MINUTES OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16 JULY 2026

PRESENT:

Members of the Committee:
Councillors Kedward (Chair), Downes, Henderson, U Mistry, New, Pullin, Thompson, Trimble and Willis

Also Present:
Councillor Robinson (Leader of the Council) and Councillor Roodhouse (Deputy Leader of the Council)
Councillor C Edwards (Portfolio Holder for Regulation and Safety)

Officers:
Dan Green (Chief Executive), John Murphy (Chief Officer for Legal and Governance), Mathew Crosby (Chief Officer for Finance and Performance), Michelle Dickson (Strategic Director - Communities), David Collins (Property Manager), Ella Casey (Principal Planning Officer) and Linn Ashmore (Democratic Services Officer)

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 15 January, 19 March and 21 May 2026 were deferred to the next meeting.

5. APOLOGIES

There were none.

6. DECLARATIONS OF INTERST

There were no declarations of interest.

7. GREAT CENTRAL WALK BRIDGE STRUCTURAL MAINTENANCE AND REMEDIATION.

In accordance with the Council's Constitution, the call-in procedure for Cabinet decisions was activated. The Committee considered the Cabinet decision relating to item 17 of the agenda for the meeting held on 29 June 2026.

The report was due to be considered by Full Council at its meeting on 22 July but the report had since been withdrawn from the agenda.

It was agreed that the item be deferred to allow for the item to be fully debated at Full Council.

RESOLVED THAT – the item be deferred to a future meeting of the Committee once this had been debated at Full Council.

8. SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE DIAGNOSED WITH MOTOR NEURONE DISEASE (MND) IN ACCESSING DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT (DFG)

The Committee considered the item referred to Scrutiny Committee by Cabinet at its meeting on 2 June 2026.

The Portfolio Holder for Communities and Homes and the Strategic Director for Communities attended the meeting and answered questions from the Committee.

The Portfolio Holder for Communities and Homes provided a summary of context behind the report:

A Notice of Motion was presented to Council in January that received full support that anyone diagnosed with MND should have quick access to DFGs.

A report was submitted to Cabinet to endorse this and since that decision an additional tranche of funding had been received of £69,000 in Rugby.

In 2017 an organisation called HEART was set up to carry out work across all five districts and boroughs and Warwickshire County Council. It operates as a partnership and was managed by Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council (NBBC).

There were challenges in the system. One was when triaging requests for support MND should be treated as a priority. The time it takes to make an assessment was currently 14 months.

There was a national shortage of occupational therapists creating delays in assessments being carried out.

A further challenge on the horizon was that NBBC had decided it no longer wishes to be the lead authority on HEART and has enacted a clause giving a year's notice. To date NBBC has given a reason for its decision. As a partnership alternative arrangements are required to ensure there is no loss of service.

Proper triaging of cases was necessary to identity those that need priority treatment.

In response to questions raised by the Committee, the following points were made:

With the decision of Government on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) only having been received today, it was too soon to state what the effects on Warwickshire HEART were likely to be. However, we should be aspiring to continue a seamless service in this time of change.

A further report was due to be submitted to Cabinet in September that will include more detail on all the challenges being faced, including Local Government Reorganisation.

The partnership operates as a formal contract that contains a clause whereby the host can state they no longer wish to act in that capacity, and this had been triggered.

This could be an opportunity to explore different ways of providing the service. There was a capacity issue and work must be prioritised. It was fortunate that work had already begun.

The work can involve renovations to properties or managing return home from hospital. Those delays can be challenging but they will still exist whatever the local authority structure. It has worked successfully as a Warwickshire wide partnership.

The Portfolio Holder invited Scrutiny Committee to put their views forward for shaping the future service and was open to working with the Committee and involving member engagement.

Reassurance was provided that work was being carried out in partnership at strategic director level. A strategic risk register was maintained that included LGR and an understanding that the arrangement would be required to change at some stage. Work had already begun on the different options. This could include bringing the work back inhouse. This could impact on the supply chain.

These were mandatory grants and the work must continue to keep people in their homes.

There was uncertainty on what the future looks like but that also allows officers to understand what the horizon looks like. There was a strategic overview taking place.

The Committee were informed that now the decision on LGR had been made meetings were due to be held to commence looking at those areas which had impacted in a different way as a result of the final decision. As a shared service HEART was one example of this. It was one of the LGR workstreams.

There were a lot of upcoming decisions to be made. The new Rugby Future Governance Committee has now been established and will commence work. The committee will report into Full Council and particular items may be brought to Scrutiny Committee. A key issue was the capacity to complete the work needed at pace.

RESOLVED THAT – the Portfolio Holder be invited to return to a future meeting of the Committee to provide an update on grants and an update on the housing service.

9. UPDATE ON THE CORPORATE STRATEGY

The Committee received a report (Part 1 – agenda item 6) regarding a summary of the current status of the Corporate Strategy and how delivery against the strategy should be prioritised in light of Local Government Reorganisation.

The Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council attended the meeting and answered questions from the Committee. The Chief Executive was also in attendance and addressed the Committee.

The Leader and Deputy Leader provided some background context to the Committee:

There was a ten-year Corporate Strategy in place, as approved by Council, with big ambitions for Rugby and the scale of that original ambition should continue. However, there was a need to look at the to do list in light of LGR.

Paragraph 2.5 of the report refers to three key areas for consideration:

- Projects that can be delivered before the deadline for when the new unitary authority will be vested in May 2028.

- Which projects should be developed ready to hand over to the new unitary authority.
- Organisational change, including transformation and preparation for LGR.

There was already a mandate to deliver the projects, including town centre regeneration.

Work would continue at pace on the mandate in place and what can be delivered prior to being handed over to the new authority. It was not possible to predict what the new unitary authority will decide will be its priorities.

A reprioritised delivery plan around organisational change would recognise that staff of each council will face a period of uncertainly. There will be practical changes that affect officers working lives. There was some work to do in readiness on that organisation change to prepare for the next phase.

The end of year report was issued prior to the last elections and now there was a need to look at it through a new lens.

Creation of the Rugby Future Governance Committee will take on the capacity and will work at pace. This was about the future of Rugby and local parishes.

Council was duty bound to work with officers to prepare for the Shadow Authority and the new unitary authority and ensure there were projects in progress or shelf ready to pass over.

This was about looking at the Corporate Strategy through a new lens and the new timeframe recognising what can be achieved while Rugby Borough Council still existed. There was a lot to be achieved to support the new authority being in the best position when it comes into power in 2028.

In response to questions raised by the Committee, the following points were made:

It was acknowledged that the workstreams would cut across equality and diversity with links to the work of the Equality and Diversity Working Group.

The intention was to have further details and a summary on the prioritisation of the individual projects by September, and once the new Rugby Future Governance Committee had commenced meeting. In the interim, there was a report being prepared on transformation to be submitted to the extraordinary meeting of Cabinet on 3 August.

It was important to ensure the capital programme was up to date.

Discussions would be held in a range of forums. Meeting arrangements would also be reviewed and whether additional officer or Member based meeting groups were required.

An officer level assets board would be established to ensure an equal and consistent approach across directorates, and to derive the best value from assets with the right governance routes in place.

Work was taking place across the county on managing resources, assets and services more efficiently. Work will also look at the services we deliver in a holistic way.

There were a range of different working groups in place and the discussions in those forums would help identify the priorities of what can be delivered before LGR.

When bringing forward the delivery plan for the next two years it will be accompanied by a set of KPIs that Members will receive updates on. There will be periodic updates provided to the Committee on those KPIs.

Milestones and timelines will sit alongside the KPIs. There was a need to be tight on timelines and be clear on when work would be delivered. If timelines extend beyond April 2028, they will be passed to the new unitary authority to deliver.

The use of AI was one workstream within the delivery plan. It was noted that a wider report on AI across the council may benefit the Committee.

Assurance was provided that AI would be incorporated into the delivery plan.

RESOLVED THAT – the Corporate Strategy to be included on the work programme to receive an update at a future meeting.

10. TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION DELIVERY

The Committee received a report (Part 1 – agenda item 7) regarding a progress update on the review work to date.

The Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive and the Principal Planning Officer attended the meeting and answered questions from the Committee.

The Deputy Leader introduced the report as Chair of the Town Centre Regeneration Working Group. There were 13 workstreams and many large projects taking place. Work was being carried out quickly. Members were reminded to speak to their representatives on the working group to receive updates on the work taking place.

The Leader reported that the town centre work cuts across all Cabinet portfolio areas. All Members should take ownership of the town centre to achieve good practice and effect change. The town centre and any related issues would be raised at meetings of Informal Cabinet.

There was a new dedicated email address for the town centre for businesses to use.

In response to questions raised by the Committee, the following points were made:

There would be different venues for different debates, and the Rugby Town Council debate would continue.

Scrutiny Committee has a strong role in LGR. The working groups would also have a key role.

There was a need to look at this from a devolution lens and the best options for opportunities to achieve the best way of retaining and protecting assets for the people of Rugby.

The Shopfront SPD was a planning supplementary document associated with the Local Plan. The Economic Development team were leading on the grants scheme, but wider work was taking place on the design element, and the

Conservation Officer would be consulted if a shop is situated in the conservation area.

Members discussed points raised about trusting the free market to improve the town centre and whether the planned improvements would attract visitors or tourists to the town and if expenditure would deliver for the local residents.

Half of Rugby Central was empty and part of the issue was international investors who were indifferent to what happens in the town centre. There was a need for the council to step in and take action.

There was a broader point around where people live. The people and the emotional place and the attachments. There needs to be a balance on place identity which is separate to market. There should be a balance in creating a sense of place and the quality of where you want to live rather than a pure market situation.

There needs to be an opportunity for a third party to work through that and Members being democratically elected were working to create something for the future.

There were issues with local shopping parades, but it was difficult to make improvements where they are privately owned.

There were KPIs in place to monitor the success of the town centre events as part of the post Rugby BID soft landing. There would be a six month review that would feed into the annual budget setting in terms of the following year. Footfall, people surveys and feedback was used.

There was past data available so comparisons could be made against last year for future review.

I was too soon for evidence to show that place branding was translating to tangible measurable improvements directly attributed to the branding. The new branding was launched in January and it was used on the Rugby Town website as a separate entity.

The relaunch of Rugby Town website would take place next week featuring the new branding. Any business may use the branding, and this will be promoted. It was still early stages and work was taking place to imbed this and integrate it into other projects for greater visibility. This included a new wayfinding scheme due to be reported to Cabinet and Council.

Part of the place-branding strategy was to give Rugby an identity to attract inward investment and help secure funding. The place branding will be reflected in the future plans for town centre regeneration.

Feedback was being sought from other stakeholders that may wish to use it over the next six months. The uniformed branding can also be applied to events. Improvements would be measured through business feedback but also through the success of events and inward investment that was attracted.

RESOLVED THAT – the topic would remain on the work programme for future review.

11. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received a report (Part 1 – agenda item 8) regarding the overview and scrutiny work programme.

It was agreed that an item on Local Government Reorganisation would be included on the work programme.

There was also a potential item linked to the creation of an Equality and Diversity Policy.

RESOLVED THAT – the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme be updated as minuted above.

CHAIR