Warwick District Council
2 September 2020

Item 7 Leader's and Portfolio Holders' Statements

Portfolio Holder for Business & Finance (Councillor Hales)
I would like to pay credit to the great work done by the council and its partners to reopen the High Streets, retail hospitality and leisure sectors has led to a significant increase in footfall and businesses opening up in the high 80% now. We continue to work very closely with all these sectors and also the tourism industry as green shoots start to appear.

Small Business & Retail, Hospitality & Leisure Grant Funds - We have now completed the grants and am delighted to announce that the team made 2,447 payments and a total of £31,690,000. Based on the original total grant received of £33,124,000, this equates to over 95.6% paid to businesses in our area. There has been a huge amount of work contacting businesses who qualify for this grant from Paul Town/Steve Marshall & their team & also the team processing all the grants and ensuring these businesses receive these grants into their accounts as quickly as possible, so my thanks to Jon Dawson and his team as well.

Discretionary Grants – We have now launched our final scheme, and have opened it up to all businesses, whether they be based from offices or home, who have had their business income affected by Covid 19. Can I pay credit to Gayle Spencer and her team for all their hard work so far and will update figures at meeting.

Finance Systems Replacement Project **–** Warwick District Council have signed a £489,000 with enterprise provider Technology One, which will help digitally transform the council IT systems. My thanks to all the project board for their hard work & also Keith Eales for leading this and his hard work in making sure this important project has been kept on track.

In terms of finance, I would like to thank the Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee and especially the Head of Finance for their hard work as we continue to review our finances and the challenges that lie ahead, and am looking forward at working with Councillor Bartlett and the Programme Advisory Board and reporting back with how we are going to deal with these pressing issues.

Portfolio Report Development Services (Councillor Cooke)

Planning Enforcement
I have asked the Development Manager Gary Fisher to review the entire operation of our Enforcement Team and bring forward proposals aimed at lowering the backlog of outstanding cases which currently stands at about 250. This is in spite of us increasing staffing last year. I have received complaints from several Council members about a lack of progress on cases they have reported, but also from some of our Parish Councils.

I have asked Mr Fisher to also consider not only how we prioritise the order of dealing with cases but how we communicate to private complainants and to Parish Councils. We need to keep them informed as to how the complaint will be handled and progressed.

I have also asked Mr Fisher to arrange a briefing for all members on enforcement matters. It is clear to me that some council members do not understand how the system works and the information that **they** should provide when they submit a complaint.

Local Plan Review
Irrespective of what happens with our proposed merger with Stratford we have always intended to work together and do our Local Plan Review jointly. The joint review would eventually lead to producing a South Warwickshire Local Plan.

Discussions are currently taking place between Dave Barber, Phil Clarke and senior officers at Stratford.

Discussions are progressing positively and although it is early days, it looks likely that there would be a Joint Local Plan Team, resourced from within the existing staff resources of each Council. Possibly a requirement for a total of 3 or 4 members of staff, and that during periods of intense activity, this team is supported by the remaining planning policy staff of each Council.

In terms of governance, sovereignty would stay with each Council, in that Plan Submission and Adoption should be decided independently by each Council. However, feeding in to sign off of key decisions by the respective Councils a number of other measures would need to be put in place which are still being discussed.

Portfolio Holder for Health & Community Protection (Councillor Falp)

Pavement Licences
The regulatory section is extremely busy at the moment but with support from colleagues the web site is being updated regularly with information on Pavement Furniture licences , how to apply and who has applied. As you know there is only a two week turn around for pavement furniture licences. If Councillors search for pavement licences on the District Council website it will give you information on what premises have applied for a licence.

Up to last Thursday 27th August 12 applications have been received so far (the largest number in Warwickshire). 8 have been determined (with one refusal and one partial issue), two are in Consultation and two are in Determination.

The process has also begun to contact premises around the Town centres (to start with) who have not obtained a licence but are using the pavements, about ensuring compliance with the law. So there is an expectation that numbers of applications will rise.

I would like to thank Kathleen Rose the Licensing Team Leader and all the staff working on this for the speed and efficient way it is being handled.

Dog Control Orders
Councillors have been receiving e mails from residents re these orders. The Licence and Regulatory Committee asked at a recent meeting, before the Dog Control Orders current regulations and suggestions for possible changes went out to public consultation, that Land Owners, Parish and Town Councils and other key stakeholders were consulted. This was before they would meet to debate what may or may not be included in the proposals that would then go out for Public Consultation.

One of my residents contacted me and asked why the District Council were banning dogs from Newbold Comyn. That is not happening and never was but when some people choice to raise alarm without all the facts known and before what is being consulted on is even agreed miss information happens. I am sorry that dog owners have been upset by what has happened but I can assure them when the time is right they will be properly consulted so the committee can have an informed debate with their views rightly heard

Portfolio Holder for Housing & Property (Councillor Matecki)
I am delighted to tell you that we completed on the former Waverley riding school in Cubbington, a residential development site which has existing planning permission for 17 dwellings including 7 affordable homes providing a mix of units. This is a positive step forward, boosting the number of affordable homes and for our wider plans to enable local people to have high quality, modern, energy efficient homes within the district.

With over 60 former rough sleepers/single homeless people now accommodated as part of the Council's everyone in initiative, the team have been working on the provision of move on solutions and last month submitted a bid to Government. This sought financial help with securing appropriate accommodation and the provision of support to enable people to maintain their homes. The bid has been 'co-produced' with MHCLG advisors who are happy with our approach. We should hear more about this at the end of the month.

The Council's Housing Allocation Policy has now been in place for four years and was geared to address the conditions that prevailed at the beginning of the decade. Much has changed since then and to ensure that our policy is better aligned, we have been reviewing the policy so that it is flexible and responsive to the contemporary challenges that our society faces. I have already invited the Shadow Portfolio Holders to put forward thoughts or ideas and will be putting our ideas for change to our first Housing Policy Board. The Allocation Policy sets out to ensure that the scarce resource of social housing is allocated fairly, transparently and legally, balancing all the complex and competing issues