

WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of Warwickshire County Council held on 13 December 2005

Present:

Councillor Gordon Collett (Chair)

Councillors George Atkinson, Peter Barnes, Sarah Boad, David Booth, Ken Browne, John Burton, Les Caborn, Tom Cavanagh, Richard Chattaway, Alan Cockburn, Jose Compton, Chris Davis, Jill Dill-Russell, Richard Dodd, Michael Doody, Alan Farnell, Anne Forwood, Peter Fowler, Eithne Goode, Colin Hayfield, John Haynes, 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, Mike Perry, Raj Randev, Jerry Roodhouse, John Ross, Chris Saint, Izzi Seccombe, Dave Shilton, Kam Singh, Ian Smith, Mick Stanley, Bob Stevens, Ray Sweet B.E.M., 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 John Appleton, Richard Grant, Barry Longden and Mota Singh.

The Council was advised that Councillor Barry Longden was at home following a spell in hospital. Members requested that their very best wishes for a speedy recovery be conveyed to Councillor Longden.

(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, Ray Sweet and John Vereker.

Item 3 – Bringing the Benefits of London 2012 Olympics to Warwickshire

Councillor Richard Hyde – personal interest as member of board of Advantage West Midlands and member of Leadership Group

Councillor Chris Saint – personal interest as current Chair of the 2012 Leadership Group.

Item 4 – 2005/06 Capital Programme

Councillor Richard Hyde – personal interest as member of AWM board, following reference made to AWM on this item.

Item 6 – Voluntary Sector Consortium Resource Building, Nuneaton and Bedworth.

Councillors Alan Farnell, Richard Hyde, Chris Saint and June Tandy – personal interests as members of the Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Partnership Board.

Councillor David Booth – personal interest as member of Warwickshire Welfare Rights.

Councillor Bob Hicks – personal interest as non-executive member of the Voluntary Sector Consortium.

Item 7 – NHS Consultations

Councillor Jose Compton – personal interest as associate manager of South Warwickshire Primary Care Trust

Councillor Richard Dodd – personal interest as employee of the Coventry and Warwickshire Ambulance Trust.

Councillor Colin Hayfield – personal interest as non-executive member of the North Warwickshire Primary Care Trust.

Councillor Mick Jones – personal interest as employee of North Warwickshire Primary Care Trust.

Councillor John Wells – personal interest as member of Rugby Primary Care Trust.

Item 9

(1) Second Homes Council Tax

Councillor Phillip Morris-Jones - personal interest as owner of second home.

(2) Court Fees for Family Courts

Councillors Colin Hayfield and John Vereker – personal interests as magistrates.

Item 13 – Kingsbury Water Park – Proposed Outdoor Education Centre

Councillor Richard Hyde – personal interest as a member of the AWM board.

Item 14 - Options for Shire Hall, Warwick

Councillor Sarah Boad – personal interest as her husband is Warwick District Council's Cabinet portfolio holder for housing.

Councillor Michael Doody – personal interest as member of Warwick District Council

Any discussion relating to District or Borough Councils

Personal interests as members of a district or borough council:

North Warwickshire Borough Council

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

Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council

Councillors: Pat Henry, Bob Hicks and John Ross.

Rugby Borough Council

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

Stratford on Avon District Council

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

Warwick District Council

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

(3) Minutes

(1) Minutes of the meeting held on 1 November 2005.

Resolved

That, subject to the addition of Councillor John Ross to the declarations of interest listed at minute 1 (3), the minutes of the meeting held on 1 November be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

(4) Announcements

Former Councillor Suzan Neale

The Council was advised of the death of former County Councillor Suzan Neale who had served on the Council from 1985 to 1989 and had been Vice-Chair of Council in 1988/89. Members paid tribute to Suzan's support for her community and contribution to local government. Councillor Jill Dill-Russell made particular reference to Suzan's private commitment to working for those with disabilities.

The Council stood in silent tribute and requested that their condolences be conveyed to Suzan's family.

Key Stage 2 Results

Councillor John Burton, Cabinet portfolio holder for Schools, announced that Warwickshire County Council's school examination results had been outstanding and included a number of improved schools. He also referred to the success of two pupils from Exhall Grange School who had received blind gardeners of the year awards. The Council expressed their congratulations to the pupils and also gave their best wishes to the head teacher of the school, Richard Bignell, who would be retiring shortly.

North Warwickshire Older People's Forum- Petition

Councillor Anne Forwood presented a petition from constituents in her area regarding the process for selection of membership of the Older People's Forum.

The petition was referred to the Interim Strategic Director for Adult, Health and Community Services.

2. Police Reform - update

Current position.

Philip Blundell, Chair of the Police Authority and John Burbeck, the Chief Constable presented the latest position with regard to the consultation on Police Reform, referring to the reports prepared by the Chief Constable and the Clerk to the Police Authority, which were to be considered by the Police Authority on 14 December. These papers set out the details of the initial options submitted to the Home Secretary, the feedback on the submission and the process for the next stage.

Philip Blundell explained that the preparation of papers had been to a tight timetable, with consultation taking place with stakeholders and colleagues to obtain as much up to date information as possible in time for this Council and for the Authority's meeting. He apologised that this had meant that the papers were still being prepared the previous day.

Philip Blundell reported that the latest position was that he expected an agreement would be reached in the next few days for an option including Warwickshire, West Midlands and Staffordshire. He added that West Mercia had now decided to put forward the proposal for it to continue in its present, single, configuration. Philip added that he was clear that, notwithstanding the tremendous work of the current Warwickshire police force, there was now a need to be part of a larger force with resources to ensure sustainable, effective policing for the people of Warwickshire.

Philip further advised that the Police Authority were currently in support of the view of the Association of Police Officers that mergers should not follow the voluntary route proposed by the Home Secretary, until such time as the concerns regarding governance arrangements were fairly met.

Questions

- (1) Councillor Bernard Kirton asked what consultation was being undertaken regarding the configuration of neighbourhood policing.

John Burbeck, Chief Constable reminded the Council that there was an intention to roll out the current neighbourhood policing initiatives across the County over the next 12 months. The exact configuration would be the subject of negotiation through the crime and disorder partnerships.

- (2) Councillor Sarah Boad questioned the funding arrangements that would follow with the introduction of larger police forces and the second tier of decision-making.

Philip Blundell advised that this question had still to be answered and this, along with the issue of accountability and governance, would be the subject of further discussions after Christmas.

- (3) Councillor Peter Barnes asked how responses to the West Mercia position may be made and was advised by the Chief Constable that he would be given details of the West Mercia website.
- (4) Councillor Anne Forwood sought clarification on the timetable for implementation.

The Chief Constable explained that there were two possible timetables. A shorter timeline was prescribed for voluntary mergers and envisaged strategic forces being established on 1 April 2007. A longer timeline was set for mergers initiated by the Home Secretary, with forces being established on 1 April 2008.

- (5) Councillor Michael Doody asked about the position in relation to West Mercia and how this might be pursued.

Philip Blundell assured the Council that work was continuing to encourage West Mercia to join with Warwickshire.

- (6) Councillor Peter Barnes asked about the future use of the Police Head Quarters at Leek Wootton.

The Chief Constable advised that the current building and equipment would be required for the next few years but that the long term future would then be decided.

Philip Blundell advised that the draft submission to the Home Secretary, to be considered by the Police Authority on 14 December, would be available for Members to read that afternoon.

The Chair of Council thanked the Chair of the Police Authority and the Chief Constable for their continued work and for sharing the latest position with the Council.

Resolved:

That the reports from the Chief Constable and the Clerk to the Police Authority be noted.

3. Bringing the Benefits of London 2012 Olympics to Warwickshire

Councillor Chris Saint, Cabinet portfolio holder for Economic Development presented a report from Cabinet and highlighted a number of opportunities being explored that would benefit Warwickshire. Councillor Saint advised the Council that work was being taken forward by a 2012 Leadership Group which

he was currently chairing and which included a business manager appointed by AWM.

Councillor moved the recommendations in the report, was seconded and the Council agreed these as set out below.

Resolved:

- (1) That Council allocates £50,000 in the current financial year and, subject to the budget for 2006/2007, a further £100,000 to work in partnership to support activities related to the London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics.
- (2) That Council reviews funding needs for the Olympics in the course of the normal budget setting process for the years up to 2012.
- (3) That Council lobbies Government to ensure that current levels of investment to Warwickshire are maintained rather than diverted to the South East.
- (4) That a further report be submitted on actions to be taken to use the prospect of the Olympics to generate a wider interest and participation in sport in the community and on the potential for the Council to promote high achievement in sport.

4. 2005/06 Capital Programme – Supplementary Bids

Councillor Martin Heatley, Cabinet portfolio holder for the Environment, presented a report and recommendations from Cabinet.

The report presented the following recommendations from Cabinet:

That Cabinet:

1. Recommends to Council that £2 million additional capital resources are approved and added to the 2005/06 Capital Programme for the Planning, Transport and Economic Strategy Department (PTES) to meet the budget pressures outlined in Section 2 of the report funded by additional borrowing.
2. Agrees that any interest costs incurred in 2005/06 are met from the underspend in Other Services reported to Cabinet as part of Quarter 2 Budget monitoring on 17th November 2005.
3. Recommends to Council that £180,000 to meet the on-going costs of financing the additional £2 million borrowing is included in the 2006/07 budget resolution

Councillor Ken Browne moved the following amendment (seconded by Councillor Sarah Boad):

‘ That £2 million additional capital resources are approved and added to the 2005/06 Capital Programme for the Planning, Transport and Economic Strategy Department (PTES), with £300,000 for street lighting column replacement, £400,000 for Town Centre Paving Replacement, and £260,000 allocated to each Area Committee for capital funded maintenance, which could include structural maintenance, drainage, footways, street lighting or similar maintenance items as prioritised by each Area Committee’.

Following debate, Councillor Martin Heatley indicated his acceptance of the amendment, subject to clarification on the figures quoted. The amended recommendations were then put to the vote and approved by Council as set out below.

Resolved:

- (1) That £2.2 million additional capital resources are approved and added to the 2005/06 Capital Programme for the Planning, Transport and Economic Strategy Department (PTES), with £300,000 for street lighting column replacement, £400,000 for Town Centre Paving Replacement, and £300,000 allocated to each Area Committee for capital funded maintenance, which could include structural maintenance, drainage, footways, street lighting or similar maintenance items as prioritised by each Area Committee’.
- (2) That any interest costs incurred in 2005/06 are met from the underspend in Other Services reported to Cabinet as part of Quarter 2 Budget monitoring on 17th November 2005.
- (3). That £198,000 to meet the on-going costs of financing the additional £2.2 million borrowing is included in the 2006/07 budget resolution.

5. Constitution Changes to Delegations

Councillor Alan Farnell, Leader of the Council, presented a report from the County Solicitor and Assistant Chief Executive that set out changes necessary to the scheme of delegation to officers, following the adoption of the new officer structure approved by Council on 1 November.

It was noted that the delegations should include addition of the appointment of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development as Monitoring Officer and the Strategic Director of Resources as Section 151 Officer (effective from 5 December 2005).

Councillor Alan Farnell moved the recommendations (as amended) and was seconded by Councillor Bob Stevens. The recommendations were put to the vote and agreed as set out below.

Resolved:

- (1) That the Scheme of Delegation be amended as set out in the report, subject to the addition of the appointment of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development as Monitoring Officer from 5 December 2005 and the appointment of the Strategic Director of Resources as Section 151 Officer with effect from 5 December 2005.
- (2) That the Strategic Director of Performance and Development be authorised to amend the Constitution to reflect the changes.

6. Voluntary Sector Consortium Resource Building, Nuneaton and Bedworth

Councillor Chris Saint, Cabinet portfolio holder for Economic Development presented a report requesting approval of a loan to the Voluntary Sector Consortium. Councillor Saint reminded the Council that the proposal had the support of the Nuneaton and Bedworth Area Committee and the Cabinet.

Councillor Saint moved the recommendations agreed by Cabinet on 8 December (and was duly seconded) and this was put to the vote and was agreed as set out below.

Resolved:

- (1) That Council approves a loan to the Voluntary Sector Consortium of £500,000, subject to suitable terms and safeguards being agreed by the Director of Planning, Transport and Economic Strategy and the Acting Director of Property Services and that it be added to the Capital Programme.
- (2) That, before agreement is reached, a further report about the detailed arrangements for securing the loan be submitted to Cabinet.

7. NHS Consultations

Councillor Bob Stevens, Cabinet portfolio holder for Health, presented a report of the County Solicitor and Assistant Chief Executive that proposed a process for responding to the number of consultations taking place on the future arrangements for the NHS in Warwickshire.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse (Chair of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee) referred to the work being undertaken by the Committee and advised that it was also important to identify any issues that did not appear to

be covered in the consultations (for example travelling times to hospital had been overlooked initially). It was agreed that Members be kept briefed on the consultations and that an opportunity to debate the issues with NHS colleagues would take place at the Council meeting on 21 February 2006. Councillor Stevens moved the recommendation in the report, which was seconded and agreed as set out below.

Resolved:

- (1) That the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leaders Liaison Group, be authorised to enter into joint arrangements with other local authorities where appropriate (including the establishment of joint committees if necessary) to enable a joint response to be made to the consultations listed in the appendix to the report if appropriate.
- (2) That the Council receives a report on the arrangements that have been made and the proposals for changes in the NHS at its meeting on 21 February 2006.

8 Member Question Time (Standing Order 7)

A444 Road Improvement Scheme

Councillor Richard Chattaway asked the following question of Councillor Martin Heatley (Cabinet portfolio holder for the Environment):

‘Following reports in the press that the scheme to improve the section of A444 through Bedworth (the ‘diamond scheme’) was being looked at as a priority, could Councillor Heatley advise the Council of what priority has been allotted to this scheme?’

Councillor Martin Heatley replied:

‘There has been an ongoing campaign by councillors in the area for the junction to be changed. I expect, however, that in the current climate this will not take pace as there is no available funding’.

Councillor Alan Farnell, Leader of the Council, asked the following supplementary question:

‘Is this the junction improvement considered by the Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council Planning Committee in the 1990s?’

Councillor Martin Heatley replied:

‘ Yes, the Woodlands Scheme was considered in 1997 and the link road was rejected. There are no funds to undertake this at present.’

9. Notices of Motions (Standing Order 5)

(1) Second Homes Council Tax

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Jerry Roodhouse and seconded by Councillor David Booth:

- A** 'This Council supports the principle of reducing the Council Tax discount for second homes in Warwickshire from 50% to 10% from the beginning of the next financial year.

This Council further resolves that any additional income received by the County Council as a consequence of this reduction will be dedicated to Affordable Housing projects in Warwickshire'.

The following amendment was proposed by Councillor Helen McCarthy and seconded by Councillor Marion Haywood:

- B** 'That all words after 'financial year' be deleted'.

Following a debate the amendment at **B** was put to the vote and was **LOST**.

The substantive motion at **A** was then put to the vote and was **AGREED**, the voting being 31 for and less against.

(2) Court Fees for Family Courts

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Izzi Seccombe and seconded by Councillor Jill Dill-Russell:

'The Department of Constitutional Affairs will be implementing large increases in Court Fees for Family Courts at the end of December with huge ramifications for Warwickshire County Council. Fees charged by family proceedings courts will increase 650 percent overall.

The increase in court fees has been introduced with the aim of recovering £50m in Family Courts, but concern that it will have a detrimental effect on the very vulnerable and deprived children in Society is widespread. The good practice in Child Protection by Authorities such as Warwickshire will be affected by enormous financial burden incurred, which will do nothing to help local authorities protect the most vulnerable in society.

We request that a letter is sent to Lord Falconer outlining Warwickshire County Council's concerns and requesting the Government consider ways in which best to support those local authorities affected. Copies of this letter should be sent to the Local Government Association and all Warwickshire MPs seeking their assistance.'

Following a debate the motion was put to the vote and was **AGREED**, the voting being 38 for and less against.

10. Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

11. 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, and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

12 Exempt Minutes

Resolved:

That the exempt minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 1 November 2005 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

13 Proposed Kingsbury Water Park Outdoor Education Centre

Councillor Peter Fowler, Cabinet portfolio for Family Services, presented the report of the County Education Officer and the Director of Planning, Transport and Economic Strategy and reported the recommendations to Council agreed at Cabinet on 8 December 2005.

Following a debate, Councillor Peter Fowler moved the following recommendations and was seconded. The Council supported the recommendation to develop an outdoor education centre at Kingsbury Water Park and agreed that further work be undertaken on option 3, with a report back to Cabinet in February. The recommendations were put to the vote and agreed as set out in the exempt minutes.

14 Options for Shire Hall, Warwick

Councillor Alan Cockburn, Cabinet portfolio holder for Corporate Services, Presented the report of the Acting Director of Property Services that had been considered and approved by Cabinet on 8 December 2005.

The recommendations of Cabinet were agreed as set out in the exempt minutes.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.

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Chair