop new policies within the SWLP and with Coventry in order to ensure co-development of on/near-campus student accommodation when any proposals to expand University facilities are presented to either LPA?

Response:

At this point in time it is envisaged that the South Warwickshire Local Plan Part 1 will not include policy on student accommodation. This is considered to be a more locally specific issue rather than a strategic matter that the SWLP Part 1 intends to cover. By developing an SPD/DPD on student accommodation, as per the Local Development Scheme, this would provide appropriate guidance. Furthermore, as per the answer to Question 2, if the University of Warwick Masterplan SPD does cover the issue of student accommodation this may further negate the need for any further policy on this topic. However, officers will see how these policy documents progress and will consider, in due course, whether there is a need for any further detailed policy to be included within Part 2 of the South Warwickshire Local Plan

Old Town Regeneration SPD.

1.68 Is the brief to architects in the public domain or has it been circulated to Councillors for comment/scrutiny?

Response

The brief to the architects setting out their scope has developed as the exploration of the potential of sites within the Old Town and Creative Quarter has progressed and as such this is not within the public domain.

Will local Councillors be involved in the development of this SPD both before and after the May 2023 elections?

Response:

Yes local Councillors will be involved in the development of the SPD as the document is progressed before the May 2023 elections and then as public consultation takes place after the May 2023 elections

What is the role of the Creative Quarter Board in developing this guidance?

Response:

The Creative Quarter Programme Board (WDC/CDP) now oversees the delivery and project management level aspects of all the various Creative Quarter work streams. The Leamington Transformation Board (WDC/WCC/LTC) will now consider this Old Town Regeneration SPD at the strategic level to ensure the content matches the emerging Vision for the Town Centre and is best placed to deliver the transformational change envisaged through the Transformation Framework.

7. Business Improvement District (BID) Leamington – Update on BID Renewal Process and Progress

(Report author(s): Joanne Randall – Strategic Economic Development Officer)

Question(s) from Councillor Cullinan:

1.Are there any views on effects of Brexit and dealing with any problems on supply. Business has mentioned this to me as a reason for closure.

Response:

The BID management and Board liaise closely with their members and discuss the issues facing businesses in the town and are aware of a number of challenging issues to include recruitment difficulties, cost of living crisis in particular the increased energy costs and increased costs of supplies. These issues are greatly impacting those members in the hospitality industry. The cause of these issues are complex and a result of a combination of several external factors but I have no evidence that this can be contributed to Brexit as Covid-19, war in Ukraine, increased interest rates/ mortgage costs, staff permanently leaving the employment market through sickness or early retirement or changing career choices for more secure employment are all contributory factors to the issues.

2.What is the ballot for?

Response:

Every Business Improvement District is required by law to undertake a Renewal Ballot before the end of the current term of the BID period (usually 5 years). The end of the current Leamington BID period is March 2023, so this is the formal Renewal Ballot. It is designed to allow the members of the BID (the levy payers) to decide if they wish to be part of a BID for a further period of 5 years.

I have downloaded information from the Government legislation which covers the operation of a BID (Business Improvement District) The Business Improvement Districts (England) Regulations 2004 for reference:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/415990/BIDs_Technical_Guidance.pdf#:~:text=The%20local%20authority%20will%20need%20to%20check%20that,ahead%20to%20the%20commencement%20of%20the%20ballot%20process.

The following is taken from the regulations to explain about the Ballot and what the businesses in the BID's geographic area will be asked to vote on. We will be bringing another report to the February 2023 Cabinet meeting which will highlight the business case from the BID and further details about the Ballot.

The ballot is run as a secret ballot meaning that the BID Proposer will not be notified of which way votes have been cast at any stage of the ballot, or after the ballot has ended. However the ballot holder may report to the BID Proposer during the ballot which ballot papers have been received.

The ballot must be won on two counts – both a majority by number of votes; and a majority by rateable value of those that turnout to vote with no turnout threshold required.

The count of the ballot papers is the responsibility of the ballot holder and is required to be carried out as soon as practicable after the ballot has ended. In practice, it is usually undertaken the morning after the ballot has ended with the announcement straight after the count on the same day

(Response continued on next page)

The businesses will be asked:



3. 'Unprecedented economic pressures'

Are there any plans for new forum for generating ideas, customer based? What do the increasing Over60's population want, how can we help business make the most of this and other cohorts?

Response:

I am not aware of any such forum currently being planned. I could raise this at one of the BID Board meetings as an idea going forward.

4. Leamington Transformation Board not mentioned

Response:

BID Leamington is part of the wider stakeholder group of the Leamington Transformation Board and representatives on the Leamington Transformation Board are also part of the BID Board and there is close liaison with WDC officers to ensure there is good communication between organisations.

5. A search shows 500 3 bed AirBNB options in Leamington, do businesses or BiD market to these directly?

Response:

The only businesses canvassed and who will be written to are those that are eligible for a vote in the Ballot. The businesses would need to have a rateable value above the threshold of £15,000 (consistent with the Small Business Rates Relief) and fall within the proposed geographic area of the BID. Currently the BID is only operational as a Retail and Hospitality BID.

BID markets widely locally, regionally and nationally to encourage visitors to Leamington Spa and to increase footfall to the town. It has undertaken a residential mailshot across the area this Christmas.

8. Draft Local Transport Plan – Consultation Response

(Report author(s): Dave Barber – Director for Climate Change)

Question(s) from Councillor Cullinan:

1. The references to Low Traffic 20m Neighbourhoods, encouraging more walking and cycling are to be welcomed, in fact celebrated. However, we do see this in conflict with the statement on P10.

WDC seems to be requesting a later consideration of 'New Roads constructed by Developers?' So as not to hold up Planning process, is it?

How can we plan Active Travel if these aspects are not considered well in advance. The consequences lead to the situation on Europa Way, where no pavements or cycle ways were built in when people were already moving in? I am not sure about the current situation there. Well planned roads, pavements and separate cycle ways will encourage residents out of their car, but these need to be considered and built early enough in the process of development.

2. It seems Pedestrians are somewhat lumped in with Cyclists, not always a happy or safe union. Countries successful in encouraging Cycling have a high percentage of separation between cyclists and walkers. I walk on many routes which make crossing dangerous at worst, or tedious. The prioritisation of cars continues on many routes. Walking is more popular/common than cycling, yet not often focussed on.

3. LTP4

Why is there nowhere a reference to the K2L cycle scheme to which sizable funds have long been allocated?

Given the accepted problem of dangerous levels of air pollution in our towns, why is the link between lessening road vehicle usage and the corresponding benefits to air quality not given far greater emphasis?

4. Should be more references to work planned and consulted about, for example the St Johns in Warwick current consultation which relates to the agreed Town Traffic Plan that WDC hold.

We don't see the possible Pedestrianisation of Leamington's Parade mentioned anywhere?

Response:

9. HEART Shared Service Partnership

(Report author(s): Lisa Barker – Head of Housing)

Question(s) from Councillor Kohler :

1.3.1 says 'Delivery of DFG's is broadly consistent with a dip in 2019/20 as a consequence of being unable to undertake works during the lockdown periods of the pandemic.'

I believe the first lockdown came into effect on 26th March 2020. Was the 2019/20 data down because works could not proceed during Q1 of 2020/21? Or was the data already down and then made worse by the pandemic?

Response:

HEART have been asked to respond to this question.

1.3.3 appears to refer to a chart (or a table?) showing grant allocation vs expenditure financed by grant. Unfortunately, it appears not to have made it through to the PDF version of the report. Could it be included please?

Response:

For expedience I have copied the table below that should appear in section 1.3.3. I will liaise with Committee services in this regard as it does indeed appear to have disappeared from the report.

Grant spend - Grant Allocation v's Expenditure Financed by Grant (by year).

Grant Allocation v's Expenditure Financed by Grant



The performance detailed above shows an increased annual spend until the onset of the Covid Pandemic with expenditure beginning to revert to anticipated levels. Spend to September 2022 aggregated up would produce an annual spend of £756,174.

Question(s) from Councillor Milton:

If I've understood the paper correctly it appears that we have two options. One is to commit to enter into the service for a period of five years, the other is to go our own way and seek an alternative solution.

Could you outline whether consideration has been given to committing to a shorter period or continuing the current extension of the arrangement for another year?

Response:

We are currently in an extension year and, as you may know, short term arrangements do not encourage organisational stability or support good recruitment and retention.

The main contract will have a break clause within it.

We really now need to decide to stay with HEART or leave.

Question(s) from Councillor Cullinan:

1.Can Major and Minor adaptations be listed separately for more effective monitoring?

Response:

The Board receive a quarterly monitoring report which covers a much wider range of information over and above DFG's, taking into account the interests of the wider partnership. This metric is important to this report as the responsibility of delivering DFG's lies with the Council.

2.p.34

What does 'Out of Scope' refer to?

Response:

This is a term within the HEART Business Case and means that in the future any additional services that are not currently defined within the specification could be added to it.

3.Are Budget underspends in any given year carried forward to next?

Response:

Yes

4.Can we be reassured checks and monitoring will ensure the service is improved?

Response:

The case for continuing with the partnership is set out in the report. There is no current reason to doubt that the improvement plan will be delivered.

10. Proposal to adopt an Additional Licensing Scheme

(Report author(s): Paul Hughes - Private Sector Housing Manager)

Question(s) from Councillor Quinney :

Fully support the Licensing proposal and comment officers for the clarity and thoroughness of the proposals.

Given recent evidence of high growth of HMOs, albeit from a low base, in Whitnash, Kenilworth and especially Warwick (more than doubled to 68 between 2017 and 2020) are officers considering extension of the Article 4 Direction to anticipate and prevent the nuisances arising from over-concentration of HMOs in areas outside Leamington?

Response from Gary Fisher – Development Manager:

I can advise that officers are not currently considering any extension to the existing Article 4 direction.

Question(s) from Councillor Cullinan:

1.

Coventry City Council have included the following:

You will need an additional HMO licence if:

- **if you operate a house in multiple occupation that is shared by three to four tenants living in two or more households, or**
- **if you operate a property which was converted into self-contained flats where:**
 - **less than two thirds of the flats are owner-occupied, and**
 - **the conversion did not comply with the relevant Building Regulations in force at that time and still does not comply**
- **if you operate any other HMO that is not currently subject to Mandatory Licencing**

I particularly refer to 'less than two thirds of the flats are owner-occupied.'

Do you feel it would be advantageous to include this for WDC, a safety net that captures those properties that are subdivided to get under the wire of Licensing. If this type of property development increases, we might find problems also increasing, without access to the effective levers we are aiming for.

Response:

These types of properties are referenced in Paragraph 9.2 of the Feasibility Study. The study suggests that they should not be included at this time because we do not have comprehensive data to show that they present a particular problem, remembering that Section 56(2) Housing Act 2004 requires that the Council must consider that a significant proportion of the HMOs in the area are being managed sufficiently ineffectively.

For these reasons we are not minded to include Section 257 HMOs in a proposed licensing scheme, and that is the message portrayed in the feasibility study.

2.In 3.3

Local Housing Authority is also given discretion to set additional conditions as it considers appropriate.....

With our high student HMO percentage, is there a case for adding a condition on total service requests received over a given period? EG over 3, in any given year, will mean a licence application will be considered for a shorter period, not full 5 years. The current list which enables a license to be refused are a high bar. This would encourage landlords to deal with problems in a timelier manner.

Response:

There was a public consultation on HMO Licence conditions in 2018 following which the licence conditions were revised taking account of comments made at the time. In our experience the number of service requests is not always an indicator that there are problems with the management of an HMO. Referring to the issues of noise and waste, these types of request typically arise as a result of the behaviour of the HMO occupiers and are not necessarily an indicator of poor management. We also have to bear in mind that many service requests are not 'complaints' about HMOs but requests for information and advice.

We do have a robust system of investigating individual service requests and feel that where a licence holder is operating with poor management we will deal with them accordingly. That may be in the form of a civil penalty for example, as an alternative to a short term licence. If it became common knowledge that once a certain threshold of service requests

automatically triggered a licence review, then that may encourage service requests to be made simply to reach the threshold.

3.The quality of our databases, in contrast to Coventry City Council's, may affect record keeping and enforcement. Can we work towards improving these?

Response:

In terms of Private Sector Housing, we use the Civica database to hold all information on Mandatory Licensing. This includes comprehensive information on each property and landlord and an action diary. A recent internal audit was very complimentary on all aspects of our record keeping. In terms of non-licensable HMOs, we simply do not have the same level of data because the landlords of those HMOs are not required to register their HMOs with us. However, we strive to ensure the data we do hold is updated and as accurate as can be expected and in this respect the Planning Enforcement team have worked through all of the non-licensable HMOs to this aim and have kept us informed of any changes to the status of properties.

4.There is little mention of Residents and the Community in the Report. Consequently, the positive effects of this paper for them are somewhat muted, I think they could do with some amplification?

Response:

There is a danger that Additional Licensing could be seen as a solution to all the environmental issues that are reported if we were to present the report in that way. Whilst there will be strengthening of powers to deal with the environmental issues through the licensing process, we didn't want to overstate this as we have to be realistic about what can be achieved. We should be mindful that these are small HMOs and less inclined to cause serious environmental problems than some of the HMOs which are already licensed under the mandatory scheme.

5.The Post for Student Liaison Officer is on a rolling contract and half funded by one of the Consultees, Warwick University. Is there a plan to increase these resources and make some posts permanent? This post holder has accrued an immense amount of expertise in this field, and we would not want to lose them.

Response:

A growth bid for the part of the post funding by the University has been submitted to make the Student Housing Enforcement Officer a full time fully funded post.

Additional Licensing will allow us to create further Housing Standards Officer posts and additional administrative support. The number of posts created will depend upon the number of HMOs which are subject the scheme.

6. Data for Sparerrooms was looked at in August, I believe the key advertising times are October/November?

Response:

Students typically find accommodation through the letting agents websites from November time. Sparerroom is more typically viewed by professional renters who may be on a limited budget, so the number of adverts is not likely to be influenced by the academic year. The data we obtained from Sparerroom.co.uk was to get an indication of the number and location of rooms available at a snapshot in time.

7.PBSA's are not included, this may lead to problems in the future as these age and deteriorate, damp, quality of build issues? Or management companies change/fail?

Response:

Although the feasibility study suggests a tendency to exclude PBSA from the scheme for the reasons given in the study, it suggests we are still minded to consult on this to gauge public opinion.

8.Hard to believe Refuse complaints have fallen, have people given up contacting the Council or is the recording system not fully representing the situation?

Response:

Paragraph 6.6 of the Feasibility Study refers to the difficulty in matching service requests data specifically to HMO properties using the GIS mapping data. The statistics presented are acknowledged to be an under-estimation of the true scale of HMO-related requests. For example, in respect of fly tipping on the public highway, service requests could not be linked with individual HMOs.

11. Future Funding of Warwick Visitor Information Centre

(Report author(s): Joanne Randall – Strategic Economic Development Officer)

Question(s) from Councillor Cullinan:

Why is there no increase in the request for funding? Thinking about salaries and resources?

Response:

Warwick Town Council specified they would not be requesting an uplift although I was expecting there to be a request in view of the increased costs with higher inflation. I believe they realise that we too will be feeling the strain of the increased costs and therefore a standstill budget would be preferable than a cut to their funding.

12. Extension to the Voluntary and Community Sector Contracts

(Report author(s): Bernadette Allen – Community Wellbeing Team Leader)

Question(s) from Councillor R Dickson:

1. Section 1.4 (sense?) refers to monitoring of the existing contracts with the VCS. What does the most current monitoring show?
2. Section 3.1 refers to a report provided to a recent PAB meeting. Can this report please be shared with Councillors?
3. Section 4 refers to the 3 month extension of the contracts costing £70k. When annualised am I right that this amounts to a real cut in VCS support in 2023/24 compared with 2022/23?
4. When annualised, the £658k over 2 years 9 months equates to £239k, an actual cut of 15% and even more in real terms? Have I read this correctly? If so, what will be the impact on activities in local communities?

Response:

13. Asylum Seeker Dispersal Scheme

(Report author(s): Lisa Barker – Head of Housing)

Question(s) from Councillor R Dickson :

1. In Section 1.1 reference is made to the pressure caused by the volume of asylum seekers. Isn't it also true that the pressure is also caused by the length of time being taken to process asylum applications and shouldn't this be reflected in the context section when Cabinet members are considering the proposal?
2. What is the breakdown of how the £3,500/bedspace will be spent in 2023/24? How much will be spent on accommodation and how much on support for the asylum seekers and their families? Is there any contingency and what happens if WDC's costs are greater?
3. £563.5k is significant income for the Council. What are the implications for other residents of the District when Serco secures up to 161 bedspaces in the District.
4. Why is Section 1.5 included in a proposal on asylum seekers? Why are refugees, including those from Ukraine, Hong Kong, Afghanistan and Syria arriving under bespoke schemes and who have separately defined characteristics under the 1951 Refugee Convention, being conflated with migrants?
5. Section 1.6 refers to hotels in Rugby, Stratford and Warwick. The Riverside Hotel, which is currently home to 100+ asylum seekers, is not in the town of Warwick albeit it is in Warwick District.
6. Section 1.7 rightly acknowledges the contribution of the Voluntary & Community Sector in supporting asylum seekers housed in a local hotel in Warwick District. This includes help with clothing, access to health and education services, language training and emotional/social support. Have these dispersal plans been discussed with these VCS groups and, if not, when and how will this be done?
7. How much notice will be given to the existing asylum seekers in the Riverside Hotel if they are moved to other accommodation in Warwick District?
8. What is the justification for the appendices to be confidential? Is this information commercially sensitive?

Response:

Question(s) from Councillor Cullinan:

1.A risk that doesn't appear could be that the Serco packages may well be more attractive to landlords than their current student occupiers. Could it be explained why these packages will not displace students particularly in Leamington and

thereby possibly exacerbate the student issue still further?

Response:

Landlords enter formal tenancy agreements with students that can only be terminated in very restricted and specified sets of circumstances. Our Private Sector Housing Team would enforce any attempted landlord breaches to responsibilities within Housing Law.

2. Confidential App 2

This question from Councillor Cullinan can be found in the Confidential Cabinet Agenda 7 December – Pre-Scrutiny Meeting Q&A Document

3.4.2

Who is the Accommodation Provider? Why is WMSMP model seen as unachievable?

Response:

SERCO

5. How can we or do we work within communities to deal with any negative perceptions such as perceived queue jumping.

Response: There is no queue jumping. Asylum Seekers will effectively be accommodated in housing that is temporary until such time that they approach the Council for Housing. At that point they have full rights under Leave to Remain and are deemed homeless in line with the Council's statutory duties to all its citizens.