

WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Warwickshire County Council held on 18 July 2006

Present:

Councillor Chris Davis (Chair)

Councillors John Appleton, George Atkinson, Peter Barnes, Sarah Boad, David Booth, Ken Browne, John Burton, Les Caborn, Tom Cavanagh, Richard Chattaway, Alan Cockburn, Jose Compton, Jill Dill-Russell, Richard Dodd, Michael Doody, Alan Farnell, Anne Forwood, Peter Fowler, Eithne Goode, Richard Grant, 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, Barry Longden, 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, Mota 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.

Prior to the formal business, a presentation was given updating members on progress with the development of the Warwickshire Local Area Agreement. (A copy of the overheads used for the presentation is available from Janet Purcell, Member Services Manager, tel 01960 412320 janetpurcell@warwickshire.gov.uk).

1. General

(1) Apologies

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Gordon Collett.

(2) Members' Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

District/borough memberships

The following councillors disclosed a personal interest as members of the district or borough council indicated.

North Warwickshire Borough Council

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

Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council

Councillors Pat Henry and John Ross.

Rugby Borough Council

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

Stratford on Avon District Council

Councillors: John Appleton, Peter Barnes, Richard Hobbs, 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.

Other interests

Item 2 – Youth Justice Plan

Councillor Colin Hayfield declared a personal interest as a magistrate.

Councillor Katherine King declared a personal interest as a member of the Justice Board nominated by the Police Authority.

Councillor Richard Hobbs declared a personal interest as a member of the Police Authority and as his wife was a volunteer with the youth offending team.

Item 4 – Adult and Community Learning Plan

Councillor Richard Grant declared a personal interest as member of the council of the Learning and Skills Council

(3) Minutes of Previous Meeting

Resolved:

That, subject to the addition of Councillor Phillip Morris-Jones to the list of apologies, the minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2006 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

(4) Announcements

Dutch Parliament visitors

The Chair welcomed Nicoline Van der Broek Laman Tripp, a member of the Dutch House of Lords, and her husband Yaap to the meeting.

Eric Wood and Jim Fitzgibbon

Councillor John Burton, Cabinet portfolio holder for Schools, announced that Eric Wood, former County Education Officer and Jim Fitzgibbon, Children Act Project, had been awarded doctorates from Warwick University.

The Council congratulated them both for their achievement.

Shipston High School – Formula 2000 award

Councillor John Burton, Cabinet portfolio holder for Schools, announced that pupils of Shipston High School had won an award for having designed, manufactured and raced a remote control racing car.

The Council requested that their congratulations be conveyed to the pupils and looked forward to meeting pupils and seeing the car at the next meeting of the Council.

Discussion on Corporate Business Plan at Council 26 June

Councillor Martin Heatley made the following statement:

“ In an attempt to draw a line under an outstanding issue which arose at the last Council meeting, I wish to apologise for inadvertently misleading the Council in any way as a result of my contribution to the debate about the Corporate Business Plan.”

Councillor Ken Browne made the following statement:

I also apologise if I offended the Council when using the inelegant word ‘liar’ to describe Councillor Heatley’s lack of veracity at the last Council meeting. I accept some may have regarded this as an inappropriate word to use in the context of a meeting of the County Council, and I probably should have used another word to describe the substantial deviation from the truth for which Councillor Heatley has just apologised.”

2. Warwickshire Youth Justice Plan

Councillor Richard Hobbs, Cabinet portfolio holder for community protection, presented the Youth Justice Plan for 2006/07 and assured the Council that the membership on the board was being reviewed with a view to increasing County Council representation.

Councillor Hobbs also commented that, although not all of the necessary signatures for the document had been obtained at the time of printing the draft plan, these would be in the final publication.

Members commented on the performance figures, noting that there had been a further 6% decline in the numbers of young people entering the youth justice system and a reduction in re-offending, but that the numbers in the system remained fairly constant. It was recognised that the performance measure of offenders taking up education, training and employment were low. One factor was that the current performance indicator was based on a target of 25 hours training, which was challenging and there were many who were undertaking training but at a lower level of hours. Education, training and employment

were all in one performance measure at present but there would be two indicators in future (one covering education and training and one covering employment) and the training take up would be measured according to a number of ranges (e.g. those doing 0- 10 hours).

Concern was expressed that it appeared that police were not taking action even after a number of 'final warnings' were given to offenders. It was noted that this had improved since a police vacancy had been filled and that the Board would receive up to date figures within a few weeks.

Councillor Richard Hobbs moved that the Council approve the plan. This was seconded by Councillor Izzi Seccombe and approved by the Council, with non voting against

Resolved

That the Council adopts the Warwickshire Youth Justice Plan 2006/07.

3. A Medium Term Financial Planning and Budget Process

Councillor Alan Cockburn, Cabinet portfolio holder for Resources, presented a report that set out a revised approach to medium term financial planning and the budget process. The report had been considered and supported by the Cabinet on 13 July. During the debate, Members welcomed the new approach.

Councillor Alan Cockburn proposed (and was seconded by Councillor Alan Farnell) that the recommendations in the report be agreed. The recommendations were agreed, with no one voting against.

Resolved

- (1) That the model of medium term financial planning outlined in paragraphs 2.2 and 2.3 of the report be approved.
- (2) That the medium term financial planning strategy outlined in paragraph 2.5 of the report be approved.
- (3) That the medium term financial planning and annual budget process, as outlined in section 9 of the report be approved.
- (4) That the timetable for delivering this in time for setting the 2007/08 budget and 2007/08 to 2009/10 medium term financial plan be as set out in section 11 of the report.

4. Adult and Community Learning Development Plan 2006/07

Councillor Colin Hayfield, Cabinet portfolio for Adult and Community Services, presented the plan to Council, and drew attention to the changes that had been necessary to meet the requirements of the LSC and Government policy. (The Plan had been considered and supported by Cabinet at their meeting on 15 June).

The Council debated the changes and approach of the plan and noted the comments made by the Adult and Community Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Colin Hayfield proposed that the plan be adopted and was seconded by Councillor Helen McCarthy. The Council agreed the plan with no one voting against.

Resolved

That the Council adopts the Adult and Community Learning Development Plan 2006/07.

The Council adjourned at 11.45 a.m. and reconvened at 2.15 p.m.

Corporate Parenting Event

During the adjournment, the Council received a short drama and poetry readings from two young people who had been in care. This had been followed by discussion groups of young people and councillors, the outcome of which would be taken to the Corporate Parenting Group.

Members expressed their appreciation to the young people for both the powerful presentation and their input into the group discussions. It was requested that the poems be made available to Members.

Members welcomed the opportunity to engage with young people and considered a mechanism should be put into place that ensured feedback from young people.

It was agreed that there would be a report on progress that has taken place over the last few years, the issues and outcomes of the event and a plan for the future.

5. 2005/06 Final Revenue Outturn – Customer Service Centre

Councillor Alan Cockburn, Cabinet portfolio holder for Resources, presented a report that requested that the Council approve the use of general reserves to fund an overspend on the Customer Service Centre for 2005/06. It was noted that the final revenue outturn had been considered and approved by Cabinet on 27 June.

Councillor Alan Cockburn proposed that the approval be given and was seconded by Councillor Alan Farnell.

Resolved

That Council approves the use of £184,000 of general reserves to fund the Customer Service Centre overspend in 2005/06.

6. Notice of Motion (Standing Order 5)

Local Sustainability

A Councillor Peter Barnes proposed the following motion and was seconded by Councillor David Booth:

“This Council recognises that independent shops and facilities in towns and villages face a constant threat of closure from wider social and economic forces. This can affect local communities and in particular those who are most vulnerable like older, younger and disabled people. It can also result in a decline of local jobs, and in extra traffic and pollution caused by the need to travel further. Local services fulfil important social and community roles and are key to reducing social and economic exclusion.

In addition to the work that Warwickshire County Council is already doing to protect and support local services and local economic activity, this Council welcomes the work that is currently being undertaken on a national basis to develop legislation in support of promoting local sustainability, namely, the Sustainable Communities Bill.

The Sustainable Communities Bill:

- requires the Government to assist councils and communities in promoting local sustainability in ways determined by them;
- sets up a participative process whereby councils and communities can drive the way in which Government uses its power and influence to assist with the promotion of local sustainability; and
- specifically provides that where councils themselves decide to take action to promote local sustainability they should be given the resources to do so.

This Council resolves to:

- a) support the general principle of the Sustainable Communities Bill;
- b) write to local MPs informing them of this decision, and urge them to sign EDM (Early Day Motion) No. 641 in support of the Bill;
- c) write to Local Works, the campaign behind the Bill, (at 94 White Lion St, London N1 9PF) expressing its support;

d) explore jointly through the Economic Development and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committees the ways in which Warwickshire County Council already is, and can further, support local services and facilities in order to promote local sustainability”.

B Councillor Chris Saint proposed the following amendment that was accepted by Councillor Barnes:

Amend c) to read:

“ c) Inform Local Works, the promoters of the Bill and local MPs that we would welcome a pilot project to assess the feasibility of the current plans and work out alternatives where improvements turn out to be needed”.

Add new d):

“d) Publish an account of work currently undertaken by the County Council, or completed, that supports the principles behind the Bill”.

d) in the motion at A becomes e)

The motion, as amended, was put to the vote and was **AGREED** as follows, with no one voting against:

“This Council recognises that independent shops and facilities in towns and villages face a constant threat of closure from wider social and economic forces. This can affect local communities and in particular those who are most vulnerable like older, younger and disabled people. It can also result in a decline of local jobs, and in extra traffic and pollution caused by the need to travel further. Local services fulfil important social and community roles and are key to reducing social and economic exclusion.

In addition to the work that Warwickshire County Council is already doing to protect and support local services and local economic activity, this Council welcomes the work that is currently being undertaken on a national basis to develop legislation in support of promoting local sustainability, namely, the Sustainable Communities Bill.

The Sustainable Communities Bill:

- requires the Government to assist councils and communities in promoting local sustainability in ways determined by them;
- sets up a participative process whereby councils and communities can drive the way in which Government uses its power and influence to assist with the promotion of local sustainability; and
- specifically provides that where councils themselves decide to take action to promote local sustainability they should be given the resources to do so.

This Council resolves to:

- a) support the general principle of the Sustainable Communities Bill;
- b) write to local MPs informing them of this decision, and urge them to sign EDM (Early Day Motion) No. 641 in support of the Bill;
- c) Inform Local Works, the promoters of the Bill and local MPs that we would welcome a pilot project to assess the feasibility of the current plans and work out alternatives where improvements turn out to be needed.
- d) Publish an account of work currently undertaken by the County Council, or completed, that supports the principles behind the Bill”.
- e) explore jointly through the Economic Development and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committees the ways in which Warwickshire County Council already is, and can further, support local services and facilities in order to promote local sustainability”.

7. Question Time (Standing Order 7).

(1) School Sites – Nuneaton and Bedworth

Councillor John Haynes asked Councillor Alan Cockburn (Cabinet portfolio holder for Resources):

“ What plans are envisaged for the three redundant school sites in Nuneaton and Bedworth? There was good notice that would be closed but I have had conflicting answers from officers regarding these sites.”

Councillor Alan Cockburn replied:

“ I have made enquiries on the three schools. (1) The former Griff School, St Margarets, Bedworth was vacated on 27 January 2006 and pupils put in the new SEN school. The site is to be marketed and surplus finance put back into the special school programme. Lidel and Tesco have expressed interest in the site. (2) Leyland School was vacated in January and pupils relocated to the new SEN school. It is to be marketed for possible residential use, including 40% for affordable housing. The school playing fields will be disposed of first. (3) Griff School Nuneaton is not surplus as it is under consideration for a future education training centre.

Councillor John Haynes asked the following supplementary question:

“We were told that the training centre would be at St Margarets. The Griff site is a blot on the landscape and subject to dereliction at present.”

Councillor Alan Cockburn replied:

"I accept Councillor Hayne's comments."

Councillor Richard Chattaway asked:

"Can the portfolio holder give his assurance that the development at the Griff School, St Margarets will be in the interests of the Bedworth Town Centre and that there will be full consultation?"

Councillor Alan Cockburn replied:

"There will be full consultation with the Borough Council."

(2) Bridge at Bedworth

Councillor John Haynes asked Councillor Martin Heatley (Cabinet portfolio holder for Environment):

"Why has nothing been done to make safe the dangerous bridge that connects Woodlands Park and Bedworth Heath residential areas, the bridge that you and I, along with residents, visited on the 6th of February?"

Councillor Martin Heatley replied:

" I agree it is in a terrible state. There is a section 106 agreement in process to transfer the whole of the footpath to the borough council. There is currently a question about whether the bridge is part of the conveyance."

Councillor John Haynes asked the following supplementary question:

" In the meantime, can anything be done to alleviate the danger?"

Councillor Martin Heatley replied:

" There are two ways of doing this. One would be to close the bridge which would not be acceptable. The Countryside Access Team did erect fencing around the bridge two years ago but it was torn down. Both I and you must make sure something happens within the next couple of weeks."

(3) Railway Transport for Stockton Clay quarry.

Councillor John Whitehouse asked Councillor Martin Heatley (Cabinet portfolio holder for Environment):

"Given the expressions of strong support for the re-use of Long Itchington to Rugby railway for clay transportation from Stockton Clay

Quarry, could the portfolio holder detail how this is to be encouraged? In particular how will the detail design of the Rugby Western Relief Road protect the feasibility of reusing the railway route for clay transportation in the future and avoid the 180 road freight movements a day for the next 40 years that will otherwise be necessary?"

Councillor Martin Heatley replied:

" There is planning permission in place for a railway through the Rugby Cement Works."

Councillor John Whitehouse asked the following supplementary question:

"Does the work going on now prepare for the future or will we have to undo what we have already done?"

Councillor Martin Heatley replied:

" in 2004 there was consultant's report. Rugby Cement may wish to look at this but Warwickshire County Council is not involved directly. The proposal is to phase but to still safeguard railroad. It is still possible to implement phase II and yes it is safeguarded."

(4) Vulnerable Adults Leaving Hospital

Councillor Nina Knapman asked Councillor Colin Hayfield (Cabinet portfolio holder for Adult, Health and Community Services):

" I have an Alcester resident of 90 years who, in the past, has been sent home from hospital following a stroke, without adequate care arrangements in place. This resident was in a similar position recently although a full plan is now in place. I am concerned that the needs are not being met of those vulnerable people leaving hospital and who may not have a councillor or concerned neighbour to speak for them. Could the portfolio holder tell me what his directorate is doing to improve the communication and joined up working of hospital discharge and social work teams, to ensure that vulnerable adults are not sent home from hospital without having had a care assessment and without an appropriate care package in place, if this is what they need? These circumstances are still occurring in my area and I would like reassurance from the portfolio holder, that there are measures in place to improve how we support people coming home from hospital."

Councillor Colin Hayfield replied:

" Thank you for this question. I have a detailed answer available for Councillor Knapman or for any Member who would like to see it. The details of this case are unacceptable and I will take any further action necessary on this case. This had been an issue some time ago and

there are examples across the region which raises concern that hospitals are discharging patients too soon. The relationship with hospitals within Warwickshire is good but this may not extend outside of the area. This is brought into sharper concern in view of the review of acute services and apparent 'downgrading' of some hospitals.

Social services are trying to improve work with the NHS, particularly for those with progressing debilitating illnesses and who are in and out of hospital frequently. There is now a dedicated team that will focus primarily on Warwickshire hospitals and there will be service agreements with other hospitals out of the County.

If any other councillors have examples of problems, please let me know."

Councillor Barry Longden asked:

"There was this situation some 12 years ago and I and one of the conservative members contrived to get buffer beds in hospitals. Can the portfolio holder assure us that there is a system in place.?"

Councillor Colin Hayfield replied:

"Yes, I will certainly look at this with you."

(5) Migrant Workers

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse asked Councillor Alan Farnell (Leader of the Council):

" Can the Leader of the Council tell me what actions his Cabinet are pursuing to support migrant workers coming into the County, and what is being done to research and get factual information on their employment and social conditions, and the increasing demands they are placing on public services?"

Councillor Alan Farnell replied:

"I am genuinely grateful for this question as it is an important issue and not been particularly addressed at the moment. There have been 375,000 arrivals in this country since May 2004 and a recent survey shows that this is 187,000 higher than thought with approximately 15,000 per year from new ascension countries. The prime minister recently said that there was no policy for controlling the intake of migrants. We have the highest number of migrants in our history, for example Slough local authority has stated that there is not the funding to supply the basic services. Glenwood Dunwoody has said that the influx is putting schools and housing under some strain. Lord Taylor to Lord Basson has said that local authorities 'are in the best position to allocate funding available to changes needed in population. We are

keeping this under review and look forward to the findings of the Audit Commission report on this subject.

At the last Council meeting reference was made to the ICES and work being done to teach English to migrants. Warwick Area Committee has a Portuguese worker, we are gradually getting more involved in this issue.

We are publicising services in libraries and the Warwick observatory is undertaking a research project on the numbers and associated needs, and demands on the council and other public sector agencies and this is something that should be picked up in the development of the LAA. I have asked the Chief Executive to bring back a report to Cabinet and the appropriate overview and scrutiny committee. At present we do not know how many migrant workers there are. We do need to know the position and what the effect is on services. It is very shortsighted of the government to think we have all the resources to be able to deal with any situation that comes along, the answer in the house shows a lack of urgency.”

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse asked the following supplementary question:

“ Can I have the Leaders’ assurance that we will find out the views of the Chamber of Commerce and voluntary organisations?”

Councillor Alan Farnell replied:

“ We need statistical information and then we can assess the situation, alongside the work that the Chief Executive will do, then we will know what we can address. Migrants have made an important input into our society but now it is an issue of numbers.”

Councillor John Burton asked:

“ Does the Leader not agree that this particular problem should be picked up by the Learning and Skills Council, in their role of employment of post 16?”

Councillor Alan Farnell replied:

“ This is absolutely right but the LSC is just one of our partners, focus should be in making sure that migrant workers become part of the community and ensure there are effective services for them.”

There were no further items of business.

The meeting rose at 3.30 p.m.

.....

Chair