

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 24 May 2022 in the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00 pm.

Present: Councillors Barton, Cullinan, I Davison, A Dearing, J Dearing, Kohler, Leigh-Hunt, Milton, Noone, Redford and Syson.

Also Present: Councillor Grainger – Portfolio Holder, Neighbourhood & Leisure, and Councillor Matecki – Portfolio Holder, Housing & Assets.

1. **Appointment of Chairman**

It was proposed by Councillor Redford, duly seconded by Councillor Kohler and

Resolved that Councillor Milton be appointed Chair of the Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

2. **Apologies and Substitutes**

(a) An apology for absence was received from Councillor Jacques.

(b) There were no substitutes.

3. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made.

4. **Minutes**

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 8 March 2022 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

5. **Public and 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 paragraph 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
6	3	Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

6. **Cabinet Agenda (Confidential items and reports) – Wednesday 25 May 2022**

The Committee considered two reports with confidential content which would be discussed at the meeting of the Cabinet on Wednesday 25 May 2022.

Item 6 – Milverton Homes Ltd Business Plan and Item 9 – Confidential Appendices to Item 6 – Milverton Homes Ltd Business Plan

The committee expressed its support for the report and for the aims and objectives of Milverton Homes Limited.

Members were keen that more information should be made available in the public domain.

Members asked a number of questions about the financial projections and potential risks of the organisation and were satisfied with the answers provided.

(Councillor Matecki left the meeting near the end of discussion on the Milverton Homes report because of a pre-existing appointment.)

Item 8 – Associated Costs for the Purchase of 60, section 106 dwellings, Birmingham Road, Hatton, Warwickshire

The Committee noted the report.

(The meeting resumed public session.)

7. **Cabinet Agenda (Non-confidential items and reports) – Wednesday 25 May 2022**

The Committee considered the following item which would be discussed at the meeting of the Cabinet on Wednesday 25 May 2022.

Item 4 – Programme Team (Green Spaces) – Resourcing Delivery of Live Projects

The Committee noted the report.

(Councillor Grainger left the meeting at the end of this item.)

8. **Climate Change Action Programme Update**

The Committee considered a report from the Director for Climate Change that provided an update on the Council's progress towards its climate change ambitions, specifically in relation to the delivery of the Climate Change Action Programme (CCAP).

Appendix 1 to the report detailed the progress made on the Climate Action Programme. Appendix 2 detailed the carbon baseline data, with Appendix 3 setting out the carbon emissions data. Appendix 4 was the updated risk register and Appendix 5 showed the priorities for action for 2022/23.

In response to questions from Members, the Director for Climate Change explained that:

- He was willing to liaise with Finance to draw up a list of options to finance the various projects required in the CCAP over the next 10 years and this information would be provided in the next report to the Committee. The challenge with options such as Community Bonds and loans was how the money would be paid back. Some of the projects once completed would "payback" from the results but others, which were particularly costly upfront, such as retrofitting properties, did not form a source of income or payback.
- Advancements in technology had made some energy efficient methods for homes more attractive in appearance, e.g., solar panels. The Council's planning guidance required updating to incorporate these advancements so that planning applications for such technology to be installed was not automatically refused, especially in conservation areas because the heritage aspects of the properties and the area would not be under threat. The Council could also set its own rules for conservation officers to follow for assessing these applications around existing policy framework and the Director for Climate Change had already discussed aspects with both Planning and Conservation officers. This could be done ahead of the outcome of the Local Plan review but had not so far been set as a priority because of staffing resources required against the relatively small number of properties in conservation areas where these types of applications were submitted; the focus needed to be on the types of housing that accounted for the majority of these applications. Indeed, some energy efficient alterations could take place in conservation areas anyway such as windows. Over a three-year period, there had been 25 applications for solar panels to be fitted to listed buildings, of which 15 were approved following discussions on how to make them acceptable.
- The grant funding had been lost in respect of Commitment 1.2, because of issues relating to power supply, planning, and appointing contractors. The Council was working with Midlands Net Zero Hub to prepare proposals for three Council-owned buildings, with a view to a further seven later. Lessons learned from the previous attempt were to include power supply in plans from the outset. Finding consultants with the right expertise had proven a challenge but it was hoped that Midlands Net Zero Hub would help prepare the brief to a suitable level to facilitate finding consultants. The Council would also work with other partners like the County Council so that larger schemes were submitted making them more attractive for consultants to consider bidding for the business. The

Council's staff had learnt a lot from the process and had not previously appreciated the challenges and the need for good technical advice and that these skillsets needed to be developed in-house.

- The aim to reduce gas consumption in Council buildings should be achieved by 2025 and some small-scale initiatives should produce some quick wins with longer term heating projects for replacement sources of energy were in the pipeline.
- There were some big challenges for the Council to achieve net zero carbon by 2025 but certainly good progress would be made. The degree to which the aim was achieved would depend on the level the Council would be prepared to pursue local carbon offsetting.
- Staff in all service areas worked towards the Council's aim to achieve net zero carbon and the small team of staff specifically charged with climate change as their primary focus provided advice as required.
- High-level information could be provided on the Council's website for residents on the stages reached on the CCAP.
- It was hoped to provide advice to private homeowners who wanted to pay for climate efficient adaptations to their own properties. The Director for Climate Change would review the information on the website and on Social Media links and if it pointed to helpful external organisations that provided advice on energy conservation.

The Chair thanked the Director for Climate Change and summarised the actions agreed:

1. to provide finance options for the projects in the next report in six months' time;
2. at the start of the report, provide a **Red, Amber, Green (RAG)** risk status; and
3. to provide information on conservation of energy on the website and in social media.

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

The Committee considered its work programme for 2022 as detailed at Appendix 1 to the report. Appendix 2 gave responses from the Cabinet to the comments and recommendations the Committee had made to Cabinet reports it had scrutinised.

The Chair advised that as a result of the additional remit the Committee had now been given resulting from Finance & Audit Committee (F&A) being dissolved, work would be done to divide the work this Committee needed to absorb from F&A's Work Programme and which parts would fall within the new Audit & Standards Committee. The Chair had made a request that Members receive appropriate training so that they would understand the new work they faced and that this training would be provided in a timely manner in "bite-sized chunks" to coincide when the work would be scheduled on the Committee's Work Programme. The Cabinet's Forward Plan would also be reviewed to look for any reports the Committee would need to scrutinise of a financial nature and again for training to be provided in a timely manner. The suggestion was made that where possible; these be conducted remotely.

It was noted that the Digital Strategy report would be considered at the meeting in July. Members asked for this to include what the priorities had become following the decision that the merger between Warwick and Stratford District Councils would no longer proceed. A summary of ICT tidying up tasks following up the decision not to proceed with the merger and reassurance that these had occurred was also requested.

The Chief Executive would be providing a paper to the meeting in July with an updated position statement. This would be in the form of a briefing report rather than a formal report.

Resolved that appendices 1 and 2 to the Work Programme report be noted.

(The meeting ended at 8.25pm)

CHAIR
27 June 2022