

Overview & Scrutiny Committee Tuesday 8 August 2023

An additional meeting of the above Committee will be held in the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa on Tuesday 8 August 2023, at 6.00pm and available for the public to watch via the Warwick District Council [YouTube channel](#).

Councillor Milton (Chair)

Councillor D Armstrong

Councillor M Luckhurst

Councillor A Barton

Councillor J Payne

Councillor D Browne

Councillor P Redford

Councillor M Collins

Councillor D Russell

Councillor A Day

Councillor J Sinnott

Councillor D Harrison

Emergency Procedure

At the commencement of the meeting, the emergency procedure for the Town Hall will be announced.

Agenda

1. Apologies & Substitutes

- (a) to receive apologies for absence from any Councillor who is unable to attend; and
- (b) to receive the name of any Councillor who is to act as a substitute, notice of which has been given to the Chief Executive, together with the name of the Councillor for whom they are acting.

2. Declarations of Interest

Members to declare the existence and nature of interests in items on the agenda in accordance with the adopted Code of Conduct.

Declarations should be disclosed during this item. However, the existence and nature of any interest that subsequently becomes apparent during the course of the meeting must be disclosed immediately. If the interest is not registered, Members must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest within 28 days.

Members are also reminded of the need to declare predetermination on any matter.

If Members are unsure about whether or not they have an interest, or about its nature, they are strongly advised to seek advice from officers prior to the meeting.

3. Minutes

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2023.

(Pages 1 to 8)

4. **Work Programme, Forward Plan & Comments from Cabinet & Council**

To consider a report from Governance.

(Pages 1 to 19)

5. **Scrutiny Arrangements**

To consider a report from Governance.

(Pages 1 to 10)

6. **Cabinet Agenda (Non-Confidential Items and Reports) – Wednesday 9 August 2023**

To consider the non-confidential items on the Cabinet agenda which fall within the remit of this Committee. The only items to be considered are those which Committee Services have received notice of by 9.00am on the morning after Group meetings.

(Circulated Separately)

7. **Public & Press**

To consider resolving that under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 that the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items by reason of the likely disclosure of exempt information within the paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

8. **Cabinet Agenda (Confidential Items and Reports) – Wednesday 9 August 2023**

To consider the confidential items on the Cabinet agenda which fall within the remit of this Committee. The only items to be considered are those which Committee Services have received notice of by 9.00am on the morning after Group meetings.

**(Circulated separately)
(Not for publication)**

9. **Confidential Appendix to Item 4 – Appendix 3 - Comments from Cabinet**

To note the confidential Appendix 3 to Item 4 on the agenda.

**(Pages 1 to 2)
(Not for publication)**

10. **Minutes**

To confirm the confidential minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2023.

**(Pages 1 to 5)
(Not for publication)**

General Enquiries: Please contact Warwick District Council, Riverside House, Milverton Hill, Royal Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, CV32 5HZ.

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For enquiries about specific reports, please contact the officers named in the reports.

You can e-mail the members of the Committee at

oandscommittee@warwickdc.gov.uk

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456114**

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 4 July 2023 in the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00pm.

Present: Councillor Milton (Chair); Councillors Barton, Collins, Cron, Day, D Harrison, Kohler, Luckhurst, Payne and Sinnott.

Also Present: Councillor Billiald – Portfolio Holder for Arts & Economy, Councillor Chilvers – Portfolio Holder for Resources, Councillor Davison – Leader of the Council, Councillor J Harrison – Portfolio Holder for Transformation, Councillor King – Portfolio Holder for Place, Councillor Wightman – Portfolio Holder for Housing.

4. **Apologies and Substitutes**

- (a) An apology for absence was received from Councillor Hales.
- (b) Councillor Cron substituted for Councillor Armstrong, Councillor Kohler substituted for Councillor Russell and Councillor Sinnott substituted for the Labour Group vacancy.

5. **Declarations of Interest**

Minute Numbers 10 - 12 – Future High Streets Fund Update and Confidential Appendices to Item 5 – Future High Streets Fund Update

As a former Member of Cabinet, Councillor Day declared an interest and withdrew from the meeting whilst this report was discussed.

6. **Minutes**

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings held on 19 April 2023 and 17 May 2023 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

7. **Cabinet Agenda (Non-Confidential items and reports) – Wednesday 5 July 2023**

The Committee considered the following items which would be discussed at the meeting of the Cabinet on Wednesday 5 July 2023.

Item 12 – Customer Service Relocation Options

The Committee expresses concerns about the increase in costs from those that were initially stated. The Committee requested that costs were kept closely under control for the duration of the project and reduced if possible and provided value for money. The Committee requested that further effort should be made in respect of the plans for the Pump Rooms Shop to ensure that the service provided to residents continued.

Item 5 – Milverton Homes Limited Governance Audit

The Committee recommended to Cabinet that officers should review the effectiveness on governance arrangements with the Monitoring Officer chairing Board meetings and also being the Shareholder Representative. It asked for the review to examine whether alternative options should be pursued. It had a proposal for this which would be moved at Cabinet.

The Committee noted the comments from the Portfolio Holder for Housing which clarified that Recommendation 3 in the report was a recommendation to Council, and the following amendment to recommendation 4:

“Approves the Terms of Reference for the Shareholder Representative Board at the Appendix 1 **and asks Council to annex it to the Constitution**”.

The Committee also noted comments that the Terms of Reference should be less specific and refer instead to any relevant risks or issues linked with any Joint Venture project referred to the Board by the Cabinet.

The above amendments would be circulated via an addendum prior to the Cabinet meeting.

8. **Public & Press**

Resolved that under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 that the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items by reason of the likely disclosure of exempt information within the paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, as set out below:

Minute Number	Paragraph Number	Reason
9	3	Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

9. **Cabinet Agenda (Confidential items and reports) – Wednesday 5 July 2023**

The Committee considered the following confidential item which would be discussed at the meeting of the Cabinet on Wednesday 5 July 2023.

Item 14 – Milverton Homes Business Plan Revision

The Committee discussed the confidential report and comments made to Cabinet were recorded in the Committee’s confidential minutes 4 July 2023.

(The meeting was adjourned at 8.02pm for 10 minutes and resumed at 8.12pm in public session.)

10. **Future High Streets Fund Update**

The Committee considered a report from Planning Policy and Delivery which gave an update on the projects being funded by the Future High Street Fund (FHSF). There was also a confidential element in respect of one of the project sites and the details of this were set out in Appendix 1 to the report. The Risk Register, set out in Appendix 3 to the report was also confidential because it referred to the confidential project site. The Risk Register had been issued subsequent to publication of the report on the Council's website at the request of the Chair.

In 2020 the Council was successful in its bid to the FHSF and was awarded funding of £10.15million which had to be used by 31 March 2024. The report detailed progress against the projects in the funding bid.

As well as the FHSF, there was also co-funding from private investment and Warwick District Council; this was not subject to the deadline 31 March 2024.

The report listed the various projects using the sources of funding and a spend profile giving a summary of the current spend profile against the FHSF allocation was detailed in Appendix 2 to the report.

Since some elements of the report were confidential, the elements which could be discussed in public were dealt with first before the meeting went into confidential session. Details of the discussions that took place in confidential session were given in the confidential minutes of the meeting.

The Chair explained that this funding had been discussed previously when a report was made to Cabinet in February because of the risk of the large amounts of money being committed to by the Council with a deadline by which the Council had to use the funding it had been granted. The Committee needed to keep a close eye on the funding use.

The Programme Manager, Mark Brightburn explained that he wished to explain how well the Council was progressing with spend, especially in respect of the FHSF which had the deadline. Co-funding between the Council and private investors was not linked to the FHSF, so was not subject to the spend deadline.

He explained each project in order of progress which was different to the order listed for the projects in the report:

1. Spencer Yard

This was the project that had been progressed the furthest and all monies allocated to it from the FHSF had been paid out and receipts for all that spend had been received. This project was complete in respect of all FHSF monies, so future spend would be from the private sector which was investing more than double the amount received under the Government grant. The FHSF had been used to attract the private sector to the scheme which would then invest to complete the

project. The launch date for the work done was scheduled for September.

2. Town Hall Creative Hub and Stoneleigh Arms

These two projects were then explained. The Town Hall project was slightly ahead because planning permission had been granted and work was currently in progress on the tender documents for the works to go out to tender. The plan was to start works on the Town Hall in October, leaving five to six months to spend the money allocated under the FHSF on the construction work. Some had already been spent on consultancy, but the vast majority of the money would be spent on building work. Cost consultants had phased the work and they were confident that the FHSF would be spent within the deadline. Once the deadline had been reached there was a further four months in which to use the money allocated from co-funding. The completion date on the Town Hall was scheduled for July 2024. The main risk with this project was ensuring that the chosen contractor would be on board with the timings so that there would not be a delay in finding an alternative contractor.

Stoneleigh Arms was a little bit behind the Town Hall project because of the conservation implications in the project. It was a new build in a conservation area, so a lot of work was required to ensure that the planning application was perfect. The application was scheduled to be submitted the following week. The plan was that works would commence in October leaving a five-to-six-month period to spend the monies allocated under the FHSF and then to use the co-funding monies after that. This project would take a slightly longer time than expected for the Town Hall because it was a new build. It was expected that this project would complete September/October 2024.

3. Confidential Site

This project was going ahead and when it went ahead there would be a big expenditure quickly within the required timeframes.

4. East/West Cycle Route

The report described the issues that had arisen with this project. The funding allocated from FHSF for this project was £506,000 with co-funding through CIL in the amount of £0.5million. Officers were now urgently engaging consultants to seek to re-allocate this funding to alternative live projects within the FHSF Programme. The plan was to re-allocate the £506,000 to the Town Hall and Stoneleigh Arms projects if consent was given. The Programme Manager believed that the risk of the money being withdrawn was minimal.

It was still hoped to achieve the East/West Cycle Route in the future when the Government announced what would replace the Active Travel funding that the County Council had hoped to use for a sustainable network for the Town Centre before the Government withdrew the funding scheme. The Programme Manager explained the complexities involved with a cycle route and why it all interlinked with pedestrians and street parking. Hence why for the moment, the East/West Cycle Route was paused.

The Chair opened the meeting up to questions from Councillors and in response to a question the Programme Manager explained that URC mentioned in paragraph 1.4.2 in the report referred to the United Reformed Church. The development would be a thriving hub for creative media, and it was hoped to build a bridge between Spencer Yard and the Royal Pump Rooms for better connectivity to the Town Centre and the railway station. The Chair directed the meeting back to the issue of risk of not completing expenditure of the FHSF monies by the deadline but there were no questions on this so the meeting went into confidential session to discuss the confidential elements of the report.

11. Public & Press

Resolved that under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 that the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items by reason of the likely disclosure of exempt information within the paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, as set out below:

Minute Number	Paragraph Number	Reason
12	3	Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

12. Confidential Appendices to Item 5 – Future High Streets Fund Update

The Committee discussed the confidential appendix and the minutes of this were recorded in the Committee’s confidential minutes 4 July 2023.

(The meeting resumed in public session.)

13. Cabinet Agenda (Non-Confidential items and reports) – Wednesday 5 July 2023

The Committee considered the following item which would be discussed at the meeting of the Cabinet on Wednesday 5 July 2023.

Item 9 – Use of Delegated Powers for Urgent Decisions

This report was not called-in for scrutiny because the report referred to decisions that had already been made. However, it was felt that the process and timing in the use of these powers should be examined; it was noted that these decisions referred to in the report had been made during the pre-election period and some had involved sizeable sums of money.

The Committee therefore recommended to Cabinet that as part of the review of scrutiny arrangements that had already been agreed, a review

should be carried out on the use of delegated powers and whether there was a way to provide more scrutiny of these decisions.

14. **Appointments to the Budget Review Group**

The Chair explained that the Committee was required to select five of its membership to sit on the Budget Review Group. This Group had been set up last year to alleviate some of the workload from the Committee. The five appointees had to come from different political groups so that each political group that made up the membership of the Council was represented. He, as Chair of the Committee was automatically a member of the Budget Review Group and was the Liberal Democrat Group representative. The Terms of Reference for the Budget Review Group were detailed in a report sent out with the Committee meeting agenda. The Group was scheduled to meet on 1 November and 7 February. The Audit & Standards Committee would also be appointing from its membership.

Resolved that for the municipal year 2023/24, the following Members of Overview & Scrutiny Committee will sit on the Budget Review Group:

Councillors Barton (WRA), Collins (Labour Group), Day (Conservative Group) and Luckhurst (Green Group). (Councillor Milton (Liberal Democrat Group) is automatically a member of the Budget Review Group by virtue of being the Overview & Scrutiny Committee's Chair.)

15. **Appointment of the Children's and Adults' Safeguarding Champion**

Each new municipal year, the Overview & Scrutiny Committee appoints the second Children's and Adults' Safeguarding Champion from its membership. The first Champion is the relevant Portfolio Holder. The remit for the Children's and Adult's Safeguarding Champion was circulated to Committee Members via email during the meeting prior to the decision being made on who to appoint. The Head of Governance and Deputy Monitoring Officer explained that the role of this Champion involved the following responsibilities:

- to assure themselves that the Council had sound arrangements to protect children and promote their welfare in place within the District Council and that the Council was promoting and engaging in effective interagency cooperation and collaboration in these fields;
- to undertake reasonable investigations so as to be able to form a view of the quality of the Council's child safeguarding activities and work with the officer Children's Champion to assist the Council and improve the quality and/or effectiveness of those activities whenever appropriate;
- to act as a "critical friend" to constructively challenge officers and elected members on child safeguarding and welfare issues as appropriate; and
- to promote awareness of child safeguarding and welfare issues and the activities and processes undertaken by this Council amongst elected members.

Resolved that subject to Councillor Sinnott being appointed as a full member of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 26 July 2023 at Council, he would act as the Council's second Children's and Adult's Safeguarding Champion.

16. **Work Programme, Forward Plan and Comments from the Cabinet**

The Committee considered its work programme for 2023/24 as detailed at Appendix 1 to the report. There was no need for the Comments from Cabinet report because Cabinet had not met in April.

The Chair asked Members to consider what they would like to focus on in the four additional meetings that had been scheduled for the Committee in the municipal year. He suggested that the four key issues the Committee might wish to address were:

- Monitoring the progress against responding to our climate & biodiversity motions
- Housing
- Creating diverse local economies
- Service delivery by the Council

After receiving advice from the Deputy Chief Executive & Monitoring Officer, the Committee would focus first on the climate emergency and was due to receive a report on the climate emergency action plan at the meeting 20 July. The Chair asked the Members to consider how they would wish to break down the plan and whether there were one or two issues that they would like to focus on. He had spoken very briefly to the Council's Leader about obtaining some scrutiny staffing resource to support this work to ensure the right level of reports were being delivered and that the Committee had access to the right information to undertake scrutiny work.

The Committee agreed that a report on "No Mow May" should be added to the Work Programme in about three months' time at the next non-Cabinet meeting. This initiative undertaken by the Council in May 2023 had given rise to issues. The Committee should review what occurred and how to avoid the problems that were encountered in the future. A survey had been conducted with residents about this which had highlighted the challenges such as mobility issues arising from overgrown verges. A Committee Member suggested that views should also be sought from professional organisations with which the Council had working relationships such as the Warwickshire Wildlife Trust. This would provide more evidence for developing a programme for the future and forward planning to help everyone involved. It would allow consideration of the benefit and impact of the scheme and how to better communicate with residents.

The Chair advised that this was the last meeting of Overview & Scrutiny Committee that the Deputy Chief Executive & Monitoring Officer would be attending because he was retiring from service with the Council. He thanked the Deputy Chief Executive on behalf of the Committee for his support. The Committee gave the Deputy Chief Executive a round of applause.

Resolved that:

- (1) appendix 1 to the Work Programme report be noted; and
- (2) "No Mow May" be added to the Work Programme at the next non-Cabinet meeting in about three months' time.

(The meeting ended at 9.17pm)

CHAIR
8 August 2023

Overview & Scrutiny Committee
8 August 2023

Title: Work Programme, Forward Plan & Comments from Cabinet & Council
Lead Officer: Lesley Dury, Principal Committee Services Officer
Portfolio Holder: Not applicable
Public report
Wards of the District directly affected: Not applicable

Summary

This report informs Members of Overview & Scrutiny Committee:

- (1) of the Committee's work programme for 2023 (Appendix 1);
- (2) responses that Cabinet gave to comments and recommendations made by Overview & Scrutiny Committee regarding the reports to Cabinet 5 July 2023 Recommendations (Appendix 2 plus confidential Appendix 3); and
- (3) the response Council made to the call-in of Cabinet's decision made 5 July 2023 on the Customer Services Relocation Options report (Appendix 4).

Recommendations

- (1) That Members consider the work programme (Appendix 1), the themes the Committee intends to scrutinise this year and agree changes to its Work Programme appropriately.
 - (2) That the Committee:
 - identifies any Cabinet items on the [Forward Plan](#) on which it wishes to have an input before the Cabinet makes its decision; and
 - nominates a Member to investigate that future decision and report back to the Committee.
 - (3) That Members note the responses made by the Cabinet on the Comments from the Cabinet report (Appendices 2 and confidential Appendix 3).
 - (4) That Members note the response made by Council on Comments from Council report (Appendix 4).
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1 Background/Information & Reasons for the Recommendation

- 1.1 The five main roles of overview and scrutiny in local government are: holding to account; performance management; policy review; policy development; and external scrutiny.
- 1.2 Two of the five main roles of overview and scrutiny in local government are to undertake pre-decision scrutiny of Cabinet decisions and to feed into policy development.
- 1.3 The pre-decision scrutiny of Cabinet decisions falls within the role of 'holding to account'. To feed into the pre-decision scrutiny of Cabinet decisions, the

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Committee needs to examine the Council's Forward Plan and identify items which it would like to have an impact upon.

- 1.4 The Council's Forward Plan is published 28 days before each Cabinet meeting and sets out the key decisions that are expected to be taken by the Cabinet in the next twelve months.
- 1.5 A key decision means a decision made in the exercise of an executive function by any person (including officers) or body which meets one or more of the following conditions:
 - (1) The decision is likely to result in the Council incurring expenditure or the making of savings in excess of £150,000. Excluded from this are all loans to banks or other financial institutions made in accordance with the Treasury Management Strategy.

Officers' delegated powers to make the cabinet decisions are subject to the key decision/call-in regime where it is likely that the Council would incur expenditure or make savings above the threshold of £150,000.

In relation to letting contracts the key decision is the proposal to let a contract for a particular type of work. The subsequent decision to award the contract to a specific contractor will not be a key decision provided the value of the contract does not vary above the estimated amount by more than 10% for contracts with a value of up to £500,000 or 5% for contracts of over £500,000.

- (2) The decision is likely to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in any two or more Wards.

In considering whether a decision is likely to be significant, a decision-maker will need to consider the strategic nature of the decision and whether the outcome will have an impact, for better or worse on the amenity of the community or quality of service provided by the Council to a significant number of people living or working in the locality affected.

- 1.6 The Forward Plan is considered at each meeting and allows the Committee to look at future items and become involved in those Cabinet decisions to be taken if members so wish.
- 1.7 The Forward Plan also identifies non-key decisions to be taken by Cabinet in the next twelve months, and the Committee, if it wishes, may also pre-scrutinise these decisions.
- 1.8 There may also be policies identified on the Forward Plan, either as key or non-key decisions, which the Committee could pre-scrutinise and have an impact upon how these are formulated.
- 1.9 The Committee should be mindful that any work it wishes to undertake would need to be undertaken without the need to change the timescales as set out within the Forward Plan.
- 1.10 At each meeting, the Committee will consider its work programme and make amendments where necessary, and also make comments on specific Cabinet

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items, where notice has been given by 9am on the morning after Group meetings. The Committee will also receive a report detailing the response from the Cabinet, on the comments the Committee made on the Cabinet agenda in the previous cycle.

- 1.11 The Committee will consider issues that have due significance with reference to the following criteria:
 - The number of residents impacted and the significance of that impact.
 - The amount of spend involved.
 - It concerns a strategic priority of the Council or key project.
- 1.12 On the day of publication of the Cabinet agenda all Councillors are sent an e-mail asking them to contact Committee Services, by 09.00am on the day of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting to advise which Cabinet items they would like the Committee to consider.
- 1.13 The proposed plan at Appendix 1 has been developed in order for the Committee to focus on the four agreed core themes (Covid 19, Climate Change, Medium Term Financial Strategy and Business Plan). While this Committee will not have as much focus on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, it will have to spend significant times looking at the other areas in detail.

8 August 2023*
(Cabinet meeting this cycle)

Title	Where did item originate from	Format	Lead Officer / Councillor	Next report date if applicable	Completion Date / Notes
Follow-up to whether the Committee's suggestion that a member of O&S sit on the SW Crime Safety Partnership Board should be put forward.	O&S min 92, April 2023	To discuss at the Chair's Pre-meeting briefing when Graham Leach is in attendance and the Chair to report to Members	The Chair, O&S		
Scrutiny Arrangements	O&S 7 March 2023	Written Report	Graham Leach		
Q1 Budget Update 2023/24		Automatic call-in of the Cabinet report for scrutiny	Andrew Rollins	Q4 Budget Update 2022/23 – 19 September 2023	Quarterly budget updates are standing items for call-in from the Cabinet agenda

NB – The Final Accounts 2021/22 report on the Cabinet agenda originally scheduled for August has been moved back until September.

19 September 2023*
(Cabinet meeting this cycle)

Title	Where did item originate from	Format	Lead Officer / Councillor	Next report date if applicable	Completion Date / Notes
Development Management and Enforcement Performance Update subsequent to report made to O&S in March 2023. This report should focus on enforcement.	March 2022 O&S September 2022 O&S	Written Report	HoS Development / Gary Fisher	TBA	
Q4 Budget Update 2022/23 from the Cabinet Agenda		Automatic call-in of the Cabinet report for scrutiny	Andrew Rollins	Q2 Budget Update 2023/24 – 5 December 2023	Quarterly budget updates are standing items for call-in from the Cabinet agenda
Final Accounts 2021/22		Automatic call-in of the Cabinet report for scrutiny	Andrew Rollins		Final Account reports are standing items for call-in from the Cabinet agenda
Final Accounts Draft Outturn		Automatic call-in of the Cabinet report for scrutiny	Andrew Rollins		Final Account reports are standing items for call-in from the Cabinet agenda

3 October 2023
(No Cabinet meeting this cycle)

Title	Where did item originate from	Format	Lead Officer / Councillor	Next report date if applicable	Completion Date / Notes
A 12-month review of the new waste and recycling contract and lessons learned from the renewal particularly with the focus on events over the Easter 2023 period.	O&S 19 April 2023	Report	Zoe Court		
Environmental Enforcement Update subsequent to the report made in March 2023 (following recruitment of the new position reported in March 2023). Figures for rural areas to be provided if possible for discussion of measures put in place and what is required. "Heat map" information for the District to be provided.	March 2022, O&S	Written report	Zoë Court	TBA	
"No Mow May" review. What happened and how to avoid problems in the future. Understand the real	4 July 2023 O&S	Written report	Zoë Court	TBA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How the decision was made; - The rationale; - Measuring the impact;

Title	Where did item originate from	Format	Lead Officer / Councillor	Next report date if applicable	Completion Date / Notes
<p>impact, benefits and how such initiatives are communicated to the residents in future. How to execute in the right way. Seek professional advice, eg Warwickshire Wildlife Trust.</p> <p><i>See the "notes" section</i></p>					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planning and recovery management; - Lessons learnt; - Members asked for the opportunity to feed from the comments they received from residents; - Communication with towns / parishes; - Info regarding flood risks to provide reassurance
<p>Digital Strategy Update <i>(note that a report is currently scheduled on the Forward Plan for September 2023)</i></p>	O&S November 2021	Report	David Elkington	April 2024	Every six months
<p>Future High Streets Fund update – the Committee asked for amendments to the Risk Register see confidential minutes 4 July 2023.</p>	O&S February 2023	Written report unless the timing is in proximity to a report to Cabinet, in which case the Cabinet report will be	Martin O’Neill	23 January 2024	Every 3 months until further notice

Appendix 1 – Overview & Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

Title	Where did item originate from	Format	Lead Officer / Councillor	Next report date if applicable	Completion Date / Notes
		called in instead if it deals with all the projects.			

**31 October 2023
(Cabinet meeting this cycle)**

Title	Where did item originate from	Format	Lead Officer / Councillor	Next report date if applicable	Completion Date / Notes

**5 December 2023
(Cabinet meeting this cycle)**

Title	Where did item originate from	Format	Lead Officer / Councillor	Next report date if applicable	Completion Date / Notes
Heart Shared Service Update since O&S meeting December 2022	O&S December 2022	Written report	Lisa Barker		
Q2 Budget Update 2023/24 from the Cabinet Agenda		Automatic call-in of the Cabinet report for scrutiny	Andrew Rollins	TBA	Quarterly budget updates are standing items for call-in from the Cabinet agenda

**23 January 2024
(No Cabinet meeting this cycle)**

Title	Where did item originate from	Format	Lead Officer / Councillor	Next report date if applicable	Completion Date / Notes
Six-month post opening update on the "Relocation of Office Accommodation and the Provision of Public Facing Access to Council Services	O&S February 2023	Written report	Steve Partner		

**6 February 2024
(Cabinet meeting this cycle)**

Title	Where did item originate from	Format	Lead Officer / Councillor	Next report date if applicable	Completion Date / Notes

**5 March 2024
(Cabinet meeting this cycle)**

Title	Where did item originate from	Format	Lead Officer / Councillor	Next report date if applicable	Completion Date / Notes
Annual update from Shakespeare’s England, looking back over the previous year’s activity and forward to next year.	March 2023	Written report	Martin O’Neill and Councillor Bartlett	March 2025.	This is an annual report.
Summary of the role, responsibilities and performance of the SWCSP	This is a mandatory report.	Written report	Liz Young / Marianne Rolfe.	March 2025.	This is an annual report.

**26 March 2024
(No Cabinet meeting this cycle)**

Title	Where did item originate from	Format	Lead Officer / Councillor	Next report date if applicable	Completion Date / Notes

9 April 2024
(Cabinet meeting this cycle)

Title	Where did item originate from	Format	Lead Officer / Councillor	Next report date if applicable	Completion Date / Notes
O&S End of Term report.	Standing Annual Item.	Written report.	Committee Services Officer.	April 2025.	Annual report
Noise Nuisance Investigations: Review of the Policy and the service area's performance in respect of all forms of noise nuisance more generally. Additional data was requested in the next report (see minute 93, 19 April 2023, 4 paragraphs from the end of this minute, and also see the pre-scrutiny questions on the Council's website for 19 April with the questions posed by Councillor Milton.	9 August 2022, 19 April 2023	Written report	Lorna Hudson		

Briefing Notes to All Councillors – April every year
Not for O&S Agenda, but to be emailed to all WDC Cllrs

Title	Where did item originate from	Format	Lead Officer / Councillor	Next report date if applicable	Completion Date / Notes
Children's and Adults' Safeguarding Champions: End of Term Report.	Standing Annual Item.	Briefing note	Marianne Rolfe.	April 2025.	This is a briefing note to all Councillors.
Members' Annual Feedback on Outside Appointments / Annual review of membership/participation of Outside Bodies (Includes a short synopsis on Champions)	Standing Annual Items	Briefing note	Andrew Jones	April 2025	This is a briefing note to all Councillors.

First meeting of the Municipal Year 2024/25

Title	Where did item originate from	Format	Lead Officer / Councillor	Next report date if applicable	Completion Date / Notes
Appoint Children's and Adults' Safeguarding Champion	Standing Annual Item.	Agenda item			On-going at the first meeting of each Municipal Year
To appoint members to the Budget Review Group (add the Group's remit which is saved to the annex in the Constitution)	Standing Annual Item.	Agenda item			On-going at the first meeting of each Municipal Year
Elect a Chair if this was not done after Annual Council	Standing Annual Item				On-going at the first meeting of each Municipal Year

Meeting Date: To Be Advised

Title	Where did item originate from	Format	Lead Officer / Councillor	Next report date if applicable	Completion Date / Notes
Decide if an update is required on the Catering and Events Concessions Contract – Royal Pump Rooms and Jephson Gardens Glasshouse.	Committee meeting 26 September 2019. (8 November 2022 – an email was sent to David Guilding and Philip Clarke asking for the status.)	Informal update.	Dave Guilding / Philip Clarke.	TBA	
Update - plans to improve accessibility to, and the condition / cleanliness of, toilets for people living with disabilities.	Committee meeting 26 September 2019 and briefing note 8 December 2020.	Written report	Zoë Court	To be advised if applicable.	No officer will attend the Committee meeting unless there is a request.
Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards Enforcement Process – Private Sector Housing	O&S August 2020 (31 October 2022 – Cllr Cullinan sent an email to Lisa Barker asking for a date for the report and the response was sometime spring 2023.)	Written Report	Lisa Barker		A review was requested once the scheme had been in operation for 12 months. Covid affected the process.
Park Exercise Permits – annual review of the scheme	August 2020 (Update November 2022 on status - Ann Hill has advised	Written report	Ann Hill		

Appendix 1 – Overview & Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

Title	Where did item originate from	Format	Lead Officer / Councillor	Next report date if applicable	Completion Date / Notes
	<p>that the current permit scheme is not working and work needs to be undertaken to find out why that was, be it the rules of the scheme, the eligibility or enforcement. After speaking with Marianne Rolfe, she and Marianne decided to approach the relevant PAB when a revised scheme has been formalised.)</p>				
Climate Change Action Programme Update	O&S 20 July 2023	Written report	Dave Barber		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Offsetting and any potential for getting involved in early policy development; 2. Issue of adaptation; 3. Data tracking and how this can be most efficient.

**Response from the meeting of Cabinet on the O&S Committee's Comments –
5 July 2023**

Item 5 – Milverton Homes Limited Governance Audit

Scrutiny Comment:

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommended to Cabinet that officers should review the effectiveness on governance arrangements with the Monitoring Officer chairing Board meetings and also being the Shareholder Representative. It asked for the review to examine whether alternative options should be pursued. It had a proposal for this which would be moved at Cabinet.

The Committee noted the comments from the Portfolio Holder for Housing which clarified that Recommendation 3 in the report was a recommendation to Council, and the following amendment to recommendation 4:

"Approves the Terms of Reference for the Shareholder Representative Board at the Appendix 1 **and asks Council to annex it to the Constitution**".

The Committee also noted comments that the Terms of Reference should be less specific and refer instead to any relevant risks or issues linked with any Joint Venture project referred to the Board by the Cabinet.

The above amendments would be circulated via an addendum prior to the Cabinet meeting.

Cabinet Response:

The recommendations in the report along with the recommendation from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee as revised by the addendum were approved.

Item 9 – Use of Delegated Powers for Urgent Decisions

Scrutiny Comment:

This report was not called-in for scrutiny because the report referred to decisions that had already been made. However, it was felt that the process and timing in the use of these powers should be examined; it was noted that these decisions referred to in the report had been made during the pre-election period and some had involved sizeable sums of money.

The Committee therefore recommended to Cabinet that as part of the review of scrutiny arrangements that had already been agreed, a review should be carried out on the use of delegated powers and whether these was a way to provide more scrutiny of these decisions.

Cabinet Response:

The recommendations in the report were approved, along with the recommendation from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee:

"as part of the review of scrutiny arrangements that had already been agreed, a review should be carried out on the use of delegated powers and whether there is a way to provide more scrutiny of these decisions."

Item 12 – Customer Service Relocations Options

Scrutiny Comment:

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee expressed concerns about the increase in costs from those that were initially stated. The Committee requested that costs were kept closely under control for the duration of the project and reduced if possible and provided value for money. The Committee requested that further effort should be made in respect of the plans for the Pump Rooms Shop to ensure that the service provided to residents continued.

Cabinet Response:

The recommendations in the report were approved.

**Response from the meeting of Warwick District Council on the O&S
Committee's Comments – 26 July 2023**

Urgent Item – Call-in of Cabinet Decision 5 July 2023 – Customer Services Relocations
Options

Background:

1. On 4 July 2023 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a report that would be decided by the Cabinet on the following day. This was listed on the agenda as, Item 12 Customer Services Relocation Options.

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee made the following Comment on the report:

"The Overview & Scrutiny Committee expressed concerns about the increase in costs from those that were initially stated. The Committee requested that costs were kept closely under control for the duration of the project and reduced if possible and provided value for money. The Committee requested that further effort should be made in respect of the plans for the Pump Rooms Shop to ensure that the service provided to residents continued."
2. On 5 July 2023, the Cabinet met and made its decision on the report as follows:
 - (1) That Cabinet approves the design concept for the Customer Service Centre as shown in Appendix 1 and 2 and delegates authority to the Head of Customer and Digital Services to approve minor design amendments, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Customer and Digital Services.
 - (2) That Delegated Authority is provided to the Head of Customer and Digital Services to seek Listed Building and any other consents required to implement the proposals.
 - (3) That a budget of £410,000 is approved for the project, funded from the Corporate Asset Reserve.
 - (4) That subject to agreeing recommendations 1 to 3, officers continue their work to find an alternative venue or approach for the Pump Rooms shop.
3. On 13 July 2023, Councillors Boad, Kohler and B Gifford requested a Call-In, under Council Procedure Rule E3, 21 Decisions of the Cabinet, for the following reasons:
 - i) Cabinet did not have an analysis available to them of the various current or future customer needs, or projected volumes, ranging from dropping off or collecting documents, making complaints, to detailed housing and benefits or planning matters. Each of which require a different solution from a simple reception desk to rooms for confidential discussions.
 - ii) The budget had increased by £210,000 to £410,000 since February. No challenge was made by the Cabinet as to whether the proposal put forward was either an appropriate or affordable solution, or value for money for Council Tax payers.
 - iii) The removal of the shop selling local artists products located in the Pump Rooms next to the Art Gallery was a new proposal with no appropriate alternative solution available or how it would be staffed.

4. The call-in is in respect of the overall design and cost of the proposal and not the relocation of the services to the Pump Rooms that was considered and agreed by Cabinet in February under minute 87 Relocation of Office Accommodation and the Provision of Public Facing Access to Council Services as follows:

“(6) a Customer Service Hub is created at the Royal Pump Rooms as a replacement and significant enhancement to the customer service provision currently operated at Riverside House, be agreed.”
5. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee considered the call-in on 20 July 2023.

Scrutiny Comment 20 July 2023:

The Committee referred the item to Council for further debate so that all Members can be given the opportunity to ask questions and fully understand the implications, and to provide the Council with assurance that it is providing a viable option.

The Committee asks for pertinent information, such as a breakdown of customer attendance at Riverside House reception, plans for rooms at the Town Hall, an update on shop location (confidentially if needed), timescales for the overall project to be circulated ahead of Council by way of an addendum.

The Committee notes that the move of the Customers Services team is not done in isolation, but it is part of a wider picture, with the plan to move the Council offices out of Riverside House and the developments planned for the Town Hall. As such, the Committee asks that the relevant information from these different projects is brought forward ahead of the Council meeting.

The Committee also requested further details on what other options were considered as potential for relocating the Customer Services and reasons why these were discounted.

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee asks that the issue of relocating the Pump Rooms shop should be considered by Council, asking that any confidential information be sent in advance to all Members, to inform the debate at Council, which should be carried in public session as much as possible, for the purpose of transparency and accountability.

Council Response 26 July 2023:

Council noted the Call-in procedure for Warwick District Council as set out in Appendix A to the report that was presented to it.

That in respect of the resolutions made by Cabinet on the Customer Services Relocations Options, the Council resolved to take no action. (This meant that the decision could be implemented the next working day.)

Title: Scrutiny Arrangements

Lead Officer: Graham Leach, Head of Governance & Deputy Monitoring Officer, 01926 456114 and graham.leach@warwickdc.gov.uk

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Davison

Wards of the District directly affected: None

Approvals required	Date	Name
Portfolio Holder	N/A	Ian Davison
Finance	28/7/23	Alex Elston
Legal Services		
Chief Executive		Chris Elliott
Programme Director Climate Change	28/7/23	Dave Barber
Head of Service(s)	28/7/23	Graham Leach
Section 151 Officer		Andrew Rollins
Monitoring Officer	28/7/23	Andrew Jones
Leadership Co-ordination Group	N/A	
Final decision by this Committee or rec to another Cttee / Council?	Yes	
Contrary to Policy / Budget framework?	No	
Does this report contain exempt info/Confidential? If so, which paragraph(s)?	No	
Does this report relate to a key decision (referred to in the Cabinet Forward Plan)?	No	
Accessibility Checked?	Yes	

Summary

The report informs the Committee of the current Scrutiny arrangements at Warwick District Council and provides an opportunity for the Committee to reflect on these including the capacity of the Committee.

Recommendations

- (1) That the Overview & Scrutiny Committee notes the report and its Appendices.
 - (2) That a further report is brought back to the Committee in January 2024 to enable the Committee to bring forward any changes.
-

1 Reasons for the Recommendation

- 1.1 In May 2022, the Council agreed to move to a single Scrutiny Committee. This was a change from previous years where the Council had two Scrutiny Committees (one of which also acted as the Council's Audit committee). The two Committees undertook the scrutiny function from different perspectives.
- 1.2 The remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, before May 2022, was to review items to be considered by the Cabinet, to review past decisions, policy development, health and wellbeing issues, specific issues and problems within any service area. It was also able to scrutinise any other matter not otherwise delegated to the Finance and Audit Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.3 The remit of the Finance and Audit Scrutiny Committee, before it was disbanded, was to provide independent assurance of the adequacy of the risk management framework and the associated control environment, independent scrutiny of the authority's financial and non-financial performance to the extent that it affects the authority's exposure to risk and weakens the control environment, issues of an audit nature and to oversee the financial reporting process. The Finance and Audit Scrutiny Committee would:
 - Review the robustness of business cases
 - Promote value for money and good procurement practice
 - Make recommendations on good financial management practices
 - Keep the treasury management performance under review
 - Approve the Statement of Accounts in accordance with regulation 10 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003
 - Review specific Cabinet items and past decisions.
- 1.4 The remit of the Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee covered a number of areas that are the responsibility of an Audit Committee role rather than scrutiny function. While there will always be some overlap between the work of Scrutiny Committees and the Audit Committee, it is advised against them being a single Committee. This is advised against by both the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and Centre for Governance & Scrutiny (CfGS).
- 1.5 The approach of combining the Audit Committee with an Overview & Scrutiny Committee risks conflicts of interest, spreading resources too thinly and losing clarity over both audit and scrutiny committees' important statutory functions. Both functions require distinct support and should be able to operate effectively

independently. This aside, because the functions relate to similar areas, there will be matters of common interest where it makes sense to collaborate. Some examples are areas around mindset and culture, securing good governance risk, value for money and wider policy issues (including the impact of council strategy and financial management). The example provided is that Scrutiny is there to ask are we doing the right things and Audit is to ask are we doing it right.

1.6 As a result, for the municipal year 2022/2023, Council approved a new structure around its Scrutiny function, with the Overview & Scrutiny Committee's remit being changed, to add scrutiny of finances as well, and the creation of a new Audit & Standards Committee.

1.7 The close working relationship between these two Committees should be delivered through regular dialogue between the Chairs, who should look at sharing information and areas the respective Committees may wish to look at. At present, there is a strong working relationship between the Chair of the Audit & Standards Committee and Overview & Scrutiny and this is an area that officers will continue to support into the municipal year, including ensuring they are invited to the others' briefings prior to their Committee meetings.

1.8 In respect of capacity of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee up to April 2023, the Committee had considered the following at their meetings:

Year	Meetings	Scrutiny reports	Cabinet reports considered
19/20	10	19	20
20/21	9	9	20
21/22	8	15	20
22/23	11	19*	36

*This includes three Treasury Management reports that now fall to Audit & Standards Committee

NB: The Committee do review all Cabinet reports; the ones listed above are the ones that are debated at their meeting.

1.9 In addition to this, the Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee had considered 82 Cabinet reports between May 2019 and May 2022 over 28 meetings (just under three Cabinet items per meeting). The number being considered had reduced with the introduction of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee Procedure rule 21, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report. It should also be noted that from the Cabinet items considered, 58 were simply noted or supported, 26 had comments provided and in only in six cases were recommendations made to the Cabinet.

1.10 Councillors will be aware of the introduction of pre-scrutiny questions, the answers to which are available via the website. These have helped to further focus and enhance debates at Committee. This has also reduced the number of Cabinet items being considered as simpler queries are answered outside of the formal Committee meeting.

1.11 This aside, concern has been raised by Councillors and Senior Officers that some key strategic financial reports were not receiving robust scrutiny due to lack of time and capacity at the meeting.

- 1.12 The Overview & Scrutiny Committee considered these points and came to the view that in order to provide additional capacity within Overview & Scrutiny Committee meetings, before Cabinet meetings, the most sustainable approach would be to have four additional meetings a year which would solely focus on reports to the Committee and not on Cabinet matters, therein creating more capacity at meetings of Scrutiny the night before Cabinet.
- 1.13 In addition to this, the Council has created the Budget Review Group which is composed of representatives from both the Audit & Standards Committee and Overview & Scrutiny Committee, with a representative of each political group from both Committees.
- 1.14 The use of this Group has a number of benefits through sharing skills and knowledge across the Committees, while allowing focus on specific topics. Its terms of reference have been produced and are set out at Appendix 2 to the report.
- 1.15 That said, the Overview & Scrutiny Committee did raise concerns on capacity and scope of its remit of work, set out in an extract of the Committee's end of Term report at Appendix 3 to this report.
- 1.16 Prior to the elections, Councillors had raised concerns about the level of training received in respect of local government finance and more specifically, understanding Warwick District Council finances. This is considered a particularly important area for Councillors to understand, due to their legal responsibilities in respect of the over £100million a year that the Council is responsible for.
- 1.17 As a result of this concern, Warwick District Council agreed that Finance training would be one of the mandatory training sessions for all Councillors after the election. The first session of this was intended to provide a basic understanding of local government finance which is complex and is required to follow many specific working practices which are different to private practice. The first session for this took place in June and 20 Councillors attended. Additional dates are being arranged to enable the remaining 24 Councillors to attend this training.
- 1.18 In July 2023, the Head of Finance and Head of Governance met with the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Chair of Audit & Standards Committee to discuss wider training on finance for Councillors. This approach is set out at Appendix 4 to the report.
- 1.19 In addition to these courses, all new Councillors will be provided details of further information they can access and read, for example, the supporting documents to this report and reminded of the Councillor hub on www.local.gov.uk .

2 Alternative Options

- 2.1 At this stage no alternatives were considered as the report is intend to provide a discussion point for the Committee.

3 Legal Implications

- 3.1 There are no specific legal implications of the report and the proposals comply with the relevant aspects of legislation.

4 Financial

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications of the proposals within his report.

5 Business Strategy

5.1 Warwick District Council has adopted a Business Strategy which sets out key areas for service delivery. This proposal responds to two of those proposals in respect of Maintain or Improve Services and Firm Financial Footing over the Longer Term.

5.2 In respect of both of these points, these decisions are being brought forward to provide more robust scrutiny in proposals that come forward to provide assurance to the public on the approaches being taken by the Council.

6 Environmental/Climate Change Implications

6.1 There will be no direct implications from this report in on the environment.

7 Analysis of the effects on Equality

7.1 It is not considered that an equality impact assessment needs to be undertaken for these proposals.

8 Data Protection

8.1 There is no change in the handling of personal data as a result of these proposals.

9 Health and Wellbeing

9.1 There are no direct health and wellbeing implications as a result of these proposals.

10 Risk Assessment

10.1 There are no direct risks associated with this report, however the Committee needs to have confidence that it has appropriate resource to provide good scrutiny for the Council.

11 Consultation

11.1 Discussions have taken place with the Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee who is supportive of the proposal.

Background papers: None

Supporting documents:

[Centre for Governance & Scrutiny Practitioners Guide](#)

[Centre for Governance & Scrutiny – Audit Committees and Scrutiny: working together](#)

[LGA Councillor workbook: Scrutiny of finance](#)

[Centre for Governance & Scrutiny & CIPFA Financial Scrutiny/practice guide](#)

[LGA a Councillor workbook on scrutiny](#)

[Warwick District Council Cabinet 20 April 2022 – Item 06 Amendments to the Constitution](#)

[MHCLG – Statutory Guidance on Overview & Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities](#)

Overview & Scrutiny Committee Procedure rule 21

1. We encourage all members to ask questions about issues that either affect residents or in which they have an interest. Scrutiny is not the only way to do this and members should feel free to raise questions with portfolio holders at any time.

2. Scrutiny committees will consider issues that have due significance with reference to the following criteria:
 - a) The number of residents impacted and the significance of that impact.
 - b) The amount of spend involved.
 - c) It concerns a strategic priority of the Council or key project.

3. Scrutiny committees should only consider items where there is a tangible reason to do so. This should broadly fit into one of the following criteria:
 - a) Where there are concerns about the basis for a recommendation e.g. the data that had led to the recommendation is deficient, or new data or information deemed material to forming a view on the item has been provided too late for a written question and answer to be circulated before the meeting, or members are aware of contradictory evidence.
 - b) There is an alternative policy, development or direction which needs to be explored.

4. Reasons for any request for scrutiny to consider an item should be clearly stated based on the approach outlined above.

5. Where the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee considers the criteria is not met, they can either ask for clarification from the Councillor and, if they remain unsatisfied, decline the request for the item to be considered

Terms of Reference Budget Review Group
(adopted by Council 27 February 2023)

The Group will meet the evening before Cabinet and will be responsible for reviewing the following papers:

Annual Fees & Charges

Setting of the General Fund Budget

Setting of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

Annual Treasury Management Strategy (if it is reported to Cabinet in February)

Their purpose will be to review the reports and pass comment on the strategic financial robustness of them.

The reports will be subject to pre meeting questions process as used for all Cabinet papers.

The Group will be composed of a Councillor from each Political group on the Council from each of the Audit & Standards and Overview & Scrutiny committee.

The Chairs of the respective Committees must be on the group but will form the representative of their Group from the respective Committee

The Leader of the Cabinet will permit the Chair of this meeting to represent the views of the Group in line with the rights provided to the Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Chair's Introduction

I'd like to start this year's report by thanking all the officers who have supported the Committee over the last twelve months. This includes all those who've come and presented to us along with portfolio holders but it's only right to pay particular thanks to Lesley Dury, Graham Leach and Andy Jones. All three have been invaluable to me in supporting the functioning of the Committee but also with the occasional helpful steer when needed.

I'd also like to thank all the Members of the Committee. It's been a hard year at times with the expanded remit of the Committee and they have continued to do a good job of scrutinising the work of the Council in a way that is appropriate, respectful but most of all helps improve things for our residents. This goes for Members of all party groups, and the willingness of Members to challenge constructively, regardless of party, only strengthens the work of the Committee and shows that scrutiny is most effective when divorced from party-politics. This is evidenced by the 11 recommendations that have been accepted by Cabinet as a result of work by the Committee.

Having attended the Joint Cabinet on a number of occasions it is obvious that not all Councils welcome comments from scrutiny committees and in this regard, I think we are managing to find the right balance to speak on behalf of our residents.

In pulling together this report I invited all Members of the Committee to share their thoughts on how we have worked and what could be made better in the future in order to benefit the next administration. These comments fell into three main categories:

- 1.) The breadth and volume of what we deal with as a committee makes it difficult to deal with issues to the level of detail required.

Over the last twelve months, particularly with the dissolution of Finance & Audit Scrutiny, the breadth of the Committee's remit has increased significantly. The ability of Councillors to ask targeted, direct questions has helped to keep the length of meetings within manageable bounds but with the level of detail we are reviewing there is a point at which scrutiny becomes ineffective.

The volume of Cabinet activity has also meant that we have been able to spend less time on our own proactive agenda, thus reducing the benefit that we provide to residents. This will be somewhat addressed by the introduction of additional meetings, but it does mean that being a Member of the Scrutiny Committee is one of the largest workloads a Councillor can take on.

- 2.) Cabinet reports need to be better organised to enable effective scrutiny.

As Chair I've witnessed improvements in the way that Cabinet reports are presented and written over the last three years. However, there is still room for improvement.

Members still receive reports which whilst comprehensive are overly long and often include detail which isn't really needed for the Committee. We see examples of changes to standard policies where the changes aren't made clear and the only way to identify the papers is by a 'compare and contrast'. There is

also a need to show how data and insight are being used to translate into and inform future policy in a clear and obvious way, rather than the two feeling unconnected.

3.) Effective scrutiny of the Council's finances needs specialist skill.

The finances of the Council are a complex matter for many people to understand and since taking this within our remit we have not had the specific training support that we have requested. This is a significant risk for the Council and potentially for the residents that we serve and needs urgent addressing. Members have worked hard on trying to give financial matters effective scrutiny but even with all our best efforts there are gaps which need closing.

Despite the challenges that the Committee has faced I have enjoyed my third year as Chair. With a new administration coming into being in May, and new Members as part of that, it's important that these issues are addressed quickly in order to ensure the future effectiveness of the Scrutiny function.

Councillor Andrew Milton
Chair, Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Finance Training

1. Complete mandatory basic finance training for 24 Councillors who did not attend – ensure outline of course shared with those who need to attend and reason why (i.e. Council agreed this is mandatory) – Date TBC This will be an evening session via Teams. Likely to be early September due to summer holidays.
2. Arrange a second HRA training date and promote importance of attending – Date TBC This will be an evening session via Teams. Likely to be early September due to summer holidays.
3. Basics of Treasury Management (TM) and to scrutinise it – Finance to arrange with Link lead by the Principal Accountant – Date TBC This will be an evening session via Teams. Likely to be early autumn but well in advance of the Budget & TM report drafts.
4. Civic & Committee Services to seek training for Scrutiny on finances on What could go wrong, consequences of it going wrong, warning signs it is going wrong and what do we do if it goes wrong) – Contact CIPFA, CFGS, LGIU seeking a costed proposal for this.
5. Head of Finance (and team) to deliver bite size sessions on (1) fees and charges (how this relates to the budget and assumptions), (2) overall Budget of briefing on this process (3) (added after LCG this week) reserves and what they are –Sessions in early September on this will be delivered to members. Likely these 3 elements will be done as one smaller session (less than 1 hour), and likely to be scheduled for 2 sessions to ensure increased reach.
6. Head of Finance to share budget timetable in early September with all Councillors when passed to officers.
7. Civic & Committee to send weekly email on mtgs and training for next two weeks to help remind Cllrs (LCG supported this as well on 24/7/23)