# Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee

## 5 July 2017

## Review of the Committee's Work and Preparation of the Future Work Programme

### Recommendations

(1) That the Committee notes the work of the Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee from 2015 to 2017. (Appendix A)

(2) That the Committee identifies areas for inclusion in the Committee's work programme.

## 1.0    Background

This report has been prepared to provide new members with

- a summary of the role of the Committee and different ways of working

- a snapshot of the key issues considered by the Committee over the last two years as a context for developing the future work programme and to ensure work is not duplicated.

- guidance to assist in the development of the Committee's work programme.

## 2.0    Role of the Committee

2.1    This committee's remit is:

'To review and/or scrutinise the provision of the council relating to the fire and rescue service, budget, medium term financial plan, corporate business plan, planning and performance arrangements, finance, property, information technology, facilities management, workforce strategy and development, law and governance, libraries, customer service and communications.'

2.2    The Council's Constitution sets out the general powers for all Overview and Scrutiny Committees (Part 2 Section 8) which in summary are to:

(i)     Assist the council and Cabinet in development of policy;
(ii)    Review/ scrutinise decisions already made
(iii)   Make reports/recommendations (usually to the Cabinet)
(iv)    Question Cabinet Portfolio Holders about issues within the Committee remit.

2.3    The powers reflect the Committee's dual role as both a 'check and balance' or 'critical friend' to Cabinet by reviewing policies and decisions (the 'scrutiny' element) but also  in supporting and assisting in the development of policy (the 'overview' element).  Members will also hear the term 'pre-decision scrutiny' whereby policies or decisions that are being considered by Cabinet are routed via Overview and Scrutiny Committees for their input before the Cabinet take the decision.  Post- decision scrutiny is obviously scrutiny that is undertaken after the decision is taken.  This can be in the form of a 'call-in' by members which prevents implementation of a decision until the Committee has had an opportunity to put forward its views on the proposed decision. (Members have been issued with a  copy of 'The Essentials' quick reference guides which includes a guide on overview and scrutiny and also on call-in although please note that the call-in to Council has changed following the decision of Council on 23 May.)

2.4    The formal powers of overview and scrutiny are supported by a set of protocols (Part 4 Section 3 of the Constitution and attached at Appendix B). This states the overall purpose of scrutiny to **'assist the council to achieve its corporate aims and objectives and deliver positive outcomes for local people'** and includes guidance on how to select topics for scrutiny which may assist the Committee in agreeing its work programme (see also section 4 below ).

2.5     As stated at 2.2, one of the general powers of the Committee is to question or 'hold to account' Cabinet members. A list of the forthcoming decisions for Cabinet or Portfolio Holder is provided for each Committee meeting (see item 4) but members can ask about anything within the Portfolio Holder's remit.  A list of the Portfolio Holders relevant to this Committee is listed at the end of the agenda.

2.6    The other standing item for the Committee is the One Organisational Plan (OOP 2020) quarterly performance progress report for those service areas within the Committee's remit.

**3.0    Ways of Working**

3.1     A brief outline of the key areas of work undertaken over the last two years is set out in Appendix A, along with a list of all of the other items considered over the period and the written briefings provided for members between the formal meetings.

3.2     Members will see that most meetings focused on just two or three items but there have been a number of issues raised by members that have resulted in officers producing a number of briefing notes.

3.3    The Committee has not chosen to undertake any task and finish reviews during this period, although there has been a separate cross party member working group looking at the Fire and Rescue Service.

Review and Work Programme – 05.07.2017

Although the Committee chose not to set up any task and finish groups, these can be useful for some reviews. Task and finish groups suit in-depth short reviews and enable members to work together in a less formal way.  They are particularly suitable for engagement with service users, external experts or in gathering information from other partners or other authorities –either by the whole group or by individual members. They are supported by the Democratic Services Team and lead officer(s) from the relevant service(s). They can be resource and time intensive (which is why we encourage only one task and finish group to be active per committee at any one time) but are an effective method for gathering evidence and in developing thought-through recommendations.  The recommendations from task and finish groups are considered by the Committee before being forwarded to Cabinet for consideration and response.

3.4     The majority of issues will be the subject of service officer reports for consideration by the whole Committee – in particular the monitoring reports, or issues that can be reviewed in a single meeting.  Occasionally these reports will lead to the Committee wanting to undertake a more in-depth review (as they did with the issue of air quality) and the outcome of this may again result in the Committee making recommendations to Cabinet. Officers are encouraged to produce short briefing papers as opposed to formal reports.  It is likely, however, that if the Committee wishes to consider an item that is already programmed for an imminent Cabinet meeting, the timing will mean that the Committee will receive a copy of the formal report that is in transit for the Cabinet meeting.

3.5     There is the option of holding more structured 'select committee' style meetings.  These are meetings of the whole committee, focused on one issue, and are particularly suitable where the committee wishes to gain evidence and question a range of people (such as service users, partners) in one half day or day session.

3.6     Keeping the agendas for each meeting focused on a few items is important if the meeting is to really undertake effective scrutiny.   The provision of written briefing notes, circulated after the meeting, has proved useful as a way of answering specific questions raised at meetings. This helps to manage the workload of the formal meetings and ensure the focus is on scrutiny reviews (rather than purely information reports). The briefings are sent to all members, not just those on the Committee, as it is likely that there may be other members who would find them useful.

3.7     Any member of the Committee can propose items for the work programme, but the Chair has the final say on the agenda for any particular meeting.  The Chair, Vice Chair and Group Spokespersons are given an opportunity to meet to consider the work programme of the Committee. These informal meetings take place in between the formal Committee meetings.

Review and Work Programme – 05.07.2017

**4.0    Developing the work programme for 2017/18 and beyond**

4.1    In addition to the standing items (OOP Performance Monitor and Questions to Cabinet Portfolio Holders) there are just two update reports scheduled for the September meeting - on CWLEP funding programme and on Business Rates. The Committee also asked for a report on the results of the latest Staff Survey and have been having reports on Capital Slippage at every other meeting.

4.2    The Committee are invited to consider the issues they wish to see included in the work programme.  This may include areas that they wish to first have further information on so that they can decide whether and what type of review should be undertaken.  The work programme does not have to be finalised at this point and there may be areas that could be subject of further discussion at the Chair and Group Spokespersons meetings which will be arranged shortly.

4.3    The selection of topics is critical. The importance of focussing on a quality programme (rather than quantity) cannot be over-emphasised. The Council (members and officers) resources need to be targeted effectively and focus needs to be on the things that matter and on supporting the organisation on its transformation journey, rather than diverting resources away from it. This means that the work of the Committees should reflect the Council's priorities:

**Warwickshire's economy is vibrant and supported by the right jobs, training and skills and infrastructure**

- Children and adults have access to quality learning throughout their lives
- Young people are supported to access apprenticeships and employment
- Warwickshire is an attractive place to do business with a strong local economy and infrastructure
- *Our communities and businesses are thriving and prosperous*

**Warwickshire's Communities and Individuals are supported to be safe, healthy and independent.**

- Our communities are independent, resilient and safe
- Vulnerable members of our communities are supported to be independent and safe
- *We support and coordinate other organisations to deliver services*

4.4    There are elements of both key priorities that are pertinent to this Committee (as indicated in italics).  Members may also be interested in the latest messages in the 'Living in Warwickshire' survey of residents which provides some indication of the concerns of residents that members may consider would benefit from some analysis.

Review and Work Programme – 05.07.2017

4.5 The Council's protocols set out the matters to take into account when deciding whether to conduct a particular scrutiny. (See section 5.2.3 of Appendix B). This includes whether the issue will have a significant impact on Warwickshire and is it a matter that would be of general public concern.

## 5.0 Conclusion

This report gives some background information for new members and is designed to provide a stimulus for discussion at the meeting on 5 July. The officers at that meeting will be there to support this discussion and to provide any information that will assist in developing the Committee's work programme.

### Background Papers

None

|  | Name | Contact Information |
|---|---|---|
| Report Authors | Janet Purcell<br>Helen Barnsley | janetpurcell@warwickshire.gov.uk<br>helenbarnsley@warwickshire.gov.uk |
| Head of Service | Sarah Duxbury | sarahduxbury@warwickshire.gov.uk |
| Joint Managing Director | David Carter | davidcarter@warwickshire.gov.uk |

Review and Work Programme – 05.07.2017

# Key work undertaken between May 2015 and May 2017

1.1 This provides an overview of the key work carried out by the Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny committee over the past two years. If members want more detail on these the Democratic Services Team will endeavour to provide more information on the history of a particular issue. Access to all previous agendas and reports can be accessed via the Council's Committee Management Information System.

1.2 **Fire and Rescue Procurement -** Fire and Rescue Services are now overseen by the Home Office and following this move, a procurement project was undertaken which culminated in a benchmarking report on the "basket of goods" used. This was a new form of benchmarking performance for the Fire and Rescue Service and the Committee were pleased to learn of the performance recorded for Warwickshire, in particular in ensuring best value for money and the work undertaken to work with multi-agency partners to identify opportunities for greater procurement collaboration. The one issue of concern was that local businesses were not receiving enough feedback on why they hadn't been successful in winning contracts. The Fire and Rescue Service is investigating ways to offer constructive feedback as well as encouragement to local companies. The Committee asked that the conclusion of the investigation be reported to the Committee.

1.3 **Fire & Rescue Service Peer Review and Performance -** The Committee have considered updates throughout the Fire Service Peer Review and in January 2017 welcomed the report that Warwickshire is one of the most high performing and successful services across the country. Warwickshire was also reported to be the top performer in the reduction of house fires which was welcomed by Members. There were some areas identified for improvement, including internal communications and the rise in deliberate fires across the County. The Committee will continues to monitor these areas

1.4 **Fire & Rescue Service Recruitment, Retention and Second Fire Appliances Attending Incidents -** The Committee received data in relation to the performance standards for a second appliance to reach an incident and found a number of reasons why the target was not always reached; including traffic issues, incorrect location information provided by the caller, and staffing difficulties. The Committee then looked further at the issues facing the recruitment and retention of fire fighters, especially Retained Duty System firefighters. It was found that there had been an impact during the changes to the crewing systems and some long term sickness issues but that measures had been taken such as a daily review of staff and use of a crewing pool.

1.5     **Fire and Rescue Service Deliberate Fire and Road Traffic Collisions Hotspots -** The committee had particular concern about these two issues. Members were provided with a briefing note regarding the geographical distribution of deliberate fires and also received an in depth presentation from the county's dedicated arson officer.  Regarding road traffic accidents there remain around a dozen locations that can be considered hot-spots but work is ongoing with partners to identify what action can be undertaken to reduce the dangers at these sites.

1.6     **Staff Survey -** The Committee have considered a report with the results of the latest staffsurvey. The survey used benchmarks set by the company ORC – a recognised model for employee engagement monitoring. The results were reassuring with Warwickshire County Council continuing to be in the top quartile of those who responded to ORC. The engagement rate was 70% which was noted to be enviable across the sector. Despite the predominately positive report, the Committee raised concerns regarding the levels of staff sickness and requested further analysis. Work has since been undertaken with managers and team leaders to ensure they receive full training and are able to work to quickly identify trends, including mental health issues amongst staff. The survey also resulted in action to improve the appraisal system which has simplified paperwork which encourages discussion focussed on the council's key desired behaviours.

1.7     **Digital First -** The Committee decided to scrutinise the Council's Digital First approach for customer interactions following concern raised by members that traditional communication channels were to be stopped which would have a negative impact on those who do not have the skills or access to technology to enable them to use on line services.  The Committee were assured that whilst Digital First will be the expected approach for most and would deliver necessary efficiency savings, there will be local support through community hubs for those who cannot access on-line services themselves.

1.8     **Treasury Management -** The Committee have received frequent updates on treasury management with a view to ensuring the investment strategy is effective and have been reassured by the high performance in comparison with similar authorities.

| Other Issues Considered by the Committee | |
|---|---|
| **15 July 2015** | • Property Disposal Protocols and Concessions According to Social Value<br>• County Farms and Small Holdings Strategy<br>• One Organisational Plan performance End of Year Report |
| **17 September 2015** | • Capital Programme Slippage<br>• WCC Borrowing Strategy<br>• Client Information Systems<br>• Review of WCC's Performance in Bidding for External Resources<br>• One Organisational Plan Performance –Quarter 1 |
| **3 December 2015** | • Customer Journey – and feedback<br>• One Organisational Plan Performance- Quarter 2<br>• Fire and Rescue Service Integrated Peer Challenge Action Plan – Progress<br>• Property Rationalisation and the way we work<br>• Fire & Rescue Service- Operational Impact of the Revised Response Standards |
| **21 January 2016** | • Warwickshire Local Welfare Scheme<br>• Consultation and Engagement<br>• Treasury Management Monitoring Report<br>• IT Systems – Fitness for Purpose<br>• Fire & Rescue Service Operational Performance Staff Absence, Health, Safety and Welfare |
| **17 March 2016** | • Infrastructure Funding – Use of 106 monies<br>• Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub-Update<br>• Project and Programme Management Processes |
| **18 May 2016** | • Treasury Management<br>• LEP Funding Opportunities Update<br>• The Impact on the Fire and Rescue Service of it coming under the Home Office and Proposals for Fire and Rescue to come under the Strategic Control of the Police and Crime Commissioner |
| **13 July 2016** | • Fire & Rescue Service Peer Review and Transformation Process<br>• Public Property Asset Register |
| **15 September 2016** | • Treasury Management Monitoring report<br>• One Organisational Plan Performance Report -End of Year and Q1 |
| **14 December 2016** | • Fire & Rescue Service Procurement Activity<br>• Fire & Rescue Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2017-2018<br>• Your Say Staff Survey Results<br>• Business Rates Update |
| **22 February 2017** | • Deliberately Started Fires Across the County<br>• IRMP Update<br>• One Organisational Plan Performance Report |

Review and Work Programme – 05.07.2017

**Briefing notes**

The following were sent to members over the last two years:

- Call abandonment
- Complaints update – Adult's and Children's Social Care
- Corporate Customer Journey Programme
- Customer Service Centre call volumes
- Customer Service Centre opening hours
- Digital by Default/Communication Channels
- Home Secretary Speech – Fire and Rescue Service
- Information Asset Actions
- Key and non-Key Fire Stations and Fire Engines
- LEP updates
- Local Government response to Brexit
- MASH IT update
- MASH Progress
- New in-house catering service
- One Public Estate progress report
- OOP underspend information
- Performance information for second firefighting appliances
- Project Hub update
- Property disposals and the use of receipts
- Recruitment and retention with RDS
- S106 balances update
- Staff survey response rate, results and action plan
- Warwickshire employment rates
- WCC approach to Commissioning
- WCC project and programme management approach
- Whole time fire fighter vacancies

Review and Work Programme – 05.07.2017

5.      **Overview and Scrutiny Committees**

**5.1      Procedural Matters**

5.1.1   Unless otherwise stated, each overview and scrutiny committee shall set its own programme of work.  Any member of an overview and scrutiny committee, including co-opted  members, can  propose  items  for  consideration. The  chair's  decision   is final  in deciding  the agenda for any particular meeting.

5.1.2    Officer reports to overview and scrutiny committees should be presented in a way which encourages free-flowing debate. Officers should consider shorter briefing papers with options for the committee to receive further information, through presentations, visits, questions at the meeting etc. as opposed to traditional reports.

5.1.3   Only in exceptional circumstances should there be urgent or unplanned reports to overview and  scrutiny  committees,  as  they  are  not  decision-making  bodies  and  items  of  this nature would ordinarily be routed to the leader or cabinet or the appropriate decision-making person or body.

5.1.4   Briefings for chairs, vice-chairs and spokespersons prior to the committee meetings will be focused on the management of the meeting and the work programme of the committee not on the content of reports/items on the agenda.

5.1.5   The chair, vice-chair and spokespersons will be given an opportunity to meet to consider the work programme of the committee.

5.1.6   Regular briefing meetings will be arranged between the relevant cabinet portfolio holder(s) and  overview  and  scrutiny  chairs  and  spokespersons.  The  strategic  director  and/or appropriate heads of service will attend. The  meeting  will  identify  any  key  issues  for dissemination  to  the  wide  council  membership,  which  will  form  a  bulletin  to  be  issued  to  all members as soon as possible after the meeting. The meeting will also be provided with an overview  of  overview  and  scrutiny,  cabinet  and  council  work  programmes  to  enable overview and scrutiny members to consider whether they wish to make any changes to their work programme. (These meetings should assist in ensuring the programmes progress in year and that any other important strategic issues that arise in year are accommodated). The aim should be to have these meetings every two months to ensure timely exchange of information and onward briefing of members.

5.1.7   The overview and scrutiny committees should report to full council once a year on the work undertaken.

5.1.8   Where matters fall within the remit of more than one overview and scrutiny committee, the relevant chairs shall decide which of them will assume responsibility for that particular issue. Joint  meetings  of  overview  and  scrutiny  committees  should  be  avoided,  as  these  are generally too large to carry out effective scrutiny. Alternatively the relevant overview and scrutiny committees may decide to form a small joint scrutiny panel to examine cross-cutting issues.

5.1.9    Reports from overview and scrutiny committees to the cabinet/portfolio holders and/or full council  shall  be  in  the  name  of  the  chair.    Where  the  professional  advice  of  the  chief executive  or  strategic  director  or  other  statutory  officer  does  not  support  the  content  or recommendation in the report, this will be made clear in the report.

5.1.10 An  overview  and  scrutiny  committee  shall  be  entitled  to  invite  any  person  to  address  its meetings, to discuss issues of concern and/or answer questions.   It may for example wish to hear  from  residents,  stakeholders  and  members  and  officers  in  other  parts  of  the  public sector.

5.1.11 An  overview  and  scrutiny  committee  will  normally  invite  members  who  have  called- in  an executive decision to attend the meeting to explain the reasons for the call-in.

5.1.12 If an overview and scrutiny committee establishes a task and finish group it should be time limited.

5.2     **Scrutiny Role**

5.2.1   Overview and scrutiny should be evidence based, constructive and focused on outcomes which make a positive difference to people living and working in Warwickshire. Overview and scrutiny committees should not normally scrutinise individual decisions made by committees or officers, particularly in respect of development control, licensing, registration, consents and other permissions. Scrutiny should not be viewed as an alternative to normal appeal procedures. Nor should it be used as a vehicle to pursue issues relating to matters concerning individual electoral divisions.

5.2.2   The overall purpose of a scrutiny review is to:

   •   Assist the council to achieve its corporate aims and objectives; and
   •   Deliver positive outcomes for local people.

5.2.3   Overview and scrutiny committees should take the following matters into account when deciding whether to conduct a particular scrutiny:

   •   Would the issue have a significant impact on Warwickshire?
   •   Is it a matter which would be of general public concern?
   •   Does the issue relate to a key deliverable of a strategic and/or partnership plan?
   •   Does it relate to a key performance area where the council needs to improve?
   •   Are there adequate resources available to do the activity well?
   •   Is the overview and scrutiny activity timely?
   •   Is there a clear objective for scrutinising this topic?
   •   Is there evidence to support the need for overview and scrutiny?
   •   What are the likely benefits to the council and its customers?
   •   Are we likely to achieve the desired outcome?
   •   What are the potential risks?

5.2.4   Overview and scrutiny committees should consider rejecting a scrutiny review for the following reasons:

   •   The issue is already being addressed/examined elsewhere and change is imminent;
   •   The issue is not relevant to all or large parts of the council;
   •   There is little evidence to support the need for a review;
   •   The issue is the subject of current consultation by the council;
   •   The topic would be better addressed somewhere else (and will be referred there);
   •   Scrutiny involvement would have limited/no impact upon outcomes for local people;
   •   The topics may be sub-judice or prejudicial to the council's interest;
   •   The topic is too broad to make a realistic review;
   •   New legislation or guidance relating to the topic is expected within the next year;
   •   The topic area is currently subject to inspection or had recently undergone substantial change.

5.2.5   Overview and scrutiny committees or sub-committees may question the leader, members of the cabinet or other committees, strategic directors, heads of service or their nominee, about their decisions and performance of services. The member or officer concerned will be given at least 10 working days written notice of the meeting, which will include details of the item and whether there is any background information.

5.2.6   Where, in exceptional circumstances, the relevant person or their nominee is unable to attend on the required date, an alternative date shall be arranged in consultation with him/her.

5.2.7    Overview and scrutiny committees should always bear in mind that when officers appear to answer questions their contribution should, as far as is possible, be confined to questions of fact and explanation relating to policies and decisions.

5.2.8    Officers may explain what the policies are, the extent to which those objectives may have been met and how administrative factors may have affected both the choice of policy measures and the manner of their implementation.

5.2.9    Officers may be asked to explain the advice they have given to the leader, portfolio holder or cabinet prior to decisions being taken and they may also be asked to explain the decisions they have taken themselves under delegated authority.

5.2.10   As far as possible, officers should avoid being drawn into discussion about the merits of alternative policies where this is politically contentious.   Any comment by officers on the policies and actions of the leader, portfolio holder or cabinet should always be consistent with the requirement for officers to be politically impartial.

5.2.11   Where an overview and scrutiny committee conducts investigations (e.g. with a view to policy development} and asks people to attend meetings to give evidence, such meetings are to be conducted in accordance with the following principles:

- the investigation is conducted fairly and all members of the committee shall be given the opportunity to ask questions, contribute and speak;
- those assisting the committee by giving evidence are treated with respect and courtesy; and
- the investigation is conducted so as to maximise the efficiency of the investigation or analysis.

## 5.3    **Relationship between Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Officers**

5.3.1    Overview and scrutiny committees shall seek advice from relevant officers when considering any report or matter.

5.3.2    Where an overview and scrutiny committee considers that there is doubt about whether an executive decision is contrary to the budget and/or the policy framework they shall seek the advice of the monitoring officer and other relevant officers.