

# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 11 November 2025 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00pm.

**Present:** Councillors Milton (Chair), Armstrong, Barton, Dray, Harrison, Knight, Kohler, Luckhurst, Payne, Redford, and P Wightman.

**Also Present:** Councillors Davison and Melrose.

**Officers:** Chris Elliott – Chief Executive, Darren Knight – Deputy Chief Executive, Graham Leach – Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer, Dale Duffy – Policy, Performance and Complaints Manager, and Patricia Tuckwell – Civic and Committee Services Manager.

## 42. **Apologies and Substitutes**

- a) no apologies were received; and
- b) Councillor Redford substituted for Councillor Day.

## 43. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made

## 44. **Minutes**

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 14 October 2025 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

## 45. **Budget Review Group Minutes**

The minutes of the Budget Review Group Minutes held on 15 October 2025 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

## 46. **Work Programme, Forward Plan, & Comments from Cabinet**

The Committee considered a report from Governance Services which informed Members of Overview & Scrutiny Committee of the Committee's work programme for 2025-2026, attached as Appendix 1 to the report, and sought confirmation of approach of a number of areas in respect of that work plan.

**Resolved** that the work programme attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be noted.

## 47. **Quarter 2 Performance and complaints**

The Committee considered a briefing paper from Governance Services which set out the 2025/26 Quarter 2 (Q2) Performance Report for Warwick District Council against the measures/targets included within the adopted Service Area Plans (SAPs). The report also contained an overview of complaints received during Q2 of 2025/26.

The Performance report was a key tool in helping the Council demonstrate the services it was providing are performing. The performance report focused on the measures within the SAPs and if they were achieving the expected level of performance. The commentary provided by officers against those measures which were below the expected level enabled an understanding of the reasons for this and if there was a need for further investigation.

The Committee were reminded that for performance management this year those marked with a Target (T) highlighted either a regulatory or statutory target for the Council. These would be the primary focus for the Committee in ensuring that they were being achieved and where they were not, they were satisfied with the proposed actions for achieving them within a set period.

The report provided an overview of the measures within the approved SAPs for 2025/26 with a focus on those that were either in red or amber status. The status was defined within the specific measure on expected performance. The report also provided details of measures where the "Measure/Target trending down for at least two consecutive quarters".

Not all measures were reported on within the report, but all could be found, along with full SAPs on the WDC Business Intelligence Portal, the link to which had been circulated separately to all Councillors.

Also available, via the Business Intelligence Portal, were the major projects list, the significant risk register (which was reported to both Cabinet and Audit & Standards Committee), and procurement activity setting out current and upcoming procurement activity. The links to which had been circulated separately to all Councillors.

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and Cabinet had agreed to the development of two-year SAPs which would cover financial years 2026/27 and 2027/28. This would ensure the Council could focus on delivering statutory services and key projects before forming part of a Unitary Authority in April 2028 as part of the Local Government Reorganisation programme.

The Complaints report contained analysis of complaint handling at Stage 1, Stage 2 of the Council's complaints process, and the current position of cases raised by tenants with the Housing Ombudsman. The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) did not have a portal where officers could view their open cases. The Council's Link Officer received notification emails when complaints were raised with the LGSCO – one LGSCO case was raised in Q2, the decision was not to investigate but a recommendation was made that the Council should ensure compensation offered in a Stage 1 complaint was paid to the complainant. The Council complied with this recommendation on time.

Complaints could be refused for a variety of reasons and the Council's complaints databases had been developed to begin accurately recording these reasons.

The Housing Service Area received the highest proportion of Stage 1 complaints in Q2 (110 out of 130, 84%) and roughly half of these (54 out of 110, 49%) related to Repairs. A further quarter (26 out of 110, 23%) related to Housing Advice and Allocations. These trends continued through Stage 2 complaints with Housing receiving the highest percentage (22 out of 26, 84%)

of Stage 2 complaints. Repairs was still the most common cause for complaint (7 out of 22, 32%) followed by Asset Management (5 out of 22, 23%) and Housing Advice & Allocations (4 out of 22, 18%).

The Policy, Performance & Complaints Manager would begin monthly meetings with Housing's Business Support & Customer Engagement Manager and Customer Services Team Leader. These meetings would focus on reviewing Housing related Stage 2 complaints and any disparity between the investigations at Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the complaints process. Any learning points highlighted would be adopted to improve the Council's complaint handling.

In answer to Members questions, the Policy, Performance and Complaints Manager, the Head of Governance & Monitoring Officer, the Chief Executive, and the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership explained that:

- there was a complaint case that the Ombudsman had had open since July 2023 and had still not assigned an investigating officer;
- the Policy, Performance and Complaints Manager would confirm with officers that the recommendations and actions of this historic case had been completed and would update Committee Members, by email in due course;
- WDC did not have a significant number of complaints referred to the Ombudsman;
- when the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman investigated a complaint they had conversations with officers throughout their investigation to ensure they understood the facts;
- the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman sent WDC the draft decision before the final decision for review, whereas the Housing Ombudsman just sent the final decision with little engagement;
- the Policy, Performance and Complaints Manager would obtain the rationale for the red status on the '% appeal decisions in accordance with WDC decision' measure/target, and circulate the response with Committee Members;
- the draft performance report was shared with the senior leadership team to ask for the rationale for the measures that were highlighted red;
- the Overview & Scrutiny Committee were encouraged to invite the members of the Senior Leadership Team to future Committee meetings where the rationale for measures highlighted red had not been given;
- during quarter 2 there had been a significant drop in resources available, which had contributed to the poor performance to responding to stage 2 complaints;
- staff had now been trained in processing stage 2 complaints;
- during quarter 2 staff were receiving, on average, 10 stage 2 complaints per week;
- there would be a significant improvement in the performance to respond to stage 2 complaints in quarter 3;
- a meeting was held every Friday to discuss stage 2 complaints and how WDC were performing;
- it was hoped that the additional resources would be made permanent, which would inevitably impact on performance in quarter 4, whilst WDC recruited and trained for these posts;
- the quality of the stage 1 complaint investigations, in some areas, were poor, and this had contributed to the length of time to investigate the stage 2 complaint;

- some of the Policy, Performance and Complaints Manager's time to investigate stage 2 complaints had been freed up to provide stage 1 complaint training to officers. This was important to improve the quality of stage 1 complaint investigation, which would subsequently result in fewer stage 2 complaints;
- part of the complaint process involved the investigating officer emailing the complainant listing what they considered the complaint to be and offering the complainant a telephone call to discuss further;
- if a telephone call with the complainant took place it was then followed up with another email confirming the points raised on the call;
- during the complaint process, if it became apparent that officers and service areas could implement change before the complaint was resolved, they would;
- as of 7 October 2025, there was only one stage 2 complaint that had not met the target to respond, which was a particularly complex case, involving many departments;
- there was full support from the Chief Executive and the Cabinet for the additional resources to manage complaints, to meet the increased demand;
- respective Heads of Service were responsible for reviewing and improving the performance targets and measures highlighted red;
- there was not a generic criterion for the red, amber, green (rag) rating for performance targets, there were individual tolerances set against each of the measure within the service area plans;
- the housing performance targets were a priority;
- there was a table missing from the report which set out the outstanding complaints highlighted red from the last report with progress made. This would be circulated to Committee Members in due course;
- previously not all complaints had been forwarded to the Complaints Team. This would be mitigated in future through use of a customer relationship management (CRM) system;
- details of the timeline for the CRM complaints roll out would be shared with the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, in February 2026, when quarter 3 performance was reported;
- the increase in housing complaints had ultimately increased the number of stage 2 complaints;
- the housing anti-social behaviour policy was being reviewed and would be going to Cabinet for approval; and
- the housing anti-social behaviour policy would run in parallel with the wider WDC anti-social behaviour policy, which would be going to Cabinet at the same time.

The Chair shared his concerns that the Policy, Performance and Complaints Manager was not being provided with the information necessary from the Senior Leadership Team in order to provide the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with a complete report.

The Chair also asked that the Head of Place, Arts, and Economy provide an update on the time taken to determine major planning applications at the next Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting. The target was 65 days; however, the time taken was currently 231 days. The Committee would like to know the causes for this.

**Resolved** that the report and appendices be noted.

48. **Cabinet Agenda Item 3 – Local Government Re-Organisation –  
Wednesday 12 November 2025**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee thanked officers for the report.

The Committee recognised that this was a complex process and identified some key areas to focus its debate around: process; strategic authorities; strengthening the case for two unitary authorities; and democratic representation.

On the topic of process, Members wanted to be clear on what needed to happen before the submission taking place on 28 November, and that the key criteria were set out by the Government. Members noted the timelines and that these were tight but were satisfied that the proper process has been outlined by officers. The Committee particularly wanted to highlight the need to look at the staffing resources required for the investment and replanning of the work required.

In regard to strategic authorities, the Committee encouraged more work to happen quickly on the potential options, noting that there had not been a lot of progress to date in this area, and it did not want to run the risk of potentially running out of options. Members asked that steps should be taken to ensure the future of the West Midlands Investment Zone and received assurance on this front from the Chief Executive.

In terms of the unitarisation, the Committee supported the case for two unitary authorities, particularly recognising the two distinct areas that exist within Warwickshire. The Committee recommended to Cabinet to include some content around the 1974 reorganisation and also the difference in the housing market to do with that.

And finally, the Committee looked at democratic representation and asked Cabinet to recognise the need for a realistic assessment of what would be required of the new Councillors, ensuring this will be a sustainable option for the new Members.

The Committee was mindful of the concerns from some Parish/Town Councils that they would have services put upon them by a new unitary Council without funding from that Council to deliver the service. While this would not be the case, as the Parish/Town would need to agree to take on the service, there was a risk to the principle of LGR, of providing clear accountability for service delivery (of a single Council compared to two (which overlooks that there are three tiers in Warwick District at present) ), if services were delivered by Parish/Town Councils, especially where some of those Councils may not chose to take the service on.

(The meeting ended at 8.10pm.)

CHAIR  
3 February 2025