

**Minutes of the Meeting of Warwickshire County Council
held on 23 February 2016**

Present:

Councillor Bob Stevens (Chair)

Councillors: John Appleton, John Beaumont, Sarah Boad, Mike Brain, Peter Butlin, Les Caborn, Richard Chattaway, Jonathan Chilvers, Chris Clark, Jeff Clarke, Alan Cockburn, Jose Compton, Yousef Dahmash, Corinne Davies, Nicola Davies, Neil Dirveiks, Peter Fowler, Jenny Fradgley, Bill Gifford, Mike Gittus, Brian Hawkes, Colin Hayfield, Bob Hicks, John Holland, John Horner, Julie Jackson, Philip Johnson, Kam Kaur, Danny Kendall, Bernard Kirton, Keith Kondakor, Joan Lea, Jeff Morgan, Phillip Morris-Jones, Peter Morson, Brian Moss, Bill Olnor, 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.

1. General

(1) Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Richard Dodd, Sara Doughty and Keith Lloyd.

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

Councillor Jenny St John declared a non-pecuniary interest as Chair of the Advisory Board of Warwick Children's Centres.

Councillor Julie Jackson declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of Nicholas Chamberlaine Schools Foundation and as a governor of St Michaels C of E School which has a children's centre.

(3) Minutes

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2016 be approved as a correct record.

(4) Announcements

Harry Jenkins, Young Poet Laureate

The Chair welcomed Harry Jenkins, pupil of Warwick School, who had recently been made Warwickshire Young Poet Laureate 2016 following a competition from a short list of five young people aged 13-17.

In his first three weeks Harry had already performed at Warwick Library on National Libraries Day, been interviewed by BBC Coventry and Warwickshire and recited a poem at the opening of the new Southam Library.

Harry recited his poem 'Warwick/Kenilworth' about the two castles.

Open evening- 28 February 2016

The Chair reminded members that the open evening would take place on Saturday 28 February and that members were welcome to bring guests.

2. 2016/17 Budget – Transitional Grant and Other Information

The Council had before them a report setting out the final Local Government Finance Settlement for 2016/17. The Government had confirmed the Public Health Grant, Independent Living Fund and Better Care Fund but, in addition, had also notified councils 'with the sharpest reductions in revenue support grant' of an additional transitional grant. It was noted that the amount provided for Warwickshire County Council is £2.990 million for 2016/17 with a further indicative £2.993 million for 2017/18. The Council considered proposals for allocating the transitional grant (as set out below). It was noted that none of the proposals required any change to the precept level agreed by Council on 4 February 2016.

A Conservative Group Proposal

Councillor Izzi Seccombe, Leader of the Council, moved that the Council agree the proposed allocation of the additional transitional grant as set out at **Appendix A** to these minutes. Councillor Izzi Seccombe stated that the additional grant would provide some assistance but stressed the need to be prudent given it was one-off money and that the financial challenges before the council over the next few years is considerable. Councillor Seccombe explained that, given the financial position, the Conservative Group proposed to allocate funding to some 'invest to save' projects as listed in Appendix A but to £1.990 million to the Medium Term Contingency to manage the implementation of further spending reductions for 2017 to 2020.

Councillor Alan Cockburn, Deputy Leader of the Conservative Group, seconded the proposals.

B Labour Group Amendment

Councillor June Tandy, Leader of the Labour Group, moved the amendment set out at Appendix B to these minutes.

Councillor Tandy welcomed the transitional funding but expressed her disappointed at the low level, particularly compared to other authorities, and would not prevent the further cuts required by the decreased grant settlement. Councillor Tandy explained that the Labour Group's amendment sought to use the transitional grant to enable some services breathing space whilst also retaining a contingency to manage the implementation of spending reductions.

Councillor Richard Chattaway, Deputy Leader of the Labour Group, seconded the amendment.

C Liberal Democrat Group Amendment

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, moved the amendment set out at **Appendix C** to these minutes.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse expressed his concern that the funding is only one off and will not address the funding issues for Warwickshire, but considered it should be used to help smooth out the impact of the reduced funding.

Councillor Sarah Boad, Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, seconded the amendment.

D Green Group Amendment

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers, Deputy Leader of the Green Group, moved the amendment set out at **Appendix D** to these minutes.

Councillor Chilvers explained that the Green Group proposed some small allocations of funding to areas that would bring big benefits but proposed that the majority of the one off transitional grant should be put to the Medium Term Contingency to manage the implementation of the further spending reductions that will be required.

Councillor Keith Kondakor, Leader of the Green Group, seconded the amendment.

Following a debate, the vote was taken as set out below:

VOTE

Amendment at D: 2 for, 57 against: LOST

Amendment at C: 8 for, 47 against, 4 abstentions: LOST

Amendment at B: 23 for, 34 against, 2 abstentions: LOST

Proposal at A: 26 for, 31 against, 2 abstentions: LOST

The Council adjourned at 12.20 pm and reconvened at 1.45 pm.

E Conservative Group Revised Proposal

Councillor Izzi Seccombe, Leader of the Council, moved the revised proposal set out at **Appendix E** to these minutes.

Councillor Alan Cockburn, Deputy Leader of the Conservative Group, seconded the proposal.

F Amended Labour Group and Liberal Democrat Group Proposal

Councillor June Tandy, Leader of the Labour Group, moved the proposal set out at **Appendix F** to these minutes. Councillor Jerry Roodhouse, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, seconded the proposal.

Councillor Keith Kondakor, Leader of the Green Group, moved the following amendment to F:

“That £35,000 be allocated for developing cycling bids for capital money and developer funding and that £505,000 be added to the Medium Term Contingency to manage the implementation of further spending reductions required for 2017 to 2020.”

Councillor June Tandy accepted the amendment.

VOTE

The proposal at **Appendix F** was put to the vote and was AGREED, the vote being 32 for and 26 against. A recorded vote was taken as set out below:

For	Against	Abstentions
Cllr John Beaumont	Cllr John Appleton	<i>None</i>
Cllr Sarah Boad	Cllr Mike Brain	
Cllr Richard Chattaway	Cllr Peter Butlin	
Cllr Jonathan Chilvers	Cllr Les Caborn	
Cllr Chris Clark	Cllr Jeff Clarke	
Cllr Corinne Davies	Cllr Alan Cockburn	
Cllr Nicola Davies	Cllr Jose Compton	
Cllr Neil Dirveiks	Cllr Yousef Dahmash	
Cllr Jenny Fradgley	Cllr Peter Fowler	
Cllr Bill Gifford	Cllr Mike Gittus	
Cllr Brian Hawkes	Cllr Colin Hayfield	
Cllr Bob Hicks	Cllr John Horner	
Cllr John Holland	Cllr Kam Kaur	
Cllr Julie Jackson	Cllr Danny Kendall	
Cllr Philip Johnson	Cllr Joan Lea	
Cllr Bernard Kirton	Cllr Jeff Morgan	
Cllr Keith Kondakor	Cllr Phillip Morris-Jones	
Cllr Peter Morson	Cllr Mike Perry	
Cllr Brian Moss	Cllr Howard Roberts	
Cllr Bill Oler	Cllr Chris Saint	
Cllr Maggie O'Rourke	Cllr Izzi Seccombe	
Cllr Dave Parsons	Cllr Dave Shilton	
Cllr Caroline Phillips	Cllr Bob Stevens	
Cllr Clive Rickhards	Cllr Heather Timms	
Cllr Kate Rolfe	Cllr Angela Warner	
Cllr Jerry Roodhouse	Cllr Chris Williams	
Cllr Jenny St John		
Cllr June Tandy		
Cllr Alan Webb		
Cllr Mary Webb		
Cllr Matt Western		
Cllr John Whitehouse		

Resolved

That Council agrees to use the £2,990,000 additional one-off Transitional Grant for 2016/17 as set out in **Appendix F** to these minutes

3. West Midlands Combined Authority

A Councillor John Whitehouse moved the following motion:

‘This Council decided on 3rd September 2015 not to enter into the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) at that time. It subsequently decided on 24th September 2015 that all options should be explored, including any improved WMCA proposal.

We believe that the Council should now explore fully the option of joining the WMCA as a constituent member. Officers should be tasked with developing a full business case, bringing it to Council within a period not exceeding six months.’

Councillor John Whitehouse explained that he considered it is an appropriate time to explore the option of joining the WMCA and that the longer the delay the less opportunity there will be to influence the development of the WMCA and the increased danger there is of Warwickshire County Council being left behind or at worse having to hand over the Council's share of a function. Councillor Whitehouse added that he appreciated that there are still a number of unknowns and that these should be explored in developing the business case, which should include setting out what Warwickshire would expect to achieve from joining and what the Warwickshire offer could be. Councillor Whitehouse added that he would welcome this being sooner than six months if possible.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, seconded the proposal and emphasised the need for Warwickshire to agree its objectives and ‘asks’ as soon as possible.

Councillor June Tandy, Leader of the Labour Group, moved that the following words be added to the motion:‘and with a target of three months.’

Councillor John Whitehouse accepted the amendment.

B Councillor Izzi Seccombe, Leader of the Council, moved that the words ‘and with a target of three months’ be removed from the motion given that this timescale would mean a decision would be taken before the outcome of the EU referendum which she considered could impact on devolution deals and the funding available.

Councillor Izzi Seccombe expressed concern that the governance arrangements would be difficult; that Warwickshire, as the largest partner geographically and the most economically successful, would be contributing resources over which the Council would not have full control; and that it is doubtful how the rural area would be supported. Councillor Seccombe added that if the Council does decide to join, then everything must be done to ensure Warwickshire obtains the best deal.

Councillor Alan Cockburn seconded the amendment.

The following points were made in the debate that followed:

For the proposal:

- It is better to be in the discussions and have the opportunity to influence the shape of the WMCA.
- The WMCA provides a long term commitment to major transport funding.
- Local government is being 'hollowed out' but the combined authority may offer the opportunity to have local control over improved infrastructure.
- The target of three months is aspirational but the Council should consider this before the summer

Against the proposal:

- The funding is unclear. £8bn over 30 years has been quoted but 50% (£4.4bn) is already allocated to the HS2 growth strategy which is mainly within Birmingham and the £30m for skills is not enough.
- The Transport Bill will give all councils more control over local transport regardless of joining the WMCA.
- The deprivation levels in Warwickshire are lower than those in the WMCA which indicates that resources will be deflected away from Warwickshire
- It will cost £500,000 to join.

VOTE

The amendment proposed at B above was put to the vote and was LOST, the vote being 24 for and 25 against.

The proposal (with the addition of the words and 'with a target of three months') was put to the vote and was AGREED, the vote being 28 for, 24 against and 2 abstentions.

Resolved

That the Council should now explore fully the option of joining the WMCA as a constituent member. Officers should be tasked with developing a full business case, bringing it to Council within a period not exceeding six months and with a target of three months.

4. Member Question Time

4.1 Questions on Notice (Standing Order 7.2)

(1) Unitary Local Government

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse asked the following question of Councillor Izzi Seccombe, Leader of the Council

'This Council decided on 25th February 2014 that:

“ ...it is in the public interest to explore the opportunities of Unitary Local Government. It will engage with members of the public, other public sector bodies, businesses, the voluntary sector and Central Government to develop ideas around this way of working. It will provide evidence - based analysis so that the people of Warwickshire can form their own views about unitary solutions”.

Can the Leader explain why, two years later, little or no progress has been made in pursuing this agreed course of action, while the financial pressures on local government have become much more severe, and the need to co-operate at all levels more paramount?’

Councillor Izzi Seccombe, Leader of the Council, replied that at the time of the earlier debate the Secretary of State had made it clear that he was not interested in any unitary proposals. The current Secretary of State does not take the same view but any proposal has to have local support and as Warwickshire does not have the support of district and borough councils a proposal would not get approval.

Councillor June Tandy, Leader of the Labour Group, asked whether the Leader would support Warwickshire being a unitary authority. Councillor Izzi Seccombe answered that as it will not happen she is not prepared to give a view.

4.2 Questions without Notice to Leader of the Council and Cabinet Portfolio Holders (Standing Orders 7.7 and 7.8)

Public Health Warwickshire Neighbourhood Development Guide

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers asked Councillor Les Caborn, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Health, what impact the new guide would have on how Warwickshire County Council responds to planning applications.

Councillor Les Caborn replied that he had received good feedback on the document which had been sent out to all councillors and to district/borough and parish councils (who had also contributed to its development). He added that it is not enforceable but the intention is that officers and members, whenever considering plans or initiatives, will take cognisance of the guide. It is a live document and will be updated as new ideas and evidence comes forward.

LEP Performance

Councillor Keith Kondakor referred to the recent report of the National Office for Statistics which showed that the Coventry and Warwickshire LEP had fallen from a top performer to being the second worst in the country in terms of gross added value per head of population. Councillor Kondakor asked Councillor Izzi Seccombe whether she would put pressure of the CWLEP to diversify rather than focus on just one industry and to also look more widely geographically to get more level growth.

Councillor Izzi Seccombe agreed that there should not be a single focus and that it was important to encourage a wider skills set and provide a wider range of opportunities. The promotion of the wider County area also encourages this diversification. Councillor Seccombe undertook to continue to push for this.

5. Any other items of urgent business

None

6. Reports Containing Confidential or 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.

7. Exempt Minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2015

Resolved

That the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2015 be agreed as a correct record.

The meeting rose at 3.26 p.m.

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Chair