

Minutes of the Meeting of Warwickshire County Council held on 21 July 2015

Present:

Councillor Bob Stevens (Chair)

Councillors John Appleton, John Beaumont, Mike Brain, Les Caborn, Richard Chattaway, Jonathan Chilvers, Chris Clark, Jeff Clarke, Alan Cockburn, Jose Compton, Yousef Dahmash, Corinne Davies, Nicola Davies, Neil Dirveiks, Richard Dodd, Sara Doughty, Peter Fowler, Jenny Fradgley, Bill Gifford, Mike Gittus, Brian Hawkes, Colin Hayfield, Bob Hicks, John Holland, John Horner, Philip Johnson, Kam Kaur, Danny Kendall, Bernard Kirton, Keith Kondakor, Joan Lea, Keith Lloyd, Phillip Morris-Jones, Peter Morson, Brian Moss, Maggie O'Rourke, Dave Parsons, Mike Perry, Caroline Phillips, Wallace Redford, Clive Rickhards, Howard Roberts, Kate Rolfe, Jerry Roodhouse, Chris Saint, Izzi Seccombe, Dave Shilton, Jenny St. John, June Tandy, Heather Timms, Angela Warner, Alan Webb, Mary Webb, Matt Western, John Whitehouse and Chris Williams.

The Chair, on behalf of Council, welcomed Councillor Bernard Kirton to the meeting following his period of absence from the Council.

1. General

(1) Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Sarah Boad, Peter Butlin, Julie Jackson and Bill Olnier.

(2) Members' Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

Councillor Jeff Clarke, Councillor Colin Hayfield and Councillor Mike Gittus each declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 3 (Warwickshire Youth Justice & Family Intervention Service Strategic Plan) as members of the Coventry and Warwickshire Magistrates Bench.

(3) Minutes

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 May 2015 be approved as a correct record.

(4) Announcements

30,000th Sounding of the Last Post.

The Chair reported that he had attended the ceremony on 9th July, given by the Warwickshire Fire & Rescue Service, to mark the 30,000th sounding of the last post at the Menin Gate, Ypres. The sounding of the last post at Menin Gate takes place every evening, with buglers drawn from Ypres volunteer fire brigade, and dates back to 1928 when the people of Ypres

wished to record their gratitude for the sacrifice of allied soldiers. Many Fire and Rescue services and other organisations also took part in ceremonies across the world.

Warwick University Graduation

The Chair had attended one of the graduation ceremonies at the university and put on record his congratulation to the estimated 3000 students who would be graduating from the university this year.

Members of the Youth Parliament

The Chair reminded members that Warwickshire MYPs would be attending this meeting and would give a presentation following Council.

Federation of Small Businesses Award

The Chair announced that the County Council has been awarded 'Best Small Business Friendly Programme' for 2015 by the Federation of Small Businesses. The award had been given in recognition of the Council's work to regenerate and support small businesses, including through the Small Business Saturday campaign. The Chair, on behalf of Council, thanked officers for their help in putting plans and activities in place to support economic growth and in particular welcomed the recognition given by those that matter, the businesses of Warwickshire. The Chair presented the award to Dave Hill from the Economic Growth Business Unit, whose team had supported much of the work on the FSB Keep Trade Local programme.

(5) Public Speaking

There were no public speakers.

2. Notification of casual vacancy – Nuneaton Whitestone Division

Council noted the vacancy in Nuneaton Whitestone Division following the resignation of Councillor Martin Heatley and that the by-election would be held on 13 August 2015.

3. Warwickshire Youth Justice & Family Intervention Service Strategic Plan 2015-2016

Councillor John Horner, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, presented the Warwickshire Youth Justice and Family Intervention Service Strategic Plan and proposed that it be adopted by the Council. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Philip Johnson, Chair of the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Horner reminded members that the Service is a combined service that adopts a whole family approach to the work undertaken with young people who have

offended and that the Service has been recognised nationally as one of the best in the field. It is also a multi-agency service with funding provided by a number of partners, including the Police and Crime Commissioner, Warwickshire Police, Probation and the County Council's People Group, Communities Group and Public Health (who collectively provide around 50% of the funding).

Councillor Horner drew members' attention to the high performance of the service in 2014/15 and the national and local objectives and priorities for 2015/16. Councillor Horner commended the Service's national lead on the use of restorative justice, which avoids custodial sentences and is the key to avoiding reoffending. Councillor Jonathan Chilvers added his support to the restorative justice approach which he considered could be an approach that may be appropriate in other areas of work.

Councillor Philip Johnson, in seconding the proposal, noted that the performance of the service was, in a number of areas, significantly better than other authorities in the West Midlands and nationally. He added that part of the success is due to the Troubled Families Programme, the success of which is reflected in the invitation to be an 'early adopter' of Phase 2 of the programme.

The proposal to adopt the Plan was put to the vote and was supported unanimously.

Resolved

That the County Council adopts the Warwickshire Youth Justice & Family Intervention Service Strategic Plan 2015/16 as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

4. Capital Growth Fund Application: Business Loans and Grants

Councillor Izzi Seccombe, Leader of the Council, presented a report from Cabinet that sought Council's approval to use of a maximum of £3.m of the Capital Growth Fund to fund three projects. Councillor Kam Kaur, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Customers, seconded the proposal.

Councillor Izzi Seccombe commended the projects as providing opportunities for both start up and growth of businesses in Warwickshire. Councillor Seccombe also drew attention to the evaluation that had been undertaken in assessing the projects and the alignment with the Council's objectives in delivering growth.

Councillor Keith Kondakor, Leader of the Green Group, welcomed the principle of providing small business loans and grants and supported the first two projects in the report. Councillor Kondakor expressed concern, however, with regard to the Coventry and Warwickshire Investment Fund project as the £1m will be allocated through the CWLEP and that the governance arrangements of the LEP would mean that such allocation will not be transparent. Councillor Kondakor requested that the regular reports that will be available to members are also available for the public. Councillor Izzi Seccombe appreciated the concerns regarding transparency of the CWLEP but advised that this was improving, for instance the minutes of the CWLEP were now public.

Councillor Kondakor also requested that projects focus on areas of decreasing working population, such as in Nuneaton and Bedworth, where there had been a net loss of 480 people in 2014/15 which meant a loss of young people and potential

entrepreneurs to surrounding areas. Councillor Izzi Seccombe agreed that it is important to retain skills within the County and advised that the CWLEP has a skills group which is concerned with lifting the skills base and tackling the issue of lower productivity, although some of this is due to the age of the population in the County. Councillor Seccombe added that there is an increase nationally in the number of people starting businesses post-retirement and there may be opportunities to support this growth locally.

In welcoming the use of small business loans and grants, Councillor Kondakor noted that the cost benefit analysis of these types of projects is measured over 10 years, unlike large capital projects that may be measured up to and over 60 years. He expressed his support for these small projects which, if done well, see positive returns in a much shorter timescale.

During the debate Councillor Jerry Roodhouse, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group and Councillor John Whitehouse welcomed the support for both grants and loans and questioned whether the support for grants was now Council policy. Councillor Izzi Seccombe replied that grants had always been given and that these grants can lever out matched funding.

Councillor Matt Western asked whether there may be opportunities to take an equity stake in those businesses that give higher returns on the Council's investment. Councillor Izzi Seccombe replied that this approach had not been taken in the past and was uncertain whether it would be appropriate, but it could be an approach that overview and scrutiny could explore.

The recommendation was put to the vote and agreed unanimously as set out below.

Resolved

That Council approves the use of a maximum of £3.0 million of the Capital Growth Fund to fund the three projects making up the programme of Business Grants and Loans investment.

5. Urgent Decision Taken Since the Last Meeting

Councillor Izzi Seccombe, Leader of the Council, presented a report on an urgent decision taken since the last meeting. The recommendation to note the report was seconded by Councillor Alan Cockburn, Deputy Leader.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

6. Motions

(1) Publication of Traffic Data

A Councillor Keith Kondakor, Leader of the Green Group, proposed the following motion and was seconded by Councillor Jonathan Chilvers:

‘That, given the council already undertakes traffic surveys and produces detailed models for Warwickshire’s highways network (which developers pay a contribution for in order to simulate the possible impacts of their developments), the County Council investigates the practicability of:

- publishing its baseline highways traffic data sets for traffic flows and network configuration via the Open Data website so that the public is better able to assess the impact of development on their communities, and
- providing support to communities to model the impact of highway changes at near cost price.’

Councillor Kondakor explained that the purpose of his proposal was to enable public access to all traffic data and to enable communities to produce viable alternative plans and to get better designed projects.

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers, (in responding to the debate set out below), explained that the intention of the motion is to lead to better schemes and to work with communities through an engaging and solutions form of democracy. Councillor Chilvers added that the motion recognised that not all communities would have people who could interpret data and come up with schemes on their own. It was for this reason that the motion included a proposition to provide support to communities for modelling, at a reasonable charge.

B Councillor Richard Chattaway, Deputy Leader of the Labour Group, moved the following amendment and was seconded by Councillor Philip Johnson, Chair of the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

Amend the motion at A to read:

‘That, given the Council already undertakes traffic surveys and produces detailed models for Warwickshire’s highways network. Given that developers pay a contribution to assess the possible cumulative impact of their developments, that the County Council asks Overview and Scrutiny to investigate the practicality of publishing this data’.

Councillor Chattaway, in moving the amendment, expressed his support for the principle of providing access to data but wished to ensure that the data is accessible. Councillor Philip Johnson added that the quality of some of the data is difficult to verify at the moment and that there is a need to counter the cynicism that is sometimes expressed by the public when data is made available to them. He therefore wished to take this to Overview and Scrutiny to find the best way to provide this information.

- C** Councillor Bill Gifford moved the following amendment, and was seconded by Councillor John Whitehouse:

Delete the final word 'and' from the second paragraph and delete the third paragraph of the motion at A, to read:

' That, given the Council already undertakes traffic surveys and produces detailed models for Warwickshire's highways network (which developers pay a contribution for in order to simulate the possible impacts of their developments), the County Council investigates the practicability of publishing its baseline highways traffic data sets for traffic flows and network configuration via the Open Data website so that the public is better able to assess the impact of development on their communities.'

Councillor Bill Gifford, in moving the amendment, expressed the view that the public may be cynical if not all data is published and he therefore supported the publication of raw data so that the public can make use of it as they wish, which may include using others to analyse it. Councillor Gifford added that he did not, however, support the proposal in the motion that the council supports communities in modelling the impact of highway changes as this could put the Council in an invidious position. Councillor John Whitehouse added that he did not see the need for the Labour Group amendment (at B above) as there is no requirement to seek Council approval to take an issue to Overview and Scrutiny and that it would be possible for Overview and Scrutiny to look at this issue should the Liberal Democrat Group amendment at C be agreed.

DEBATE

Councillor Alan Cockburn advised that the current system was being updated and a new system will be available in approximately 12 months that will automatically process traffic count information into a mapping based format and that will be open to the public through Open Data. Councillor John Horner observed that it is possible to present data to the public and for this to lead to the withdrawal of opposition to a scheme. He added that many people do not have time to analyse raw data and that it is preferable for information to be in the form of a report that is accessible to everyone.

The following issues were also raised in relation to the last part of the motion that proposed providing support to communities to model the impact of highway changes at near cost price:

Against the proposition:

- Communities already have input through the planning consultation process.
- The Council has limited resources to undertake additional work outside its core modelling activities
- The Council has a duty to provide an impartial view of development proposals and their impact, whilst ensuring highway changes produce the best possible outcome for all users of the highway. Modelling is one tool for this and the results of the modelling process is made available through the planning process or consultation. There is therefore no need for communities to commission their own modelling of highway schemes.

- Developers may stop paying for the data if it becomes freely available so the investigation of this should include whether it will be accessible by payment.
- The identification of solutions and production of schemes requires professional skill and a holistic view of the wider area, both of which may not be present in a solution put forward by the community.

For the proposition

- The proposition should be investigated. The advance in IT applications means the next generation of community campaigners will be looking at solutions in a different way and communities need to be trusted to come through with solutions. There are already traffic engineers living in Warwickshire communities who are capable, and do, put forward proposed solutions.
- Data should be made freely available but communities and developers should be expected to pay for any modelling.
- The purpose of the motion is to enable communities to be engaged in providing solutions and for this to result in better schemes.

Councillor Bill Gifford accepted the suggestion put forward by Councillor Alan Cockburn that the words 'through overview and scrutiny' be included after 'investigates' in the amendment at C above. Councillor Richard Chattaway withdrew the Labour amendment at B on the basis of this agreement that Overview and Scrutiny investigate this issue.

VOTE

The amendment at C (with the addition of the words 'through overview and scrutiny') was put to the vote and was CARRIED.

The substantive motion was put to the vote and was CARRIED

Resolved

That, given the Council already undertakes traffic surveys and produces detailed models for Warwickshire's highways network (which developers pay a contribution for in order to simulate the possible impacts of their developments), the County Council investigates, through Overview and Scrutiny, the practicability of publishing its baseline highways traffic data sets for traffic flows and network configuration via the Open Data website so that the public is better able to assess the impact of development on their communities.

(2) Council Borrowing Strategy

A Councillor Matt Western proposed the following motion and was seconded by Councillor Philip Johnson:

'That, given one of the roles of the Council is to invest in its communities (people and infrastructure) and that failure to do so may lead to long-term higher maintenance costs, higher underemployment, lower productivity and greater health,

education and social issues, the Council investigates taking advantage of the current low interest rates to borrow more through long-term bonds and to raise debt ratios and so ensure Warwickshire emerges from this deep recession in better shape than its peers.'

Councillor Matt Western explained that the purpose of the motion is to ensure long term investment in communities and that, although it is a time of significant challenge, it is also a time of historically low interest rates. Councillor Western cited projects where bond issues have been used such as the building of the Hoover Dam that provided water and municipal supply of electricity and Munich who are investing in an energy plan to provide renewable energy for Munich by 2025. He added that corporate bodies (such as Apple) are also borrowing money on bonds for over 30 years at interest rates of around 3.45%. These rates provide opportunities to invest in communities and to also generate revenue. Other councils, for example Lancashire County Council, are also exploring the use of bonds and given that Warwickshire's debt ratio is 29% lower than some other councils, this is a good time to invest.

Councillor Western added, in response to the debate below, that the intention of the motion was to investigate the principle of this method of investment and he added that despite economic growth there is under employment and that there are countries with good economic growth that also use this form of investment. He envisaged that it would be a mix of types of investment, including the possibility of generating revenue, which is important as grant funding declines.

Councillor Philip Johnson, in seconding the proposal and responding to the debate set out below, noted that most secondary schools were now academies and that the presence of a local plan did not mean development happens, at least not in the short term, and he considered this is not a good way of predicting school places. Councillor Johnson added that it is the right time to look at the use of bonds to undertake schemes to improve infrastructure and also provide employment.

B Councillor John Whitehouse proposed the following amendment and was seconded by Councillor Clive Rickhards:

Add the following sentence:

'A particular focus for higher borrowing for investment should be in our schools, to ensure that Warwickshire has the right quality of school buildings in the right locations to meet the needs of its growing population, and to provide the best possible learning environment for all its school children.'

Councillor John Whitehouse supported the investigation of opportunities to invest for the public good but expressed concern that the motion was too general and high level and would not get progressed quickly, whilst the Council has a significant funding problem now with regard to school buildings.

Councillor Clive Rickhards, in seconding the motion, supported the pump priming of economic growth and that it would appear timely to explore borrowing given the comparative low debt ratio and the low rate of interest. Councillor Rickhards added that he considered the primary focus should be on the immediate problem of funding

the school programme.

DEBATE

Councillor Alan Cockburn, Deputy Leader, advised that the current policy of the Council is to use capital receipts to repay debt. It is costing £40m a year to service the Council's debt (which is around £380m). Keeping the debt low is releasing money for services and if it increased then the savings level required would be higher. Councillor Cockburn agreed that there is a problem in meeting the pressure for school places that is putting pressure on the capital programme but there are also other pressures on the budget so he could not support the Liberal Democrat amendment.

The following points were also raised in debate:

- There are many areas of pressure in addition to the schools programme (such as highways, health) and therefore the motion should be accepted as it stands
- The economy is no longer in recession and is now in a period of growth. Therefore the Council should be cautious about putting money into the economy at this time.
- There is a duty of ensuring sufficient school places but the Council is going to be in a better position to predict need in future. This will be aided by the local plans being in place.
- The lack of a local plan (as in Nuneaton and Bedworth) means that developers are putting in applications without providing funding need for schools, health services etc.
- Nuneaton and Bedworth is still in recession. It is losing its wage earning population and there is a 'two speed' Warwickshire in terms of growth.
- The population is not growing to the level in the local plans. Investment is needed in places of need, in particular in education.
- There is a danger of developing a 'cash bank'
- Academies have their own funding streams but there will be funding gaps, despite CIL, but the LEPs and devolution bodies will have funding streams. The Council will need to tap into the funds that will be available.
- There is no indication of how much might be borrowed and there is a danger that borrowing will result in increased debt in future.

C Councillor John Whitehouse welcomed the debate and explained that he supported the broad proposal put forward in the motion at A, but wished the schools issue to be looked at. He therefore revised his amendment by replacing the words 'A particular focus' with the words 'An initial focus'

VOTE

The Council voted on the amendment at B (with the amendment at C) which was LOST.

The Council voted on the motion at A which was CARRIED as set out below.

Resolved

That, given one of the roles of the Council is to invest in its communities (people and infrastructure) and that failure to do so may lead to long-term higher maintenance costs, higher underemployment, lower productivity and greater health, education and social issues, the Council investigates taking advantage of the current low interest rates to borrow more through long-term bonds and to raise debt ratios and so ensure Warwickshire emerges from this deep recession in better shape than its peers.

(This investigation will be undertaken by Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee).

7. Member Question Time

7.1 Questions on Notice (Standing Order 7.2)

1. Early Years Education

Councillor Clive Rickhards asked Councillor Colin Hayfield, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Education & Learning whether he could confirm that the 15 hours of free early education is accessible by all qualified parents in Warwickshire and that top-up fees are not being demanded.

Councillor Colin Hayfield replied that they are entitled to 15 free hours. Providers can charge extra if they provide extra provision (such as extra hours, activities or meals). Councillor Hayfield asked that Councillor Rickhards forward to him if there are any examples of where the provision is not being provided.

Councillor Clive Rickhards asked that the Portfolio Holder guarantee that these issues be reviewed as the offer is expanded to 30 hours.

Councillor Hayfield said that the move to 30 free hours would be monitored and that it was likely to be a challenge for some providers who may not have the capacity, and who may have already been charging for the extra 15 hours.

2. Safety for students crossing road to Avon Valley School

Councillor John Whitehouse asked why the Rugby Western Relief Road project had not made adequate provision for the students of Avon Valley School to cross safely on the way to and from school.

Councillor Alan Cockburn, Deputy Leader, replied that there are various crossings, both formal and informal. There is a formal crossing on the B4112 at the main pedestrian access to the school. There are various other footways along the Relief Road and Park Field Road and safety audits have shown that crossings were considered adequate at both the planning and implementation stage of the Rugby Western Relief Road.

Councillor John Whitehouse asked that his disappointment be relayed to Councillor Butlin that he had not received a reply to this question until today, although he had submitted on 23rd June and there had been lobbying locally. Councillor Cockburn agreed to do so but repeated that the safety audits had concluded that the crossings

were adequate. He added that officers are, however, investigating whether there could be a pedestrian crossing where the Black Path meets Park Field Road.

Councillor Cockburn also undertook to pass on the concerns expressed by Councillor Maggie O'Rourke who also awaited a response from Councillor Butlin.

4. Portobello Crossroads, near Shipston

Councillor John Whitehouse asked Councillor John Horner, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Community Safety where the Portobello Crossroads near Shipston sits in the priority ranking of Warwickshire accident locations, as used to determine Casualty Reduction priorities.

Councillor John Horner replied that the Safety Team revise the rankings every year and that Portobello Crossroads (the junction of the A429 with the B4035) is currently ranked at 6.

Councillor John Whitehouse asked for details on the projects ranked 1-5 and whether they would be going ahead during the current financial year.

Councillor Horner replied that:

- Nuneaton Park Lane Junction, B4102 (this has been completed)
A444/M6 junction 3 roundabout (has traffic lights and the next stage is to rebuild the junction which will cost millions)
- Fillongley B4098 (cost is around £200,000 and is going ahead)
- B4109 at Wolvey (is going ahead)
- B4455 Harbury crossroads – requires a roundabout (costing between £1-£1.6m) and the Council does not have the funding for this.

The Council has funded £350,000 to the Road Safety Team this year and £251,000 was carried forward from last year. There is a further £2m that is at the discretion of the councillors (around £32,000 each). These are not for identified schemes but are at the discretion of the councillor and often it is perceived safety issues rather than data evidence. The Road Safety Team prioritises schemes according to personal injury collisions and the number of repeatable incidents (rather than deaths). The level of accidents at Portobello last year meant that the scheme went up the ranking from 23rd to 6th. The only way to fund a large scheme such as Harbury would be for all councillors to pool their money.

5. Combined Authority

Councillor Neil Dirveiks asked the Leader of the Council whether, in the light of Coventry City Council's decision to join the West Midlands Combined Authority, the Leader of the Council can inform the Council of the position Warwickshire County Council is taking with regard to joining a Combined Authority.

Councillor Izzi Seccombe replied that any decision that is required will be made by the full Council. Councillor Seccombe advised that the current position is that Coventry City Council has issued a letter of intent signed by the three LEP Regions. A prospectus is available on the website (but is being amended) and as soon as that

is finalised it will be made available to all members. The prospectus is expected to be available for 'engagement' with an end date at the beginning of September. Councillor Seccombe added that at present the proposal is that the body could include Warwickshire as a 'non-constituent' body, able to engage but not with full voting rights.

An extraordinary meeting of the Council will be arranged for consideration of this.

6. Cycling

Councillor Matt Western asked Councillor Alan Cockburn, Deputy Leader (on behalf of Councillor Peter Butlin, the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning):

'It is great the Warwickshire County Council has been encouraging more people to cycle between Warwick and Leamington and elsewhere through the Cycle Challenge initiative. Can the Portfolio Holder advise how many Council staff based in Warwick actually live in a) Warwick and b) Leamington and what proportion 1) cycle or 2) would cycle if cycle routes were improved? Does he agree that these statistics could be extremely useful also from other major employers such as National Grid, Warwick Hospital and others to help establish a basis for investment?'

Councillor Alan Cockburn replied that the Staff Travel Survey indicates that 18% of staff live within two miles of work, 5.7% travel to work by bicycle and when asked what improvements there could be, 48.5% wanted showers and lockers (which have been provided in Warwick) and 47.6 % wanted improvements to routes (and work is completed on the cycle development plan for Warwick and Leamington which includes proposed links to all major employment sites).

Councillor Matt Western asked whether there could be more precise information from major employers and also asked whether Councillor Peter Butlin would join him in a cycle from Leamington to Warwick during the rush hour (8.30 am on a weekday, in September) to experience how difficult it is.

Councillor Alan Cockburn undertook to pass this request to Councillor Peter Butlin. Councillor Cockburn added that there was no resource to undertake traffic surveys of all employers, but officers do collect survey data as part of projects provided it can be done by low cost methods, such as on-line survey.

Councillor Keith Kondakor requested that improvements be made in Bedworth to enable cycling on routes and to make improvements at King's House, Bedworth.

7. Chancellor's Summer Budget

Councillor John Beaumont asked Councillor Izzi Seccombe, Leader of the Council:

'As part of the budget on July 7th, the Government stated that further cuts would be required from the public sector. Can the Leader of the Council (or Deputy Leader) please explain or circulate copies of any correspondence to Government / DCLG since May 2013 to demonstrate how WCC is challenging these cuts to important public services?'

Councillor Izzi Seccombe undertook to circulate any letters and added that there has been a continuing campaign on school places.

8. By-Election

Councillor Keith Kondakor asked Councillor Izzi Seccombe, Leader of the Council, what is the estimated cost to this authority of the Whitestone by-election. Councillor Seccombe replied that she would make that available when the cost is known.

9. Minerals Plan

Councillor Keith Kondakor asked the following question:

‘It seems that this authority is about to progress its new minerals plan. The immediate threat of fracking in Warwickshire is low, but in the medium term the county could be subjected to fracking and Underground Coal Gasification (UCG) planning applications. Due to the long duration of the Minerals Plan it is important to consider threats to our county over many years. Will you allow this plan to robustly protect the Warwickshire Countryside from the future prospects of fracking and UCG?’

Councillor Alan Cockburn, Deputy Leader, replied in the absence of the Portfolio Holder for Highways and Planning, that he considered the threat was low, noting that the British Geological Society had said that the reserves in Warwickshire are not economically viable. The Minerals Plan does refer to fracking and UCG but that we could not accept something that has an unacceptable adverse effect on the environment, transportation or residential amenities.

Councillor Keith Kondakor asked whether the portfolio holder could say there will never be fracking in Warwickshire.

Councillor Alan Cockburn said it would require looking very carefully at this and would have to look at any planning application that came forward but if it has an adverse effect then he would have serious concerns.

7.2 Questions without Notice to Leader of the Council and Cabinet Portfolio Holders

1. Implementation of the Second Stage of the Care Act

Councillor Maggie O'Rourke asked the Leader of the Council whether, given the decision of Government to delay the implementation of the second stage of the Care Act to 2020 whether she believes that the proposed £72,000 cap on social care payments for self-payers will be delivered by that date and, if so, how it will be paid for.

Councillor Izzi Seccombe replied that the LGA has been running a campaign for social care to be properly funded and, with reluctance, had asked for delay to phase two of the Care Act for up to two years (the Government has chosen to delay for four years). The LGA will be looking to Government to use the savings they make from the delay in implementation to fund social care properly.

2. Living Wage

Councillor Angela Warner asked Councillor Kam Kaur, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Customers, what progress had been made in meeting the Council's request to investigate the possibility of introducing a Living Wage.

Councillor Kam Kaur replied that the council had agreed a budget of £50,000 to undertake this work but, given the recent Government announcement, this work had to be revisited. A full report will be shared with members as soon as available.

3. Light Rescue Pump

Councillor Dave Shilton asked Councillor John Horner, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Community Safety what are the benefits of the Light Rescue Pumps as seen on display outside Shire Hall.

Councillor John Horner replied that these pumps are a significant step forward, are lighter, narrower and shorter and more manoeuvrable. They are 40% cheaper to operate and 90% cheaper to buy than regular pumps. Councillor Horner also referred to the car that was on display, which is equally important as it is a Watch Commander's car that is almost a mobile office that enables the Commander to oversee more than one watch and also offer support. It was bought using Police procurement and at 40% cheaper than list price.

It was agreed that the Chief Fire Officer would circulate a briefing note to all members regarding the Light Rescue Pump.

4. Impact of the Government proposed wage increase

Councillor Kate Rolfe asked how many WCC workers will be affected by the proposed increase in the minimum wage and how will this impact on the budget going forward. Can we have assurances that it will come to Cabinet on 8 October.

Councillor Kam Kaur, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Customers, replied that there is work being undertaken currently and will be circulated to members as soon as possible and on to Cabinet.

5. Housing Related Support

Councillor Dave Parsons asked Councillor John Horner, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, whether he was monitoring the impact of the 43% reduction in the Housing Related Support Service on youth crime that could happen due to increase in homelessness.

Councillor John Horner replied that he was unqualified to say there would be an impact and that he would wait until more is known in September.

6. Public Health

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse asked Councillor Izzi Seccombe, Leader of the Council, whether she would write to the LGA, Secretary of State and the Chancellor opposing the £200m in year cut to public health services which could result in Warwickshire losing out by £1.4m.

Councillor Izzi Seccombe replied that she would write, and had already done so on behalf of the LGA, and in particular had asked that the Government to at least not be prescriptive and allow local authorities to manage the reduction themselves in the best way that they can.

7. Reduction in Budget

Councillor Matt Western referred to the Chancellor's announcement that he expects a further £20bn in cuts for all Government departments (except for defence) and asked the Leader whether she agreed that this would, as stated by the Chancellor, see no reductions in public services?

Councillor Izzi Seccombe responded that local authorities have been innovative in finding savings and keeping services to date but she did not believe that it is possible to keep squeezing budgets into the future.

8. Bermuda Park Railway Station

Councillor Keith Kondakor referred to the forthcoming opening of the Bermuda Park Railway Station and asked when the rolling stock would be available and when the opening date will be?

Councillor Alan Cockburn replied that he was unaware of the opening date and had also not been invited.

9. Procurement from Local Businesses

Councillor Mike Perry asked Councillor Alan Cockburn whether it is the Council's policy to employ local businesses wherever possible and whether the Council pays invoices to them in a short time period as cash flow is important to them.

Councillor Alan Cockburn replied that the Council does employ local business where this is possible and have always paid promptly on 28 days. The Council has just entered into agreement with Oxygen Finance Ltd, which is a voluntary scheme,

whereby agreement is made to pay within 7 days in exchange for a discount. This helps the companies cashflow and provides a benefit to the Council.

10. Living Wage

Councillor Richard Chattaway asked that the Cabinet Portfolio Holder share with officers, the brief given to officers for them to look into the application of the living wage.

Councillor Kam Kaur repeated that members will get the report, but that there is delay due to the announcement from the Chancellor. As soon as the report is ready it will be shared with everyone.

8. **Any other items of urgent business**

None.

The Council adjourned at 12.30 pm and reconvened at 12.55 p.m.

9. **Report Containing Exempt Information**

Resolved:

That members of the public be excluded from the meeting for the item mentioned below on the grounds that their presence would involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1972.

10. **Exempt Minutes of the meeting held on 19 May 2015**

Resolved

That the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 19 May 2015 be agreed as a correct record.

The Council rose at 1.00 p.m.

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Chair