MINUTES OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17 SEPTEMBER 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), Councillor Roodhouse (Deputy Leader of the Council) and Councillor McKenzie (Portfolio Holder for Growth and Investment)

Officers:
Dan Green (Chief Executive), John Murphy (Chief Officer for Legal and Governance), Andrew Grant (Strategic Director – Operations and Transformation), Nicola Smith (Strategic Director – Place), Lesley Campbell (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and Linn Ashmore (Democratic Services Officer)

12. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 15 January, 19 March, 21 May and 16 July 2026 were approved.

13. APOLOGIES

There were none.

14. DECLARATIONS OF INTERST

There were no declarations of interest.

15. TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME 2026/27

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 5 of the agenda for the meeting held on 3 August 2026.

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

The Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council introduced the report and gave a brief overview including the following key points:

- There was already a budget allocated for transformation. The Cabinet report was designed to give transparency to key projects requiring transformation. The work would dovetail with the process for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).
- The aim was to define services that require transformation, identify risks and ensure the Council was ready for LGR.

- The report set out the focus and methodology. It was a skeleton report that required details to be added.
- It was important that safe and legal services were provided. Some of the work would come through the Rugby Future Governance Committee.
- The report identified that a new Leadership Team had been established and they were involved in formulating the content of the report.

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

In response to a question regarding the timing of the progress reporting to Cabinet, each project would have the correct level of reporting to Cabinet Members. The Leader undertook to work with the Strategic Director to consider how to give greater visibility to that and provide assurance to all Members. The portfolio holders were involved in regular meetings and discussions on their particular elements. Tracking was important but it was more beneficial to view trends over a quarterly timeline. Information would also pass through the Rugby Future Governance Committee.

There was some uncertainty on the future of LGR but this would not affect the progress of the necessary workstreams. It was important to be proactive.

Regardless of LGR, these were high-priority projects. Waste and recycling was one key service. Irrespective of the future of LGR, this was a key piece of work. There was a challenging Medium Term Financial Plan and it was important to look at this in the context of LGR and whether it would continue. The focus would continue on the transformation efforts.

There was an expectation that the Senior Leadership Team would deliver on the projects within the transformation programme and make improvements to the service areas. Safe and legal services were needed that were financially efficient and operated within the set performance framework.

Any Member was welcome to look at the project briefs and discuss those with the portfolio holders.

Workforce resilience, to include supporting staff, releasing talent and retaining and acquiring the best staff within a challenging market was important. A workforce resilience report was due to be submitted to the Rugby Future Governance Committee in October, and a wider detailed report would be submitted to a future meeting of Cabinet.

There would be appropriate frequency tracking. Most of the work would be carried out behind the scenes. Ways to provide greater visibility for Members to allow greater assurance would be considered. It was anticipated this would be included in the Project Initiation Documents (PIDs).

Intended outcomes and intended benefits would be tracked. For some projects there could be additional learning which could result in new policies. Good project management methodologies would be followed.

The report was called in before the PIDs could be produced. The PIDs were developed prior to the Cabinet meeting but not all were fully completed. They would be available for review by all Members. The call in had resulted in the work being paused.

Business critical or health and safety related matters had continued but other workstreams were paused at the point of the call in. The original expectation

was to report back to Cabinet in September. Work could be revived on the basis of the outcome of the call in.

A possible arithmetic error in the budget allocation figures would be checked with the S151 Officer.

The figures contained in the report do not relate to town centre regeneration. Each project was costed on a case-by-case basis. Officers could be requested to provide greater transparency on whether resources were coming from internal or external sources. Acquiring the most appropriate and accurate advice would be a saving in the long run. The cap would be the budget. It was not possible to set an arbitrary cap as decisions needed to be evidence based.

Details would be incorporated into the PIDs. There would be certain external specialist support required that would be sourced under procurement policies. There would be occasions where independent oversight was required as the council should not be evaluating its own performance.

There were a range of Standing Orders in place that required opportunities to report on external spending, including the Contract Standing Orders.

Members were invited to feedback with any comments or suggestions.

The Committee considered the two options available:

(a) that it concurs with the decision of Cabinet, in which case the decision stands and becomes effective from this meeting; or

(b) that the decision be referred back to Cabinet for reconsideration, setting out in writing the nature of the committee's concerns.

RESOLVED THAT – the decision of Cabinet be concurred.

16. TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION DELIVERY PLAN

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 4 of the agenda for the meeting held on 3 August 2026.

The Portfolio Holder for Growth and Investment and the Chair of the Town Centre Regeneration Working Group attended the meeting and answered questions from the Committee. The Strategic Director for Place also attended and addressed the Committee.

The Portfolio Holder for Growth and Investment gave a brief introduction to the report covering the following key points:

The delivery plan builds on the Town Centre Regeneration Strategy published in 2022. It was an aspirational document with no decision-making power.

The delivery plan sets out the vision for the town centre. Most of the assets were not in the ownership of Rugby Borough Council. Possible development opportunities were being explored for sites such as Rugby Central, the Brotherhood House, the assets around St Andrew's Church, and the redevelopment of North Street.

It sets out a vision about attracting inward investment including Government grants through a process of review and scrutiny and planning. Any use of Council owned assets would be subject to Cabinet and Council approval.

Place branding and wayfinding were part of the 2022 strategy document and those the workstreams have now come forward. It was a big web of parts that all together transform what is happening in the town centre.

The place branding was available for everyone, and its use was being encouraged to provide a uniformed look in the town centre.

Rugby Borough Council (RBC) was a large provider of car parking in town centre and on street parking was provided by Warwickshire County Council (WCC). The remainder included the Swan Centre and Rugby Central.

The 2022 strategy proposed closing all RBC owned car parks except for Little Church Street. Based on over supply, inefficiency and poor quality, it was originally proposed to move it to peripheral car parks. Following review it was decided to retain the John Barford Car Park. At the moment the data was being interrogated.

No car parking would be lost at this stage. Any proposal to change the use of any car park would require the approval of Planning Committee, Cabinet and Council. This included the provision of a cut through Chestnut Fields Car Park. The same applies to the aspiration to develop a cultural quarter.

The Motion to Council on free car parking was also a consideration.

A report was being commissioned to look at the trends of car parking in the town centre carried out by an external consultant. Decisions would be evidence based.

Equality and diversity sat at the core but there may be opportunities of further raising awareness.

Meanwhile use covers the events in the town centre aimed at meeting the needs of all people.

The shop front grants would help improve the exterior of store, particularly in the Sheep Streed and High Street area. The appearance of the public and showing off the architecture would make it a place people want to spend time.

Rugby has been a fast-growing town. Lots of people made Rugby their home and they don't necessarily know the town centre. There was more emphasis on providing a different offering and help support to the town centre. Bringing people into areas of the town would allow retail to follow as there would be footfall.

The support of WCC was needed. The block paving in the town centre was technically safe, but it was not an attractive space. WCC do not have a budget to improve it. Being safe and legal and being attractive were different.

Public toilets were expensive to operate and there were facilities in the town centre and Rugby Central. Additional facilities would be both a financial and anti-social behaviour issue. Unmanned toilets attract problems, but manned toilets come at considerable cost.

The delivery plan encompasses the town for marketing purposes to encourage investment. It was developed through the cross-party Town Centre Regeneration Working Group. The working group sought to operate in a cross-party manner looking at tasks on a more strategic level.

Below the strategic level sits a sub section of projects. Changing rooms and toilets was a discussion for all stakeholders including retailers.

The underlying element was how to increase footfall.

Sunday has become a busy day with families visiting the town centre. This may be the best day for retailers to consider opening.

There was a paper due to Cabinet on wayfinding. This covers the journey from the train station to the town centre.

The wider strategic regeneration and operation elements underpin that. The Town Centre Regeneration Working Group wants to move at pace at officer and portfolio holder level. The next step was for officers take back a document to the Town Centre Regeneration Working Group setting out the sites and priorities to allow officers to work within including some quicker wins and long-term solutions.

There was £10m to run a training campus in the town centre for a six year period, either procuring or leasing a building and money towards operating the facility. This was not enough to cover the cost of The Lawn and The Retreat. The money was ring fenced to be spent in the town centre.

RBC does not own Rugby Central or the Brotherhood House. The aim was to attract external investment. Any money spent would have to follow all due diligence checks. RBC may end with LGR but there will be a successor authority that has an interest in the town centre. WCC was looking for grant funding to improve the area around the train station. This will be going out to consultation later in the year.

The delivery plan was commissioned with Saville's who are one of the leading property experts with a wealth of data at their disposal. This project had a multi-disciplinary team to produce the document. This was commissioned in July 2025 when LGR was known. There was a great degree of confidence in the abilities of Saville's.

Local authorities can borrow money at better rates. That would not be permitted until after all the correct democratic and governance processes were followed.

The working group works in a confidential way and allows Members from all groups to be involved in those discussions. All working group members should be feeding that information across the rest of their political groups.

Structural Changes Orders were originally expected in November. The ambitions were not being scaled back. Work on projects would continue and would be modified along the way. At the point of LGR the baton would be passed to the successor authority.

The Committee considered the two options available:

(a) that it concurs with the decision of Cabinet, in which case the decision stands and becomes effective from this meeting; or

(b) that the decision be referred back to Cabinet for reconsideration, setting out in writing the nature of the committee's concerns.

RESOLVED THAT – the decision of Cabinet be concurred.

17. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received a report (Part 1 – agenda item 6) regarding the overview and scrutiny work programme.

It was agreed that an item on fly tipping be included on the work programme.

RESOLVED THAT – the work programme be agreed subject to the inclusion of an item on fly tipping and regular updates on LGR.

CHAIR