

Finance and Audit Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 10 May 2022 in the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 4.30pm.

Present: Councillors: Ashford, Barton, Davison, R Dickson, Illingworth, Mangat, Murphy, Syson and Tracey.

Also present: Councillor Day (Leader of the Council) and Councillor Hales (Portfolio Holder for Transformation/Resources), Chris Elliott (Chief Executive).

95. Appointment of Chair

It was proposed by Councillor Dickson, seconded by Councillor Davison and

Resolved that Councillor Syson be appointed as Chair for the 11 May 2022 meeting.

96. Apologies and Substitutes

- (a) There were no apologies; and
- (b) Councillor Mangat substituted for the Labour Vacancy.

97. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

98. Cabinet Agenda (Non-Confidential items and reports) – Wednesday 11 May 2022

The Committee considered the following items which would be discussed at the meeting of the Cabinet on Wednesday 11 May 2022.

Item 3 – Future Relationship with Stratford-on-Avon District Council

The Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee noted the report and its appendices. Members noted the timing of ending the potential merger was better happening now when the integration was minimal, than further down the line. It also noted that had the Council proceeded with pausing the merger to allow for further due diligence to be carried out, it would have put staff in an untenable position. It was explained to Members that although a significant amount of work had been considered abortive as a result, there were still some arrangements that could proceed, such as the Joint Digital Strategy, Legal Services, Climate Change, and the Local Plan.

The Committee agreed that the work that had gone on between the Council and Town and Parish Councils as part of the proposed merger process was vital and also noted the benefit of having relationships and engaging with Town and Parish Councils, which would be a key ingredient in how the Council moved forward.

The Committee also noted that the reliable details of the implications of ending the merger in terms of the budget, costs, and savings would be included as part of the Quarter 1 Budget Report and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) reports which would be coming to the August cycle of Committee meetings. These reports would also go through the Programme Advisory Boards (PAB's). Members also asked if the Future Forward Plan could include reference to the benefits of the work with Parish and Town Councils, and if this could be made available for the August cycle of meetings so that Councillors could consider the Quarter 1 Budget Report and the MTFS in the context of the wider picture of what the Council would look like moving forward.

The Committee placed on record its thanks to Tim Oruye (Programme Manager) for his hard work and professionalism throughout the process, and also thanked Chris Elliott for his leadership and support on what had been a huge project.

Members also noted the additional recommendation to the report to read:

"That the Significant Business Risk Register be updated as a matter of priority in the light of the decision not to proceed with the merger with SDC."

(Councillor Ashford joined during this item)

(The meeting ended at 5:39pm)

CHAIRMAN