

Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: Wednesday 23 February 2022
Time: 2.00 pm
Venue: Committee Room 2, Shire Hall

Membership

Councillor Adrian Warwick (Chair)
Councillor Parminder Singh Birdi (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Sarah Boad
Councillor Piers Daniell
Councillor Sue Markham
Councillor Caroline Phillips
Councillor Will Roberts
Councillor Richard Spencer
Councillor Robert Tromans
Councillor Martin Watson

Items on the agenda: -

1. General

(1) Apologies

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

(3) Chair's Announcements

(4) Minutes of Previous Meeting

5 - 12

2. Public Question Time

Up to 30 minutes of the meeting is available for members of the public to ask questions on any matters relevant to the business of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Questioners may ask two questions and can speak for up to three minutes each. To be sure of receiving an answer to an appropriate question, please contact Andrew Carswell (Democratic Services) at least two working days prior to the meeting.

3. Questions to Portfolio Holders Relevant to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Up to 30 minutes of the meeting is available for the Committee to put questions to the Leader and Portfolio Holders on any matters relevant to the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

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|--|---------|
| 4. Our People Strategy - Year 2 Plan | 13 - 20 |
| 5. WFRS HMICFRS Inspection Report | |
| 6. School Admissions Process Improvements | 21 - 28 |
| 7. Quarter 3 Council Plan 2020-2025 Quarterly Progress Report | 29 - 44 |
| 8. Work Programme | 45 - 46 |
| 9. Any Urgent Matters | |

Monica Fogarty
Chief Executive
Warwickshire County Council
Shire Hall, Warwick

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A member attending a meeting where a matter arises in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest must (unless they have a dispensation):

- Declare the interest if they have not already registered it
- Not participate in any discussion or vote
- Leave the meeting room until the matter has been dealt with
- Give written notice of any unregistered interest to the Monitoring Officer within 28 days of the meeting

Non-pecuniary interests relevant to the agenda should be declared at the commencement of the meeting.

The public reports referred to are available on the Warwickshire Web
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Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday 15 December 2021

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

Councillor Adrian Warwick (Chair)
Councillor Parminder Singh Birdi (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Sarah Boad
Councillor Piers Daniell
Councillor Sue Markham
Councillor Caroline Phillips
Councillor Will Roberts
Councillor Richard Spencer
Councillor Robert Tromans
Councillor Martin Watson

Officers

Rob Powell, Strategic Director for Resources
Benjamin Brook, Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Andrew Felton, Assistant Director - Finance
Martin Lewis, Service Manager
John Cole, Democratic Services Officer
Andy Carswell, Democratic Services Officer
Simon Lewis, Strategy and Commissioning Manager - Property Management
Spencer Payne, Service Manager (Business Intelligence)
Steve Smith, Assistant Director - Commissioning Support Unit

Others County Councillors

Councillor Peter Butlin, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property
Councillor Kam Kaur, Portfolio Holder for Economy and Place

1. General

(1) Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Andy Crump (Portfolio Holder for Fire & Rescue and Community Safety). Apologies were also received from Barnaby Briggs and Sarah Duxbury.

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

There were none.

(3) Chair's Announcements

The Chair informed the Panel of the passing of Kieran Amos, former Chief Fire Officer with Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service. The Chair said Kieran Amos was a true gentleman who would have stayed in contact with the Committee members, and would be missed by the Council and Fire and Rescue Service. The Chair sent his sympathies to his family and friends on behalf of the Committee.

Ben Brook (Chief Fire Officer) said Kieran Amos was a larger than life character, full of life and charisma, who had served in the fire service for 32 years. Not only would he be missed at Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service, but he would be missed by colleagues nationally.

Councillor Boad said she had found the tributes to Kieran Amos at Full Council the previous day to be very moving.

Councillor Butlin said he had been present when Kieran Amos was interviewed for the role of Chief Fire Officer and said he knew immediately that he was the right man for the job. Councillor Butlin said Kieran Amos had been one of the most likeable people that had ever been interviewed, and fully understood the Warwickshire way and was a great advocate for the county. He said he would be greatly missed.

Councillor Singh Birdi said that just before his retirement, Kieran Amos had approached him at an event and said the Fire Service needed to raise £5,000 to supply new uniforms for crew members taking part in marches. Councillor Singh Birdi made some enquiries and was able to raise some money, but when he next spoke to Kieran Amos he found he had managed to raise almost all of the £5,000 himself. Councillor Singh Birdi said Kieran Amos did not need to raise the money personally, but felt he had a duty to do so.

Members stood for a minute's silence in memory of Kieran Amos.

The Chair introduced members to Andy Carswell, who had just joined Warwickshire County Council as its new Democratic Services Officer and would be supporting the Committee at future meetings. The Chair thanked the previous support officer, John Cole, stating he had been very supportive and an excellent officer for the Committee.

(4) Minutes of Previous Meeting

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2021 be approved as a correct record.

There were no matters arising.

2. Public Question Time

No public questions were received or presented at the meeting.

3. Questions to Portfolio Holders Relevant to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Boad noted the discussions on fires at industrial sites at the previous meeting and asked if there was an update on this. Ben Brook said it was a national issue and since the last meeting there had been an increase in the number of risk-based assessments being undertaken. There had initially been 10,000 businesses due for an inspection and this had now risen to around 35,000. Ben Brook said there were 12 fire safety officers who could conduct the assessments in full, but over a 12 month period they would only be able to make 600 such inspections. The possibility of training operational crew members to assist with inspections was being investigated. Councillor Boad said she had seen some information on this on social media and hoped businesses had also seen it. The Chair suggested it may be possible for information to be circulated to businesses to help them.

4. Work Programme

Resolved:

That the Committee agrees the updated 2021/22 Work Programme, as set out in the report, and notes the scheduled future meeting dates.

5. Quarter 2 Council Plan 2020-2025 Quarterly Progress Report (April 2021 to September 2021)

Rob Powell (Strategic Director for Resources) introduced the report and stated that performance had remained strong and robust throughout the Covid pandemic. He said that of the 16 Key Business Measures of relevance to the Committee, nine were on track and six were not; of the six that were not, three related to best use of resources. Rob Powell reminded members that one of the KBMs was a target of having no fire-related deaths or injuries, which was acknowledged as being a difficult target to reach but an appropriate one. Of the KBMs not on target, Rob Powell stated that these related chiefly to capital expenditure. These had been caused due to interest rates and supply chain issues and expenditure on other projects locally, such as HS2 and preparation for the 2022 Commonwealth Games. Rob Powell said these KBMs were unlikely to improve in the short term. It was noted another off-target KBM related to the referral of complaints to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. Rob Powell said this followed a national pattern as there had been an increased demand for this following on from the Covid pandemic, and said he was confident this target would be met by the end of the year. It was noted that 89 per cent of revenue savings were on target to be met, which Rob Powell stated still represented a strong performance in spite of it being off target.

Members were told there had been a significant improvement in terms of the shortfall on the dedicated school grant and this was now on track to be met, although Rob Powell said there was still the possibility of volatility relating to this KBM. Rob Powell said there had been very high levels of customer satisfaction with the contact centre, which was in spite of a high increase in demand and increased complexities of some of the issues being dealt with. He said he had recently gone to the customer contact centre in Bedworth and seen for himself the high level of support being provided to residents.

Rob Powell said the Member Working Group was working on the development and leadership framework, regarding the refresh of the Council Plan. This was likely to be finalised during the next quarter.

Councillor Watson noted the resource pressures on the Fire and Rescue Service, particularly regarding the fire risk assessors as this had been raised earlier in the meeting. He asked if there were any external factors or challenges that could affect the figures in the report or impact on the service that could be provided. Ben Brook said the biggest challenge currently was delivery of fire safety interventions. There was a requirement for more fully trained fire safety officers; however Ben Brook explained that it took two years for the training to be completed in full.

The Chair asked for the Committee's thanks for the report to be passed back to the officers who had prepared it.

6. Estates Master Planning (EMP)

Martin Lewis (Re-Enabling Services Manager) introduced the item and began by explaining the system of agile working and new methods of working had begun to be re-examined 18 months ago. The Covid pandemic had then hit and this was used as an additional opportunity to trial new ways of working and broaden the scope of the Estates Masterplan. The programme had been run since July and had provided important information in terms of how teams wanted to work, and how to embed cultural and behavioural changes. Martin Lewis said the first stage of the Estates Masterplan would focus on Shire Hall and a pilot scheme would be introduced here first before looking at how the proposals would affect other office spaces. Simon Lewis (Strategy and Commissioning Manager, Property Management) said the dynamics of different teams would change how the office buildings were used. It was important to understand how teams wanted to use the buildings before any cultural changes were implemented. The Chair said he was pleased that consideration was being given to how staff wanted to work, as this was an important point in terms of the Masterplan.

Councillor Boad said she was surprised the number of staff wanting to return to the office was low, as compared to a year ago a significant number of staff had expressed a preference for wanting to return to office working. She asked if any trends had been identified from different teams. She gave the example of social workers being an appropriate team to have located together as it was a team that could benefit from collaborative working, particularly in light of recent tragic cases that had been covered in the national media. She added some staff members may have missed the spontaneity of having one to one catch ups with colleagues. Martin Lewis said different teams were identified to test different ways of working, and in teams where a preference for home working had been identified then they had been supplied with the technology to allow them to do this.

Responding to a question from Councillor Tromans, Martin Lewis said collaborations meant different things to different teams. For example some teams would regard face to face meetings to discuss a confidential matter as collaborative whereas others would use technology to hold a hybrid meeting and consider that as collaborative. Simon Lewis added that workspace utilisation would vary from team to team; in some cases, 40 per cent of spaces being used might be appropriate whereas in other teams, such as in the call centre, 100 per cent utilisation would be anticipated. It was possible for a workspace to have more than 100 per cent utilisation if more than one person used it on any given day.

Rob Powell said there had been variations in the number of people coming into the office. Prior to the recent implementation of Plan B, numbers had been starting to increase. Rob Powell said each team had set its own agile working principles, and noting the earlier example given of the social care team said this was one that had been working together in the office more regularly than other teams might. Rob Powell added that office space had been available throughout the pandemic and some staff had been coming in on a regular basis, either because they did not have the physical space to work from home or for mental wellbeing reasons. Virtual working had been successful and consideration was being given to how this could be extended for those who wanted to continue working virtually from home.

Councillor Kaur (Portfolio Holder for Economy and Place) said check-in surveys had been taking place as part of the people strategy, which had helped gain insight into people's work/life balance. The success of agile working had increased as a result. She added the mechanisms were in place to allow staff to switch between home working and being in an office environment. Councillor Butlin said it was important for the Council to be confident that any repurposing of office buildings was done in the right way before it committed to any capital spending. He noted that a number of people had begun returning to office working, highlighting the number of people who had evacuated from the building after a fire alarm sounded during the May Cabinet meeting.

Councillor Singh Birdi stated his belief Members and officers would now struggle without the use of technology and it would be important going forward, noting there had initially been opposition to it. He asked if hybrid meeting rooms could be made available to Members for them to hold, for example, meetings with their constituents. Martin Lewis said this was being investigated and meeting rooms could be made available in other office buildings and not just Shire Hall.

Councillor Watson said although it was important to allow staff the opportunity to work from home if they wished, he noted that in one of the staff surveys only five per cent of respondents said they were more productive when working from home. Councillor Watson said it was important to take into account value for money and for home working not to be an excuse to not work. The Chair accepted this point, and added that home working meant fewer car journeys and this would help the Council achieve its net zero carbon emission challenge.

Rob Powell said there had been two cohorts of graduates through the LGA scheme who had taken up their placements during the pandemic. He said their contributions had been phenomenal, noting that of the first cohort one had won a national award and another had received an offer of a permanent job placement with the Council. Regarding the use of office space Rob Powell said final discussions were starting to conclude and there was an idea of the direction that would be taken, but there was still some uncertainty. He stressed the importance of taking time to finalise this plan, as the correct short-term solution could cause problems in the medium to long term. Regarding productivity, Rob Powell said there was anecdotal evidence to suggest an increase in productivity from home working and the performance indicators would seem to confirm this. Responding to a question from Councillor Roberts, Rob Powell said staff had used home working as a way of working more flexibly. He said staff with childcare responsibilities might find their personal circumstances meant it was better for them to work earlier in the mornings or later in the evenings, and he said this was the case for him.

The Chair asked for the Committee's congratulations to go to the graduates that Rob Powell had mentioned.

7. Update on the Voice of Warwickshire Residents' Panel

Spencer Payne (Service Manager, Business Intelligence) introduced the report and reminded members of the background to the item. There had been a lengthy recruitment process for potential members of the Residents' Panel and an initial 800 applications. Following this some gaps had been identified that prevented the Panel being truly reflective of Warwickshire as a whole, such as certain age groups, ethnicities and geographical location. There had been a more focused recruitment process to facilitate this and there were now 890 recruits. Members' attention was drawn to Appendix 1 of the report, which gave a breakdown of the potential members of the Panel. Spencer Payne said initial contacts would be made with those who had expressed an interest in the new year to explain more about the work of the Panel and the pilot work programme. The planned pilot exercise would then feed into a report that would come back to the Committee towards the end of next year.

Responding from a question from the Chair, Spencer Payne said elected Members in underrepresented areas had been contacted asking to help push the message out about the Panel. Relevant stakeholders and also been contacted and posts had been made on community groups' social media pages in the relevant localities. Regard had also been given to ensure would-be recruits were residents and not members of any pressure or campaign groups, which could distort the views being put forward by the Panel. Rob Powell said another recruitment drive was likely to take place in the new year, taking into account the groups that were still underrepresented.

Responding to a question from Councillor Roberts, Spencer Payne said the benchmark figures were generally within 2-3 per cent of what one would expect to see represented. Councillor Boad said asking focus groups for their input into recruitment would be unlikely to work, as the final Panel would effectively be a single focus group. Councillor Phillips suggested contacting higher education colleges and Neighbourhood Watch groups might be a way of potentially recruiting new members. Spencer Payne said every Sixth Form and further education college had been contacted, in addition to children's centres as they were used by young families.

Responding to a question from Councillor Singh Birdi, Spencer Payne said the ethnicity definitions used in the survey followed standard national guidelines. He said it was possible to use census data to potentially target demographic areas and groups but this information was now ten years old and the results of the 2021 census would not be available until March.

Councillor Tromans said contacting schools and colleges may not be that useful as only a handful of students attending would have turned 18 and thus be eligible to be on the Panel. He suggested a ready to go Facebook poster could be provided to all elected members in North Warwickshire and Nuneaton and Bedworth, for them to post in relevant local community groups.

Responding to a question from Councillor Butlin, Spencer Payne said no information had been requested from respondents that related directly to their income/economic status. However they had been asked questions such as whether they were employed, unemployed or self-employed, and whether they owned their home, rented, or lived with parents/a family member.

8. Any Urgent Matters

There were none.

The meeting rose at 15:18

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Chair

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Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee

23 February 2022

Annual Review of Our People Strategy & Year 2 (2022/23) Delivery Plan

Recommendation

That the Committee notes the work in the review of Our People Strategy and considers and comments upon the proposed delivery priorities to inform the development of the Our People Strategy Delivery Plan for 2022/23.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 In December 2020, our refreshed Our People Strategy was shared with Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Staff and Pensions Committee. The Strategy and 2021/22 Plan were endorsed and a commitment made to bringing the 2022/23 Plan to both committees.
- 1.2 In September 2021 further papers were brought to Staff and Pensions Committee in a revised 'Annual Review' format covering:
 - Sustainable & Resilient Workforce;
 - Health Safety & Wellbeing, and;
 - Equality, Diversity & Inclusion.
- 1.3 An Annual Review of Our People Strategy is currently being finalised and will showcase and celebrate the activity and performance against our priorities over the previous year, consider the performance data and current context and detail the key priorities for the coming year.
- 1.4 This paper summarises progress made in the first year (2021/22) of the refreshed Our People Strategy and outlines the 2022/23 Delivery Plan.

2. Financial Implications

None.

3. Environmental Implications

None

4. Supporting Information

4.1 Our People Strategy Annual Review – At a Glance

The Our People Strategy provides direction and focus for the development and implementation of a range of projects and initiatives under six building blocks.

2021/22 activity, measurement of success and priority actions for 2022/2023 for each building blocks are summarised as follows:

Culture, Value and Behaviours

Progress – Our wellbeing work has seen the achievement of Thrive bronze accreditation, launch of our approach to wellbeing and an updated Attendance at Work Policy. We have developed the future approach to engagement, whilst continuing to run regular check-in's with our people and prioritising actions based on their feedback. We continue to develop and progress an ambitious Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) action plan.

Measures – Attendance levels have remained within target; Our Colleague Survey scores are strong with our wellbeing indicator at 83% and 11% above 2019 levels. Solid progress has been made against our EDI indicators including gender and ethnicity pay gaps and 83% of colleagues believe that Warwickshire County Council values equality and diversity.

2022/2023 – Focus will continue on wellbeing, engagement, and EDI, these being key areas in which we aim to positively differentiate as an employer. The coming year will see further development of our culture in support of the Council Plan.

Leadership

Progress – Our foundational work towards people management data and metrics will better equip leaders. We have continued to develop leadership capability through our Senior Leadership Forum (SLF). Positive gains have been seen in the approachability of senior managers, their role modelling of values and colleagues feeling trusted to do their jobs.

Measures – Our High-Performance Culture engagement measure brings together several leadership areas and has remained at a consistently high level.

2022/2023 – Focus will continue on leading with data and developing our leadership offer.

Performance

Progress – Contributions have been made in the further development of our Performance Management Framework, Business Planning, individual Appraisals and Personal Development Plans.

Measures – Our High-Performance Culture and Engagement scores have remained consistently high.

2022/2023 – 360-degree feedback processes will be in place for all SLF members and if capacity allows, we will review our wider approach to performance and appraisal frameworks.

Organisational Development and Design

Progress – We launched our agile working offer, based on service delivery, choice, and trust, and have provided a package of support and guidance for its implementation. This has supported the pandemic response. Activities to implement and support our service redesigns have continued.

Measures – The take up of agile working contracts continues to rise each month.

2022/2023 – Focus will continue on developing the agile working approach, and if capacity allows, we will enhance the use of establishment data in order to support improved workforce planning.

Reward and Recognition

Progress – Implementation and development of the employee benefits platform; phased roll out of the 'High5' peer-to-peer recognition system.

Continuation of our Long Service and STAR recognition schemes.

Measures – Employee retention has maintained at sustainable rates whilst marginally above target.

2022/2023 – Our focus will be to drive utilisation of existing processes with recognition being embedded a key part of our Employer Value Proposition (EVP).

Talent Development and Career Opportunities

Progress – Recruitment activity has been extended in support of service redesigns and pandemic response. External Indeed and GlassDoor profiles have been developed alongside recruitment microsites. Induction and onboarding processes have been enhanced to complement our EVP and support agile working. Foundational work on career pathways is underway in several services. A Children and Families workforce academy is in place. A Chartered Management Apprenticeship has been introduced.

Measures – The service has strengthened in several key areas to improve social services and respond to the pandemic. Headcount increases of 4.2% in response to the Pandemic and increased demand for services in particular services areas have driven additional recruitment activity.

2022/2023 – Continued focus on positive differentiation as an employer through our purpose, EVP, approach to EDI, the leadership we provide and the culture we build.

4.2 Priorities for 2022/2023

Following the review activities, assessment of the measure outcomes, and engagement from key stakeholders, the following priorities are proposed for 2022/2023:

Several of the priority areas initiated in year 1 of our plan will continue into 2022/23. Activities have been prioritised to enable resources to be allocated to areas of maximum benefit and flexed to meet changes in organisational demand. New priorities are denoted by (n), and those in italics will be secondarily prioritised.

Culture, values, and behaviours

Sustainable and Resilient Workforce - supporting the wellbeing of our workforce to enable our people to be well and in work and development of plans towards silver Thrive accreditation.

Employee Engagement – providing a framework where we can listen learn and act on the feedback from our people, to enable an engaged and high performing workforce.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – enabling everyone to feel valued, included, safe, supported and welcome’, and places inclusivity at the heart of everything we do.

Culture to support Council Plan (n) – Ensuring our culture enables the successful delivery of the Council Plan and our people embody and embrace the culture, values, and behaviours.

Leadership

People Metrics – Leading with Data - Providing managers with the information they require to understand the issues in their workforce and effectively manage them.

Leadership Offer (n) – *equipping our leaders to provide agile and situationally responsive leadership.*

Performance

Reviewing performance management and appraisal approach (n)– Providing a positive and rewarding framework for our people to embrace a high-performance culture.

Organisational development and design

Agile Working Approach – work is what you do not where you do it, with the customer and business need at the heart.

Establishment enhanced activity (n) – developing how we use our establishment to enhance workforce planning.

Reward and recognition

Employer Value Proposition - promoting what working for our organisation is all about to attract and retain the best people.

Recognition platform - implementing and monitoring our peer-to-peer recognition platform to enable our people to give and receive recognition.

Talent development and career opportunities

Induction and Onboarding - improving how we induct and onboard our people who are new to the organisation and/or their role.

Apprenticeship Pay (n) - aligning apprentices' pay with National Minimum Wage rates and to address attraction and recruitment challenges.

Recruitment, Retention and Talent Approach (n)– flexible resourcing solutions to maximise talent, attraction and retention.

*Tier 1-4 recruitment process (n)- reviewing the process applied when recruiting and assessing Tier 1-4 (Leadership & Management) appointments.
Apprentice first approach (n) – providing a framework so that apprenticeships are routinely considered for entry level roles.*

Corporate Learning and Development Offer (n) – ensuring that our corporate learning and development offer is relevant and meets the organisation's needs.

Service Development and Assurance

Policy, legal and compliance – Reviewing our people policies to reflect the changing tone and voice of the organisation whilst ensuring they cover legal requirements.

Pay Framework and National Living Wage (n) – Determining how to accommodate the change to national living wage within our pay framework. Horizon scanning, forthcoming policy and legislation – Ensuring the organisation to ready to adopt any changes – examples include exit cap, carers leave and flexible working rights.

HR System (n) – Planning for contract renewal including options for potential successor system.

Lone Workers (n) – Identifying, sourcing, and introducing a technological solution which improves the safety and security of lone workers.

HROD Service Development (n) Continuing to develop and improve our OneHR service offer and manage demand.

HR Commercial Strategy (n) – Developing our strategy so our traded services remain strong in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

4.3 Conclusions

2021/2022 has been a challenging but successful year for delivery against the Our People Strategy whilst managing the dynamics of the pandemic.

Particular successes include:

- Achieving Bronze Thrive at Work Accreditation.
- Foundational work to set the Tone and Voice for all our policies, as well as how we articulate Our Approach in key areas such as wellbeing, engagement; track performance and celebrate success through the use of Annual Reviews: Health, Safety & Wellbeing; Sustainable and Resilient Workforce; Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, and Colleague Engagement.
- Defining and launching our Agile Working Offer.
- Developing approaches for listening to the voice of our people
- Developing people metrics dashboards, which when launched will support managers to lead with data.
- Piloting the Hi-Five recognition platform.
- Reviewing our recruitment services, and enhancing the service offer to managers.
- Continuing to embed our Employer Value Proposition.
- Maintaining high levels of performance in key areas in an ever-changing environment.
- Alongside the longer-term strategic deliverables we have continued to support our people and enabled them to continually deliver for the people that we serve.
- Our measures have mainly remained on target, with some particular successes in terms of stress and mental health absence and the gender pay gap. We are tracking on target in terms of absence, high-performance culture and ethnicity pay gap. Our plans aim to address engagement and retention, where the outturn is tracking marginally outside of our target range.

- In addition to supporting the Our People Strategy our HROD Delivery colleagues strive to enhance the service offer to our customers whilst continuing to deliver a wide range of essential HROD services across the Council and beyond.
- Many of our major projects and initiatives will continue into 2022/2023 and are supplemented by a number of new key activities that will enable the Council to be the best it can be and support the delivery of our Council Plan.
- We will continue to develop the HR service that we can all be proud of, with exceptional service delivery for our customers today and tomorrow.

Appendices

None

	Name	Contact Information
Report Author	Rich Thomas	richthomas@warwickshire.gov.uk
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Strategic Director	Rob Powell Strategic Director for Resources	robpowell@warwickshire.gov.uk
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Jenns Portfolio Holder for Customer & Transformation	andyjenns@warwickshire.gov.uk

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Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee

23 February 2022

School Admissions Process Improvements

Recommendation

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

Considers progress on the improvements that have been made to the Schools Admissions Service and endorse the direction of travel set out for further work.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. In 2020 the Schools Admissions Service was under significant pressure and was struggling to cope with demand. Since then, significant work has been taking place to make improvements. This paper provides a high-level overview of the original problems faced, the improvements that have already happened and signals further work in train.
- 1.2. In Spring 2019 the Schools Admissions Service moved to Business Support from Education. The service processes approximately 15,000 school place applications every year; of which 55% are for primary (including junior) and 45% for secondary as part of the normal admissions cycle. The team also process approximately 6,000 in-year applications annually, around 2,500 11+ exams, as well as school appeals, free school meals and support work linked to School Transport, School Exclusions, Fair Access Panel, Children not on a School Roll (NOSR) and SEND.
- 1.3. We have been reviewing our admissions arrangements since Autumn 2020 to look for ways to improve what we do. This was to help us respond to significant operational issues that created risks for the Authority, with specific challenges for children, parents and schools who were trying to access the Service. This included:
 - High volumes of calls.
 - Significant call abandonment.
 - Increased email demand.
 - Officers being distracted from core duties to respond to the above demands.
 - Increased backlog of cases.

- High levels of failure demand as a result of parents and schools not having their issues resolved first time.
- High numbers of children with outstanding in year applications contributing to the number of children registered as Not On a School Roll (NOSR) and therefore missing education
- A risk that school vacancies were not filled by students without a school place ahead of DfE's school census date, with the associated risk of a reduced funding allocation from DfE.

2. Understand the Challenges

- 2.1. Analysis in the autumn term of 2020 highlighted some key issues that contributed to the challenges within the service. These included:
 - 2.1.1. Staffing challenges within the team had reduced effectiveness. This included a gradual reduction in staffing over an 18-month period, including a significant loss of experience. Replacing staff had taken longer than expected and the effectiveness of induction training was compromised by demand pressures.
 - 2.1.2. Moving to remote working in March 2020 made the use of the IT system, Synergy, challenging. This has now been addressed by moving to a different version of the software but initially contributed to a backlog.
 - 2.1.3. The processes were not always efficient, often due to a lack of system capability and integration. This included lots of duplication of effort and use of spreadsheets outside the main Synergy system. This impacted performance and presented difficulties obtaining data and management insight, making the management of case work more challenging.
 - 2.1.4. The work of Admissions is based on various policy and statutory deadlines across the school year, e.g. Reception and Secondary place allocation, 11+ exams, etc (see appendix 1). We identified weaknesses in our planning that created challenges with peaks and troughs within the year; making the achievement of our 10-day target for In-Year applications challenging, contributing to the NOSR figure.
 - 2.1.5. Customer service for parents was not at satisfactory levels, both through failure demand, and because pressures on the team led them to focus on the transactions associated with each application, rather than the child.
 - 2.1.6. Available information (via the website and post) was not always clear, helpful, or up to date. This contributed to the large volume of telephone and email demand, where parents were seeking clearer information.
 - 2.1.7. Significant failure demand in the team existed due to unhappy parents and schools, adding to the existing backlog.

- 2.1.8. The absence of a manager with single accountability for all admission functions was challenging.
- 2.1.9. Data sharing with schools is time consuming, with the system used by schools (SIMS) not integrating with our system (Synergy) resulting in a lack of live data for the Admissions team, creating challenges in allocating school places.
- 2.1.10. From a parent's perspective, once the application is submitted there is no functionality to amend applications or obtain a status update. This results in further failure demand from parents contacting us to make changes or wanting updates. As an authority, we are using an old version of the parent portal, which is reflective of the issues there are with the wider Synergy system.

3. Improving what we do

- 3.1. Following our initial review, we started an improvement project in December 2020 focusing on the following:
 - Understanding and responding to customer demand.
 - Improving our forward plan to ensure all activities delivered on time.
 - Enabling greater flexibility and resilience amongst staff.
 - Opportunities for digital improvements.
 - Opportunities for working better together with other services in Education and school partners.
- 3.2. As a result we:
 - Temporarily increased staffing to clear backlogs and implement changes.
 - Created planning tools covering the school year, ensuring activities and processes are captured and planned into a weekly, monthly, and annual cycle.
 - Reviewed processes and templates to streamline activities.
 - Reviewed and improved information available online to better ensure parents have access to the information they need to make decisions.
 - Proposed a new structure for the Admissions Services to address capability and resilience issues.
 - Comprehensively reviewed correspondence to ensure the important messages are clear.

- Improved collaborative working with colleagues in Education on issues such as NOSR and escalations.
- 3.3. As a result of this work, the admissions process has already seen the following improvements, when comparing the first three weeks of the academic year of 2021 with 2020:
- A reduction of incoming emails by 62% year on year.
 - An increase in the uptake of online portals from 69% in the previous year to 84%.
 - Inboxes being better managed with no significant backlogs. Last year there were more than 1,000 emails in a queue compared to 100 at any one time this year.
 - Calls into the team had reduced by 50% which is linked to reduced case backlogs and improved information on website.
 - Call abandonment rate reduced by 82%. This reflects staffing changes, improved information on the website and increased focus on good customer service and team working as well as the improved performance on inboxes, improved processing times on In Year applications.
 - The 11+ exams were well delivered in challenging, COVID-19 restricted circumstances, with compliments from parents.
 - This year we have not received any complaints from Members and Schools compared to many in the previous year.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1. The staff consultation on proposed changes to the structure including revised roles and responsibilities, is scheduled to close on 7th March. Assuming the consultation outcome is positive, this will allow recruitment to key roles in March and April 2022.
- 4.2. We have learnt through this improvement work, that there is so much more to do to improve the way in which the admissions team works with schools, parents, and other parts of the council in finding a suitable education place for our children. We are therefore taking this improvement work a stage further, using systems thinking to involve all these players in helping us understand how parents take the decisions they do, the impact that has on school sufficiency and our ability to offer them their preferred choices.
- 4.3. Since October, with some external support, we have been using systems thinking principles to design a better service and improve performance. This

work is in its infancy and expected to last 12-18 months, but to date has already engaged many schools and parents to help shape our thinking.

- 4.4. In the meantime, we continue to focus our attention on the delivery of admissions activities as they happen through the school year, with the next significant milestone being the offer of secondary school places for September 2022 (taking place on 1st March 2022).

5. **Financial Implications**

- 5.1. School Admissions is a function that is funded via the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Budget with a small element of funding via the 11+ examinations Traded Service with our Grammar Schools.
- 5.2. There are no specific savings in the MTF5 that have been attributed to the system-wide work as the focus first and foremost is to ensure that Warwickshire has the capability it needs to deliver a service that meets the needs of parents and schools. However, as highlighted in the paper, some issues with our processes, technology and overall performance remain, and the realisation of savings through efficiencies is anticipated over the next few years once we have implemented the redesigned service.

6. **Environmental Implications**

- 6.1. The environmental impact associated with the Admissions Service is not significant, but there are potential changes we can make that will benefit our services users and the environment.
- 6.2. Feedback from a recent workshop with parents highlighted that a factor in their decision making when applying for a school place is proximity to home, with an aspiration that children and parents can walk to school. Delivering this will be dependent on several factors including school admissions policies, how information is presented and school place sufficiency, but it will be explored further during the system-wide change project.
- 6.3. We aim to minimise printed correspondence wherever possible, and the opportunity to do this best will be realised through our digital capabilities, including improved communications between us and parents along with improved system integration between our systems (such as Mosaic and Synergy) and those of schools to achieve a single view of the child.

7. **Supporting information**

None specific to this report.

Appendices

1. [Admissions Timetable](#)

	Name	Contact Information
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Portfolio Holder	Cllr Morgan, Portfolio Holder for Children, Families & Education	

The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Other members: As above

Activity	Date
Secondary place offer (for September 2022 start)	1 st March 2022
Re-offer rounds for secondary places	Mid march
Primary place offer (for September 2022 start)	19 th April 2022
Re-offer rounds for primary places	End April 2022
11+ exam registration opens	9 th May 2022
Deadline for applications for SEN 11+ testing provision	30 th June 2022
11+ exam registration deadline	30 th June 2022
Summer holidays	25 th July to 5 th September 2022
Registration for Secondary 2023 school places opens	1 st September 2022 (provisional)
11+ Test dates	17 th & 18 th September 2022
Supplementary 11+ test date	24 th September 2022
School Census	7 th October 2022
Secondary school place application deadline (for September 2023)	31 st October 2022
Registration for Primary 2023 school places opens	1 st November 2022 (provisional)
11+ Proof of Address deadline	31 st December 2022
Primary school place application deadline (for September 2023)	15 th January 2023

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Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 23rd February 2022

Council Plan 2020-2025 Quarterly Performance Progress Report: Period under review: 1st April 2021 to 31st December 2021

Recommendation

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- (i) Consider progress on the delivery of the Council Plan 2020 - 2025 for the period as contained in the report.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Council Plan Quarter 3 Performance Progress Report for the period 1st April 2021 to 31st December 2021 was considered and approved by Cabinet on 17th February 2022. The report provides an overview of progress of the key elements of the Council Plan, specifically in relation to performance against Key Business Measures (KBM)s, strategic risks and workforce management. A separate Financial Monitoring report for the period covering both the revenue and capital budgets, reserves and delivery of the savings plan was presented and considered at the same Cabinet meeting.
- 1.2. This report draws on information extracted from both Cabinet reports to provide this Committee with information relevant to its remit.
- 1.3. Comprehensive performance reporting is now enabled through the following link to Power BI [full OSC 2021/22 Performance Report](#).

2. Council Plan 2020 - 2025: Strategic Context and Performance Commentary

2.1 The Council Plan 2020 – 2025 aims to achieve two high level Outcomes:

- **Warwickshire's communities and individuals are supported to be safe, healthy and independent;** and,
- **Warwickshire's economy is vibrant and supported by the right jobs, training, skills and infrastructure.**

Delivery of the outcomes is supported by **WCC making the best use of its resources.**

Progress to achieve these outcomes is assessed against 54 KBMs.

Outcome	No. of KBMs	No. of KBMs available for reporting at Quarter 3
Warwickshire's communities and individuals are supported to be safe, healthy and independent	27	25
Warwickshire's economy is vibrant and supported by the right jobs, training, skills and infrastructure	13	8
WCC making the best use of its resources	14	13

- 2.2 Overall, the Council continues to maintain its robust performance across the board in the face of increased and changing demand, due to the ongoing and varying degree of impact of the Covid-19 pandemic resulting in significant changes in how services are delivered. Despite some restrictions being reintroduced Council Services are continuing to provide support to communities most in need but are now focusing more resource on their core work and less on specific pandemic response, which is now being reflected in KBM performance.
- 2.3 Of the 54 KBMs, 17 are in the remit of this Overview and Scrutiny Committee and at Quarter 3, 16 KBMs are currently available for reporting. The data for the % of Pension Fund Returns Compared to Target KBM was delayed at the time of reporting and not available until January 2022, it will therefore be reported at Year End. At Quarter 3 50% (8) KBMs are On Track and 50% (8) are Not on Track.
- 2.4 Table 1 below summarises KBM status at Quarter 3 by agreed Outcomes.

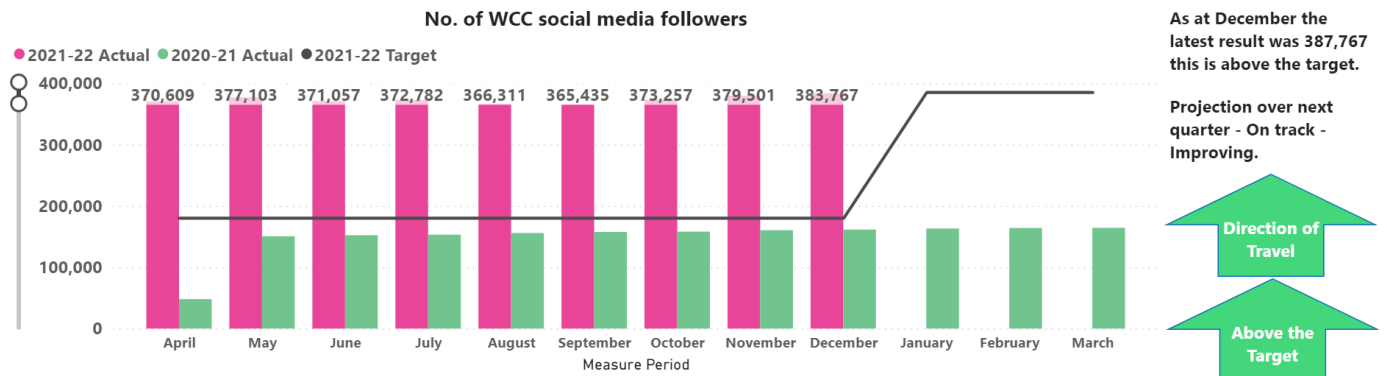
Outcome	Current Status	Number of measures
Warwickshire's communities and individuals are supported to be safe, healthy and independent	On Track	0
	Not on Track	3
	Not Applicable	0
Warwickshire's economy is vibrant and supported by the right jobs, training, skills and infrastructure	On Track	0
	Not on Track	0
	Not Applicable	0
WCC making the best use of its resources	On Track	8
	Not on Track	5
	Not Applicable	1

Table 1

- 2.5 Of the 50% (8) KBMs which are On Track at Quarter 3, there are 3 of note as Areas of Good Progress which are detailed in Table 2 below:

WCC makes the best use of its resources

No. of WCC social media followers



Current performance:

The number of social media followers continues to exceed targets and, encouragingly, the increase continues at a steady pace.

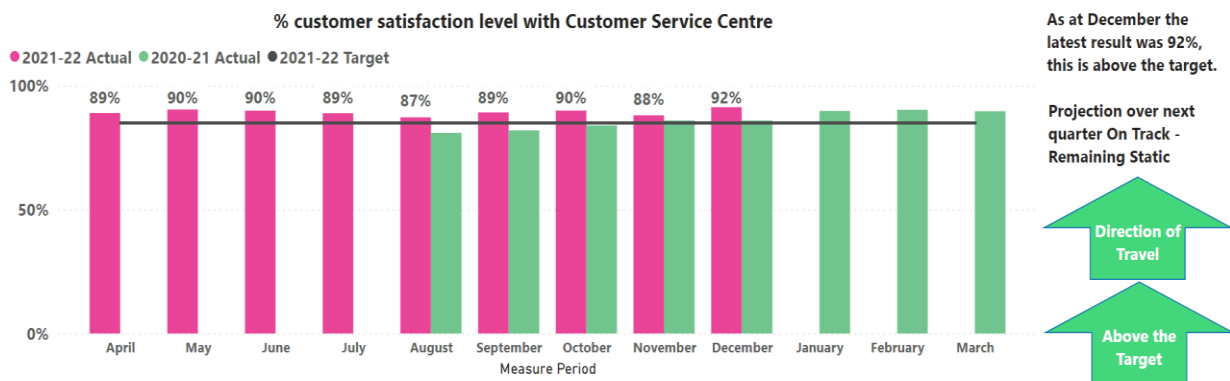
Improvement activity:

The current target of 180,000 has been reviewed and is now set to 385,000.

Explanation of the projection trajectory: On Track - Improving

Given the current performance, modest increase is anticipated.

% customer satisfaction level with Customer Service Centre



Current performance:

During Quarter 3, the Customer Service Centre (CSC) has continued to experience high call volumes. This is reflective of the corporate response to Covid-19 to ensure the most vulnerable can access services and support through all channels including telephone e.g. Covid-19 hotline, Household Support Fund (welfare support) and Adult Social Care.

Data for this measure is provided via telephone surveys and the customer satisfaction levels continue to remain consistently above target. The December 2021 figure is particularly

encouraging at 92%, especially as this has been at a time when the service has experienced a peak in demand.

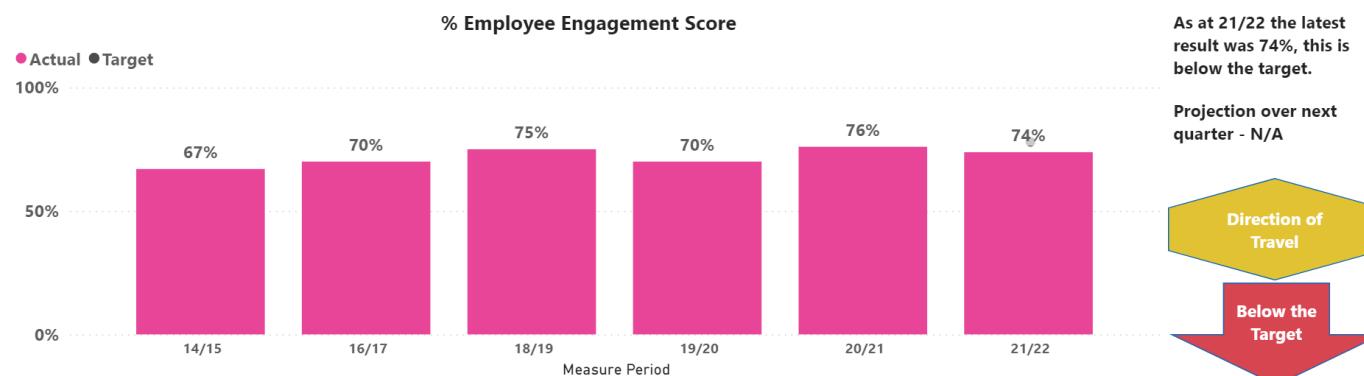
Improvement activity:

The service will continue its quality assurance processes as well as monitor demand and resource availability and take appropriate action as and when needed.

Explanation of the projection trajectory: On Track - Remaining Static

The CSC is operating from both virtual and office bases and has increased its service offer in response to Covid-19 and customer needs. Despite the increased call volume and challenging circumstances, individual customer feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, and this is reflected in this measure and it is expected this will continue to be on or above target going forward.

% Employee Engagement Score (Staff Survey)



Current performance:

The performance is at 74% based on Winter check-in survey results (December 2021) compared with 76% in December 2020. This is a slight decrease compared to last year and the target of 78% whilst still being 4% above the 2019 comparator. Encouragingly there has been an improvement in the scores around line management, notably People Directorate scored highly in this area.

Improvement activity:

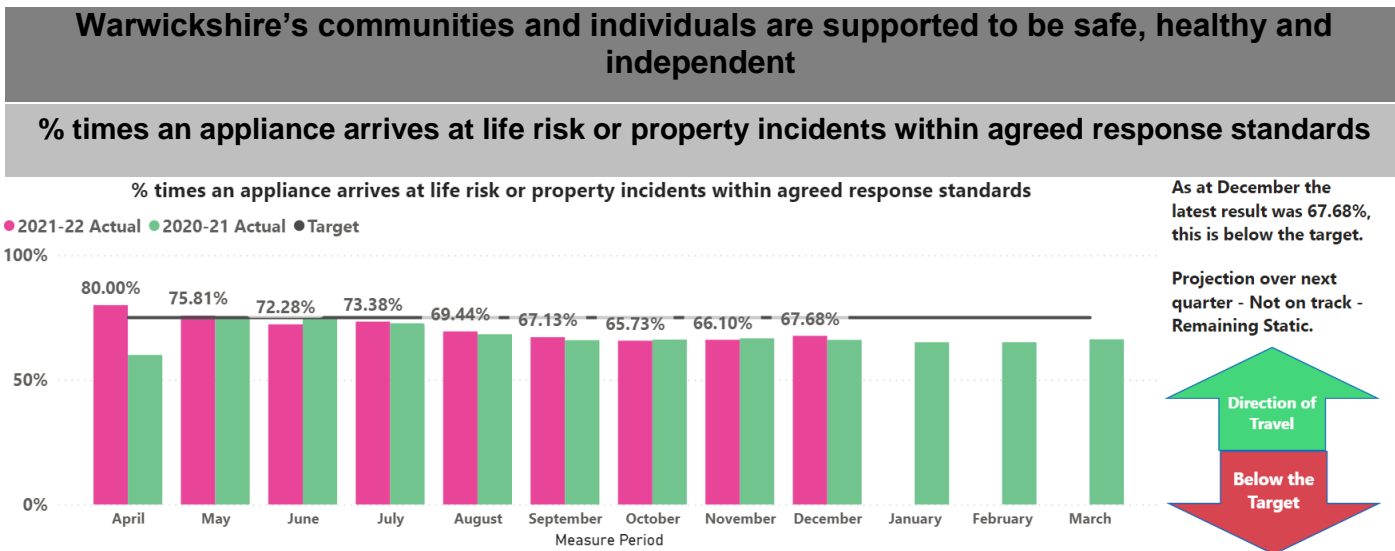
Continued focus on colleague engagement as part of Our People Strategy. A live engagement project is in place to both increase response rates and engagement levels as part of Our People Strategy.

Explanation of the projection trajectory: N/A

The response rate to the December 2021 check in survey was significantly lower than the preceding year and comes at a time when further restrictions were in place as a result of the global pandemic.

Table 2

2.6 Of the 50% (8) KBMs that are Not on Track at Quarter 3, 3 KBMs require highlighting below with details of the current performance narrative, improvement activity and explanation of projected trajectory:



Current performance:

The April to December 2021 figure 67.68% is a slight improvement on the year end 2020/21 figure of 66.05%.

The beginning of a return to normality post-covid has brought an increase in operational activity but no reduction in staff absences due to positive Covid-19 tests or self-isolating. Increased social contact outside of the work environment has increased Covid-19 related absence. The resultant reductions in crewing levels have a direct impact on appliance availability and attendance times.

Improvement activity:

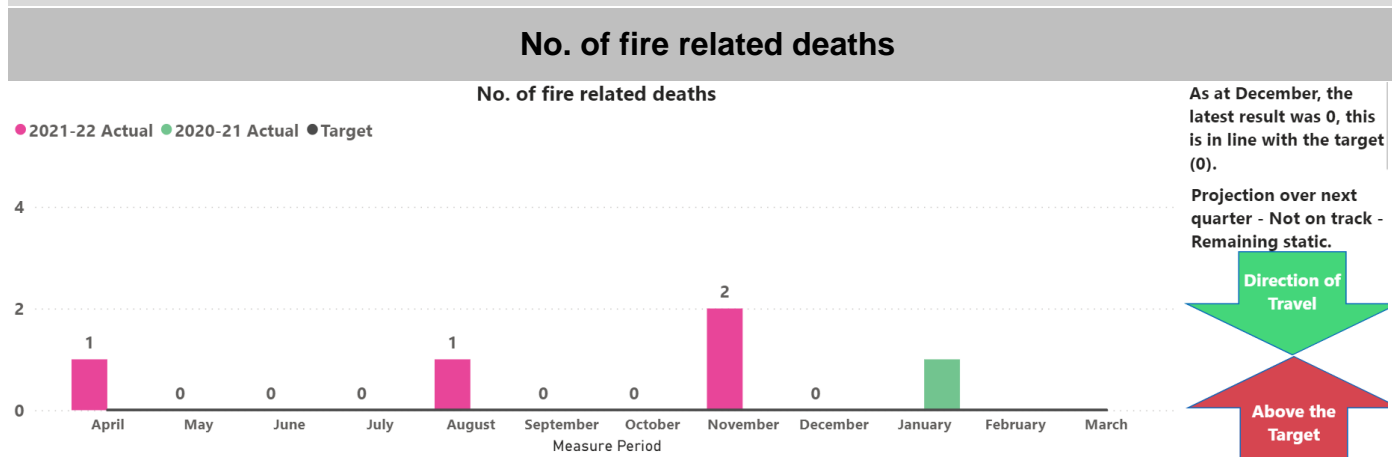
Covid-19 related safety precautions have been reinforced across all fire stations. The Service deploys staff flexibly across duty systems to provide optimum operational crewing at any given time. 20 new wholetime recruits joining the Service by the end of February 2022 should improve wholetime availability. Recruitment and retention of On-Call firefighters is an ongoing and increasingly difficult challenge, reflecting the national picture, and the Service now has a dedicated On-Call support officer looking at options to address this.

A review has been undertaken of The Service risk profile. This risk profile is being used to drive improvement across the service. A prevention, protection and response strategy has been produced that will ensure that The Service place the right resources in the right place, at the right time against risk. The Integrated Risk Management Plan Assurance Panel is reviewing the targets around response.

Explanation of the projected trajectory: Not on Track - Remaining Static

In the longer term the Service Asset Management Plan sets out the intention to relocate some wholetime response points onto transport nodes across the County with the intention of improving response to emergency incidents outside of the current predicted 10-minute travel time, particularly

those on the motorway network.



Current performance:

For the period 1st April to 31st December 2021 there have been 4 fire related deaths, compared to zero in the same period of 2020.

There were 3 suicides by self-immolation, one in April and 2 in November. In August there was a major non-domestic fire incident occurred at the Leasons premises (in Leamington Spa) and is currently under investigation.

Improvement activity:

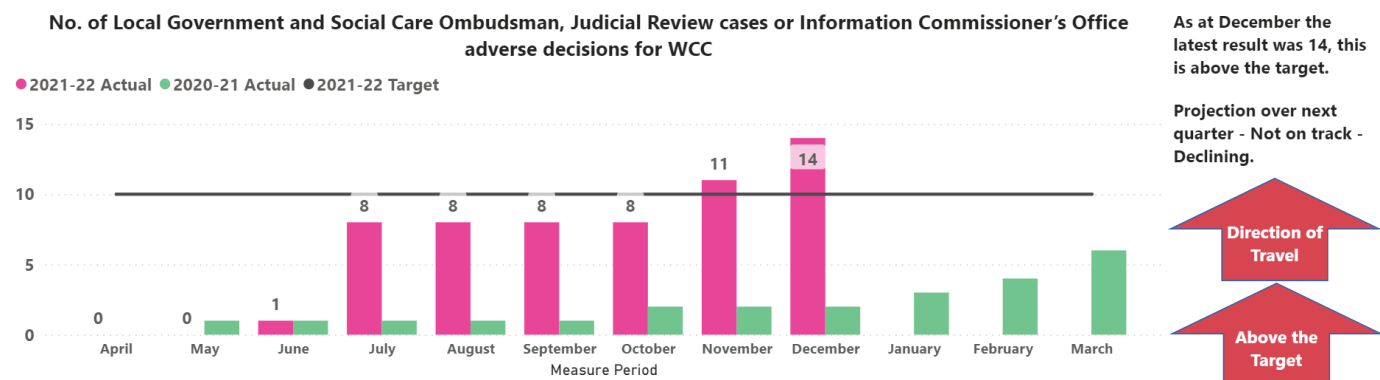
The Service rigorously investigates every fire related death in an effort to understand causes and identify any appropriate improvement activity. Where it is identified that an improved multi-agency approach could have prevented the fatality a multi-agency serious case review is carried out. With a growing trend, albeit in small numbers, for suicide by self-immolation the Service has joined the multi-agency suicide prevention group to see if any prevention strategies can be deployed. As a result of feedback and recommendation from Her Majesty’s Inspectorate Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services all fire related deaths are reported to the Fire Leadership Team and a new Serious Incident Review approach is being designed.

Explanation of the projection trajectory: Not on Track - Remaining Static

Detailed reports have previously been to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, and Committee Members recognise that it is difficult to influence fire death outcomes as a result of suicide or crime. However, the Service will endeavour to identify and address all preventable causal factors to fire deaths.

WCC makes the best use of its resources

No. of Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, Judicial Review cases or Information Commissioner's Office adverse decisions for WCC



Current Performance:

After 3 quarters there have been 14 adverse decisions against the Council - 11 upheld Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) decisions and 3 upheld Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) decisions. The target has therefore been exceeded. The impact of Covid-19 both in the context of the Council's ability to respond to complaints and the Ombudsman pausing investigations of complaints has had some impact on the increase in the number of adverse decisions the organisation is seeing this year.

Of the 11 LGSCO upheld decisions, 5 relate to Adult Social Care 3 relate to Education Services and 3 relate to Children & Families. One of the upheld ICO complaint relates to Fire & Rescue and related to a request for information about incident details attended by Fire & Rescue and the Council's initial decision to refuse disclosure. The other 2 upheld ICO complaints were both from the same complainant and were in relation to information requested about village greens. Both complaints were only partly upheld, one because WCC did not respond to the requests for information on time and the other because the ICO found that WCC failed to provide appropriate advice and assistance to the complainant.

One significant current challenge is the response to subject access requests within required timeframes. These requests tend to come from services and often involve very complex cases. Performance has been flagged by the ICO and the Organisation is in dialogue with them. The ICO are satisfied with the steps taken to date and the additional provision in the MTFs approved by Council includes increasing staffing capacity in this area of work. There is an action plan in place to tackle this issue, however, it will take a little time to see improvements, and this could affect the trajectory of ICO cases over coming months.

Improvement activity:

The trajectory for this measure has been significantly impacted by Covid-19, over this year and last. As a result, until the 'hump' of cases has come through the system, it is difficult to improve on the current position as decisions that are likely to be upheld by either the LGSCO or the ICO in the next quarter are already being investigated. However, lessons learned from all upheld complaints are always considered and shared with relevant officers. In addition, provision has been made in the MTFs for additional funding to support services to improve the complaints process. This should have a positive impact in terms of our complaints handling overall and, in particular, the cases progressing to the LGCSO.

Explanation of the projection trajectory: Not on Track – Declining

There are currently a further 11 complaints of which the Council is aware, being investigated by the LGSCO - 3 of these have a draft upheld decision (they relate to Adult Social Care, Education Services and Children & Families). There is also 1 complaint about WCC currently being investigated by the ICO. 4 threats of Judicial Review have also been received although these all appear to be at the pre-action stage and therefore it is unlikely that there will be any final determinations this financial year. Therefore, this measure is projected to decline further over the next reporting period.

Table 3

2.6 Table 4 below illustrates the considered forecast performance projection over the forthcoming reporting period

	On Track			Not on Track			Not Applicable
	Improving	Remaining Static	Declining	Improving	Remaining Static	Declining	
Warwickshire's communities and individuals are supported to be safe, healthy and independent	0	0	0	0	3	0	0
Warwickshire's economy is vibrant and supported by the right jobs, training, skills and infrastructure	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
WCC making the best use of its resources	1	4	1	1	1	2	4

Table 4

2.7 It is forecast that over the next period overall performance will be similar to current performance. Of the 35% (6) of measures reporting On Track, 4 will remain static, 1 is projected to improve and one is forecast to decline, which is:

- Number of days sick leave per FTE (rolling 12 months).

Of the 41% (7) of the measures reporting Not on Track, 4 are projected to remain static, 1 is projected to improve (% General and Directorate Risk Reserves Compared to the Net Revenue Budget) and 2 are forecast to decline:

- % of capital expenditure against budget; and,
- No. of Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, Judicial Review cases or Information Commissioner's Office adverse decisions for WCC.

24% (4) KBMs have a projection status as N/A, 3 of the KBMs are annual and have been reported in this financial year and % of Pension Fund Returns Compared to Target KBM did not have data available at the time of reporting and therefore it was not possible to forecast performance over the next quarter.

2.8 The Pandemic continues to impact on a proportion of these measures leading to delays in programmes of activity and both additional and frequently changing service demands. Improvement activity is in place to improve performance across all measures, and this is under constant review to ensure it is robust. Full context on all measures is provided in the [Power BI report](#).

2.9 The Council is developing a new performance management framework alongside the Council Plan refresh, which aims to provide a sharpened focus on performance and trajectory and will better support delivery of the Organisation's new priorities as outlined in the refreshed Council Plan. A Member Working Group (MWG) has been supporting the development of the new Framework and Cabinet will receive a full report, including the recommendations from the MWG and the full proposed Performance Management Framework, in March.

3. Financial Commentary

3.1. Revenue Budget

3.1.1. The Council has set the performance threshold in relation to revenue spend as zero overspend and no more than a 2% underspend. The following Table 5 shows the forecast position for the Services concerned.

Service Area	Approved Budget	Service Forecast	(Under) /Over spend	Variation as a % of budget	Change from Q2 forecast	Represented by:				Remaining service variance as a % of budget	Remaining Service Change from Q2 forecast
						Investment Funds	Impact on Earmarked Reserves	Covid Impact	Remaining Service Variance		
	£m	£m	£m	%	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	%	£m
Business and Customer Services	19.051	27.611	8.560	44.93%	3.444	(0.110)	0.085	8.657	(0.072)	(0.38%)	(0.098)
Commissioning Support Unit	7.106	8.589	1.483	20.87%	(1.411)	(0.560)	0	2.271	(0.228)	(3.21%)	(0.165)
Enabling Services	25.577	23.546	(2.031)	(7.94%)	0.236	(0.912)	0.035	0.352	(1.506)	(5.89%)	0.260
Finance	6.336	5.827	(0.509)	(8.03%)	(0.620)	(0.624)	0.083	0.142	(0.110)	(1.74%)	(0.026)
Governance & Policy	2.591	3.821	1.230	47.47%	0.142	0.009	0.015	1.022	0.184	7.10%	0.066
Fire & Rescue	22.249	22.294	0.045	0.20%	(0.108)	0	0.061	0.121	(0.137)	(0.62%)	(0.214)
Total	82.91	91.688	8.778	10.59%	1.683	(2.197)	0.279	12.565	(1.869)	(2.25%)	(0.177)

Table 5

3.1.2. **Business and Customer Services** is forecast to overspend by £8.560m, including £8.657m of covid pressures which is fully funded from Covid grant income. The material aspects of the Covid pressure are attributable to Household Support, New Social Impact Fund & Social Supermarkets, and the Welfare and Critically Extremely Vulnerable Support. After taking account of Covid pressures, the remaining service underspend is £0.072m.

3.1.3. **Commissioning Support Unit** is forecast to overspend by £1.483m at the end of Quarter 3 including £2.271m Covid pressures. Covid pressures will be funded from Covid grant

income. After taking account of Covid related pressures and the impact of Investment/Transformation funds the remaining service variance is an underspend of £0.228m (3.21% underspend), which has increased by £0.163m since Quarter 2 due to delays in recruitment and increased income achieved from rebates on contracts.

3.1.4. **Enabling Services** is reporting an underspend of £2.031m including Covid pressures of £0.352m. Covid pressures will be funded from Covid grant income. After taking account of Covid and the impact of earmarked reserves and Investment/Transformation Funds, the remaining service underspend is £1.506m (5.89% underspend).

The material aspects of the remaining underspend are attributable to the following factors, further details can be found in the Q3 Finance Monitoring report:

- £0.496m underspend across Property Services mainly due to over recovery of income and in year staffing underspends; and
- £0.737m underspend across ICT Strategy and Commissioning due to in-year staff underspends and delays in ICT project activity being limited whilst staff continue to work from home.

3.1.5. **Finance** is reporting an underspend of £0.509m including £0.142m Covid pressure, which will be funded from Covid grant income. The investment funds are forecast to underspend by £0.624m and is due to the reprofiling of the Agresso development programme to allow for completion of the required upgrades before the start of phase 2. After taking account of Covid pressures and the impact of earmarked reserves and Investment/Transformation Funds, the remaining service underspend is £0.110. (1.74% underspend).

3.1.6. **Governance and Policy** is reporting an overspend of £1.230m including £1.022m Covid pressures and will be funded from Covid grant income. After taking account of Covid pressures and the impact of earmarked reserves and Investment/Transformation Funds, the remaining service overspend is £0.184m (7.10% overspend).

3.1.7 **Fire and Rescue Service** is reporting an overspend of £0.045m including £0.121m Covid pressures funded by Covid grant income. After taking into account the impact of Covid and planned movements in reserves the remaining service variation is £0.137m (0.62% underspend).

3.2. Delivery of the Savings Plan

3.2.1. The savings targets and forecast outturn for the Services are shown below in Chart 1:

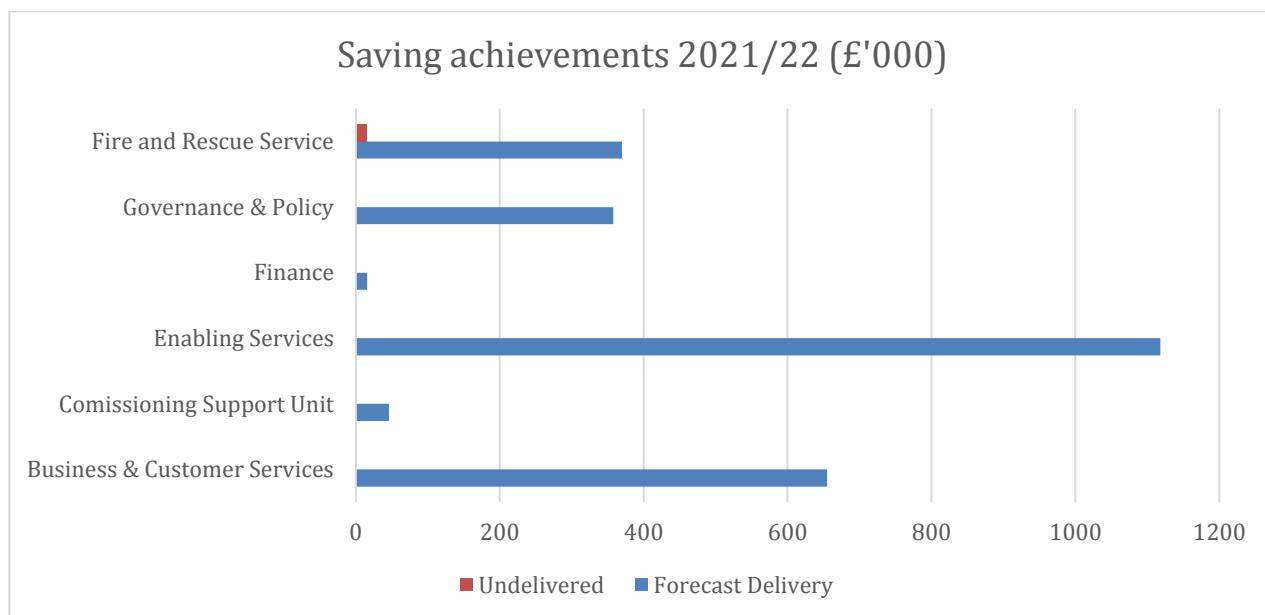


Chart 1

3.2.2. All services are forecasting to deliver their 2021/22 savings except for Fire and Rescue who expected to deliver a shortfall of £0.015m (3.9% of target) due to a delay on the Training capital programme.

3.3. Capital Programme

3.3.1. The Table 6 below shows the approved capital budget for the Services, new schemes and any delays into future years.

Service	Approved	New projects in year	Budget Reprofile	Net over / underspend	Total capital programme	Delays	Forecast In year capital spend	Delays %
	2021-22 capital programme							
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Fire and Rescue	3,902	27	25	-	3,954	-	3,954	0%
Business and Customer Support	471	-	-	-	471	(50)	421	-11%
Enabling Services	20,395	-	87	-	20,482	(1,626)	18,856	-8%
Governance and Policy	2,826	-	(89)	-	2,737	(1,038)	1,699	-37%

Table 6

3.3.2. **Enabling Services** is forecasting a delay of £1.626m, due to the Development of Rural Broadband project (£1.626m). The forecast expenditure on the project has reduced in 2021-22 and is due to national and third-party delays caused by:

- a) the project working in more rural areas;
- b) a national shortage of civil engineering contractors;
- c) revised DCMS guidance regarding finances and project end dates; and

- d) the recent Covid 19 pandemic.

In addition, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has put in place an annual Grant Gainshare clawback process which has resulted in a reduction in the Grant claimed back by DCMS in 2021-22 with the remainder expected to be claimed in yearly requests based upon DCMS's gainshare calculations.

3.3.3. **Governance & Policy** is forecasting a delay of £1.038m caused by:

- a) Strategic Sites planning applications relating to works with asbestos and both removal from structures and site demolition; and
- b) Ecology work (associated with archaeology) relating to Bovine remediation costs rescheduled in financial year 2022-23.

The current economic situation, both nationally and internationally post Covid-19, is likely to have an impact on the delivery of the capital programme in the short to medium term. Inflation, material shortages and supply chain issues are creating uncertainty and a challenging delivery environment.

4. Management of Risk

4.1 Strategic risks were updated and assessed by Corporate Board in January 2022. Those strategic risks owned by Resources Directorate are reported at Appendix A, along with mitigation strategies and an indication of the direction of travel for each risk.

4.2 Resources and WFRS service risk registers were also updated by Assistant Directors and service risk owners in January. The highest rated risks and movements in risk levels are then reported to respective Directorate Leadership Teams for oversight and assurance on mitigation actions. Directorate level risk reporting will continue to evolve in 2022/23, making use of Power BI to report aggregated risk and provide a facility to drill down to risk register information.

4.3 Key Resources risk themes and risks which impact across services, identified from Strategic and Service Risk updates are:

- The impact on financial planning of continued uncertainty about longer term policy, economic and funding forecasts;
- The sustained risk of inflationary pressures and cost of living increases putting pressure on direct costs, service budgets, service continuity and affordability, capital value and investment returns;
- Workforce resilience and impact on service capacity and individual well-being, particularly in customer contact roles; and
- WFRS resource capacity to meet required standards for fire protection and on call availability, following the HMICFRS inspection findings.

5. Supporting Papers

A copy of the full report and supporting documents that went to Cabinet on the 17th February is available via the committee system.

6. Environmental Implications

None specific to this report.

7. Background Papers

Appendix A

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Appendix A

1. Strategic Risk Update, Corporate Board 17 January 2022: Resources Owned Risks

For each strategic risk, a **residual risk score is applied, using a consistent risk assessment matrix [(impact x likelihood) + impact]**. The positive impact of existing control and mitigation measures is also considered.

Priority Areas and Risk Appetite	Risk	Mitigation Approach	Lead Directorate	Residual Risk Scores			
				Corporate Board assessment			Direction of Travel
				Feb 2021	Oct 2021	January 2022	
Sustainable Futures <u>Risk Appetite:</u> Climate Change (Open)	09 (revised). Risk of not achieving our climate change target of net zero by 2030, if we fail to adopt sustainability goals within our core service activities, plans and strategies.	Climate Change Programme overseen by dedicated Climate Change Delivery Group and proposals to commission external support to deliver net zero County by 2050 and a Warwickshire/ Coventry COP for climate change action. <i>In Q3, we will split risk 9 to show County wide risks and challenges separately from the Council's own targets and risks.</i>	Resources	12	12	12	➔
Great Council & Partner <u>Risk Appetite:</u> People (Minimalist)	10. Risk of failing to sustain and progress change to modernise, innovate and take advantage of technology-driven solutions within the organisation and ways we work, failing to fully update legacy IT systems.	Digital & Technology Strategy; Change team and hubs to support services through change and drive out benefits.		8	6	6	➔
Commercial (Open)	11. Risk of staff health and wellbeing concerns due to post pandemic new ways of working; isolation, loss of team culture, remote/office working tensions and low resilience following pandemic-related workloads.	Our People Strategy supported by the How We Work programme and Delivery Group oversight.		8	8	8	➔
Service Delivery (Cautious)	12. Risk of negative results (financial and social) from our commercial and investment activities.	Commercial Strategy and support for traded services. WRIF and WPDG investment, governance and regulatory compliance arrangements, including oversight and assurance on managing financial risk.		12	12	12	➔
Service Delivery (Cautious)	14. Risk of continued uncertainty about key policy, economic and funding forecasts; impacting on financial planning assumptions and our ability to address the ongoing structural gap in available resources to deliver Council Plan priorities and respond effectively to unplanned events.	MTFS update process includes scenario planning and sensitivity analysis of assumptions. Shorter term volatility is managed through reserves and availability of unallocated funds. An Integrated Planning approach allows refreshed Council priorities to inform resource planning and allocation decisions, including scaling back or withdrawing from activity.		16	20	16	➔

Priority Areas and Risk Appetite	Risk	Mitigation Approach	Lead Directorate	Residual Risk Scores			
				Corporate Board assessment			
				Feb 2021	Oct 2021	January 2022	Direction of Travel
Reputation (cautious)	15. Risk of legal, regulatory, Information security non-compliance, impacting on the Council's reputation and future joint working and engagement opportunities.	Governance Code, Information Gov and Data Strategies and oversight arrangements. Council response to ICO intervention on Subject Access Requests	Lead	6	9	9	→
	16. The risk of detriment to our reputation, including that of financial loss from commercial activities, locally, nationally and with partners and our community.	Customer experience strategy, Strategic Communications Framework, Governance Code and annual assurance effectiveness review.		6	6	6	→
RISKS ADDED Q3	17.The risk of sustained inflationary pressures and cost of living increases putting pressure on staff costs, recruitment and retention and impacting on service resilience, service continuity and affordability as well as social, health and economic inequality.	Risk 2,5 and 14 Mitigation approach				12	↑
	18.Risk of not achieving County net zero by 2050, bio diversity and climate adaptation targets, if national roadmap and guidance on approach and funding structures is not clear and unable to mobilise businesses, communities and co-delivery partners where there are critical dependencies.	Spotlight on WCC led climate change action via dedicated website, open communication channels and community engagement opportunities. Warwickshire & Coventry COP event March 2022. Green shorts fund phase 1 and 2.	Jointly owned risk			15	↑

**Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Work Programme 2021/2022 – February 2022**

Item / Lead Officer	Report detail	Date of next report
Public Question Time/Questions to the Portfolio Holders / Work Programme	Standing items for every meeting.	* Standing item
Council Plan 2020 – 2025 Performance Report	Council Plan 2020 – 2025 Performance Report	* Standing item
Updated Procurement Strategy	A report to the OSC ahead of Cabinet consideration of an updated Procurement Strategy placing an emphasis on social value and climate change (Steve Smith).	TBC (Steve Smith to advise)
Warwickshire Fire & Rescue Service	Verbal Update: Impact of the construction phase of HS2 on Warwickshire Fire & Rescue Service.	TBC
Member Oversight Group (WPDG / WRIF)	Annual Report of the Member Oversight Group to be presented to the Committee each year to enable attention to be given to the performance, progress, and priorities of WDPG and WRIF.	TBC (recurring annually)

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