



Agenda Item 5

Overview & Scrutiny Committee 10 August 2021

Title: Update on Joint Work with SDC
Lead : Chris Elliott
Portfolio Holder: Andrew Day
Public report
Wards of the District directly affected: All

Contrary to the policy framework: No
Contrary to the budgetary framework: No
Key Decision: No
Included within the Forward Plan: No
Equality Impact Assessment Undertaken: No
Consultation & Community Engagement: No
Final Decision: No
Accessibility checked: Yes

Officer/Councillor Approval

Officer Approval	Date	Name
Chief Executive	30/7/2021	Chris Elliott
Transformation Programme Manager	30/7/2021	Tim Oruye
CMT	30/7/2021	Chris Elliott, Andrew Jones, Dave Barber
Section 151 Officer	30/7/2021	Mike Snow
Monitoring Officer	30/7/2021	Andrew Jones
Finance	30/7/2021	Andrew Rollins
Portfolio Holder(s)	30/7/2021	Andrew Day

1. Summary

- 1.1. It was agreed at the last 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.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the contents of the report and appendices are noted and any comments arising are presented to the Cabinet of both Councils and the JASG.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 3.1. 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.

- 3.2. 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 1st April 2024.

- 3.3. 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 and improve them if we can
- 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.

- 3.4. 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 (para 3.2) agreed by both Councils
- The Cabinet portfolios for both Councils are fully aligned
- Jointly Tendering for the Refuse and Recycling Contracts
- Developing jointly a South Warwickshire Local Plan
- Developing a joint Regulatory Services Enforcement Policy
- Developing a South Warwickshire Economic Strategy
- Agreed a shared of ambitions regarding the Climate Emergency
- Joint Staff/HR policies agreed
- Agreed and have appointed a Transformation Programme Manager
- Established a governance regime via the creation of an officer Programme Board and the Councillor led Joint Arrangements Steering Group (Reports and Notes of meeting available on the Working Together

Hub) which has met twice to date (see attached governance structure chart)

- 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 operational from 2nd August with Head of Place and Economy to be appointed on 4th August (see attached structure) – (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 (see attached schedule)
- 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

3.5. The next steps include the following:

- Start of public consultation on proposal from end of August/beginning of September – expected to end early November time
- Programme of Service Integration being developed with criteria to help shape it being undertaken – expected to be ready for September
- 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 13th December

3.6. 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

3.7. The key milestones are:

- Agreement to the business case to be submitted to Government on 13th 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 ~~January~~ March 2024 having started the process in ~~September~~ October 2021
- New Council comes into life on 1st April 2024
- Elections to new Council in May 2024

3.8. The overall outcome will be that a new South Warwickshire Council which has a sustainable financial foundation and so is able to deliver better, transformed,

and relevant services for the residents, businesses, and communities of the area.

4. Policy Framework

4.1. Fit for the Future (FFF)

4.1.1. 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.

4.1.2. 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.

4.2. FFF Strands

4.2.1 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.

4.2.2. 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 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.

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

4.4. Impact Assessments

None relevant at this stage.

5. Budgetary Framework

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

6. Risks

- 6.1. A risk register for the joint work is being developed and should be available for scrutiny at the next meeting of these Committees.

7. Alternative Option(s) considered

- 7.1. None relevant at this stage.