

# Public Pre-Scrutiny Questions and Answers - O&S 3 February 2026

## Report Title: Item 6 – Project Management Capacity & Capability

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Councillor R Dickson: Thanks for this welcome report. Paragraph 2.1.1 about very successful projects names a new leisure centre and tree planting. Against the original planned and announced opening dates, budgets and trees actually planted, in what ways can these be considered the best examples of project management?

Response: The two projects mentioned at 2.1.1 were intended to reference examples of the diverse and ambitious nature of Warwick District Council and its desire to deliver outcomes which are of benefit to the communities it serves. When compiling the report, the examples in mind for this opening paragraph were Castle Farm Leisure Centre and our Tree Planting Project – although these were not specifically identified.

Tree Planting is delivered through WDC's Biodiversity Action Plan, which aims to support and improve the district's tree canopy and promote tree equity. This is an ongoing project, delivered through a range of partnerships, and more than 15,000 trees were planted last season (Winter 2024/25) across Warwick District. A further 16,000 trees are expected to be planted this season (Winter 2025/26) including planting on Council land. The team are working with other landowners to support biodiversity and improve resilience to climate change. Whilst WDC has allocated its own budgets for tree planting, external funding has also been secured to support some of the undertaken work. Where this could be considered as success is the co-ordination of multiple stakeholders to achieve significant planting over a prolonged period, with proper financial controls and in alignment with the Council's strategic objectives.

On the Leisure Centre front at Castle Farm, when considered against the original planned budgets and opening times, there were difficulties. The original predicted cost reported to the Executive in August 2019 was between £12m and £15m. As the proposals were developed through the RIBA stages, a budget of £16.25m was allocated and the eventual cost was £16.78m, an overspend of £529,000. There were also delays to the predicted opening times and when considered from those perspectives in isolation, it does not appear to provide the hallmarks of an excellent project.

However, what must also be factored in, was that the COVID pandemic hindered progress on all construction projects and the subsequent period of unprecedented construction cost inflation that followed, presented a real

challenge across all sectors. Whilst it wasn't possible for the project team to entirely mitigate these macroenvironmental factors, they did everything possible to limit their impact. Overall, the Castle Farm project created an excellent community facility, which is very well used and receives regular positive feedback from its customers.

This was considered as a successful project in terms of its outcomes for the community, its contribution towards the Council's objectives and vision for the district, and that the factors which presented challenge to the project overall, were managed in the best way possible to minimise the impact.

Councillor R Dickson: After the Project Management CoP was created in 2023, what have been its main outputs in 2024 and 2025 in terms of changed project management procedures?

Response: Regarding the Project Management Community of Practice, several outcomes have been generated by the group. These include but are not limited to:

- Evaluated the use of dedicated Project Management software and the options available to WDC
- Initially identified the issues experienced by project managers across the council and reported this information to SLT
- Facilitated the training of all Project Managers in Procurement procedures/requirements
- Facilitated better inclusion of EQI Assessment requirements in project delivery
- Created a library of project templates that were already in use – this is now being refined into a single set of documents
- Implemented the new corporate projects list which will shortly be available to all staff and members.
- Facilitated a trial of Change Manager training, which is now being developed into a wider reaching programme.

It should also be noted that the PM CoP are a group of project managers who are voluntarily working together to improve WDC's overall approach. We will seek to support and resource this group further through the formation of the Corporate Programme Team, which is now underway, but their extensive efforts to date have been on top of their day jobs.

Councillor R Dickson: The proposed changes in paragraph 4.3.3 are welcome. Is the cost recovery for key projects applied on a full cost or marginal cost basis?

Response: At paragraph 4.3.3, resources for delivering projects, cost recovery would have to be considered on a full rather than marginal basis. However, the

intention was aimed towards better informing the decision-making process and supporting delivery more effectively up front. Where internal resources are exclusively used to complete a project, this would be covered under the Council's internal cost recovery operations and as such, these are typically not included as specific lines for financial implications within our reports. However, as we do not always have sufficient resources internally to complete projects, where this is the case, the cost of bringing in resources to fully cover the project's needs should be considered as part of the supporting report – so that Cabinet, or any other decision making group, have the opportunity to fully understand what will be involved. Ensuring that projects are properly resourced addresses a key delivery risk and getting sign off for an agreed resourcing plan is an important mitigation to this.