

WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of Warwickshire County Council held on 1 November 2005

Present:

Councillor Gordon Collett (Chair)

Councillors John Appleton, George Atkinson, Peter Barnes, Sarah Boad, David Booth, Ken Browne, John Burton, Les Caborn, Richard Chattaway, Alan Cockburn, Jose Compton, Chris Davis, Jill Dill-Russell, Richard Dodd, Michael Doody, Alan Farnell, Anne Forwood, Peter Fowler, Eithne Goode, Richard Grant, Colin Hayfield, Marion Haywood, Martin Heatley, Pat Henry, Bob Hicks, Richard Hobbs, Richard Hyde, Mick Jones, Katherine King, Bernard Kirton, Nina Knapman, Joan Lea, Bryan Levy, Anita Macaulay, Frank McCarney, Helen McCarthy, Phillip Morris-Jones, Brian Moss, Tim Naylor, Raj Randev, Jerry Roodhouse, John Ross, Chris Saint, Izzi Seccombe, Dave Shilton, Kam Singh, Mota Singh, Ian Smith, Mick Stanley, Bob Stevens, June Tandy, Heather Timms, Sid Tooth, John Vereker, C.B.E. John Wells and John Whitehouse.

1. General

(1) Apologies

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Tom Cavanagh, John Haynes, Barry Longden, Mike Perry and Ray Sweet, B.E.M.

(2) Members' Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

The following councillors disclosed interests in the items indicated:

Item 2 – Police Force Reform

Personal interests as members of the Warwickshire Police Authority:

Councillors: Chris Davis, Eithne Goode, Richard Hobbs, Katherine King, Phillip Morris-Jones, Izzi Seccombe, Mota Singh, Ray Sweet and John Vereker.

Item 3 – Warwickshire Strategic Partnership Plan

Personal interests as members of a district or borough council:

North Warwickshire Borough Council

Councillors: Peter Fowler, Colin Hayfield, Joan Lea, Mick Stanley, and Sid Tooth.

Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council

Councillors: Pat Henry, Bob Hicks.

Rugby Borough Council

Councillors: Gordon Collett, Richard Dodd, Jerry Roodhouse and Heather Timms.

Stratford on Avon District Council

Councillors: John Appleton, Peter Barnes, Richard Hobbs, Anita Macaulay, Chris Saint, Izzi Seccombe and Bob Stevens.

Warwick District Council

Councillors: Les Caborn, Jose Compton, Chris Davis, Michael Doody, Eithne Goode, Bernard Kirton and Dave Shilton.

(3) Minutes

(1) Minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2005

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2005 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The Council noted that correspondence had been circulated to Members in response to the Council's resolution regarding Traffic Offences by European Union Nationals. (Minute 7 (2) refers).

(2) Minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2005

Resolved:

That the minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 11 October 2005 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The Council noted that a response had been sent to the Home Office on the proposals for police reform. (See minute 2 below).

(4) Announcements

Warwick Hospital

Councillor Bernard Kirton referred to recent reports regarding the future of services at Warwick Hospital and requested that consideration be given to a Council debate on the issues. Councillor Jerry Roodhouse, Chair of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, advised the meeting that a review of acute services was underway and that clinical services was also being reviewed. He undertook to ensure there was an informed debate at Board level.

Councillor Alan Farnell, Leader of the Council, assured the Council that there would be a full debate on the health proposals. This would either be on the scheduled meeting of the Council on 21 February 2006 or a special meeting would be arranged for January, if this was found to be more appropriate.

School Links with Shenzhen

Councillor Izzi Seccombe, Cabinet portfolio holder for Children's Services, presented a plaque given by the region of Shenzhen in China, which celebrated new links that had been formed between schools of the region and schools in Warwickshire. The Council congratulated Eric Wood, County Education Officer, who had led a group of head teachers on a recent visit to Shenzhen and looked forward to the development of joint projects between the region and Warwickshire and a reciprocal visit by schools from Shenzhen.

Teaching Awards 2005

Councillor John Burton, Cabinet portfolio holder for Schools, announced that Mrs Lesley King, head teacher of Nicholas Chamberlaine Technology College in Bedworth had been named as RAF Head teacher of the Year in the Secondary School in West Midlands category at the Teaching Awards 2005.

The Chair undertook to convey the Council's congratulations and appreciation to Mrs King.

2. Police Reform

Update

The Chair welcomed Philip Blundell, Chair of the Police Authority and John Burbeck, the Chief Constable, to the meeting and drew attention to the briefing note and correspondence circulated to members that morning.

John Burbeck reported that a series of consultation meetings had taken place since he had reported to Council on 11 October. This had included meetings with the district and borough councils. An initial response had also been sent to the Home Secretary on Friday 28 October, which answered the specific questions posed by the Home Secretary.

The Council noted that the Police Authority had written to the Home Secretary expressing a preference for a federated model but recognising that the Home Office would not favour this option, the Authority had supported the Police Force in identifying two main options built around the Home Office criteria:

- Warwickshire, Staffordshire, West Mercia and West Midlands
- Warwickshire and West Midlands

The response to the Home Office made it clear that the options were conditional upon sub-regional command, governance and accountability arrangements that would need to be carefully developed to reflect the differing needs within our region. The Council was advised that a response from the Home Secretary was expected on Monday 7 November, following which there would be detailed consultation.

Questions

(1) Councillor Sarah Boad questioned whether democratic accountability could be maintained in a new structure as Warwickshire would have reduced representation on a larger police authority. She also questioned whether the Chief Constable and Chair would have time to attend meetings such as this Council meeting. Councillor Boad also sought assurance that the sub regional structure would safeguard communities, particularly the rural areas.

John Burbeck replied that other forces in the country were also of the view that a regional structure required a sub-regional command in order to work and this was the consistent in the responses being put to the Home Secretary.

Philip Blundell added that the question of democratic accountability was something that concerned the Police Authority and that this, and other issues, would be picked up in the next stage of consultation.

(2) Councillor Helen McCarthy questioned the approach that would be taken in improved community policing and asked whether this would include zero tolerance.

John Burbeck replied that he was of the view that zero tolerance did work. He added that this was part of the approach of neighbourhood policing which aimed to prevent local problems escalating and to prevent trouble-makers becoming criminals. Phil Blundell added that the current neighbourhood policing teams had been well received by the public in Warwickshire and that it was on this basis that it was being rolled out across the County.

(3) Councillor John Appleton questioned why Warwickshire Police had been placed at 29 in a league table of performance and whether there were plans for improvement.

John Burbeck replied that the particular table reflected the fact that protective services are now included in the new assessment regime. The regime exposed the Force's weakness in tackling cross border and major crime which they were aware of and which they sought to address in the new proposals for a strategic force. He added that the Force appeared in much better position in other league tables.

Councillor June Tandy requested that a positive message be relayed from this meeting that reflected the good work that was being put into this review and the continuing commitment of the Warwickshire Police to provide the best service possible to Warwickshire.

Councillor Alan Farnell reminded the Council of the good work that was being undertaken in Warwickshire, including innovations such as the criminal justice centres and expressed the view that the reform must ensure the good work is continued and that, whatever the structural change, there remains a commitment to ensuring effective policing for the people of Warwickshire.

Councillor Farnell reiterated his intention that this issue is on the agenda for Council meetings and welcomed the Police to future meetings to keep members briefed on progress.

The Chair of Council thanked the Chair of the Police Authority and the Chief Constable for their attendance and work in taking forward the consultation.

3. Warwickshire Strategic Partnership Plan

Councillor Bob Stevens presented the Warwickshire Strategic Partnership Plan. The Plan had been developed with partners and agreed by the Strategic Partnership, Cabinet and County Leaders Group.

Following a debate, it was proposed that the Plan be agreed.

Resolved:

That the Council approves the Warwickshire Strategic Partnership Plan.

4. Member Question Time (Standing Order 7)

(1) Drug, Substance and Alcohol Misuse

Councillor Richard Chattaway asked Councillor Jerry Roodhouse (Chair of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee) the following question:

“A report on tackling of drug, substance and alcohol abuse was recently considered by Rugby Area Committee. It is an excellent report but can the Chair of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee advise how it is proposed to standardise this approach across the County?”

Councillor Roodhouse replied:

“This is of interest to the Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Group will be asked to advise on the best way forward.”

Councillor Peter Fowler asked the following supplementary question:

“Would the Chair of Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee agree that last week a golden opportunity was missed to introduce a smoking ban in bars, pubs and restaurants?”

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse replied:

“Yes. The government was obviously divided over this.”

(2) Advertising on Street Furnishings

Councillor Ken Browne asked Councillor Martin Heatley (Portfolio Holder for Environment):

“As noted in my question at the Council meeting in September, despite opposition from four of the five Area Committees, the 2005/06 budget included at least £100,000 to be raised from advertising on street furnishings in the first year. At the meeting in September, the Cabinet portfolio holder told us that the scheme was progressing and that final documents would be signed in October with a provider and that implementation would start.

Would Councillor Heatley please inform the Council whether the final contracts for advertising on street furnishing have now been signed and

whether planning issues have been resolved and when implementation will start?”

Councillor Martin Heatley replied:

“Contracts have not been signed. After that Council meeting we took advice from the County Solicitor and discovered that there was a need to readvertise allowing a 40-day return period to meet requirements in European legislation. The tenders will be returned by 18 November. The planning issues will be dealt with by the borough and district councils”.

Councillor Ken Browne asked the following supplementary question:

“Can you confirm that revenue from the advertising this year is likely to be nil and that it is unlikely that the planning process will have been completed in order to allow implementation and that, therefore, the ‘cautious estimate’ of revenue you gave at last Council will not be met?”

Councillor Martin Heatley replied:

“If tenders are approved I will instruct officers to go ahead and identify sites throughout the County”.

Councillor Richard Chattaway asked:

“Will Councillor Heatley please tell us where the advertising on street furnishings will be located, and can we have your assurance that local members will be advised when these advertisements are due to appear in their areas by letter or e-mail. Can he also confirm that the £100,000 anticipated will not be available and the money will have to be found from somewhere else?”

Councillor Martin Heatley replied:

“I cannot tell you the sites. There is a planning process and I can’t interfere in that. Until we fail to meet the £100,000, we will not have to find the money from elsewhere. Services will not be cut as you are suggesting”.

(3) County Council’s Green Transport Plan

Councillor Ken Browne asked Councillor Martin Heatley (Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Environment):

“Could Councillor Heatley please explain to the Council how the Council’s Green Transport Plan and the objectives in the Warwickshire Strategic Partnership Plan of ‘reducing the impact of traffic by encouraging the use of public transport, cycling and walking and ‘demonstrating to others our commitment by the use of exemplars within our own organisation’ is

compatible with the provision of 100 extra car-parking permits bought from Warwick District Council, provided free to staff, extra parking at the Saltisford Development and at a time when a number of staff in the Education Department are moving from Warwick town centre to Wedgenock House?"

Councillor Martin Heatley replied:

"You are aware that the provision of car park spaces is a temporary resolution. Both the department and the Council are committed to the Green Transport Plan. The Education Department staff have not yet moved out of Northgate Street. There is a problem for our staff and we cannot tell our staff, who expect to have parking as part of their working contract, that they cannot park. These extra 100 spaces are justified as a short-term measure. If we are going to tell staff not to park we should look at ourselves".

Councillor Ken Browne asked the following supplementary question:

"When will the portfolio holder, therefore, be bringing forward proposals for members of the County Council?"

Councillor Martin Heatley replied:

" We will produce a Green Transport Plan as and when appropriate. We have only been in Cabinet for six months. You were the portfolio holder last year and we are working to the Green Transport Plan you introduced."

(4) Avian Influenza

Councillor Helen McCarthy asked Councillor Richard Hobbs (Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Community Safety):

"What preparations and contingency plans have been made to ensure Warwickshire is able to respond to an outbreak of Avian flu?"

Councillor Richard Hobbs replied:

"Warwickshire has made preparations and contingency plans for an outbreak of Avian flu. It is important to stress that at present Avian flu very rarely affects humans and then only those working directly with affected poultry. A pandemic would only occur if the virus mutates to one that is easily passed between humans. It is thought extremely unlikely that it will occur this winter and the general view is that the risk remains low.

Our Emergency Planning Team is, however, addressing the issues about a future pandemic of the Avian flu and are working with

colleagues across the health economy, but primarily with the Health Protection Agency. A one-day seminar is being held shortly to clarify all roles and responsibilities and to agree the production of specific contingency plans. All County departments will be invited to this. National plans are already available from the Department of Health and the Health Protection Agency and Trading Standards are liaising with DEFRA.

A regional working group has been set up and has a Warwickshire County Council representative. In summary a significant amount of work is being done across Warwickshire and the West Midlands.”

Councillor Helen McCarthy asked the following supplementary question:

“In the absence of any clear lead from DEFRA, is the County Council giving any advice to those people who keep poultry?”

Councillor Richard Hobbs replied:

“Regulations were laid before parliament on the 28 October, and these provide for a ban on any sales from farmers who have not been licensed by DEFRA. Local advice is being given by Trading Standards. For example we have given advice to the market at Henley in Arden where there are a large number of birds prepared for Christmas. We do not have the precise details but Trading Standards is the enforcing agency for this Council and receiving advice from DEFRA”.

Councillor Colin Hayfield asked the following supplementary question:

“Is the County Council giving any advice to the many private individuals who keep poultry. Are Trading Standards aware of these and able to give advice?”

Councillor Richard Hobbs replied:

“Trading Standards have information on commercial keepers and aim to find amateur keepers and issue advice. We do not know all keepers so it is important that messages are sent out via the Trading Standards Press Officer”.

5. Notices of Motions (Standing Order 5)

There were no notices of motions.

6. Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

7. Exclusion of the Public

Resolved

That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that their presence would involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 8, 9 and 11 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

8. Modernisation of the Council

The Council considered a report from the Chief Executive and agreed proposals based on a new structure of departments and the establishment of an Appointments Committee.

9. Proposed Kingsbury Water Park Outdoor Education Centre

The Council considered a joint report from the County Education Officer and the Director of Planning Transport & Economic Strategy

The Council agreed the use of a capital receipt in respect of the Kingsbury Water Park Outdoor Education Centre.

The meeting rose at 1.00 p.m.

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Chair