

# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 8 February 2022 in the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00 pm.

**Present:** Councillor Milton (Chair); Councillors Ashford, Cullinan, A Dearing, J Dearing, Jacques, Kohler, Leigh-Hunt and Russell.

**Also Present:** Councillor Rhead – Portfolio Holder, Climate Change.

## 44. **Apologies and Substitutes**

- (a) An apology for absence was received from Councillor Redford.
- (b) Councillor Ashford substituted for Councillor Morris.

## 45. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made.

## 46. **Minutes**

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 7 December 2021 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

## 47. **Cabinet Agenda (Non-Confidential items and reports) – Thursday 10 February 2022**

The Committee considered the following items which would be discussed at the meeting of the Cabinet on Thursday 10 February 2022.

### Item 13 – Decarbonisation of Council Assets

The Committee recommended to Cabinet that:

- (1) Standards set out by the Government for de-carbonisation and retrofitting and those the Council would apply, should be included within the report.
- (2) The Climate Emergency PAB, within the terms of its remit, should be involved more in developing some of the schemes outlined in the report.
- (3) A schedule/plan showing when stages of the process would be implemented, and the expected impact as a result, should be produced.

### Item 9 – Net Zero Carbon Development Plan Document

Appendix 4 - Net-Zero Carbon Development Plan Document: Revised Viability Study, a lengthy document, was only circulated late on the day of the meeting. This gave Members of Overview & Scrutiny Committee insufficient time to review it properly. The Committee was informed that

the delay was due to unavoidable staff absence. The Director for Climate Change provided a brief verbal summary of the content.

It was explained that Recommendation 3 in the report, that delegated authority should be given to the Head of Place and Economy in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change to make further non-substantive amendments to the draft DPD prior to consultation commencing, meant that Members would have the opportunity to feed through comments once they had been able to properly review the Appendix. If the changes requested were substantive amendments, then these had to be approved through Cabinet.

The Committee supported the report.

The Committee expressed concern about maintaining the 40% affordable housing commitment when viability was questioned and asked that the Council investigated mechanisms to defend this through the planning process.

(Councillor Rhead left the meeting.)

#### **48. Update on Joint Work of WDC and SDC**

The Committee considered a report from the Chief Executive which set out the progress of the work being done to enable effective scrutiny of the proposals to achieve joint working with Stratford-on-Avon District Council.

Appendix 1 to the report set out the Programme Risk Register.

Both Warwick District Council (WDC) and Stratford-on-Avon District Council (SDC) had agreed a vision to create a single statutory South Warwickshire Council covering all of the activities currently carried out by SDC and WDC by 1 April 2024.

Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee had agreed that at each of their meetings, a progress report would be submitted for consideration whilst work was ongoing to merge the service areas of both Councils and depending on the response from the Secretary of State, to enable scrutiny of the political merger also.

The Chair asked Members to consider what the Committee should be looking at now that the merger process had moved to the next stage following the decision made by both Councils on 13 December 2021 to formally apply to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to become the South Warwickshire District Council.

Various ideas/points raised by Members were:

- Should time be set aside to look at what actions needed to happen in the time prior to receiving the Secretary of State's decision.
- To look at service areas where joint working was already happening to find out if there were things that required improvement as the merger progressed. Delivery of services to residents.
- Climate Change was something both Councils were driving forward very well so was there a need to continue to scrutinise this within the context of the scrutiny of the merger.

- The shape of the future democracy of the Councils should be considered for scrutiny.
- Continuing consultation and engagement with residents.
- Impact of joint working with SDC on WDC's work and ambitions.

The Deputy Chief Executive explained that the process of integrating teams at both Councils had only just started, so it would be difficult to determine what difference this would make right now and to give meaningful data. The main change to have taken place so far was Heads of Service covering the service areas at both Councils, so in effect, managing two teams. Work had been ongoing about governance and recommendations would be coming forward on how joint scrutiny by SDC and WDC could be carried out going forward. He asked Members to wait for the outcome on suggestions coming forward from the next meeting of the Joint Arrangements Steering Group (JASG) when governance arrangements would be discussed. He hoped to give clearer advice to the Committee at the meeting in April.

In response to a question from Councillor Kohler, the Deputy Chief Executive explained that the Programme Risk Register was discussed and updated weekly by an officer programme board. More proposals had been considered in respect of the highest rated risk, the integration of ICT systems across the two councils. Following on from comments made on these, more detailed proposals for sign off would be coming forward and it was hoped that the risk rating for ICT would then reduce.

Councillor J Dearing raised a concern that both Councils might be driving forward Climate Change ambitions with slightly different approaches in terms of staffing and budget resource and that it was still appropriate to keep a watching brief to help WDC achieve its ambitions. The Deputy Chief Executive advised raising these concerns through their political groups and then the group leaders could raise these at the Leadership Coordination Group.

The Deputy Chief Executive would liaise with the Chair to bring proposals for joint scrutiny to the April meeting.

#### 49. **Fly-tipping Enforcement Update**

The Chair advised Members that the report on fly-tipping enforcement had not been completed in time for proper consideration at the meeting. He had agreed that it would be delivered in time for the meeting in March but had asked for additional information to be added to it which was:

- details of the number of reported fly-tipping incidents over recent years (ideally broken down by Ward level);
- details of the number of reported fly-tip incidents that the Council was obliged to clear;
- the response time for clearing the incidents;
- a summary of any consequential action taken against fly-tipping offenders; and
- the risk-based analysis of the impact of the 123+ on fly-tipping in the District.

50. **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.

Councillor Kohler gave an update on the Service Area Dashboard and was pleased to announce that it was now a lot more useable on an iPad. Members asked for:

- all councillors to receive training on how to use the Dashboard; and
- a briefing for all councillors.

Once all Members had access to the Dashboard, then the Committee would need to decide how to use the information provided on the Dashboard to identify areas requiring scrutiny.

Councillor Kohler asked for a document written by the Performance Management Officer called "Workaround to Intranet and Business Intelligence site access for iPad for Councillors" to be circulated. However, it was proving difficult to read this document on an iPad at the same time as trying to follow its instructions to access the Dashboard on an iPad. The Deputy Chief Executive suggested that he would ask the Performance Management Officer to review the problem of reading the document at the same time as trying to use it to access the Dashboard before the document was circulated.

It was agreed to invite the Head of Development Services, Adrian Harding, to the next meeting to speak about the issues faced in Development Services for dealing with the processing of planning applications within the statutory deadlines and the backlog of work within planning enforcement. The report should include an update on recent performance and plans to improve performance for residents in the near future. Staffing levels were a concern in light of recent staff turnover within the department.

An item was withdrawn from the Work Programme in respect of the sustainability gap on listed buildings which had been covered by NZC4 in Appendix 2 of the Net Zero Carbon Development Plan Document.

The Chair referred Members to Appendix 3 which was a record of a scrutiny session held to discuss the "Developing a Digital Strategy for South Warwickshire" report which was considered by Cabinet in December 2021. It was noted that an action had been placed on Councillor Milton as a result of the session to liaise with the Portfolio Holder – Transformation & Resources and the Head of ICT to liaise to agree the key points in the project when a report should come to the Committee for scrutiny.

**Resolved** that

- (1) appendices 1, 2 and 3 to the Work Programme report be noted;

- (2) training and a briefing be provided to all Councillors in respect of the Service Area Dashboard;
- (3) the Head of Development Services be invited to attend the next meeting to discuss issues faced in the service area; and
- (4) the policy gap on the sustainability on listed buildings be removed from the Work Programme.

(The meeting ended at 7.37pm)

CHAIR  
8 March 2022