

Finance and Audit Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the remote meeting held on Wednesday 21 April 2021 at 6.00pm, which was broadcast live via the Council's YouTube Channel.

Present: Councillor Nicholls (Chair); Councillors: Bartlett, J Dearing, R Dickson, Grey, Heath, Illingworth, Luckhurst, Syson, Tracey and Wright.

Also present: Councillors Hales (Portfolio Holder for Finance & Business), and Matecki (Portfolio Holder Housing & Culture).

91. **Apologies and Substitutes**

- (a) there were no apologies for absence; and
- (b) there were no substitutions.

92. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made.

93. **Minutes**

The minutes of 17 March Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee were taken as read and signed by the Chairman.

94. **Public and Press**

Resolved that under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 that the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item by reason of the likely disclosure of exempt information within paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

95. **Executive Agenda (Confidential Items and Reports) – Tuesday 13 April 2021**

Item 11 – Community Stadium and Associated Developments

The Finance & Audit Committee supported the report.

(The meeting resumed in public session)

96. **Review of the Work Programme and Forward Plan & Comments from the Executive**

The Committee considered a report from Democratic Services that informed the Committee of its work programme for 2021/2022 Municipal Year (Appendix 1) and of the current Forward Plan.

The proposed addition to Scrutiny Procedure rules, attached as appendix 3 to the report, was brought forward by Councillors Milton and Nicholls following several months of informal testing which had worked well.

At its meeting in September, the Committee asked for an update at each meeting on the revised Audit Plan so it was aware of progress. This was attached as appendix 4 to the report.

The Chair stated that following the Scrutiny Committee last month, he and the Chair of Overview & Scrutiny sought feedback about the way the Council should scrutinise the proposed merger with Stratford District Council. They identified the following themes:

- Impact on services to residents;
- Democratic representation;
- Impact on strategic priorities (in particular the CEAP);
- Finance and Council Tax; and
- Communications and consultation with residents.

These themes were supported with some additional focus on specific services, for example Neighbourhood Services and Green Spaces, and the importance of understanding the inter-relationship with Town and Parish Councils. They also sought views about joint scrutiny with Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Warwick District Council scrutiny Committees.

Particular concerns were raised that this could become unwieldy and put at risk the ability to represent the interest of residents as this programme was taken forward.

Councillors Nicholls and Milton had consulted with officers and agreed the following recommendations:

- Scrutiny for the merger should continue to be done separately by Finance & Audit and Overview & Scrutiny, but the Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees should consult frequently to ensure there was good synergy between the work of the Committees and nothing fell between the gaps.
- Scrutiny should be conducted in line with the five themes identified with specific areas being covered in the impact of services to residents theme and the impact of Town / Parish councils, which should become cross-cutting themes. On this point, Committee Services would arrange a briefing session for all Members of Warwick District Council on the different roles of Parish and Town Councils across the District, and the powers they held and what further powers could be delegated or devolved to them within the existing legal framework, if those bodies were to agree.
- Committee Services should be asked to prepare a scrutiny plan which would outline a timetable for Scrutiny to consider these themes. This timetable needed to give sufficient scope for the Committee to influence the development of policy rather than simply reviewing it post hoc.

- The Council should seek additional resource to support the scrutiny of this programme both in terms of officer support and expert support from the centre for governance and scrutiny.
- In terms of joint local plan, the chairs of the Scrutiny Committees agreed with the Executive that joint scrutiny with Stratford-on-Avon District Council was appropriate, and it would be for the chairs of the Scrutiny Committees to meet with the relevant officers and agree an approach in the new Council year.

The Democratic Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer advised Members that in relation to creating the workplan and flow, it would be handy to bring in Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) at an early stage to help with the planning phase with the Scrutiny Committee Chairs, in order to help the overall structure and to help guide throughout. If Members were minded to agree with the proposal, Committee Services would get in touch with CfGS to set up meetings as quickly as possible.

Recommended to Council that the addition of the protocol set out at Appendix 3 to the report, for embedding within Scrutiny Procedure Rules, be approved, and asks Council to amend Scrutiny Procedure rules so that the deadline to request Executive items to be considered by Scrutiny is 9.00am on the morning after Group meetings.

Resolved that

- (1) the report be noted; and
- (2) the progress on the Audit Plan as set out at Appendix 4 to the report, be noted.

97. **End of Term Report**

The Committee received a report from Democratic Services providing an update on the work the Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee had undertaken during the municipal year 2020/21. The Committee met 10 times during the year, although its first meeting was just to appoint the Chair of the Committee. It also met jointly with the Overview & Scrutiny twice in July 2020.

Under Article 6 of the Council's Constitution, the Overview & Scrutiny Committees and Policy Committees were required to provide an end of term report to the Council on work they had undertaken during the year.

The matters considered during the year were attached at Appendix A to the report. This would be updated to include matters considered at this meeting, before it was submitted to Council on 5 May 2021.

A full account of the work undertaken by the Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2020/21 would also be submitted to Council.

In response to a question from Members , the Chair stated that because of the constructive relationship between the Chair of the Finance Programme Advisory Board (PAB), the Portfolio Holder for Finance & Business and himself, the PAB had been helpful in terms of ensuring that the Committee was able to provide scrutiny on a well-informed basis.

Recommended to Council that

- (1) the list of matters considered by the Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee during the municipal year 2020/21, as detailed in Appendix A to the report, be noted; and
- (2) prior to submission to Council, the report will be updated to include the meetings of the Committee and any Executive responses that took place in April 2021.

(The meeting ended at 7.05pm)

CHAIR
26 May 2021