

**Summary of Comments made on the Cabinet Agenda for  
Thursday 9 December 2021**

**4 Proposal to create a South Warwickshire District Council**

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting discussed the report using the themes that the Scrutiny Chairs had established at the outset of the process. Five main themes were identified:

1. Consultation
2. Services
3. Climate Emergency
4. Democratic Representation
5. Finance & Risk

Overview & Scrutiny would focus on themes (1) to (4). At the meeting each theme was discussed in turn and any comments and recommendations made at the end of discussion of each theme.

Consultation:

The Committee asked that where issues had been raised by residents, there should be a summary of the issues raised and drilled down to provide the split between Councils. It also requested that the way that information was given to residents, should both Councils agree to merge on 13 December, be strengthened so that residents are clear about the aims and objectives of the new Council. There should be an ongoing communications plan. It requested that stakeholder submissions should be circulated to all Councillors ahead of 13 December.

It recommended to Cabinet that a clearer statistical summary of the evidence base should be published providing clarity upfront on the differences between results in respect of the Residents' Telephone Survey and the Open Consultation Questionnaire and how these evidence bases would be used to shape the future strategy.

**The Cabinet is required to vote on this because it forms a recommendation to it.**

Services:

The Committee noted the importance of communication with residents and how the council engages with them as Services develop.

The Committee made two recommendations to Cabinet:

1. There should be Councillor engagement when developing the Service Area Plans, this should include involvement in metrics and how measures would be set. (Councillors would not be involved in deciding the mechanism for providing this.)

2. More information should be provided on how to treat the risk logs (the Deloitte Risk Register and the Programme Risk Register devised by officers) and the relationship between the two, after it had been explained that the differences were a result of the timings when the Risk Registers had been prepared, with Deloitte's being at the very start of the process.

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Climate Emergency:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee did not make any comments or recommendations in respect of Climate Emergency.

Democratic Representation:

The Committee recommended to Cabinet that:

1. It should be made clear that the Council would work with all parish and town councils in the district, not just those which were members of the Warwickshire Association of Local Councils (WALC).
2. The implications of reference to the "Quality Parish" mark (Item 4/Appendix 10/Page 4 in the agenda papers or page 6 in the actual document) should be reviewed because it was too restrictive. Councillors expressed their scepticism about the advantages being a "Quality Parish" Council might bring.
3. The Shadow Council, should, as one of the first things it focusses on, create a framework for how parish and town councils will be supported and how this Council would engage with them with a view to looking at how powers might be devolved to them in the future where there was interest in so doing.

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The Finance and Audit Scrutiny Committee requested that Councillors should be provided before the Council meeting on 13 December with a new financial table that consolidates the most recent estimates of the financial case based on the savings to be achieved over the period to 25/26. The table should include the investments to secure those savings (the three tranches of £1.5m) and should distinguish the savings that would be achieved through service integration and those that could only be achieved from political merger.

The Committee believed that this information would supplement and provide a single point of reference for the financial case for merger from the original information in the Deloitte Report from January 2021 (Appendix 1), the more recent analyses from the LGA (Appendices 4 and 5) and the financial information provided by the Head of Finance (Appendix 12).

The Committee noted the importance, should a political merger be approved, of harmonising Council Tax between the two current Districts, noting that differences in Parish and Town precepts added a further complicating factor in how this would be achieved and over what period. In the opinion of the Committee, the plan for harmonisation would be closely linked to the proposed discussions with WALC and representatives of parishes and towns about the devolution of powers, responsibilities and assets.

The Committee considered the Programme Risk Register (Appendix 6). It noted that this superseded the risk assessment made by Deloitte in its Report. The

Committee expressed a view that the risk ratings for PR004 and PR007 (“democratic deficit” and “integration of culture”) were underscored but accepted that the Register was dynamic and the Committee would have the opportunity to consider future iterations of it should the programme go ahead.

The Committee also thanked officers and Members for the significant work that had gone into the report and the appendices, and for the balanced way in which they were written.

## **5 Quarter 2 Budget Report**

The Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee supported the recommendations in the report. The Committee also welcomed the fact that the Everyone Active forecast income was showing a positive variance. The Committee requested an analysis of the income received from EA to date for each year of the current contract including compensation from the government during the pandemic for lost concession fees.

## **7 Housing Revenue Account Business Plan Review 2021**

The Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee supported the recommendations in the report.

## **9 Developing a Digital Strategy for South Warwickshire**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted both the report and the importance to consider residents and businesses with the design as it is taken forward.

It recommended to Cabinet that:

- (1) A briefing should be provided to all Councillors because of the wide-ranging impact of the Strategy.
- (2) The Overview and Scrutiny Committee should hold a dedicated session on the Digital Strategy to scrutinise the Strategy in more depth and to look at the finer detail.
- (3) The lessons learned from the Finance System Project and Member involvement in the project should be incorporated into the work to be done for the Digital Strategy.

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## **10 Outdoor Sports Review – Proposed Revised Delivery Models for Council Owned Facilities**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is keen for basketball facilities to be provided across the District.

It recommended to Cabinet that as part of the contract, free time provision should be made available at a variety of times during the week and that the provider encourages a wider demographic of people to use the facilities.

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The Finance & Audit Committee recommended to Cabinet that recommendation 4 should be amended to specifically include reference to basketball facilities, to read:

"4) That a procurement exercise is undertaken to appoint one or more tennis operators to run community-based tennis programmes at the Council's four tennis venues. The procurement will make explicit that the tennis programmes are to take account of the basketball facilities at Christchurch Gardens and Abbey Fields and will permit basketball to continue at these venues.)"

**The Cabinet is required to vote on this because it forms a recommendation to it.**

The Finance and Audit Scrutiny Committee raised a question whether using a different model for tendering could be looked at and discussed with the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Tourism & Leisure and Chair of Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee also recognised that the Council was bound by its standing orders in how it conducted procurement exercises. Nonetheless, the Committee wished to encourage an approach to the proposed tender that required evidence of excellence and the achievements of the outcomes that the Council wished to see from the new strategy as well as commercial innovation in providing the wider access and participation it sought.