

Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee
9 February 2022

Title: Work Programme, Forward Plan & Comments from Cabinet

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Portfolio Holder: Not applicable

Public report

Wards of the District directly affected: Not applicable

Accessibility checked: Yes

Summary

This report informs Members of Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee of its work programme for 2021/2022 Municipal Year (Appendix 1) and of the current [Forward Plan](#).

Recommendations

- (1) That the Committee considers the work programme attached as Appendix 1 to the report and make any changes as required;
 - (2) That the Committee identifies any Cabinet items on the Forward Plan which it wishes to have an input before the Cabinet makes its decision; and
 - (3) That the Committee considers its workload for the coming months, specifically how it can accommodate the work within their scheduled meetings.
 - (4) The Committee agrees to defer the review of the Council's democratic structure until the later of (a) a decision by the Council on 13 December regarding the potential merger of the Council; or (b) the decision from the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing Communities on the application for this Council to be merged.
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1 Background/Information

- 1.1 The five main roles of overview and scrutiny in local government are: holding to account; performance management; policy review; policy development; and external scrutiny.
- 1.2 The pre-decision scrutiny of Cabinet decisions falls within the role of 'holding to account'. To feed into the pre-decision scrutiny of Cabinet decisions, the Committee needs to examine the Council's Forward Plan and identify items which it would like to have an impact upon.
- 1.3 The Council's Forward Plan is published on a monthly basis and sets out the key decisions to be taken by the Council in the next twelve months. The Council only has a statutory duty to publish key decisions to be taken in the next four months. However, the Forward Plan was expanded to a twelve-month period to give a clearer picture of how and when the Council will be making important decisions. A key decision is a decision which has a

significant impact or effect on two or more wards and/or a budgetary effect of £50,000 or more.

- 1.4 The Forward Plan also identifies non-key decisions to be made by the Council in the next twelve months, and the Committee, if it wishes, may also pre-scrutinise these decisions. There may also be policies identified on the Forward Plan, either as key or non-key decisions, which the Committee could pre-scrutinise and have an impact upon how these are formulated.
- 1.5 The Committee should be mindful that any work it wishes to undertake would need to be undertaken without the need to change the timescales as set out within the Forward Plan.
- 1.6 At each meeting, the Committee will consider their work programme and make amendments where necessary, and also make comments on specific Cabinet items, where notice has been given by 9am on the day of the Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee meeting. The Committee will also receive a report detailing the response from the Cabinet, on the comments the Committee made on the Cabinet agenda in the previous cycle.
- 1.7 The Forward Plan is considered at each meeting and allows the Committee to look at future items and become involved in those Cabinet decisions to be taken, if members so wish.
- 1.8 At each meeting, the Committee will consider their work programme and make amendments where necessary, and also make comments on specific Cabinet items, where notice has been given by 9am on morning after Group meetings. The Committee will also receive a report detailing the response from the Cabinet, on the comments the Committee made on the Cabinet agenda in the previous cycle.
- 1.9 If the Committee made a comment on a Cabinet report, a response will be provided to the Committee at its next meeting (Appendix 2). In reviewing these responses, the Committee can identify any issues for which it would like a progress report. A future report, for example, on how the decision has been implemented, would then be submitted to the Committee at an agreed date which would then be incorporated within the Work Programme.
- 1.10 In July 2020, a report went to Executive on "Governance Review of Warwick District Council" – Minute 22. In the list of resolutions made, one was:
(1) an independent assessment of these arrangements is undertaken in February 2022 and officers are asked to bring back an outline proposal for this, in consultation with the Chairs of Scrutiny, in December 2021 along with proposed funding arrangements, be approved.
- 1.11 Following the decision in July 2020 the Council has embarked on proposals for a potential merger with Stratford-on-Avon District Council. The decision of this Council to make a formal application (or not) to the Secretary of State will, one way or another, impact on the democratic structure of this Council. Therefore, after consultation with the Chairs of both Scrutiny Committees, they were in agreement the review should be deferred for now to enable proper consideration of the Council's needs.

2 Conclusion/Reasons for the Recommendation

- 2.1 The work programme as attached at Appendix 1 to the report should be updated at each meeting to accurately reflect the workload of the Committee.

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- 2.2 Two of the five main roles of overview and scrutiny in local government are to undertake pre-decision scrutiny of Cabinet decisions and to feed into policy development.
- 2.3 If the Committee has an interest in a future decision to be made by the Cabinet, or policy to be implemented, it is within the Committee's remit to feed into the process.
- 2.4 The Forward Plan is actually the future work programme for the Cabinet. If a non-cabinet Member highlighted a decision(s) which is to be taken by the Cabinet which they would like to be involved in, that Member(s) could then provide useful background to the Committee when the report is submitted to the Cabinet and they are passing comment on it.