

WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Warwickshire County Council held on 20 March 2007.

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, Gordon Collett, Jose Compton, Jill Dill-Russell, Michael Doody, Alan Farnell, Peter Fowler, Eithne Goode, Colin Hayfield, John Haynes, Marion Haywood, Martin Heatley, Pat Henry, Bob Hicks, Richard Hobbs, Richard Hyde, Mick Jones, Bernard Kirton, Katherine King, Nina Knapman, Joan Lea, Bryan Levy, Barry Longden, Susan Main, 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, Ian Smith, Mick Stanley, Bob Stevens, Ray Sweet, June Tandy, Heather Timms, Sid Tooth, John Vereker, C.B.E., John Wells and John Whitehouse.

1. General

(1) Apologies

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Richard Dodd, Anne Forwood, Richard Grant, Dave Shilton, Kam Singh and Mota Singh.

(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 and Sid Tooth.

Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council

Councillor John Ross.

Rugby Borough Council

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

Stratford on Avon District Council

Councillors: John Appleton, Richard Hobbs, Susan Main, Chris Saint, Izzi Seccombe and Bob Stevens.

Warwick District Council

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

Other interests

Councillor John Appleton declared a personal interest in the notice of motion at item 9 relating to Dignity in Care, as the council's representative on Age Concern at Southam.

(3) Minutes and Updated Prudential Code Final Indicators

Resolved:

- (i) That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2007 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.
- (ii) That updated Prudential Code Final Indicators circulated with the Agenda be agreed.

(4) Chair's Announcements

(i) Bill Boxley

The Chair reported the death of former County Councillor Bill Boxley who had served as county councillor for the Warwick North Division from 1985 to 1993. Several councillors paid tribute to the work undertaken by Councillor Boxley during his term of office.

(ii) Councillor Mota Singh

The Council was informed of the recent death of Councillor Mota Singh's son and requested that their condolences be passed to Councillor Singh.

(iii) The Warwickshire Compact

Compact was a government initiative aimed at promoting effective working relations between public bodies and the voluntary and community sector.

The Chair announced that the Council was one of 28 organisations in the country, including government departments, local authorities and voluntary organisations and partnerships to receive a commendation in 2006. The Warwickshire Compact was considered to be an excellent example of how a Council had developed a clear plan for working with the voluntary and community sector to enhance its role as a major partner, thereby taking working together with the sector to a new level.

The Council congratulated all involved in this achievement.

(iv) Dr Bus

Councillor Martin Heatley, portfolio holder for Environment, drew attention to Dr Bus, the converted exhibition bus, which aimed to make information on services more readily available around Warwickshire. The bus had been parked outside the Shire Hall for Members to inspect.

He added that the bus would travel to various strategic locations in the County on different days and urged members to support the project.

2. Audit and Standards Committee Annual Report 2006/2007

The Chair informed the Council that this matter had been deferred to a later meeting when the revised Code of Conduct for Members would be available.

3. Annual Report of the Cabinet portfolio holder for Community Protection.

Councillor Richard Hobbs, portfolio holder for Community Protection, introduced the strategic key points of the work undertaken during the past twelve months and responded to several points raised by Members with regard to the following subjects.

Fire and Rescue

- The continuing success of the proactive work being undertaken with young people including the Young Fire-fighters Association was confirmed.
- The number of calls to the Service had reduced.
- In response to comments about the possible loss of the excellent CPA rating of the Fire and Rescue Service, Members were advised that the excellent rating had been achieved by the County Council not the actual Service.

Drug and Alcohol Action Team and Domestic Violence

- Work was being undertaken with the Police on measures to protect victims of domestic violence and children. This included consideration of the appropriateness of placing people in refuges.
- The work of the Drug And Alcohol Action Team overlapped with the work being undertaken in other directorates. Work would be undertaken to ensure that all issues were linked together.
- The review being undertaken by the Adult and Community Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee relating to issues surrounding alcohol consumption amongst young people would inform the development of a Strategy.
- Consultations were being undertaken in connection with governance arrangements under the LAA.

Policing

- The Leaders Liaison Group were meeting with representatives of the Police Authority and Constabulary in order to create closer relationships and increased awareness.
- The importance of quick responses to emergency calls under Safer Neighbourhoods was acknowledged and Members noted that the response times were improving.
- Action should be undertaken to improve publication of local police information contained in the Little Blue Book in ways other than electronically.
- New arrangements for community policing would be reviewed after a reasonable time to allow them to bed in.

Criminal Justice

- The Criminal Justice Centre at Nuneaton had resulted in improved liaison with councillors. Improvements in the Criminal Justice arrangements in the south of the county would be undertaken in 2009.

4. Annual Report of the Community Protection Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Richard Chattaway, Chair of the Community Protection Overview and Scrutiny Committee introduced the main points of the report. In doing so he expressed his appreciation to the Committee and supporting officers for the work undertaken.

During the debate the following points were made:

- The work undertaken by the Committee relating to Safer Neighbourhood Policing had been successful.
- Best practice should be used to ensure maximum community benefits and good working relationships between the local councillor and the local police officer
- Future consideration should be given to improving poor communication in some areas of the County.

5. Annual Report of the Cabinet portfolio holder for Environment.

Councillor Martin Heatley, portfolio holder for Environment introduced the main points of the report. He expressed his appreciation for the work being undertaken by the Environment and Economy Directorate.

He responded to several points from Members relating to the following subjects:

Highways

- With regard to concerns about pothole repairs, many temporary repairs had to be undertaken because of weather conditions and there was a

backlog of repair work which the repair gangs were endeavouring to resolve. It was hoped that more regular inspections by tarmacing gangs should be undertaken.

- With regard to comments about the condition of pavements in The Parade at Leamington Spa, particularly paving slabs, Members were advised that there was some remedial work outstanding. Damage was frequently caused by heavy goods vehicles driving onto the pavement and the Police had been asked to enforce waiting restrictions. The possibility of including conditions on planning permissions to require any damage resulting from HGVs to be repaired would be examined.
- With regard to damaged paving slabs in Stratford upon Avon the possibility of obtaining funding for replacement works would be sought under World Class Stratford.
- Improved signage for the Stratford Park and Ride Park was being introduced. This would include better signage at Bishopton Island on the A46.
- Although there were some concerns about the use of slurry surfacing work to pavements, the slurry process was the only way forward under present budget restrictions. Local teams would be asked to deal with any irregularities in the resultant surfacing work, including areas which ponded.
- The Coleshill Parkway had not yet opened because contaminated material had been discovered in the fill material of a bridge.
- With regard to the Rugby Western Relief Road, early warning of any delay in the project would be given to local members and the Area Committee.
- Parking on verges was of increasing concern and was to be examined in the near future.
- Councillor Heatley confirmed his support for the bids by Sustrans for lottery funding for new cycle ways between Kenilworth and Warwick University.
- Work had been undertaken in conjunction with the Kenilworth/Leamington Spa Cycling group to provide extra lighting on the A452 at Kenilworth Crossroads.

Public Transport

- Several members expressed concern about inconsistencies in the application of concessionary bus fares throughout the County. Officers were working towards introducing a trial system across the county.
- Work was being undertaken with Coventry City Council concerning public transport access to hospitals.
- Although decriminalisation of parking was being introduced in towns such as Warwick, similar action was also considered to be necessary in many villages.

Environmental Services and Sustainability

- The “Switch it off” Campaign had been successful. The use of low energy lighting in Council buildings is being explored.
- Where ever possible action was taken to ensure insulation and double glazing were installed in the Council’s buildings.
- Improved provision would be made for the recycling of plastics at household waste sites and recycling centres.
- Consideration would be given to encourage more challenging targets for diversion of waste from landfill sites.
- Other markets were opening up such as use of alternative fuels.

6. Annual Report of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Ken Browne, Chair of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee introduced the main points of the report. In particular he mentioned that consultations were being undertaken relating to the Speed Management Strategy and the proposals to reduce the hours of operation of street lighting.

The examination of the proposal to reduce the hours of operation of street lighting should be undertaken as quickly as possible to allay fears being expressed in the local press.

A review of the arrangement with Carillion would be undertaken in September 2007.

7. Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP)

The Council was invited to approve the Integrated Risk Management Plan for 2007/10. The Plan had been subject to consultation and the Cabinet on 8 March recommended that it be adopted by Council.

Councillor Richard Hobbs, portfolio holder for Community Protection introduced the main points of the report.

During the discussion several points were made in particular:

- The importance of private businesses and the Oil Terminal at Kingsbury being included in the Plan.
- Consideration should be given to introducing more clarity in the description of non-criminal activity which could include anti-social behaviour.
- Reviewing risk will not compromise responses to incidents.

Councillor Richard Hobbs, seconded by Councillor Mike Doody, moved that the Plan be approved. A vote was taken and it was agreed by 23 votes to nil, (with 27 abstentions).

Resolved

That the Council adopt the Integrated Risk Management Plan 2007/10.

8. The Warwickshire Local Area Agreement

Councillor Peter Fowler, portfolio holder for Performance and Development, introduced the main points of the report and expressed his appreciation for the work being undertaken to develop the agreement.

During the debate members noted that there were still some issues to be resolved relating to funding and governance and that a review was to be undertaken in 12 months time.

Councillor Peter Fowler, seconded by Councillor Alan Farnell, moved and it was agreed as set out below, with one vote against:

Resolved

- (1) That the Council formally adopts the final LAA 2007-10 (dated March 2007) with any further amendments necessary to be agreed by the Chief Executive and approves the inclusion of the LAA in the Council's budget and policy framework for 2007/08.
- (2) That the Council endorses the LAA governance arrangements set out in paragraph 3 of the report.
- (3) That the Council authorises the Chief Executive to sign the final LAA 2007-10 and to conclude the agreement with central government.
- (4) That the Council expresses its appreciation to the LAA Block Leaders, all partners and the officers for their commitment to the development of the Warwickshire Local Area Agreement.

9. Notices of Motions (Standing Order 5)

Dignity in Care

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse moved the following motion and was seconded by Councillor Jill Dill-Russell:

"This Council:

- (1) Welcomes the launch of a national Dignity in Care campaign, introduced by the Minister for Care Services Ivan Lewis in November 2006, which aims to place dignity and respect at the heart of caring for older people.
- (2) Welcomes the associated one-off capital funding that Warwickshire will receive in 2007/08 to help enhance the physical environment of its care homes.

- (3) Resolves to sign up to the Dignity Challenge and work towards achievement of the 10 point plan, which lays out the national expectations of what constitutes a service that respects dignity. That is

High quality care services that respect people's dignity should:

- (a) Have a zero tolerance of all forms of abuse.
 - (b) Support people with the same respect you would want for yourself or a member of your family.
 - (c) Treat each person as an individual by offering a personalised service.
 - (d) Enable people to maintain the maximum possible level of independence, choice and control.
 - (e) Listen and support people to express their needs and wants.
 - (f) Respect peoples right to privacy.
 - (g) Ensure people feel able to complain without fear of retribution.
 - (h) Engage with family members and carers as care partners.
 - (i) Assist people to maintain confidence and a positive self-esteem.
 - (j) Act to alleviate people's loneliness and isolation.
- (4) Requests that a report be taken to the Adult and Community Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on our current performance against the 10 elements of the Dignity Challenge and what actions can be taken to raise the profile of Dignity in Care issues for older people.
- (5) Aims to work towards the achievement of Beacon Council status for Dignity in Care in 2008.”

Following a debate, the motion above was put to the vote and was **CARRIED**, unanimously.

10. Member Question Time (Standing Order 7)

(1) Tree Cutting

Councillor John Vereker asked Councillor Martin Heatley, Cabinet portfolio holder for Environment the following question:

“Are you aware that the highways department were recently responsible for cutting down a row of trees which had grown into excellent specimens, having been ceremonially planted some 25 years earlier by the Chairman of the County Council for a specific purpose?

Can more be done to encourage the Department to be even more careful to preserve mature tress when planning their work?”

Councillor Martin Heatley replied:

“ The trees concerned were planted by Councillor John Vereker when he was Chairman of the Council.

Unfortunately, the tress had to be removed because of the need to follow design criteria for the development of the cycleway/footway. The trees would be replaced and he assured Councillor Vereker that he would be invited to the planting ceremony.”

(2) Flooding Issues

Councillor Nina Knapman asked Councillor Martin Heatley, Cabinet portfolio holder for Environment the following question:

“Following the spate of serious flooding incidents that occurred in various parts of the County during the autumn last year, can the Portfolio Holder tell me what progress has been made to alleviate these issues and resolve the inadequate sewerage systems and the effect of increased run-off?

A response to an earlier representation had been made. A protocol was being prepared. There had been difficulties caused by lack of central funding and major difficulties in other areas. Given the impact of new development drainage and increased run off, it was hoped to obtain more funding from Section 106 Agreements.”

Members also mentioned other issues including the adverse weather and the relationship with Severn Trent Water about drainage issues.

(3) Victim Support

Councillor Richard Hobbs, portfolio holder for Community Protection, declared a prejudicial interest in the matter in view of his involvement with “Victim Support” and left the room during the discussion.

Councillor Nina Knapman asked Councillor Alan Farnell, Leader of the Council, (in view of Councillor Hobbs having to leave the room), the following question:

“In light of the decision by Stratford on Avon District Council at their recent budget meeting to reduce the grant for Victim Support for 2007/08, can the portfolio holder tell me what opportunities there are for the provision of a grant from the County Council to ensure the capacity of such a worthwhile and valuable charity will not be affected?”

Councillor Alan Farnell responded

“He would take up the question with the portfolio holder and the Strategic Director of Adult, Health and Community Services to see if action was possible. He added that there was holistic provision in Warwickshire (for example with support at home or in a refuge) and the Council ensure that work is undertaken with other agencies.”

(4) Energy Review

Councillor John Whitehouse asked Councillor Martin Heatley, portfolio holder for the Environment the following question:

“Can the portfolio holder update members on what has been happening with regards to the officer report that we were promised following the debate we had back in October on the motion our Group put forward on the Government’s Energy Review?”

Councillor Martin Heatley responded:

“The Government was considering preparing a second consultation on the Energy Review and if this is undertaken and the Council are consulted, a report would be prepared by the officers for the Cabinet’s consideration.”

11. Any other items of urgent business

There were no other items of business.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.

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Chair