

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 3 February 2026 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00pm.

Present: Councillors Milton (Chair), Barton, Day, Gorman, Harrison, Knight, Kohler, Luckhurst, Payne, and P Wightman.

Also Present: Councillors Davison, Billiald, Chilvers, King, Melrose, and Williams.

Officers: Darren Knight – Deputy Chief Executive, Josie Wainwright – Scrutiny Officer, Dale Duffy – Policy, Performance, & Complaints Manager, Graham Leach – Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer, David Elkington – Strategic Director, Charlotte Sully – Business Support & Events Manager, Martin O’Neill – Business Manager Projects and Economic Development, Graham Folkes-Skinner – Climate Change Team Leader, Tim Hornsby – Building Climate and Energy Manager, Becky Burridge – Site Delivery Officer, and Becci North – Housing Development Programme Manager.

65. **Apologies and Substitutes**

- a) apologies were received from Councillor Dray; and
- b) Councillor Gorman substituted for Councillor Armstrong.

66. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made

67. **Minutes**

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings held on 11 November 2025, 25 November 2025, and 17 December 2025 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

68. **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 for a number of areas in respect of that work plan.

The Chair proposed removing the Milverton Homes agenda item scheduled on the Overview & Scrutiny work programme on 24 February 2026 due to Milverton Homes being an agenda item at Cabinet on 18 March 2026. Therefore, Members were able to call-in the Cabinet agenda item for scrutiny at Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 17 March 2026, if necessary.

The Chair also proposed the Procurement Update listed on the work programme on 24 February 2026 be rescheduled for Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 17 March 2026. This was because the Procurement Champions and Senior Leadership Team (SLT) were due to meet for their bi-annual

meeting on 26 February 2026. Therefore, it would make sense for the report to be considered at Overview & Scrutiny Committee following this meeting.

Committee Members raised their concerns at the 20 plus Cabinet reports they were required to read and scrutinise ahead of Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The document pack was more than 1,100 pages and many of the Cabinet reports were published late. Members stressed the importance of receiving reports on time to enable them the maximum time to review the documents and asked that Committee Services reflect on the priority of the items listed on the forward plan, and whether there was scope to summarise the reports.

Addressing Members concerns the Leader of the Council explained that Warwick District Council was an ambitious Council and this the reason for the number of Cabinet reports. Historically, Members had sighted there had not been enough detail in the reports. All reports included a summary, and officers were encouraged to use appendices. Report authors had recently attended report writing training and it was anticipated that reports would be more concise going forward. The Leader shared Member's frustration for reports being published late and pleaded for officers to be realistic as early as possible if deadlines were likely to be missed.

Resolved that

- (1) the work programme attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be noted;
- (2) the Milverton Homes agenda item be removed from the work programme on 24 February 2026; and
- (3) the Procurement Update listed on the work programme on 24 February 2026 be rescheduled for 17 March 2026.

69. 2025/2026 Quarter 3 Performance Report

The performance report was a key tool in helping the Council demonstrate the services it was providing were performing. The performance report focused on the measures within the Service Area Plans (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 were a need for further investigation.

Due to the absence of two key staff members of the Policy, Performance & Complaints team it had not been possible to collate the Quarter 3 performance data to accompany the report.

Interviews were underway to recruit two Policy, Performance & Complaints team members.

The link to the Business Intelligence Portal had been circulated to all Councillors. This included the major projects list, the significant risk register,

and procurement activity setting out the current and upcoming procurement activity.

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and responsible officers had begun 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 SAPs were due to be considered and agreed by Cabinet at their meeting on 18 March 2026.

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 email was received from the LGSCO in relation to a case in Q3. The decision was that the complainant had made a premature referral about a complaint that the Monitoring Officer (MO) and Chief Executive (CE) were in the process of handling. The LGSCO recommended that the MO and CE kept the complainant updated while the investigation was open. Negotiations for this case were ongoing.

Sometimes the complaints process was not the correct process to follow to efficiently resolve a request, in these cases complaints were refused. This was different from a complaint which was investigated and not upheld. Complaints could be refused for a variety of reasons and the Council's complaints databases had been developed to begin accurately recording these reasons.

There had been no compensation awards of £5000 or more in Q3.

The Housing Service Area received the highest proportion of Stage 1 complaints in Q3 (111 out of 128, 87%) and over half of these (63 out of 111, 57%) related to Repairs. Despite receiving a similar number of complaints in the current and previous quarters, there was a reduction in those relating to Housing Advice and Allocations (22 out of 111, 19%) this represents a 4% reduction.

These trends continued through Stage 2 complaints, with Housing receiving the highest percentage (34 out of 41, 84%) of Stage 2 complaints. Place, Arts & Economy received a smaller number of Stage 1 complaints (6 out of 128, 4.6%) but saw an increase in the number of those where requests to escalate to Stage 2 were received (4 out of 6, 66%).

In Stage 2 Housing complaints, Repairs was still the most common cause for complaint (11 out of 34, 32%) followed by Landlord Operations (8 out of 34, 24%) and Housing Advice & Allocations (5 out of 34, 15%).

Officers recognised the importance of understanding the reasons why complainants make requests to escalate their complaints to Stage 2. The Policy, Performance and Complaints team currently had insufficient resource (one Officer had left before Christmas, another was absent for health reasons) to carry out this work but it was anticipated that the data for complaints relating to Housing would be prepared in time to present to Housing Scrutiny Committee on 31 March 2026.

There were 10 Warwick District Council complaint cases open in the Housing Ombudsman's online portal. There was one evidence request in progress which was due to be completed by Tuesday 27 January 2026.

One case had been closed in the Housing Ombudsman's online portal.

In answer to Members questions, the Policy, Performance, and Complaints Manager, the Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer, and the Portfolio Holder for Housing advised that:

- 12 of the 128 complaints were refused;
- on page 5 of the appendix to the report, the peak at day 5 - to acknowledge stage 1 complaints was due to resources and prioritising the workload;
- the acknowledgement to complaints would be considered when incorporating complaints into the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, to reduce the process;
- 112 complaints, which equates to 88%, were completed within target;
- there was a business case going to the change board on 16 February 2026 and Senior Leadership Team (SLT) on 19 February 2026 to discuss how the impact of incorporating complaints into the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system affected every Service Area;
- the complaint process mapping was part of the regulatory response for housing;
- page 13 of the appendix showed a similar figure for the number of complaints completed within the timeframe as the number of complaints acknowledged within the timeframe. The Policy, Performance, and Complaints Manager would investigate and update Committee;
- complainants had been setting out their complaint in more detail, and were potentially using artificial intelligence to quote laws, which were sometimes inaccurate, and not English laws. This had resulted in officers spending more time to investigate the complaint;
- WDC were currently working on an artificial intelligence policy report that was currently awaiting approval ahead of Cabinet;
- the target was to complete complaints within 20 days, however, officers were able to request an additional 20 days to complete the investigation, if the complainant was agreeable;
- the focus of the Policy, Performance and Complaints Manager would be to appoint, train, and develop the two new Policy, Performance and Complaints Officers (PPCO). This could cause the performance to slip initially;
- there was currently a correlation between Stage 1 housing complaints and Stage 2 complaints. A key role for the two new PPCOs would be to investigate the reason why and would provide constructive feedback to the original Investigating Officer;
- the Housing Scrutiny Committee were monitoring housing complaint performance;
- the Housing team were considering the number of Investigating Officers necessary to investigate housing complaints; and
- the information listed in the confidential appendix to the report would be referred to the Housing Scrutiny Committee.

Resolved that performance and complaints data be reported to Overview & Scrutiny Committee on a half-yearly basis for 2026/27.

70. **Project Management Capacity & Capability**

At its September 2025 meeting, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee requested an update to review how the project management capacity of Warwick District Council (WDC) was being improved.

The Committee also sought to review the current lessons learned regarding the Royal Pump Rooms Roof Replacement Project.

WDC had delivered a significant number of very successful projects. WDC had remained committed to ambitious undertakings, that generated lasting positive outcomes for its communities, the local economy and the environment.

The positive commitment to delivering projects that support WDC's strategic priorities and the Council's vision for Warwick District was not just an internal observation. In 2023, this was recognised through the Council's Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge which said:

"The Council's ambition and its commitment to the District as a key player is valued and it is clearly an important partner to those the peer team spoke to. Partners spoke very highly of the visible role which the Council has. This is an ambitious Council with a wide programme of projects which it should rightly be celebrated for."

In the short period between the end of September 2025 and the start of January 2026, some of the projects successfully delivered by WDC included:

- refurbishment of the Mill Gardens Play Area;
- installation of solar panels at St Nicholas Park Leisure Centre;
- completion of the Stoneleigh Arms Refurbishment;
- opening of Newbold Comyn Cycle Hub; and
- LED Lighting Upgrades at the Royal Spa Centre

Alongside these public initiatives, there were also internal projects, such as:

- the roll out of Windows 11 to all corporate laptops;
- delivery of commercial awareness training;
- migration of waste service calls from Stratford-on-Avon District Council back in-house; and
- multiple Change Programme initiatives resulting in cashable efficiencies.

Overall, a review of Service Area Plans (SAP) for 2025/26 identified more than 250 major workstreams.

Historically, WDC's approach to Project Management had been a mixture of dedicated project resources with associated governance structures, and in-service arrangements for projects which were considered as smaller. This could be due to their lower risks, costs or limited-service coverage across one or two areas. This had worked relatively well for WDC; the formal governance structures established for larger projects had generally ensured that delivery

was regularly monitored and progress was kept on track, whilst the in-service management of smaller projects had allowed for flexible and agile delivery.

However, this was not without its issues and whilst the 2023 LGA Corporate Peer Challenge praised WDC's ambition, it also highlighted that the scale and breadth of projects being implemented also saw a concurrent increase in the level of financial risk and discussed the importance of robust and effective governance. The need to provide capacity in this area and grow the corporate core, was further highlighted in the 2024 follow up review.

The project to replace the Pump Rooms Roof was underway and as such, a complete lessons learned review could not be undertaken. It should be noted that whilst the Pump Rooms Roof Replacement Project did have some significant lessons learned to date, the project overall had been well managed from WDC's side, and the resources in place had been responsive to changes and adapted accordingly.

The team at the Pump Rooms had been significantly impacted by this project, and the staff had continued to be committed to keeping the centre open, despite being faced with some very challenging circumstances and for this, they should be commended.

Requirements around capacity were being addressed through the development of the Corporate Programme Team and whilst this would not be complete in time for the finalisation of the Pump Rooms Roof Project, the lessons learned from this would help to inform how project management standards were developed and how staff were trained in the future, particularly around aspects such as Construction Design and Management (CDM) and building safety.

Upon completion of the Pump Rooms Roof Replacement project, a full review would be undertaken. The issues identified as part of this review, including positive aspects could be reported back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee if required.

In answer to Members questions, the Strategic Director and Leader of the Council advised that:

- there were some project management standards used within the Council, for example waterfall methods like Prince 2 had been adopted in various ways to suit specific projects;
- agile project management approaches had also been implemented, dependent on the needs of the project;
- a library of project management, approaches, methodologies and documents had been developed and were being used by Project Management Practitioners across the Council;
- one of the actions for the Project Management Community of Practice (PMCoP) Team and Corporate Project Team over the next six months, and in the forthcoming service plan, would be to unify the project management approaches and standardise the documentation, for example how to initiate the project, report progress, manage risk, and close a project;
- through the creation of the Corporate Programme Management Team the Project Management Community of Practice (PMCoP) would have the capacity to complete this piece of work;

- to date, without the library of standardised documents officers had to create their own which had meant a lack of consistency between projects;
- Monday.com software had been used extensively on the programme of housing improvement and the fire safety work within the Housing Team;
- the PMCoP had been considering various project management software tools and the costs associated with them;
- there had been no firm decisions made yet with regards to a specific project management application, however, Monday.com had been used by the Housing Team and PMCoP officers were familiar with the application;
- if the Overview & Scrutiny Committee would like the Strategic Director to return in six months to share progress he would be happy to do so;
- the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) team had been working with the Policy, Performance and Complaints Manager, and PMCoP to produce a portfolio of projects and programmes within the Council. The responsible Project Manager was assigned to each project, together with the methodology being used, and the status of the project. It was in the late stages of being tested but all the work streams would be available, on the portal, for Members to see in due course;
- the PMCoP had engaged with some of the neighbouring Councils when developing the project management methodologies and documentation, considering Local Government Reorganisation (LGR);
- officers had taken an approach that would be easier to adapt with partners in the future, considering LGR;
- there had been mixed approaches to project management with contractors, with contractors often using their own project management documentation;
- there was scope within the contracts to be very clear about how data needed to be handled by contractors;
- WDC would not be expecting contractors to access difficult systems that they would not have come across before; for example, SharePoint could be used for a repository of documents which would be accessible through Microsoft applications, such as Microsoft Teams, or the internet;
- officers would specify the ways in which they would like the contractor to work with WDC, in the contract, which would be established at the beginning of each project;
- there were more than 50 members of the PMCoP;
- every service area within the Council had a member of the PMCoP;
- the project management responsibility for Tachbrook Country Park had transitioned into the Corporate Programme Management Team;
- at the end of the Tachbrook Country Park project officers would complete an entire report which would include a lessons learned exercise;
- there needed to be a fine balance between Members micromanaging aspects of a project and staying close enough to support it when representation was needed. The Pump Rooms project was a good example. The Portfolio Holder for Place had been close to the project throughout. He had knowledge and skills that were applicable and had a desire to see the project taken forward and delivered. This had helped the enthusiasm of the team, to communicate issues, and to report back to Cabinet when required;

- it had been healthy to be challenged by a Cabinet Member;
- Cabinet Members were encouraged to support their projects, ask questions, to be enthusiastic, and promote the benefits;
- Monday.com was an online project management tool, allowing users to record all aspects of the project, for example milestones and work streams. It enabled collaboration across multiple members of staff and organisations, including third parties;
- officers had not had the chance to roll out Monday.com to all teams yet;
- there were a range of projects that differed in size;
- there were a range of Project Managers with different skills;
- the project management tool used was dependent on the scope of the project, the values and complexities. Sometimes Excel was all that was required to track progress; however, typically Council projects were rarely simple;
- officers were aiming to use just one portal;
- guidance would be given to Project Managers regarding which project management methodology would be most appropriate, and examples offered. However, ultimately it would be the decision of the Project Manager, using their knowledge and skills to decide which approach was best;
- there would be structure and consistency which ever methodology was used and guidance and support would be available to all Project Managers;
- risks would reside in the risk register within the Corporate Programme Management Team and the team would take ownership of the risks;
- the Strategic Director's report was extremely useful and would be considered by Members at an informal Cabinet meeting;
- a systematic approach to Project Management across the Council was valuable because not all officers had similar expertise;
- the Deputy Chief Executive had produced a helpful, one-page, document listing useful assurance questions to ask of Project and Programme Managers. This would be shared with Committee; and
- the Portfolio Holder for Resources had ensured projects moved with pace and that project management resource was available for key projects.

Members thanked officers for the report. The Chair asked for a Project Management Strategy and progress update to be added to the work programme in 7 months' time and asked the Leader of the Council to make the Cabinet aware of the high-priority project management work and ensure they were following the progress.

71. Cabinet Agenda (Non-Confidential items and reports) – Thursday 5 February 2026

The Committee considered the following non-confidential items which would be discussed at the meeting of the Cabinet:

Item 7 – Events Strategy

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee thanked officers for their work and the report. The Committee recognise the value that events bring to the District and supports the need for proper resourcing of the team. The Committee would welcome periodic reporting of the economic and social value of events.

The Committee expressed some concerns about the potential negative impact events have on residents.

Item 8 – Annual Emissions Reporting and Carbon Offsetting

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee thanked officers for their report.

Item 17 – Kenilworth School Sites

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee thanked officers for their report. The Committee recommended that Recommendation 2, to the report be amended to read:

That Cabinet delegates authority to the Strategic Director, in consultation with Cabinet, Leadership Co-ordination Group, the Chief Executive, S151 Officer, Monitoring Officer, and Legal Services to enter contract for the disposal of the Leyes Lane site, subject to:

- a) The **maximum** financial value achieved being within the tolerance outlined in Confidential Appendix CA1.
- b) Suitable **climate change** environmental enhancements are agreed **that deliver best value per carbon tonne per resident, over the lifetime of the scheme, to be funded as a Local Growth Initiative (LGI).**
- c) Savings made on abnormal costs as outlined in Confidential Appendix CA1, will be returned to Warwick District Council on a shared basis, through an uplift in land value once confirmed.
- d) A mechanism will be included in the contract to proportionally relieve WDC of its obligations regarding the Housing Infrastructure Grant for the Leyes Lane site.

72. **Public & Press**

Resolved that under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 that the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item by reason of the likely disclosure of exempt information within the paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, as set out below:

Minute Number	Paragraph Number	Reason
73	3	Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

73. **Cabinet Agenda (Confidential Items and Reports) Thursday 5 February 2026**

There had been no Confidential Cabinet agenda items called in to Overview & Scrutiny. However, the Committee considered the confidential appendix to Cabinet Agenda Item 17 -School Sites.

74. **Confidential Appendix to Item 5 – Quarter 3 Performance and Complaints Report**

The confidential appendix was not considered.

75. **Confidential Appendix to Item 6 – Project Management Capacity & Capability**

The confidential appendix was not considered.

(The meeting ended at 9.02pm.)

CHAIR
24 February 2026