

Overview & Scrutiny Committee Tuesday 5 July 2022

An additional meeting of the above Committee will be held in the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa on Tuesday 5 July 2022, at 6.00pm and available for the public to watch via the Warwick District Council [YouTube channel](#).

Councillor Milton (Chair)

Councillor A Barton

Councillor P Kohler

Councillor G Cullinan

Councillor V Leigh-Hunt

Councillor I Davison

Councillor M Noone

Councillor A Dearing

Councillor P Redford

Councillor J Dearing

Councillor S Syson

Councillor O Jacques

Emergency Procedure

At the commencement of the meeting, the emergency procedure for the Town Hall will be announced

Agenda

1. Apologies & Substitutes

- (a) to receive apologies for absence from any Councillor who is unable to attend; and
- (b) to receive the name of any Councillor who is to act as a substitute, notice of which has been given to the Chief Executive, together with the name of the Councillor for whom they are acting.

2. Declarations of Interest

Members to declare the existence and nature of interests in items on the agenda in accordance with the adopted Code of Conduct.

Declarations should be disclosed during this item. However, the existence and nature of any interest that subsequently becomes apparent during the course of the meeting must be disclosed immediately. If the interest is not registered, Members must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest within 28 days.

Members are also reminded of the need to declare predetermination on any matter.

If Members are unsure about whether or not they have an interest, or about its nature, they are strongly advised to seek advice from officers prior to the meeting.

3. **Work Programme, Forward Plan & Comments from Cabinet**

To consider a report from Democratic Services.

(Pages 1 to 12)

4. **Update on the Cessation of the Proposed Merger with Stratford-on-Avon District Council**

To consider a report from the Chief Executive.

(Pages 1 to 12)

5. **Work Programme Update – Digital Update**

To consider a report from ICT.

(Pages 1 to 10)

6. **Cabinet Agenda (Non-Confidential Items and Reports) – Wednesday 6 July 2022**

To consider the non-confidential items on the Cabinet agenda which fall within the remit of this Committee. The only items to be considered are those which Committee Services have received notice of by 9.00am on the morning after Group meetings.

(Circulated Separately)

7. **Public & Press**

To consider resolving 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 the paragraphs 1,2 & 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

8. **Cabinet Agenda (Confidential Items and Reports) – Wednesday 6 July 2022**

To consider the confidential items on the Cabinet agenda which fall within the remit of this Committee. The only items to be considered are those which Committee Services have received notice of by 9.00am on the morning after Group meetings.

(Circulated separately)

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Overview & Scrutiny Committee
5 July 2022

Title: Work Programme, Forward Plan & Comments from Cabinet
Lead Officer: Lesley Dury, Principal Committee Services Officer
Portfolio Holder: Not applicable
Public report
Wards of the District directly affected: Not applicable
Accessibility checked: Yes

Summary

This report informs Members of Overview & Scrutiny Committee:

- (1) of the Committee's work programme for 2022/2023 (Appendix 1); and
- (2) responses that Cabinet gave to comments and recommendations made by Overview & Scrutiny Committee regarding the reports to Cabinet on 25 May 2022 (Appendix 2).

Recommendations

- (1) That Members consider the work programme (Appendix 1) and agree any changes as appropriate.
 - (2) That the Committee:
 - identifies any Cabinet items on the [Forward Plan](#) on which it wishes to have an input before the Cabinet makes its decision; and
 - nominates a Member to investigate that future decision and report back to the Committee.
 - (3) That Members note the responses made by the Cabinet on the Comments from the Cabinet report (Appendix 2).
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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.

1.4 A key decision means a decision made in the exercise of an executive function by any person (including officers) or body which meets one or more of the following conditions:

- (1) The decision is likely to result in the Council incurring expenditure or the making of savings in excess of £150,000. Excluded from this are all loans to banks or other financial institutions made in accordance with the Treasury Management Strategy.

Officers' delegated powers to make The cabinet decisions are subject to the key decision/call-in regime where it is likely that the Council would incur expenditure or make savings above the threshold of £150,000.

In relation to letting contracts the key decision is the proposal to let a contract for a particular type of work. The subsequent decision to award the contract to a specific contractor will not be a key decision provided the value of the contract does not vary above the estimated amount by more than 10% for contracts with a value of up to £500,000 or 5% for contracts of over £500,000;

- (2) The decision is likely to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in any two or more Wards.

In considering whether a decision is likely to be significant, a decision-maker will need to consider the strategic nature of the decision and whether the outcome will have an impact, for better or worse on the amenity of the community or quality of service provided by the Council to a significant number of people living or working in the locality affected.

1.5 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.

1.6 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.

1.7 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.

1.8 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 the 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 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.

- 1.10 As part of the new scrutiny process, the Committee is no longer considering the whole of the Cabinet agenda.
- 1.11 On the day of publication of the Cabinet agenda all Councillors are sent an e-mail asking them to contact Committee Services, by 09.00am on the day of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting to advise which Cabinet items they would like the Committee to consider.
- 1.12 As a result, the Committee considered the items detailed in appendix 2. The response the Cabinet gave on each item is also shown.
- 1.13 In reviewing these responses, the Committee can identify any issues for which they 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.

2 Conclusion/Reasons for the Recommendation

- 2.1 The work programme should be updated at each meeting to accurately reflect the workload of the Committee.
- 2.2 The proposed plan at Appendix 1 has been developed in order for the Committee to focus on the four agreed core themes (Covid 19, Climate Change, Medium Term Financial Strategy and Business Plan). While this Committee will not have as much focus on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, it will have to spend significant times looking at the other areas in detail.
- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 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 this process.
- 2.5 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.
- 2.6 Appendix 2, Comments from Cabinet, is produced to create a dialogue between the Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It ensures that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is formally made aware of the Cabinet's responses.
- 2.7 Where Overview and Scrutiny Committee has made a recommendation as opposed to a comment, the Cabinet is required to respond to the recommendation(s) made, including whether or not it accepts the recommendation(s).

Meeting Date 5 July 2022

Title	Where did item originate from	Format	Lead Officer / Councillor	Next report date if applicable	Completion Date / Notes
Digital Strategy Update	O&S November 2021	Written report	David Elkington	February 2023	Every six months
The Progress and Impact of the Equality & Diversity Task & Finish Group's Recommendations in the report that was presented to O&S 6 July 2021 – To agree a date for a written update	O&S 6 July 2021		Councillor Tracey, Portfolio Holder	Date to be decided at this meeting	
Task & Finish Group – Equality & Diversity – Phase 2	O&S 6 July 2021	Verbal report	Councillor Mangat	Every meeting until completed	
Updated position statement following the decision not to merge with SDC	O&S 24 May 2022	Briefing Note	Chris Elliott	TBA	

Meeting Date 9 August 2022

Title	Where did item originate from	Format	Lead Officer / Councillor	Next report date if applicable	Completion Date / Notes
Task & Finish Group – Equality & Diversity – Phase 2	O&S 6 July 2021	Written report	Councillor Mangat	Every meeting until completed	

Meeting Date: 20 September 2022

Title	Where did item originate from	Format	Lead Officer / Councillor	Next report date if applicable	Completion Date / Notes
Park Exercise Permits – annual review of the scheme	August 2020 (Last report made to O&S - 21 September 2021)	Briefing Note	Padraig Herlihy	TBA	
Development Management and Enforcement Performance Update subsequent to report made to O&S in March 2022	March 2022 O&S	Written Report	HoS Development / Gary Fisher	TBA	
Task & Finish Group – Equality & Diversity – Phase 2	O&S 6 July 2021	Written report	Councillor Mangat	Every meeting until completed	

Meeting Date: 1 November 2022

Title	Where did item originate from	Format	Lead Officer / Councillor	Next report date if applicable	Completion Date / Notes
<p>Climate Emergency Action Plan update from previous period and giving progress against carbon emissions and what is coming forward.</p> <p>To provide options for financing climate change action programme projects as promised at O&S 24 May 2022.</p> <p>To give a RAG risk status at the start of the report showing the summary of risks and stage reached to achieving the Council’s ambitions without carbon offsetting becoming necessary.</p>	<p>May 2022 O&S</p>	<p>Written report</p>	<p>Dave Barber</p>	<p>May 2023</p>	<p>Every 6 months</p>

Appendix 1 – Overview & Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

Title	Where did item originate from	Format	Lead Officer / Councillor	Next report date if applicable	Completion Date / Notes
HEART Shared Service update including the implementation of the new IT system, progress/improvements made and if needed, the options available to Council to change the service.	April 2022	Written report or if a report is going to Cabinet, call it in. Report to include progress/improvements made and if needed the options available to the Council to change the service.	Lisa Barker		

Meeting Date: 6 December 2022

Title	Where did item originate from	Format	Lead Officer / Councillor	Next report date if applicable	Completion Date / Notes
Environmental Enforcement Update subsequent to the report made in March '22	March 2022, O&S	Written report	Zoe Court		

Meeting Date: 7 February 2022

Title	Where did item originate from	Format	Lead Officer / Councillor	Next report date if applicable	Completion Date / Notes
Digital Strategy Update	O&S November 2021	Written report	David Elkington	August 2023	Every six months

Meeting Date 7 March 2023

Title	Where did item originate from	Format	Lead Officer / Councillor	Next report date if applicable	Completion Date / Notes
Summary of the role, responsibilities and performance of the SWCSP	This is a mandatory report.	Written report	Liz Young / Marianne Rolfe.	March 2024.	This is an annual report.
Annual update from Shakespeare’s England, looking back over the previous year’s activity and forward to next year.	April 2022	Written report	Martin O’Neill and Councillor Bartlett	March 2024.	This is an annual report.

Meeting Date 18 April 2023

Title	Where did item originate from	Format	Lead Officer / Councillor	Next report date if applicable	Completion Date / Notes
Overview & Scrutiny End of Term report.	Standing Annual Item.	Written report.	Committee Services Officer.	April 2023.	This is an annual report.

Briefing Notes to All Councillors – April 2023: Not for O&S Agenda, but to be emailed to all WDC Cllrs

Title	Where did item originate from	Format	Lead Officer / Councillor	Next report date if applicable	Completion Date / Notes
Children's and Adults' Safeguarding Champions: End of Term Report.	Standing Annual Item.	Briefing note	Marianne Rolfe.	April 2024.	This is a briefing note to all Councillors.
Members' Annual Feedback on Outside Appointments / Annual review of membership/participation of Outside Bodies (Includes a short synopsis on Champions)	Standing Annual Items	Briefing note	Andrew Jones	April 2024	This is a briefing note to all Councillors.

Meeting Date: To Be Advised

Title	Where did item originate from	Format	Lead Officer / Councillor	Next report date if applicable	Completion Date / Notes
Decide if an update is required on the Catering and Events Concessions Contract – Royal Pump Rooms and Jephson Gardens Glasshouse.	Committee meeting 26 September 2019.	Informal update.	Dave Guilding / Philip Clarke.	TBA	D Guilding and P Clarke were asked when they can give an informal update considering the impact of Covid-19 on this service. A response from them is awaited.
Update on plans to improve accessibility to, and the condition / cleanliness of, toilets for people living with disabilities.	Committee meeting 26 September 2019 and briefing note 8 December 2020.	Briefing Note	Zoë Court	To be advised if applicable.	No officer will attend the Committee meeting unless there is a request.
Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards Enforcement Process – Private Sector Housing	O&S August 2020	Written Report	Lisa Barker		A review was requested once the scheme had been operation for 12 months. Covid Lockdown has meant that the 12 months has not been achieved yet.

**Response from the meeting of the Cabinet on the
O&S Committee's Comments – 25 May 2022**

Item Number 4 – Programme Team (Green Spaces) – Resourcing Delivery of Live Projects

Scrutiny Comment:

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee noted the report.

Cabinet Response:

The recommendations in the report were approved.

Items 6 & 9 – Milverton Homes Ltd Business Plan and confidential appendices

Scrutiny Comment:

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee expressed its support for the report and for the aims and objectives of Milverton Homes Limited.

Members were keen that more information should be made available in the public domain.

Members asked a number of questions about the financial projections and potential risks of the organisation and were satisfied with the answers provided.

Cabinet Response:

The recommendations in the report were approved and item 9 – Confidential Appendices to item 6 were noted.

Item 8 – Associated Costs for the Purchase of 60, section 106 dwellings, Birmingham Road, Hatton

Scrutiny Comment:

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee noted the report.

Cabinet Response:

The recommendations in the report were approved.

Title: Update on the Cessation of the Proposed Merger with Stratford-on-Avon District Council

Lead Officer: Chris Elliott (chris.elliott@warwickdc.gov.uk)

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Andrew Day

Wards of the District directly affected: All

Summary

This report provides an update to Members on the implications of the cessation of the Proposed Merger with Stratford on Avon District Council. It reports progress against the 12 recommendations agreed in May 2022 and sets out as an Appendix the statement issued by the Group Leaders on the circumstances leading to the decision to cease the Merger process.

Recommendations

- (1) To note the report and to make any comments and identify any areas that require further attention.
-

1 Background/Information

- 1.1 In early April 2022 Stratford on Avon District Council (SDC) informed Warwick District Council (WDC) that it would not consider the proposed Inter Authority Agreement (IAA) until an additional due diligence exercise on both Councils and on Milverton Homes was completed. A due diligence exercise of both Councils, which found no issues of significance for either Council including Milverton Homes, had been undertaken and completed by May 2021. This report was formally reported to both Councils in December 2021 but its contents and its recommendation to SDC was clear and known beforehand via the Joint Arrangements Steering Group (JASG). The issue of due diligence was not raised again by SDC until February 2022. Reference elsewhere externally has been made to an additional loan made by the Council to Milverton Homes for the Joint Venture with Vistry, but members should be aware that that the decision was taken by this Council in April 2021. Instructions had been issued by SDC in March 2022 to external consultants to undertake the work on Milverton Homes and by both Councils on the wider due diligence.
- 1.2 The signing by both Councils of the IAA was a necessary pre-condition to the implementation of the first service integration planned between the two Councils – this being for the Environment and Operation (E and O) Service Area. Member briefings for all Councillors on the IAA and associated joint governance arrangements had been undertaken on 30 March and 5 April in advance of the expected reports at both Council's forthcoming cycle of meetings. Completion of the IAA would not have been compromised by any outcome of the due diligence process.
- 1.3 The timetable for completing the due diligence process on Milverton Homes was complicated by needing to know what documentation the consultants required and then in the light of that requirement of the legal necessity of both the

boards of Milverton Homes and of the Joint Venture of Milverton Homes with Vistry needing to agree to share the private and confidential information and requiring a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) to be completed by SDC.

- 1.4 Regrettably this requirement meant that although the design for the service integration had been set out; was near the end of the staff consultation process; and was expected to be implemented in early to mid-May, a delay would have meant that the staff of both Councils involved would have been left in a position of stasis for an undetermined period. This was of concern given the uncertainty that had been created for all staff of E and O but especially for those where there was a direct impact on existing jobs.
- 1.5 WDC had initially proposed to still take IAA and Governance related reports to the April cycle of meetings as evidenced by the fact the reports were published; so that they could be signed when SDC was ready. However, on the morning of Tuesday 12 April WDC was informed by email that the SDC Leader was now proposing to send a letter to the Government asking that the merger process be paused until the due diligence process was complete. This meant that the WDC Leader felt obliged to withdraw the IAA and associated reports from consideration by the Scrutiny Committees that week and from Cabinet on 20 April.
- 1.6 At a meeting with the SDC Leader and Chief Executive on 14 April, the WDC Leader and Chief Executive were informed that the letter asking for the pause was going to be sent unilaterally if need be but that they hoped WDC would agree to such a pause.
- 1.7 The Leader of WDC stated that should the Leader of SDC write to the Secretary of State seeking a delay in the merger process to enable the completion of further due diligence that this would constitute an end to the merger process since it would place staff in a difficult position; would impact adversely on the reputation of the Councils with Government; and would damage trust between the Councils. The Leader of SDC did write such a letter that same day, therefore by default effectively ending the merger ambitions.
- 1.8 Following this meeting a joint statement was issued by the two leaders in which irreconcilable differences was cited as the reason to end the ambition of merging the two authorities. The full joint statement, attached at Appendix 2 to the report, included within this announcement was the following:
 - *There is a significant difference between the approaches and ambitions of the two councils that have proved to be irreconcilable, and this means that a joint request, subject to Council approval, will now be made to the Government to stop the merger process.*
 - *It is anticipated that some of the joint working arrangements already put in place will continue, such as legal services and business rates collection. However, others including the Joint Management Team and the service integration programme will end.*
- 1.9 A report identifying the immediate decisions which would be required was prepared considered and agreed in May 2022. This report is a follow up to that report and in particular sets out the current position on all the agreed recommendations in the table below:

Recommendation	Update
That the formal submission to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to create a South Warwickshire District Council, is withdrawn.	Recommendation implemented.
That work on the full-service integration of teams across Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick District Councils is ceased.	Recommendation implemented.
That work on the identification of sharing civic and office accommodation between Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick District Council is ceased.	Recommendation implemented but in addition officers are reviewing future accommodation needs specifically for WDC with a view to reporting to members in the Autumn.
That the Council withdraws from the Joint Arrangements Steering Group.	Recommendation implemented.
The arrangements for the Joint Management Team are ended and that the Interim Senior Leadership Team structure, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved for immediate effect, i.e., 12 May 2022.	Recommendation implemented. The Interim Senior Leadership Team now meets fortnightly with a weekly touch base meeting on Mondays.
That the Council agrees to Andrew Rollins taking the Section 151 Officer role on an interim basis.	Recommendation implemented.
That the Council agrees to Andrew Jones taking the Monitoring Officer role on an interim basis.	Recommendation implemented.
To note that a further report setting out the proposed longer term management arrangements will come forward for consideration by the autumn of this year.	This report will come forward in September for consideration.
To note that a further report on the overall consequences of the end to the merger process and the implications for the Council going forward will be prepared for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Cabinet.	This report will come forward in the autumn for consideration.

To note the steps to advise and support staff especially those who had been in the first proposed service integration.	Recommendation being implemented; note proposed Applause package.
That the Monitoring Officer be authorised to align the Officer Scheme of Delegation with the Interim Senior Leadership Team structure; and make any consequential amendments to the Constitution because of this report.	Recommendation being implemented.
To note that the work on the joint South Warwickshire Local Plan, Climate Change Action Programme and Joint South Warwickshire Economic Strategy will continue.	Recommendation continues to be carried out – e.g., recent report on Local Plan.
That the Council approves the closing of the Service Alignment Reserve with the funding contained therein transferred to the Service Transformation Reserve.	Recommendation implemented.

1.10 After the report the Group Leaders issued a note setting out the circumstances leading up to the cessation of the merger process. This is attached at Appendix 1. This also addresses the financial implications.

1.11 Key issues now are:

1.11.1A review to put in place a permanent Senior Leadership Team structure – this will be done by end of September 2022.

1.11.2 Updating the MTFs and developing ideas to address the forecast deficit for consideration - the Updated MTFs will be reported as part of the first Quarter budget report and the ideas on tackling the forecast deficit will be addressed through the Cabinet and the Leaders Co-ordinating Group before coming to Members.

1.11.3 Finalising the respective staff costs incurred through the Section 113 notices.

1.11.4 Preparing for an autumn discussion around “delegation” with parish councils and community groups.

1.11.5 Reviewing and updating the Digital Strategy – see other report on this agenda.

2. Alternative Options

2.1 The options available to the Committee are as follows:

2.1.1 Endorse the recommendations of the report; or,

2.1.2 Amend the recommendation with suggestions for additional items to be reported upon.

3. Consultation and Members’ comments

3.1 The Leader has considered and supports the recommendation within the report.

4 Implications of the proposal

4.1 Legal/Human Rights Implications

The main legal points were covered within the 11th May report.

4.2 Financial

- 4.2.1 The Council was expecting to make significant savings from the proposed merger and service integration process with SDC. There have been benefits associated with the joint working to date and a schedule is being prepared to fully identify these and the recurring benefits that will be achieved through the joint working that will continue.
- 4.2.2 The interim SLT structure is likely to be more costly than the previous joint arrangements. However, these will be accommodated by re-prioritising existing budgets linked to the cost of implementation. The structure is an interim structure and will be reviewed by September 2022.
- 4.2.3 The Council will need to update its Medium-Term Financial Strategy and savings plan. This work has started though as ever the Government's position on the financial settlement for local government will not come until much later in the year. It is expected that an initial update to the MTFs and savings programmes will be provided as part of the Quarter 1 Budget Report.
- 4.2.4 It has been agreed with officers at SDC that any costs associated from the disbanding of the South Warwickshire Programme Team and other support posts will be shared.

4.3 Council Plan

- 4.3.1 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 impact on the Council's strategy.
- 4.3.2 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](#).
- 4.3.3 The external impacts of the end of the merger process and the reinstatement of separate arrangements at this stage will have little impact on the Council's intended outcomes. In respect of internal impacts, the situation is different:
- 4.3.4 **People - Effective Staff** – the merger process has caused considerable anxiety and concern amongst staff especially those directly implicated by the first service integration. It is equally the case that it would have been irresponsible to have left staff implicated by the service integration process hanging in the air proverbially if a pause to the merger based upon further due diligence had been agreed. The task has been to offer support, reassurance, and re-engagement.
- 4.3.5 **Services – Maintaining or Improving Services** – the merger process was argued upon offering an opportunity to achieve significant level of savings whilst offering the best way to protect services. The Council's services are not presently in any danger because of the end of the merger process, but a new strategy will need to be developed on an urgent basis lest the financial risk

undermine service provision. This work has begun, and it is intended it will seek to change the Council in other ways that achieve the service outcomes but address the financial challenges in other ways.

4.3.6 **Money - Firm Financial Footing over the Longer Term** – the merger process was argued upon offering an opportunity to achieve significant level of savings whilst offering the best way to protect services. The end of the merger process therefore creates the risk that tackling the financial challenge whilst protecting services is not resolvable. The mitigation of this risk is to review the MTFS and the existing savings plan immediately and work upon new proposals. This work is underway

4.3.7 The implicit approach to be taken is to never waste a crisis and to use the situation to generate a new energy and direction in the Council with a new plan of action – Future Forward - so it can continue to deliver the community's ambitions.

4.4 **Environmental/Climate Change Implications**

4.4.1 The proposal is to continue to work in partnership with Warwick District Council in relation to Climate Change, therefore there are no direct implications arising.

4.5 **Analysis of the effects on Equality**

4.5.1 There are no direct impacts on equality arising from this report.

4.6 **Data Protection**

4.6.1 The Councils had data sharing agreements in place in respect of the transfer of information to enable operational services to work effectively. As a result of most of the joint working ending, both Councils need to ensure the agreements are followed to ensure any necessary personal data is either returned or disposed of in line with these agreements. The shared Information Governance Manager will be monitoring this point over the coming weeks to ensure it is concluded appropriately.

4.7 **Health and Wellbeing**

4.7.1 There are no direct impacts on Health and Wellbeing arising from this report.

5 **Risk Assessment**

5.1 There are several risks that the decision to cease the move towards the merging and integration of services these include:

5.1.1 Reputational – both Councils have been actively advocating for the benefits which the creation of a South Warwickshire Council could achieve. Whilst a lot of the shared approaches to areas including development of the SWLP and economic growth will continue this decision will affect the credibility of both Councils for the worse.

5.1.2 Financial – as discussed in the finance section both authorities had included significant financial savings in relation to the joint working. A review of the MTFS and the savings plan is being undertaken to ensure that the Council can continue to deliver its objectives and its services.

5.1.3 Staffing – the process of service integration was causing staff considerable

anxiety and whilst this has been relieved by the ending of the merger process staff are also anxious to know what happens next to the services and to their jobs in the context of the financial challenges that this Council now faces.

- 5.1.4 Service Delivery – While there is no immediate issue for service provision the risks are that given the rationale for the merger was to best help continue to deliver services then the cessation of the merger raises the risk to their continued deliver as is. In mitigation the review of the MTFS and the savings plan is required to draft a new plan of action – Future Forward, for Councillors to consider and determine.
- 5.1.5 In addition, it was the case that the Government may have decided in response to the merger proposal that a wider Local Government Review be initiated. This risk remains and indeed may be exacerbated by the decision of SDC to want to pause the merger process. There appears to be no imminent prospect of a wider proposal for local government reorganisation from the Government but of course WCC’s submission for a unitary Warwickshire has not been rescinded and so must be considered to remain on the table as its ambition.

6 Conclusion/Reasons for the Recommendation

- 6.1 This report provides an update on progress in respect of the agreed recommendations from the May 2022 report.

Report Information Sheet

Please complete and submit to Democratic Services with report

Committee / Date	Overview and Scrutiny Committee 5 th July 2022	
Title of report	Update on the Cessation of the Proposed Merger with Stratford-on-Avon District Council	
Officer / Councillor Approval *Required	Date	Name
Ward Members(s)		
Portfolio Holder	24 th June 2022	Andrew Day
Financial Services *	As above	Andrew Rollins
Legal Services		
Other Services		
Chief Executive		Chris Elliott
Head of Services		
Section 151 Officer	As above	Andrew Rollins
Monitoring Officer	As Above	Andrew Jones
Deputy Monitoring Officer	As Above	Graham Leach
Leadership Co-ordination Group (WDC)		
Other organisations		
Final decision by this Committee or rec to another Cttee / Council?	Yes	
Contrary to Policy / Budget framework?	No	
Does this report contain exempt info/Confidential? If so, which paragraph(s)?	No	
Does this report relate to a key decision (referred to in the Cabinet Forward Plan)?	No	
Accessibility Checked?	Yes	

Council Merger - Open Letter

Dear residents

In the interest of openness and transparency we write to clarify why your Councillors reluctantly decided not to proceed with the planned merger with Stratford on Avon District Council (SDC).

Our SDC colleagues have put on the public record that their reason for withdrawing from the planned merger was the discovery of a *new* risk created by this Council's investment in our Local Housing Company, Milverton Homes. In addition, SDC Councillors cited unacceptable concerns with other proposals to borrow a further £100m.

The facts of the matter are:

- 1. We created Milverton Homes in December 2020** to accelerate the provision of housing, including much-needed affordable homes across Warwick district. Our ambition is to build housing to high environmental standards, contributing to reduced carbon emissions and creating an improved quality of life for our residents who live in these new homes. Indeed, the submission document that both Councils submitted to Government in support of the proposed merger, referred to Milverton Homes operating over the whole of South Warwickshire. Our new local housing company was presented as one of the shared benefits the merger would generate, offering SDC residents to also achieve high quality, affordable homes.
- 2. Milverton Homes has so far undertaken one transaction** – a joint venture with Vistry; with the Council investing £60 million at a fixed interest rate on a loan taken over a 7-year term. This investment enables a scheme for 620 homes in Kenilworth; 248 homes will be affordable and retained by our Housing Service. A further 62 homes will be available for private rent through Milverton Homes. All of these 310 homes (50% of the development) will be built to net zero carbon standards. The balance of the homes would be sold by Vistry. This scheme will provide income to our General Fund which in turn supports the costs of our other services. The Milverton Homes financial proposal was subject to stringent due diligence by external advisers. Please note that our decision to invest was made in April 2021 and the joint venture formed in August 2021. These dates are significant.
- 3. In February 2021** we agreed with our SDC colleagues to work towards merging our Councils by 1 April 2024. As part of the work to deliver that vision the Local Government Association funded an independent Financial Disclosure Review looking at the finances of both Councils. No financial concerns were found.

The report addressed the joint venture between Milverton Homes and Vistry Partnerships Limited. It noted that any risk arising from servicing of the £60m loan would impact on the WDC General Fund and ultimately that of the merged Council. On page 7 of the report, it was noted that the plans for the Local Housing Company had been subject to detailed external professional advice and due diligence. The report also confirmed:

- Advice that any further review of this agreement was beyond its scope, recommending that SDC undertake this work prior to the proposed merger.
- The level of increased borrowing WDC planned in the year ahead to fund its capital programme.

In May 2021, the Local Government Association report was shared with the two Chief Executives and their senior officers, including the Head of Finance (S151 Officer) – which had become a joint role across both Councils in March 2021. **In June 2021** the report was presented to the Joint Arrangements Steering Group comprising Councillors from both Councils, including the Leaders, Political Group Leaders, and other senior Councillors. **In December 2021** the report was published as an appendix to the public papers that both Councils considered at their historic meetings when the merger decision was taken.

It is important to note that at no stage in this process did SDC Councillors, or their Officers, express any concern about our financial arrangements or those of Milverton Homes. In fact, it was not until **late February 2022** (two months after the merger decision had been taken and eight months after SDC Councillors had received the LGA report) that they requested further Due Diligence, the details of which were not provided to us **until mid-March 2022**.

4. A key part of the work leading up to the April 2024 merger was to integrate our staff to deliver efficiency savings, whilst maximising service provision. An **Inter Authority Agreement (IAA)** was prepared to enable governance arrangements for both Councils to integrate services in an orderly manner. The first major integration planned was for the joint Environment and Operations service which had been prepared in detail, with staff fully consulted, and a schedule agreed to be implemented in early May 2022. This process was stressful for our staff, with some posts proposed to be made redundant and other staff to be redeployed, pending the signed IAA agreement.
5. Two informal **Joint Cabinet meetings were held in March 2022** (1st and 22nd) where no mention was made by SDC Councillors that they wished to pause the process of agreeing the IAA because of Due Diligence issues. It is notable that the first of these two March 2022 meetings was

devoted exclusively to discussing the Inter Authority Agreement and related governance issues.

6. **On 31 March 2022**, SDC advised that it wished to defer consideration of the IAA until their further Due Diligence had been completed. Despite confirmation that there was no material reason to delay while the additional financial checks were done, SDC resolved not to sign the IAA and therefore postpone the service integration programme.
7. **On 12 April 2022**, SDC announced its decision to write to the Government pausing the merger process until the further Due Diligence process was completed. They were concerned that the Government might issue a decision before this work had been done. Two days later, when the Council Leaders and Chief Executives met, SDC confirmed that they were writing to the Government with or without our agreement. (The letter was sent within minutes of the meeting concluding).
8. Agreeing to SDC's request would have meant that all the staff in the Environment and Operations service area would have been left in an **extended period of uncertainty**, being unable to move to new jobs and with the continuing knowledge of some posts potentially being made redundant. We did not consider this an appropriate way to treat staff who had already gone through a long period of uncertainty about their roles.
9. We also judged that to agree to this letter would have **undermined the merger proposal** and our credibility with Government. Given the paucity of communication from the Government we had but a rumour that it would reach a decision on our merger proposal by the end of May 2022; that rumour was no basis on which to decide to pause the merger process.
10. Had SDC done what the LGA recommended in May 2021, and not delayed for eight months to start their further Due Diligence, then these questions could have been answered in a timely manner. All the information required in respect of Milverton Homes or the investment in the Joint Venture was available before the merger decision in December 2021.
11. We also note additional references made by SDC regarding our **Medium-Term Financial Strategy** (MTFS), our Treasury Management Strategy and reference to an additional £100m borrowing requirement. While new initiatives will need to be agreed over the next year to enable savings or additional income to be generated, it should be noted that the Council has proven delivery in developing new and innovative strategies, including realising ways to improve returns from its investments. This will enable the Council to balance its budget over the medium term and create a sustainable platform for ongoing service delivery. Schemes implemented across 2021/22 are expected to deliver a £3m benefit to the Council,

which is more than we have ever achieved. To put that into context, it is twice as much as SDC is planning to achieve in over 5 years, as set-out in its most recent MTFS.

12. As part of the **March 2022 Treasury Management Strategy**, we approved the use of additional borrowing to support investment in our communities. The finance requirement is forecast to increase by £102.6m in 2022/23, for a number of major General Fund schemes, including service activity in housing, the Kenilworth leisure centres and school schemes, our share of the investment in the Material Recycling Facility in Coventry and in the purchase of a fleet of waste collection vehicles to be used as part of the new service.
13. Agreeing this borrowing reflects our ambition and our commitment to **focus on what is important to our communities**, such as delivering more affordable homes; improving leisure facilities; tackling climate change; improving our waste management service; and assisting the local economy. We are conscious that delivering these ambitions in the current financial climate is challenging, but we are up for that challenge.
14. The merger process has cost WDC £157,600 but working with SDC will achieve ongoing savings of £301,200 per annum. So, although a good deal of Officer and Councillor time has been abortive, there will be an ongoing significant financial saving to both Councils from the merger work and the joint services we are undertaking. For instance, the Joint Local Plan will save £500,000 for this council, compared to doing it alone.

On reflection, we've concluded that SDC had decided they didn't want to proceed with the merger as it became evident that they approach their aims and aspirations for their communities in a very different way to that of WDC, who will always tackle a challenge head on. And that is why we believe the merger has halted, and not because of the finances of Milverton Homes or, of WDC's additional borrowing proposals.

All of that said, we will continue to work with SDC on a range of services and proposals as ironically the work we have done jointly to date has and will continue to deliver benefits for the residents of both Councils. The biggest thing we have recognised is that WDC staff and Councillors love a challenge and will step-up to whatever the future may hold. We have learned an awful lot though the process and will take that forward as we continue to strive to make our District a great place to live, work and visit.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Andrew Day, Conservative Group Leader; Cllr Alan Boad, Liberal Democrat Group Leader; Cllr Ian Davison, Green Group Leader; Cllr Mini Mangat, Labour Group Leader; Cllr Judy Falp, Whitnash Residents' Assn Group Leader

Title: Work Programme Update – Digital Strategy
Lead Officer: Head of ICT
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Tracy
Wards of the District directly affected: None

Summary

To summarise the current progress being made towards Digital Transformation and the Council's Digital Strategy.

Recommendation(s)

- (1) That the contents of the reported are noted.
-

1 Background/Information

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 In December 2021, the Cabinets of both Stratford-upon-Avon and Warwick District Council's considered and approved the creation of a Joint Digital Strategy for South Warwickshire.
- 1.1.2 The intention of the proposed strategy was to embed digitalisation as a component of service integration; ensuring that as services from the two Councils were brought together, digital was at the forefront of the revised delivery methods.
- 1.1.3 The strategy focused the Council's activities on customer centric digital outcomes, through investment in service design, training, infrastructure, effective operational technology and several key digitalisation initiatives.
- 1.1.4 Unfortunately, when the merger process was aborted in April 2022, the Joint Digital Strategy also ended. This report provides an update on the key workstreams which were undertaken, the ongoing workstreams at Warwick District Council and key item that will be considered in a revised Digital Strategy.

1.2 Progress to Date

Key

- Significant progress made / ongoing project with a plan and resources.
- Some progress made / ongoing project requiring review.
- Limited progress made / project requires significant review.

1.2.1 *Supporting Agile Working* ●

Our People and Priorities workstream included an initiative to continue our support for agile working and wherever possible, remove requirements for paper within processes. Two initiatives within this area have been undertaken:

- *eSignatures*

The Council has introduced a solution where documents that would require a traditional “wet” signature can be signed electronically by multiple recipients. The solution, DocuSign, was procured in conjunction with SDC, where it was intended to be used significantly by the Legal Service – being the only solution on the market capable of dealing with virtual document sealing.

- *Hybrid Mail*

WDC successfully trialled the use of Hybrid Mail within several service areas and is now planning a live roll out. Hybrid mail is essentially a printing system which electronically transfers letters to a 3rd party provider, who then autonomously prints, envelopes and dispatches them.

During the trial, participants were very positive about how the hybrid process worked, the flexibility it provided for them and the speed at which large mailing runs could be completed. A more widespread rollout of the system was agreed by SLT in June 2022.

Roll Out Plan:

The eSignature and Hybrid Mail solutions will be rolled out together starting in Q2 2022, with an anticipated duration of 12 months.

The roll out will be integrated with a larger project to include optimising our printed materials to use less paper, transferring communications to electronic wherever possible, and in situations where a signature is needed, converting this to an electronic workflow. This is not an overly complex project, but it is time consuming due to the level of involvement required to analyse and improve our current situation.

1.2.2 *The Local Land and Property Gazetteer* ●

The LLPG is the Council’s core address database, detailing every addressable unit within the Warwick area. As part of the Digital Strategy it was intended that the LLPG become the address data source for every major Council system – to improve data management, future integration opportunities and ensure a consistent geographical base.

The first solution to include the LLPG following the sign-off of the Joint Digital Strategy was the Council’s new waste service, which uses LLPG data within the CRM, online forms, in-cab devices, and back-office applications. The Unique Property Reference Number (UPRN) ties all these systems together, allowing simple communication based on a location rather than a person.

The revised Digital Strategy will continue to prioritise the use of the LLPG as a core address database. It should be noted that the quality of WDC’s LLPG is very

high and in May 2022, the GIS team were awarded gold status by Geoplace (who look after the National Land and Property Gazetteer). This was in recognition of the improvements the team had made to our data quality.

Roll Out Plan:

There is no set roll out plan for the LLPG, as this is a supporting dataset for other initiatives.

1.2.3 Risk Management ●

Our Digital Service by Design strategy theme included an initiative to work with the Council's Risk Management function to introduce a better risk framework within ICT and Digital. The intention was to improve how we prioritised our resources, provide more consistent identification of significant risks and ensure we implemented effective controls in a timely way.

Whilst work with SDC did not continue, new Risk Management application is being used across ICT at WDC. Discussions are also underway within the Senior Leadership Team and the Council's Risk Manager, to see if this system would be of benefit to any other areas of the authority.

Roll Out Plan:

The Risk Management application used by ICT will be considered by the Council's Senior Leadership Team in July 2022.

If after careful evaluation it is decided that wider usage would be beneficial for the Council, resources could be put in place to facilitate this, starting in September 2022, for completion within six months.

1.2.4 Service Design ●

The Service Design workstreams of the Digital Strategy were intended to be used as part of the integration processes. The strategy also included initiatives to develop "ways of working" methods for repetition within other service areas. Neither of these workstreams were progressed following merger ending however, a small number of initiatives were already underway.

The chargeable garden waste process was one such example. Intended to be delivered digitally from the start, online signup forms were integrated seamlessly with the CRM, payment portal, waste management system and with the 3rd party sticker creator. The input forms could be used by contact centre operators to manually trigger a process and to deal with customer queries.

This solution was designed using SDC's CRM system and since launch, more than 85% of the service sign-ups have been completed entirely online. Similar online processes have been created at WDC for other services such as reporting fly tipping (using the Arcus platform) and improving how noise complaints are managed. The principles of digitally focused, user-centric design feature in all solutions and WDC will continue to prioritise this in the future.

The revised Digital Strategy will still suggest a major project of service design review, emphasising the importance of focusing on user's needs and using digital delivery methods to accommodate these efficiently behind the scenes.

Lesson Learned: The Change Management elements of service design cannot be underestimated. This has to be led from the top of the organisation and the vision of providing better services has to be embedded amongst all involved.

Roll Out Plan:

Service Design will be covered within the Council's revised Digital Strategy. This is anticipated for submission to Cabinet in September 2022. Design methodologies, guided by principles from the Government Digital Service, will be implemented within the first 12 months of the Digital Strategies life.

1.2.5 *Combined Telephony* ●

One of the first digital strategy projects to commence was the introduction of a combined telephony system. This workstream had made significant progress; ICT had identified potential solutions and was engaged with several suppliers to take proposals forward.

Our intention was to use Microsoft Teams Telephony and expand SDC's Mitel Contact Centre software into WDC. The decision to cease merger operations effectively drew this workstream to a close in its previous form. Fortunately, no contracts had been signed and all input from suppliers had been on a goodwill basis rather than consultancy.

Some aspects of the work undertaken continue to be used – SDC's handling of WDC's waste and recycling calls for example is facilitated through the redirection of SIP trunk traffic – a technique explored during this workstream.

The forthcoming Digital Strategy will continue include a project to review WDC's telephony, as our existing Cisco platform still requires replacement and there are a number of features in newer systems that we currently cannot accommodate. ICT have already begun to engage services to ensure we continue to have a good understanding of their requirements as this project moves forward.

Roll Out Plan:

Renewed Telephony will be picked up in Q3, 2022 and is anticipated for completion within 12 months.

1.2.6 *Creation of a Digital Team* ●

A priority outcome in the Joint Digital Strategy was the creation of a dedicated Digital team to support other Council services. The intention was to resource this largely from existing ICT staff, following a re-alignment of their workloads in recognition of the combined service. Financial provisions were also made for an additional two temporary Project Manager posts and a Business Analyst.

A revised ICT structure had been agreed by the Programme Board, which included a Digital Team, and job roles were being specified in advance of launching a staff consultation. Unfortunately, without the merger resources, this workstream was unable to progress any further in its previous form.

Proposals are currently being drawn up (as part of a revised Digital Strategy) to revitalise the creation of a bespoke Digital Team. It will not of course be possible

to move resources around within ICT in quite the same way, but it is not anticipated that this will cause significant difficulties.

Currently, WDC's projects are being progressed by the Transformation Lead and are being technically supported by ICT's Application Support group.

Lesson Learned: Effective Project Management and Business Analysis resources are essential and any Digitalisation initiatives will most likely fail without having these core resources in place.

Roll Out Plan:

The Cabinet report for a revised Digital Strategy will include a recommendation to establish a dedicated Digital Team. If accepted, it is anticipated that the team will be in place within three to six months, depending on recruitment outcomes.

1.2.7 Introduction of a Customer Relationship Management System ●

Introducing a single corporate CRM system was a cornerstone digital project, required to underpin most other strategy workstreams. Work started in December 2021 to review both Council's existing CRM systems (SDC's in-house platform and WDC's Jadu and Salesforce/Arcus systems) but this was paused shortly after launch.

In January 2022, as work gathered pace on the digital aspects of the waste management contract, a request was made by the (then) Head of Customer Services and Head of Waste and Recycling to pause work on the CRM review. It was not felt that there was capacity to participate in this workstream, whilst also completing the work required for the waste integration, which had to be ready for testing by April.

At the request of the aforementioned Heads of Service, all integration work for the new Waste and Recycling service was completed using Stratford's in-house CRM system. In the aftermath of the merger, SDC have continued to develop the digital waste provisions (within their CRM) as a service for WDC to consume. This has worked well, but this does limit WDC's ability to access customer information and the associated waste management portal.

At WDC, work is currently underway to review the Arcus platform and assess its suitability for more widespread usage – particularly its CRM and self-service capabilities which are built on Salesforce technology.

As a part of the revised Digital Strategy a new project will be put forward to introduce a corporate CRM system which will remain a cornerstone project. Consideration will be given to our existing platforms and the current Arcus review will give us a head start on completing this due diligence exercise.

Roll Out Plan:

A business case for a corporate CRM system will be produced in Q3, 2022. If accepted, it is anticipated that the first services will be rolled out in Q1 2023 (accounting for selection, training, implementation and development). Other customer facing online services (where appropriate) will migrate to or integrate with the CRM platform over a two year period.

1.2.8 *Application Consolidation*

As part of the merger process, a significant workstream to review the Council's application estate was due to undertaken. Initial priority areas had been identified which included Customer Services (CRM), Development and Building Control (Accolade/Uniform), Finance (CIAnywhere/Civica) and Revenues and Benefits (Civica/Civica).

Other than agreeing a prioritisation matrix, examining the potential costs involved with some systems and agreeing a running order, no other work on this stream was completed.

WDC's revised Digital Strategy will continue to focus on ensuring that staff have the right tools for the job, including the line of business applications they use. We will continue to look at consolidation opportunities and review how our existing applications are able to meet our future needs, as part of an integrated, end-to-end customer environment.

Roll Out Plan:

There is no longer a specific timeline associated with application consolidation.

1.3 ***Practical Impacts of De-Merging***

1.3.1 Work to facilitate the merger of SDC and WDC within ICT had already commenced at pace. The subsequent decision to cease merger activities did have some specific ICT implications, but fortunately none were significant:

- *Remote Access*

A number of staff at both SDC and WDC had been given access to systems and data at both organisations. In some cases, hardware for each respective authority was also issued.

All remote access for non-WDC staff was quickly terminated. The Councils are yet to exchanged retuned hardware, but this has simply been a question of logistics rather than an actual problem.

- *Combined Systems*

Most of the work undertaken to combine systems was focused on the use of Office 365 and the enablement of shared collaboration technologies.

Again, all remote access to collaborative resources that contained WDC data has been ceased. However, the facilities introduced during the merger (such as the ability to directly Teams chat with an SDC staff member) have been left in place. They posed no significant threat and continued to benefit the authority for any ongoing shared initiatives.

Work on combined software applications was ceased in all areas other than eSignatures, where a contract involving the two Council's had already been signed. Fortunately, the DocuSign solution is an online portal, and no practical sharing has continued with SDC other than invoicing for the costs of the system.

- *Information Sharing*

Where necessary, services can continue to share data with SDC colleagues

as the Council has left all relevant sharing agreements in place. Any information that was shared with SDC previously has been purged from their systems where appropriate, or will be removed as part of their retention and disposal policies.

- *Email*

Several SDC colleagues were issued with WDC email addresses as part of their combined duties. These have now been entirely removed, following a brief period of redirection and the presence of an "out of office" warning.

All shared mailing lists have also been decommissioned.

1.4 **New Developments - Government Digital Strategies**

1.4.1 In June 2022, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) announced its new UK Digital Strategy. Intended as a cross-government policy, the strategy focuses on six key areas:

- *Digital Foundations*

Digital infrastructure, data, regulation and digital markets, and security.

- *Ideas and Intellectual Property*

Consolidation of the government's work to support the innovation ecosystem, including in universities and the private sector.

- *Digital Skills and Talent*

Strengthening the digital education pipeline, increasing awareness of pathways into digital occupations, enhanced digital skills base, access through alternative routes and, work with the private and third sectors.

- *Financing Digital Growth*

Improving access to finance, embedding the technology revolution across the economy and the government's push to make the UK the best place to list a technology business.

- *Spreading Prosperity and Levelling Up*

Using digital technologies to support key strategic priorities including enhancing productivity, improved services, levelling up, and net zero.

- *Enhancing the UK's Place in the World*

The UK's strategic advantage to influence global decisions, commitment to maintaining the UK a science and technology superpower and helping to set global standards on digital products and services.

1.4.2 Each of the government's digital priorities are broken down further into smaller initiatives but many of these are likely to be delivered by central government agencies. None of the key actions are identified for delivery by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), but this does not mean that local government does not have a role to play.

1.4.3 The Central Digital and Data Office (CDDO) also recently published a new policy paper, *Transforming for a Digital Future: 2022 to 2025 roadmap for digital and data*. This also identified six key, cross-government priorities:

- *Transformed Public Services*

Enabling great digital services and embedded digital design and delivery.

- *One Login for Government*

A single method of authentication for all government services.

- *Better Data to Power Decision Making*

Co-operative sharing of quality data for reuse across government.

- *Secure, Efficient and Sustainable Technology*

Promotion of reusable technology that is resilient, secure, sustainable and effective with emphasis on the remediation of legacy systems.

- *Digital Skills at Scale*

Upskilling staff, establishing a capability framework and improving retention.

- *Unlocking Digital Transformation*

Addressing systematic barriers to digital transformation and ensuring all departments meet an agreed standard of delivery.

1.4.4 The CDDO policy does state that it is not specifically intended for adoption within Local Government. However, it also indicates that the CDDO and DLUHC are jointly engaging with local government to help create alignment with these plans, by supporting the reform of local services and, where appropriate, encouraging integration with central government services.

1.4.5 WDC's revised Digital Strategy will include direction (where appropriate) from Central Government Digital Strategies. Consideration will also be given to the Levelling Up agenda which was not available when the Joint Digital Strategy was designed.

2 Alternative Options

2.1 No alternative options are presented.

3 Consultation and Member's comments

3.1 The Portfolio Holder for Transformation has received a copy of this report.

4 Implications of the proposal

4.1 Legal/Human Rights Implications

4.1.1 None.

4.2 Financial

4.2.1 None.

4.3 Council Plan

4.3.1 None.

4.4 Environmental/Climate Change Implications

4.4.1 None.

4.5 Analysis of the effects on Equality

4.5.1 None.

4.6 Data Protection

4.6.1 The reversal of Digital Strategy initiatives is in-line with data protection legislation.

4.7 Health and Wellbeing

4.7.1 None.

5 Risk Assessment

5.1 None

6 Conclusion/Reasons for the Recommendation

6.1.1 Abandoning the merger was a significant blow for the Digital Strategy objectives. However, this does not mean the end of the road for Digital and a revised Digital Strategy proposal will provide WDC with a real opportunity to tailor its digital approach and concentrate on delivering programmes which will truly be of benefit to our residents.

6.1.2 There are no specific recommendations made within this paper, it is simply intended to offer reassurance to members that after the Digital Strategy was approved, ICT did actively start to work on several the key initiatives. Our revised strategy proposals will continue to prioritise the actives which will have the most benefit to our communities, but also to resolve some of the shortfalls of the previous strategy and improve our overall outcomes.

7 Background papers

7.1.1 WDC, 2021 – [Joint Digital Strategy](#).

Report Information Sheet

Please complete and submit to Democratic Services with draft report

Committee/Date	05/07/2022	
Title of report	Work Programme Update – Digital Strategy	
Consultations undertaken		
Consultee *required	Date	Details of consultation /comments received
Ward Member(s)	NA	
Portfolio Holder WDC & SDC *	27/06/22	Cllr. Tracey
Financial Services *	NA	
Legal Services *	NA	
Other Services	NA	
Chief Executive(s)	CE 27/06/22	
Head of Service(s)	NA	
Section 151 Officer	NA	
Monitoring Officer	NA	
CMT (WDC)	27/06/22	
Leadership Co-ordination Group (WDC)		
Other organisations		
Final decision by this Committee or rec to another Ctte/Council?		Recommendation to :Cabinet / CouncilCommittee
Contrary to Policy/Budget framework		No
Does this report contain exempt info/Confidential? If so, which paragraph(s)?		No
Does this report relate to a key decision (referred to in the Cabinet Forward Plan)?		No
Accessibility Checked?		File/Info/Inspect Document/Check Accessibility