

Statement of Cllr Neil Gregory, Chair of Scrutiny Committee

Read by Cllr John Lodge, Leader of the Council at Cabinet 13 June 2019

We had an excellent meeting of Scrutiny Committee yesterday evening, the membership is collegial and has a firm grasp of the nature and extent of their duties. They are particularly minded to establish an effective working relationship with Cabinet.

We have identified two major work streams which we intend to be the focus of our work. It is our intention to have agreed, implementable findings by 31/3/20. We intend to discuss detailed draft Terms of References (ToRs) for each workstream at our meeting on 25 June.

1. Governance of the Council - We are aware of your desire to move away from the cabinet system, this work stream which will of necessity require close collaboration with officers and the executive is intended to ensure that such changes are practicable, implementable, maintain (enhance) accountability and can be operated with minimal disruption. Cllr SELL has kindly agreed to chair the working group for this matter.
2. Planning - This work stream is split into two components - Major Planning Applications and General Planning, taking each separately;

Major planning applications - this will look at the conduct of very large and significant proposals in terms of process, resource, advice to members and the ways in which UDC engages with stakeholders. It will not consider any specific aspect of the Stansted application until that matter has been determined. However preliminary work can and will be carried out, the Planning Advisory Service is being retained to assist with that preliminary work. Cllr LeCOUNT has kindly agreed to chair the working group for this matter.

Closely related, and with extensive cross overs and matters of mutual interest, General Planning will look at such matters as enforcement, developer contributions, engagement with town and parish councils, the user experience, resourcing and other relevant issues to improve and enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of this aspect of UDC operations. Cllrs CRISCIONE, EVANS and JONES are all keen to take leading roles in this matter. Cllr EVANS has, in the first instance, agreed to work on draft ToRs and work closely with Cllr LeCOUNT on aligning the work streams.

The committee is aware that there may be resource requirements for this work and officers are investigating this. The committee is also aware that the planning function is under some operational stress and that we need to avoid making this worse. Our approach will be sympathetic and supportive.

The committee preferred to focus on a few areas of activity rather than spread our efforts too thinly. Nonetheless as Cllr FAIRHURST's work on investments and investment governance continues we would welcome interaction with him.