



## Agenda Item 8

Executive Committee  
1 October 2020

### **Title: Progress Report on Joint Work with Stratford District Council**

**Lead Officer: Chris Elliott**

**Portfolio Holder: Councillor Andrew Day**

**Public report**

**Wards of the District directly affected: All**

Contrary to the policy framework:	No
Contrary to the budgetary framework:	No
Key Decision:	No
Included within the Forward Plan:	No
Equality Impact Assessment Undertaken:	Not applicable
Consultation & Community Engagement:	Not applicable
Final Decision:	Yes

### **Officer/Councillor Approval**

<b>Officer Approval</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Name</b>
Chief Executive	14.09.20	Chris Elliott
Head of Service	14.09.20	-
CMT	14.09.20	Andrew Jones, Bill Hunt, Chris Elliott, Dave Barber
Section 151 Officer	14.09.20	Mike Snow
Monitoring Officer	14.09.20	Andrew Jones
Finance	14.09.20	Mike Snow
Portfolio Holder(s)	14.09.20	Councillor Andrew Day

## 1. Summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to inform members of progress made in respect of decisions made at the end of June 2020 relating to joint work with Stratford District Council (SDC) and on Local Government Review and to seek authority to progress other opportunities with SDC.

## 2. Recommendation

- 2.1. The Executive notes the progress made in respect of its decisions made at the 30<sup>th</sup> June Executive.
- 2.2. The Executive agrees that other opportunities for joint work with SDC outside of SMT also be explored as a priority and be reported back upon early in the new year.

## 3. Reasons for the Recommendation

### Recommendation 2.1

- 3.1 At its meeting on 13 July the Executive agreed that:

"2.1The Executive agrees that the joint statement (Appendix 1 of that report – *see attached*) that was issued by the Leader of the Council and the Leader of Stratford on Avon District Council (SDC) be endorsed, and in doing so:

- i) Agrees to a jointly commissioned review of local government across South Warwickshire and the wider Warwickshire County area;
- ii) that the Leaders of this Council and of SDC invite all of the other Borough/District Councils in the County, Warwickshire County Council and the Warwickshire Association of Local Councils (WALC) on behalf of the town and parish councils, to participate in the review as equal partners.
- iii) that the Leader of the Council be the Council's nominee on a multi Council working party to steer the review.
- iv) that the Leadership Co-ordinating Group (i.e. all the Political Group Leaders and the Executive) act as this Council's internal steering group of the review and the joint work with SDC.
- v) that the brief for the review be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader and the Leadership Co-ordinating Group and that the report be procured as a matter of urgency.
- vi) that provision of cost for the review be made from a source to be determined by the S151 Officer (at the time of writing the cost has not been determined and will be affected by the number of Councils participating).

2.2The Executive agrees in the context of the joint statement to exploring with SDC, in relation to the following:

- i) Sharing of Senior Management Team posts across the two authorities;
- ii) Exploration of shared contracts across the two authorities; and,
- iii) That agreement be given in principle to conducting a Joint Core Strategy/Local Plan Review and that a further paper be presented setting out details of a proposed programme, a member and officer governance.

## Agenda Item 8

Further reports to be presented to Employment and/or Executive on all of the items above as soon as possible.

2.3 Subject to the agreement to 2.1 above it is recommended to Council that:

- (1) That the principle of joint working with SDC be included as part of the Council's Business Strategy.
- (2) That agreement(s) be entered into with SDC pursuant to section 113 of the Local Government Act 1972 and all other enabling powers so that employees can be placed at the disposal of the other Councils as may be required"

2.4 £35,000 be provided from the Service Transformation Reserve to fund the Council's contribution to the joint study and for additional support in respect of communications.

2.5 The cabinet of the County Council be asked to reconsider its informal decision to commission a separate business case for a single unitary Council and instead, to participate in the joint study with the other Borough and District Councils to look at all options and to listen to the public's views".

3.2 In terms of progress in respect of the first of the endorsed recommendations:

i) All Borough and District Councils were invited to join the review and all have agreed to do so. WALC have also agreed. Warwickshire County Council was invited as an equal partner and initially agreed but then decided it would commission a business case for a single county wide unitary. It was felt that it was impossible for WCC to be both part of the joint work and pursue a separate case especially as its brief had not and has not been shared nor was an opportunity given to offer a comment on a draft of the subsequent report presented to the WCC Cabinet on 27<sup>th</sup> August.

ii) The brief for the review was agreed and is attached at Appendix 2. Deloitte were commissioned to carry out the work from a framework with SDC as the procuring body on behalf of all the Borough and District Councils.

iii) The Council's Group Leaders when meeting as the Leadership Co-ordinating Group are kept up to date with progress.

iv) The sum of £35,000 was agreed as the Council's contribution to the cost of the review and communications.

v) As part of the review work a number of steps are to be undertaken to engage the community to help the Borough and District Councils to arrive at a conclusion on the options. These steps include focus groups with residents across the county area; a telephone survey of a sample of residents; a focus group of parish and town councils; businesses; and other key stakeholders. The first of the focus groups will commence before the end of September.

vi) Discussions have been held with various stakeholders to gain their perspective on the issues and approaches inherent in the options.

3.3 In respect of the second of the endorsed recommendations:

i) A Head of Service from SDC – Julie Lewis - is now also operating as Head of Neighbourhood Services for WDC. An advert of a Joint Head of ICT has been placed and interviews will have been held and concluded by the time this report is considered. Work on addressing the other vacancies will be timed so they could be implemented in the next financial year.

ii) Work is now progressing looking at a Joint Waste Contract. A report will be forthcoming for the November Executive to consider the details. It is also recognised that there are other possible procurement opportunities that could be exploited and a mapping exercise is underway to look at them and in particular at the timing.

iii) Elsewhere on this report is a detailed report setting out the proposals for a Joint Local Plan for South Warwickshire.

3.4 The third recommendation has been actioned.

### **Recommendation 2.2**

3.5 Whilst examining how the “splicing” of the SMT’s of both Councils might be achieved and in the context of other discussions about how the Council can maintain service delivery but with fewer resources, discussions have identified that various opportunities outside of SMT level either exist or should be subject to examination over the next few months with the intention of reporting back on progress early in the new year (2021).

3.6 Mapping work of IT systems and procurement opportunities will also be undertaken as part of that opportunity assessment.

## **4. Policy Framework**

### **4.1. Fit for the Future (FFF)**

4.1.1 The Council’s FFF Strategy is designed to deliver the Vision for the District of making it a Great Place to Live, Work and Visit. To that end amongst other things the FFF Strategy contains several key projects. This report shows the way forward for implementing a significant part of one of the Council’s key projects.

4.1.2 The FFF Strategy has 3 strands, People, Services and Money, and each has an external and internal element to it, the details of which can be found [on the Council’s website](#). The table below illustrates the impact of this proposal if any in relation to the Council’s FFF Strategy.”

### **4.2. FFF Strands**

#### **4.2.1 External impacts of proposal(s)**

**People - Health, Homes, Communities** - The proposal could assist with the attainment of the Council’s objectives across all its policy priorities.

**Services - Green, Clean, Safe** - The proposal could assist with the attainment of the Council’s objectives across all its policy priorities.

**Money- Infrastructure, Enterprise, Employment** - The proposal could assist with the attainment of the Council's objectives across all its policy priorities.

### 4.2.2. **Internal impacts of the proposal(s)**

**People - Effective Staff** – The initial proposals will help to address vacant posts in the Senior Management Teams of both Councils. A wider examination will help to address other employment opportunities.

**Services - Maintain or Improve Services** - In addressing people and finance issues it will enable the Council to better maintain or improve services.

**Money - Firm Financial Footing over the Longer Term** - This would help the Council to address the unfolding financial issue arising from the Covid 19 emergency on top of the underlying pressures.

### 4.3. **Supporting Strategies**

4.3.1. Each strand of the FFF Strategy has several supporting strategies but none are particularly relevant here.

### 4.4. **Changes to Existing Policies**

4.4.1. The Council's Business Strategy has been updated to reflect this area of work as it will be significant. However, it is not anticipated that this will divert the Council from tackling Climate Emergency as the central plank of its policy objectives and indeed working closer with SDC should aid that objective.

### 4.5. **Impact Assessments**

None at this stage.

## 5. **Budgetary Framework**

5.1 At this point other than the cost of contributing toward the review there is no immediate budgetary impact. However, the proposals if implemented should enable beneficial financial impacts to occur in the short term in respect of the joint work with SDC.

5.2 The potential for change within WDC of working with SDC is significant and could create a significant body of additional work for the transitional phase and given the extensive work programme already of the Council some additional resource will be needed.

## 6. **Risks**

6.1 There is clearly a risk that the money and effort expended on the review and the joint work may not deliver the expected benefits for WDC and more importantly for its communities. This is best mitigated by ensuring an effective scope of work and that in the detailed papers for the joint work that the benefits are clearly identified, quantified and assessed for deliverability.

**7. Alternative Option(s) considered**

- 7.1 The Executive could decide not to agree to explore further opportunities but this is not helpful in the context of the challenges which the Council now faces.