

# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 12 April 2022 in the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00 pm.

**Present:** Councillor Milton (Chair); Councillors A Dearing, J Dearing, B Gifford, Illingworth, Kohler, Leigh-Hunt, Margrave, Redford and Skinner.

**Also Present:** Councillors Bartlett – Portfolio Holder, Culture, Tourism & Leisure, Day – Leader of the Council, Hales – Portfolio Holder, Transformation/Resources, and Matecki – Portfolio Holder, Housing.

## 60. **Apologies and Substitutes**

- (a) An apology for absence was received from Councillor Morris.
- (b) Councillor B Gifford substituted for Councillor Russell, Councillor Illingworth substituted for Councillor Jacques and Councillor Skinner substituted for Councillor Cullinan.

## 61. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made.

## 62. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting 8 March 2022 were not available for approval and would be ready for consideration at the meeting in May.

## 63. **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.

Councillor Day was asked to make a brief statement about the withdrawal of two reports that were scheduled to be discussed at Cabinet the following week. He explained that Item 4 – Joint Governance – Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick District Council and Item 5 – Inter-Authority

Agreement between Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick District Council on the Cabinet agenda had been withdrawn until the next meeting of the Cabinet following receipt of an email from Stratford-on-Avon District Council because they were progressing a bit slower than Warwick. To continue to work to the same timescales, it had been decided to delay consideration of the reports.

In response to questions from Members, Councillor Day and the Chief Executive explained that:

- SDC was coming to terms with the way that WDC did business. SDC did not have a local housing company for example and required more time to understand how that worked, the related risks and benefits; WDC had already been through due diligence, but SDC was now asking for more time.
- The changes required by both Councils had not been one-sided. SDC was beginning to hold more evening meetings for example and in the new municipal year, would be appointing an opposition Chair to the Scrutiny Committee as WDC did.
- It was important that the two councils worked in step therefore the better option had been to delay consideration of the Cabinet reports. The concern was the impact of officers and shared service plans. There would be a meeting with the SDC Chief Executive and Leader on Thursday, and it was hoped to resolve the timetable issues at the meeting. Councillor Day would circulate a full report on the situation would be given to all Councillors ahead of Cabinet the following week.
- In light of the additional time required by SDC, none of the planned major milestones in the project had been affected as yet because the response from the Secretary of State had not responded to the request for the two councils to merge. The Inter-Authority Agreement (IAA) dealt mainly with the integration of service areas and if timing was affected, it would be in relation to the delay of the IAA. Until further discussions had been held with SDC and what information it still required, it was difficult to state the impact of the delay. Service integration could continue up to the point a political decision was required.
- Using SDC's Legal Services started 1 April and would continue without any impact from the delay.
- The integration of Environment and Operations was the most advanced and therefore most affected by the delay but ICT work in this area could still progress whilst the actions were officer based and not requiring a political decision and the IAA had been concluded.

64. **Cabinet Agenda (Non-Confidential items and reports) – Wednesday 20 April 2022**

The Committee considered the following items which would be discussed at the meeting of the Cabinet on Wednesday 20 April 2022.

Item 4 – Joint Governance – Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick District Councils

The Committee noted that the report had been withdrawn, that this may impact on the planned integration of services with potentially a delay to this. There were concerns around this and the Leader agreed to provide clarification on the impact of this to Cabinet next week for all Councillors.

#### Item 5 – Inter-Authority Agreement between Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick district Council

The Committee noted that the report had been withdrawn, that this may impact on the planned integration of services with potentially a delay to this. There were concerns around this and the Leader agreed to provide clarification on the impact of this to Cabinet next week for all Councillors.

#### Item 6 – Amendments to the Constitution

The Committee noted the recommendations and provided the following observations:

1. The Committee felt the clarification on the reasons why a report was confidential should be explained within the report itself to show how the information related back to the legal reason for it being exempt. It would also be useful if the report could provide a timescale/event for when it may be possible for the information to become public.
2. The PABs needed to improve the consistency in their minute format to facilitate Councillors' understanding,
3. Consideration should be given if the PAB minutes could be public minutes.
4. Noted that the better description of items expected to go to PAB would be those items that proposed significant change to a service.

#### **65. Shakespeare's England 2021 Summary**

The Committee considered a report from Development which provided a summary of Shakespeare's England activity during 2021 in respect of Warwick District Council's grant conditions.

Councillor Bartlett explained that SDC also scrutinised activity conducted by Shakespeare's England but where WDC looked back at the previous year, SDC looked forward to the future year. However, there would be an additional report coming to WDC's Cabinet in May on the future relationship Shakespeare's England had with the Council, and there was opportunity to look forward when this report was considered. He asked the Committee to consider the way it scrutinised in future, forward looking, or looking back.

In response to questions from Members, Councillor Bartlett and the Senior Economic Development Officer explained that:

- It was hoped that more Town Councils would engage with Shakespeare's England and smaller organisations in the lower tier of the membership.
- Looking back at the work that has been done over the previous year was an opportunity to capitalise and inform on what work should be done going forward. The suggestion was that future reports should

look back and then make suggestions on what work should happen going forward.

- Kenilworth had made use of the “Visit Warwickshire” template to encourage tourism to its town and the aim was to get small communities to use the same template to pull visitors in. Shakespeare’s England had developed walking and cycling trails.
- The proposed conditions and funding would need to be considered by Shakespeare’s England Board with the hope that the new agreement would come to Cabinet in May or the next cycle.

66. **Cabinet Agenda (Non-Confidential items and reports) – Wednesday 20 April 2022**

The Committee considered the following items which would be discussed at the meeting of the Cabinet on Wednesday 20 April 2022.

Item 9 – HEART Shared Service Partnership

The Committee considered the report at length and had concerns about the cyclical nature of the concerning position set out in the report.

The Committee noted the recommendations in the report and agreed that a report be brought back to Scrutiny in six months, unless a report is brought to Cabinet at that time on the progress/improvements made and if needed the options available to the Council to change the service.

The Committee thanked the Head of Housing and Portfolio Holder for their time in attending and engaging with the Committee on this report.

Item 10 – Masterplanning Framework for Land to the North and East of Kenilworth/South of Coventry

The Committee noted the report and proposals for providing the master planning framework to help recognise the constraints in the area and developing a collective vision. It welcomed the responses from officers and the reflection from this would be provided to the Cabinet.

The Committee suggested that the words Green Belt were set out within the document as this plan would have an impact on that.

The Committee welcomed the agreement to ensure that wider stakeholder groups would be involved in the consultative role. Whilst those to be involved would be agreed by the project board once it has been formed, it was expected that this would include local district councillors, local parish councils, residents’ groups, Stoneleigh Park, HS2, local major landowners along with Solihull MBC and Rugby BC.

The Committee recommended that at least one PAB should be involved for discussion and involvement in this area of work.

During this item the Committee meeting reached 2 hours 30 minutes long. In line with the Constitution the Committee took a vote and more than the necessary half agreed to proceed without a break.

## 67. **End of Term Report**

The Committee considered its annual end of term report to the Council on the work the committee had undertaken during the municipal year 2021/22. The Committee had met nine times during the year and had also held an informal meeting to scrutinise the "Developing a Digital Strategy for South Warwickshire" report in more depth. Any further meetings the Committee held before Annual Council would be added to the report. The report had been circulated via email to Councillors following publication of the agenda and Councillors were asked to send any comments they had on the report to Committee Services and the Chair.

**Resolved** that the Chair be authorised to approve the final report to be considered at Council on behalf of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

## 68. **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.

The Deputy Chief Executive was asked to chase a report that had been written by the Head of ICT on issues with the service causing downtime of systems and a root-cause analysis and ask for it to be circulated.

Councillor Kohler was informed that all Councillors had been sent written instructions for using the Dashboard and a request to contact the Performance Management Officer if they required individual training. Councillor Kohler stated that the request had been for an all-Councillor briefing on the source of the data held in the Dashboard and how to interpret it. The Democratic Services Manager & Deputy Monitoring Officer advised that this would be provided but that finding a suitable date could prove a problem because the Councillors' diaries were already quite full of appointments.

**Resolved** that

- (1) appendices 1 and 2 to the Work Programme report be noted; and
- (2) training on how to interpret the data held on the Dashboard and the source of the data be arranged for all Councillors by the Democratic Services Manager & Deputy Monitoring Officer.

## 69. **Cabinet Agenda (Confidential items and reports) – Wednesday 20 April 2022**

The Committee considered the following item which would be discussed at the meeting of the Cabinet on Wednesday 20 April 2022.

Item 14 - Creative Quarter / Future High Street

The Committee recommended a briefing update to all Councillors regarding the project.

(The meeting ended at 9.07pm)

CHAIR  
27 June 2022