

WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL**ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2020/21****1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require the Council to prepare an annual governance statement.
- 1.2 Governance is about how an organisation is directed and controlled in order to achieve its objectives. It therefore comprises the systems, structures and values that an organisation has in place to achieve those objectives. Good governance requires that objectives be achieved not only efficiently and effectively but also ethically and in compliance with laws and recognised standards of conduct.
- 1.3 Good governance comprises robust systems and sound structures together with effective leadership and high standards of behaviour.
- 1.4 In short, governance is "Doing the right things, in the right way."

2 THE PURPOSE OF THE ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

- 2.1 This Statement provides a summarised account of how Warwick District Council's management arrangements are set up to meet the principles of good governance set out in the Council's Constitution and how assurance is obtained that these are both effective and appropriate. It is written to provide the reader with a clear and straightforward assessment of how the governance framework has operated over the past financial year (but also up to the time of approval of the financial statements) and to identify any weaknesses or gaps in our arrangements that need to be addressed.
- 2.2 The format and scope of this Statement follows that prescribed by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA).

3 THE COUNCIL'S GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

- 3.1 Warwick District Council must operate in accordance with the law and appropriate standards and ensure that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively.
- 3.2 Warwick District Council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised.
- 3.3 In discharging these responsibilities Warwick District Council is responsible for putting in place suitable governance arrangements, including provisions for the management of risk.
- 3.4 The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, culture and values by which the authority is directed and controlled as well as its activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads its communities. It

enables the authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate services and value for money.

- 3.5 The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve aims and objectives and can therefore provide only reasonable, not absolute, assurance of effectiveness.
- 3.6 Warwick District Council has approved and adopted a Local Code of Corporate Governance that is consistent with the principles of the latest CIPFA/SOLACE¹ Framework for Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (2016).
- 3.7 The Council's corporate strategy is set out in its Fit for the Future (FFF) programme which draws together a shared vision, setting out the Council's objectives and priorities for the District and how these are to be achieved. The FFF programme is the key planning instrument for the Council. In February 2020 the Council adopted a new Business Strategy. The Strategy is based around five themes and will be used to identify and prioritise the work programme over the next three years.
- 3.8 Delivery of the Council's change programme is through the Service Area Plans in which the corporate objectives are translated into more specific aims and objectives. These are then fed down into individual performance development reviews through the Council's performance appraisal system. These include agreed expectations and, where appropriate, service standards against which service quality and improvement can be judged. Performance is monitored by individual services and reported to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. During the course of 2019/20, a new approach to performance management oversight was in development. Additional officer resource was recruited and 2020/21 saw a full roll-out of the revised approach.
- 3.9 Effective performance management oversight has not been fully-resolved, however, and the range and content of performance data that councillors receive is under review. In terms of governance, the scrutiny committees previously undertook programmed reviews of contract registers, service risk registers and performance data. This was discontinued due to the pressure on committees' workload. Scrutiny of these key governance mechanisms will form part of the review.
- 3.10 Warwick District Council has adopted a Constitution that establishes the roles and responsibilities for members of the Executive, Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee, Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Standard Committee, together with officer functions. It includes details of delegation arrangements, the Councillors' Codes of Conduct and protocols for councillor/officer relations. The Constitution is kept under review to ensure that it continues to be fit for purpose. The Council has adopted a Standards regime pursuant to the Localism Act 2011 and appointed a Standards Committee. Conduct of officers is governed through the Employee Code of Conduct and through the values and behaviours which are part of the Council's individual performance appraisal system.

¹ Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy / Society of Local Authority Chief Executives
Item 7 / Page 9

- 3.11 The Constitution contains procedures, rules and financial regulations that define clearly how decisions are taken and where authority lies for decisions. The statutory roles of Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer and Chief Financial Officer are described together with their contributions to provide robust assurance on governance and that expenditure is lawful and in line with approved budgets and procedures. The influence and oversight exerted by these posts is backed by post-holders' membership (whether permanent or 'as required') of the Corporate Management Team² (CMT).
- 3.12 In 2010 CIPFA published a statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) in local government, setting out core principles and standards relating to the role of the CFO and how it fits into the organisation's governance arrangements.
- 3.13 A specific statement is required to be reported in the Annual Governance Statement on whether the authority's financial management arrangements conform to the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement.
- 3.14 The governance requirements in the CIPFA Statement are that the CFO should be professionally qualified, report directly to the Chief Executive and be a member of the Leadership Team³, with a status at least equivalent to other members. The Statement requires that if different organisational arrangements are adopted the reasons should be explained publicly in the Council's Annual Governance Report, together with how these deliver the same impact.
- 3.15 The Head of Finance has confirmed that the Council's financial management arrangements conform to the CIPFA Statement other than in three specific aspects:
- Head of Finance reporting directly to Chief Executive.
 - Head of Finance being a member of Leadership Team.
 - Head of Finance having responsibility for Asset Management.
- 3.16 The Council's view is that the way it operates – the Head of Finance's regular attendance at Corporate Management Team/Executive meetings, budget planning meetings, and numerous ad-hoc meetings – enables the officer to have unhindered access to the most senior officer as well as senior councillors. The Head of Finance reports to the Deputy Chief Executive/Monitoring Officer. This approach has been in place for several years without any apparent problems; consequently, the Council considers that the risk of there being any detriment to the authority is low. These arrangements were confirmed within the review of the Senior Management Team⁴ (SMT) during 2021.
- 3.17 With regard to asset management, responsibility for this comes under the post of Head of Assets. As with all heads of services, the Head of Assets reports to one of the Deputy Chief Executives and is a member of the Senior Management Team.

² The Corporate Management Team comprises the Chief Executive and the two Deputy Chief Executives.

³ In the Council's case, this is likely to be the Corporate Management Team.

⁴ The Senior Management Team comprises heads of services together with the members of CMT.

- 3.18 The Executive provides the strategic direction for the Council, ensuring that the Council's priorities are established and that corporate objectives are set and achieved.
- 3.19 The primary counterbalances to the Executive are the Finance & Audit Scrutiny and the Overview & Scrutiny Committees. The roles of these committees include the opportunity to provide a robust challenge to the Executive.
- 3.20 The Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee monitors the performance of the Council, fulfilling the core functions of a typical 'audit committee' in respect of External Audit, Internal Audit and Risk Management. The Committee seeks assurance from the relevant Executive councillor (Portfolio Holder) and/or senior manager when it has concerns or queries in respect of matters relating to particular service areas.
- 3.21 'Task and Finish' Groups, comprising solely councillors, are appointed by the Scrutiny Committees to examine various issues in detail. These Groups report back to their respective Scrutiny Committees with recommendations on improvements which are, when approved, taken forward.
- 3.22 The Council has a formal complaints procedure which allows the public or other stakeholders to make a complaint regarding the service received from the Council or the conduct of councillors. The Standards Committee has responsibility for overseeing the investigation of complaints against councillors.
- 3.23 The Council has policies to help safeguard the organisation and its staff when making decisions. An Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy and set of Policies and Procedures, including a Fraud Response Plan, Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure, Money Laundering Policy and Procedure and Bribery Act 2010 Policy and Procedure, have been developed and communicated to all staff via the intranet and as part of the Staff Induction process. The Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy and the Whistleblowing Policy are reviewed by councillors annually.
- 3.24 The Council has embedded Risk Management throughout its arrangements with the Significant Business Risk Register (in effect, the Council's corporate and strategic risk register) being reviewed and updated each quarter, firstly by the Senior Management Team and then by the Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee before being considered by the Executive who assumes overall responsibility for it.
- 3.25 Council services are delivered by staff with the appropriate skills, training and level of experience. Job Descriptions and Person Specifications are in place for all posts and together with a rigorous recruitment and selection process this helps to ensure that the best candidates are appointed into each position. A significant commitment has also been made towards retaining good staff, by offering numerous 'work friendly' schemes and where possible encouraging succession planning and promotion from within. This ensures that valuable skills and experience are retained and passed on, rather than being lost. Training needs are identified through the performance appraisal system.
- 3.26 The individual performance appraisal system has been operated in the Council for a number of years, having been reviewed and subsequently refined on

several occasions. Staff are measured against operational objectives that derive from the Business Strategy. The performance appraisal system also identifies learning and developmental needs to ensure that appropriate training is made available to staff to ensure that they are able to undertake their role effectively and have the opportunity to develop.

- 3.27 Following the Local Elections in May 2019, it was agreed by the Executive, after discussions with all Group Leaders, to review the Democratic Structure of the Council. A Governance Working Party was set up within the Council (comprising Group Leaders plus an extra Member from each of the Conservative, Liberal Democrat and Green Groups) and a series of workshops led by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) was run. As a result of the review, the Council has discontinued the majority of its working parties. These have been replaced by six Programme Advisory Boards (PABs). The PABs act in an advisory capacity, or providing guidance, in developing the projects/policies of Warwick District Council and in doing so, enabling backbench members to have greater involvement in shaping the Executive decisions of the Council, particularly on services, key projects and programmes (but not day to day operations). This also helps to utilise the skills, knowledge and talent of all Councillors in a more effective way.
- 3.28 The Council has also established a joint advisory group of Councillors and a Joint Cabinet/Executive Committee with Stratford-on-Avon District Council in respect of the South Warwickshire Local Plan. The latter had its first meeting in April 2021.
- 3.29 The two Scrutiny Committees have continued to reflect and develop their core areas of work. They have revised how they select areas for scrutiny, having developed and tested a method for selecting areas to look at. This was considered for formal adoption at the scrutiny meetings in April 2021.
- 3.30 The Council strives to be open and accessible to the community. All Council committee meetings are open to the public except where confidential matters are discussed. Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, significant changes had to be made to how Council meetings are held, details of which can be found in section 5 – The impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic. All agendas and minutes are placed on-line, along with the Council’s policies and strategies. All Council meetings that are held in the Council Chamber, such as the meetings of the Council’s Executive, are recorded. When identifying the priorities and objectives for Council strategies, the views of stakeholders and the wider community are sought through a number of consultation mechanisms, and are taken into account.
- 3.31 There are terms of reference and constitutions set up for key partnerships which ensure that partners act lawfully throughout the decision-making process. Key partnerships include the Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership and South Warwickshire Crime and Disorder Partnership. Warwick District Council also works closely with several other councils and operate shared services for Building Control, Business Rates, Corporate Fraud and Legal Services.
- 3.32 At the end of 2019, the Council introduced the position of Performance Management Officer. Part of the role is to monitor the information published on the website to ensure it meets the 2015 Local Government Transparency

Code. The Council strives to publish information that is accessible and understandable to Councillors and the public, and continues to seek to make improvements in this. An example of this is achievement of the required Website Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).

- 3.33 Also, the Council's Scrutiny Committees looked at various areas of Council decision-making and service delivery, with their Annual reports submitted to Council. This included the establishment of a Task & Finish Group to look at Equality and Diversity, with an emphasis on race.
- 3.34 Internal Audit reviews were undertaken during 2020/21 on a specific and pre-determined aspect of governance, namely the 'exempt' reports, and delegated decisions taken under the Chief Executive's 'emergency powers'.

4 REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS

- 4.1 Warwick District Council is required legally to conduct an annual review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of managers within the authority who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the Audit & Risk Manager's annual report, annual service assurance statements completed by heads of services and by the findings and reports issued by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates.
- 4.2 More information on the arrangements that provide this assurance is set out below.
- 4.3 The Council's Monitoring Officer (one of the two Deputy Chief Executives) has responsibility for overseeing the implementation and operation of the Code of Corporate Governance, maintaining and updating the Code in the light of latest guidance on best practice, contemplating any changes that may be necessary to maintain it and ensure its effectiveness. All reports to Executive, Committees and Council are seen by the Monitoring Officer to ensure compliance with legal requirements.
- 4.4 The Council's Section 151 Officer has responsibility for the proper administration of the Council's finances. This includes responsibility for maintaining and reviewing the Code of Financial Practice and Code of Procurement Practice to ensure they remain fit for purpose, and submitting any additions or changes necessary to the full Council for approval. An updated Code of Procurement Practice was agreed by Council in December 2018. The Section 151 Officer is also responsible for reporting any significant breaches of the Codes to the Executive and/or the Council. All reports to Executive, Committees and Council are seen by appropriate staff within the Finance Department to ensure compliance with financial requirements.
- 4.5 The CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit in Public Service Organisations requires the head of internal audit to give an opinion annually to the Authority on its risk management, governance and control environment and that this should be used as a primary source of evidence for the annual governance statement. In regard to this, the Audit and Risk

Manager's Annual Report and Opinion for 2020/21 has concluded that, in overall terms, the areas audited were adequately managed and controlled.

- 4.6 In addition to the above, the Council has conducted a formal review of its internal control environment and collated evidence and assurance from a variety of sources. This has included assurances, set out on "service assurance statements", from heads of services on the effectiveness of the internal control environment. The Statements did not reveal any issues of significant concern.
- 4.7 The work of the Council's Internal Audit function is governed by the UK Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS). The PSIAS are mandatory for all internal auditors working in the UK public sector. The Standards require an external and independent assessment at least every five years of the performance of public sector internal audit units and their conformance with the PSIAS. In Warwick District Council's case a review was undertaken during 2020/21. Some areas for improvement were identified with the principal one being that the service should undertake a more risk-based approach, particularly in regard to compilation of the Audit Plan. An essential element of the assessment is to confirm that the annual audit opinion issued by Internal Audit may be relied upon as a key source of evidence and assurance and this was found to be the case. The findings of this review together with an action plan to address the issues raised were reported to the Finance and Audit Scrutiny Committee on 17 March 2021.
- 4.8 Grant Thornton was appointed as the Council's External Auditor for five years from 2018/19 to 2022/23 and is responsible for reviewing the Council's Statements of Accounts. In addition to reviewing the 2020/21 Statement of Accounts, Grant Thornton issued a formal opinion on the Council's arrangements for securing Value for Money, concluding that the Council had made proper arrangements in all significant respects to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

5 THE IMPACT OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

- 5.1 On 23 March 2020, the Prime Minister made an unprecedented broadcast to the nation which, in effect, triggered a "lockdown" to limit the spread of coronavirus. An element of the lockdown instruction was that people would only be able to travel to work if it was necessary and the individual was unable to work from home. This had an immediate impact on the business of the Council; for both officers and Councillors.
- 5.2 In order to continue the delivery of services upon which our communities rely, a roll-out plan was developed to enable as many officers as possible to work from home and, where site visits were required, clear guidance was provided to staff to enable them to continue to provide essential services in a safe way that complies with social distancing guidance. In tandem with this, arrangements were made to enable the Council's Executive, Group Leaders and most senior officers to meet 'remotely' each Monday afternoon to provide the strategic oversight and direction for the Council at this most challenging of times. Meetings later moved to a monthly frequency as the national situation eased. Eventually, such meetings returned to those held to consider draft Executive reports and other Council business.

- 5.3 Arrangements were quickly put in place to enable the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Group Leaders, to make decisions on matters deemed to be an emergency. Shortly after this, Parliament put into law the Coronavirus Act 2020 which provided authority for the Secretary of State to make Regulations enabling Council committees to meet virtually. During the interim period, a temporary scheme of delegation was also put in place to enable decisions relating to key services to be made, including planning decisions that would otherwise have been determined by the Planning Committee.
- 5.4 Initially, the Senior Management Team met weekly to oversee the Council's response and ensure services were being delivered effectively. Later on in the year, it met fortnightly. The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Business – one of the Councillors on the Executive – was briefed regularly on the financial implications of the pandemic.
- 5.5 Another consequence of the pandemic has been that the Council has been unable to hold Council, Executive and Committee meetings in a physical setting. Initially, for the first couple of the months of the pandemic impacting on the Council and the provision of services, committee meetings were suspended with a Leadership Coordination Group being established to make decisions. In addition, the Chief Executive was given delegated powers to make decisions that normally would have to be made by the Executive.
- 5.6 Eventually, regulations were introduced by the Government that enabled committee meetings to take place remotely, under specific conditions. In response to this, the Democratic Services Team worked with ICT to deliver the Council's meetings via 'Microsoft Teams', with a live broadcast linked through to YouTube. While it was a priority to get meetings functioning again, it was also important that procedures were in place to ensure that the meetings were run effectively in order to avoid some of the problems that occurred at certain other councils.
- 5.7 Democratic Services developed a rollout programme of meetings with testing and increased complexity. The Council now has a robust procedure in place for remote meetings, which has led to widespread positive feedback from officers, councillors and residents. With broadcasting via YouTube, the Council has significantly increased its presence on social media as well, with over 350 new subscribers to the channel and tens of thousands of views across the numerous committee meetings that have been broadcast.
- 5.8 The August meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee established a 'Task and Finish' Group comprising six Councillors to undertake a 'Step Back Review' of the Council's response to the pandemic and identify learning points. The Group covered the following five areas:
1. Initial response to move council from HQ based to working from home
 2. Liaising and working with other authorities
 3. Change in service delivery (for example green bins)
 4. Communications to the wider community
 5. How the business of the Council (as opposed to day to day services) was managed, specifically on how decisions made during the hiatus were open to scrutiny.

- 5.9 The Group identified eight broad findings and made six comprehensive recommendations. Through the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, the Group reported its findings and recommendations to Executive on 18 March 2021. These were wholly adopted by Executive.
- 5.10 In general terms, the pandemic has revealed many issues the Council will need to reflect on once business returns to a steady state. It is already clear that the possibilities provided by new technology need to be fully harnessed to improve factors such as: work/life balance; equality, diversity, and inclusion; environmental impact; and health and well-being of both officers and Members.
- 5.11 A consequence for the Council of the pandemic has been the reduction in income from sources such as parking charges, planning fees and rent and service charges. Whilst it is not the remit of Annual Governance Statement to go into the detail of the impact, there will be issues of financial governance to reflect upon which must cover management, monitoring, review and scrutiny.
- 5.12 The financial implications fall broadly into the following areas:
- Additional costs relating to the crisis.
 - Reduced service income as service provision and demand has reduced.
 - Impact upon 2021/22 Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy, and Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.
 - Significant sums of additional Government funding for business to be administered by the Council by way of additional business rate relief and business grants.
 - Impact on individual Council projects and the capacity of the Council to undertake those projects in the short and medium term.
- 5.13 In order to help to mitigate the financial impacts of the pandemic upon local authorities, the Government has issued various ring-fenced and non-ring-fenced grants. Whilst this has significantly assisted the Council's finances in 2020/21, it did not fully compensate for the financial losses. With the impacts of the pandemic continuing into 2021/22, the Council's finances remain at risk as a result of the pandemic.
- 5.14 The on-going financial implications need to continue to be assessed by officers throughout 2021/22 and be reported to members to help to inform the decision-making process.

6 **JOINT WORKING WITH STRATFORD-ON-AVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

- 6.1 At the start of the year, Warwick District Council and Stratford-on-Avon District Council agreed to work more closely together to obtain various operational benefits. Later, a report went to Warwick District Council's Executive in July 2020 setting out a number of reasons for further integration with Stratford-on-Avon District Council, as follows:
- A strong political relationship between the two organisations
 - Recognised sense of place
 - Consistent geography already established for the South Warwickshire Community Safety Partnership, Shakespeare's England, and South Warwickshire Health Partnership

- Single economic geography with significant number of residents, living in one district and working in the other
- Increased effectiveness, efficiency and ability to deliver value for money
- by the two authorities
- Ability to produce a joint spatial plan for South Warwickshire, which would set a clear footprint for the area and result in reductions in the cost of producing such a plan
- Ability to have some further influence in relation to the Coventry & Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership through having an enhanced voice
- Take advantage of current vacancies in management teams at both Councils
- Ability to jointly commission contracts to obtain increased economies of scale and improve services.

6.2 Since this meeting further work has continued in relation to the sharing of management team positions. As at 31 March 2021, there are five joint roles across the two authorities, including the Head of Financial Services (s151 Officer). It is expected that the remainder of the Management Team posts will be shared by the middle to end of 2021 subject to the necessary consultation and approvals at that time.

6.3 As a prelude to further staff integration the following policies have now been aligned:

- Joint Organisational Change Policy Statement
- Joint Redeployment Policy and Procedure
- Joint Redundancy Policy and Procedure.

6.4 In relation to joint contracts and arrangements, the Waste Management Contract was procured jointly and both authorities have agreed a more detailed paper on preparing a Local Plan for South Warwickshire. A joint SDC/WDC Cabinet/Executive meeting considered this matter at its inaugural meeting in April 2021.

6.5 In order to learn lessons from their experiences, both councils are now benchmarking with other councils that have recently formed 'super districts'.

6.6 The international accountancy and consultancy firm, Deloitte, was commissioned to undertake a review of the financial and non-financial benefits of further integration, up to and including the possibility of a full merger between the organisations.

6.7 The recommendation from Deloitte was that in order to achieve the maximum potential financial and non-financial benefits for the residents of South Warwickshire a full merger of the two councils should be considered.

6.8 Alongside the potential benefits the report also identified the risks and disbenefits that may arise from a merger of the two authorities. However, Deloitte contend that "the risks can be mitigated and so the very clear benefits outweigh the potential risks given the opportunity for mitigation."

6.9 The overall conclusion of the report was:

"This high-level business case has found a strong strategic, financial and operational case for merging the two Councils. Such an initiative would have risks that could lead to dis-benefits, but these risks could be managed through an effective implementation approach.

Should the two Councils decide to proceed with this initiative, substantial further planning and due diligence should be undertaken to establish a detailed implementation plan."

- 6.10 The report can be viewed by clicking on the following link: [Deloitte Report](#)
- 6.11 In February 2021 both Councils committed to seeking a full merger to create a new single statutory council for South Warwickshire by 2024.
- 6.12 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 permits councils to merge. Although it is clear from public statements that the Minister of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) is supportive of the concept of district councils merging it would still be necessary for a formal submission to be made from the two authorities to central government and for this to command local support.
- 6.13 The Council proposes to expand the risk register set out in the Deloitte Report to provide a much more detailed risk register. This will be an important part of moving forward with the proposal to merge.
- 6.14 In terms of scrutiny of the proposed merger and the joint Local Plan, the approach is being developed at the time of producing this Statement. The latest thinking is set out in the following paragraphs.
- 6.15 The Chairs of the two Scrutiny Committees have identified five broad themes to guide the process of scrutiny of the proposed merger:
1. Impact on services to residents
 2. Democratic Representation
 3. Impact on Strategic Priorities
 4. Finance and Council Tax
 5. Communication and Consultation
- 6.16 Additional focus would be given to specific services (e.g. Neighbourhood Services, Green Spaces) and the importance of understanding the interrelation with Parish & Town Councils.
- 6.17 The Chairs of the two Scrutiny Committees agreed the following recommendations:
- Scrutiny for the merger should continue to be done separately by the two Scrutiny Committees but that the Chairs should consult frequently to ensure that there is good synergy between the work of the committees.
 - Scrutiny be conducted in line with the five themes identified, with specific service areas as identified being covered in the 'Impact on Services to Residents' theme, and the impact on Town and Parish Councils should become a cross-cutting theme.
 - Committee Services be asked to prepare a scrutiny plan which outlines a timetable for Scrutiny Committees to consider these themes (the timetable

giving sufficient scope for the Committees to influence the development of policy rather than simply reviewing it).

- The Council should seek additional resource to support the scrutiny of this programme, both in terms of support from officers and from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny.

6.18 In regard to the joint Local Plan, the Chairs agree with the Executive that joint scrutiny with Stratford-on-Avon District Council is appropriate. The Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees are to meet with relevant officers and agree an approach in the new Council year.

7 SIGNIFICANT GOVERNANCE ISSUES

7.1 There are clearly major risks associated with the proposal to merge Warwick District Council and Stratford-on-Avon District Council. A comprehensive joint Risk Register in relation to this project needs to be prepared and monitored.

7.2 Business Continuity Plans have been neglected during the pandemic. In the light of extensive homeworking service business continuity plans need to be reviewed and updated.

7.3 The range and content of performance data that councillors receive is under review. As part of this, the review needs to consider how best Councillors can fulfil their scrutiny role of contract registers, service risk registers and performance data to ensure that the information can be accessed by Councillors and brought forward for detailed scrutiny as deemed necessary.

8 CERTIFICATION

8.1 The governance framework has been in place at Warwick District Council for the year ended 31 March 2021 and up to the date of approval of the annual statement of accounts.

Signed:



Councillor Andrew Day
Leader of the Council



Christopher Elliott
Chief Executive

Dated:

13 May 2021

13 May 2021