

Minutes of the Meeting of Warwickshire County Council held on 7 February 2019

Present:
Councillor John Cooke (Chair)

Councillors Helen Adkins, Jo Barker, Margaret Bell, Parminder Singh Birdi, Sarah Boad, Peter Butlin, Les Caborn, Mark Cargill, Richard Chattaway, Jonathan Chilvers, Jeff Clarke, Alan Cockburn, Andy Crump, Yousef Dahmash, Nicola Davies, Judith Falp, Jenny Fradgley, Bill Gifford, Pete Gilbert, Daniel Gissane, Clare Golby, Seb Gran, Colin Hayfield, John Holland, John Horner, Andy Jenns, Kam Kaur, Keith Kondakor, Jeff Morgan, Bill Olnier, Maggie O'Rourke, Bhagwant Singh Pandher, Anne Parry, Dave Parsons, Caroline Phillips, Wallace Redford, David Reilly, Clive Rickhards, Howard Roberts, Kate Rolfe, Jerry Roodhouse, Andy Sargeant, Izzi Seccombe OBE, Jill Simpson-Vince, Dominic Skinner, Bob Stevens, Heather Timms, Adrian Warwick, Alan Webb, Chris Williams and Pam Williams.

The Chair, on behalf of Council, welcomed Councillor Chris Williams to the meeting following his absence due to illness.

1. General

(1) Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mike Brain, Corinne Davies, Neil Dirveiks, Dave Shilton and Andy Wright.

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

None.

(3) Minutes

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2018 be approved as a correct record.

(4) Announcements

Former Councillor Barry Lobbett

The Chair announced the death of former county councillor Barry Lobbett who had represented the Bedworth North Division from June 2009 to May 2013 and had served on the Environment and Economy and the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Councillor Izzi Seccombe, Leader of the Council, paid tribute to Barry Lobbett who had been a unique and colourful character who worked hard for his constituents. Barry had been a notable campaigner, in particular for improvements to overcome the traffic issues on the A444, and had proudly represented his division and the Council.

Councillor Richard Chattaway, Leader of the Labour Group, referred to Barry's congeniality, his campaigning for Bedworth and also his dignity at remembrance services and commitment to those who had served in the armed forces.

Councillor Pete Gilbert paid tribute to Barry's commitment to Bedworth and Councillor Seb Gran expressed his thanks for the friendship and support he had received from Barry over the years.

Councillor Keith Kondakor commended Barry Lobbett for his role as a local businessman and for his interest in many topics, including waste recycling.

Jerry Roodhouse, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, supported the tributes made and the public service given by Barry Lobbett.

The Council stood in silent tribute to Barry Lobbett.

(5) Petitions

None.

(6) Public Speaking

None.

2. One Organisational Plan 2020: Development of Strategic Objectives 2019-20

Councillor Izzi Seccombe, Leader of the Council, presented the proposed strategic objectives for 2019/20 as approved by Cabinet and was seconded by Councillor Peter Butlin.

Councillor Seccombe emphasised that the objectives build on the key priorities already in place but provide a greater strategic focus and in particular support the Council's new operating model and inform the new leadership teams performance objectives.

Councillor Richard Chattaway, Leader of the Labour Group, suggested that the objectives form a statement of intent, rather than a plan, and that what will be important are the plans that sit below this and how the objectives are implemented.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, recognised that the One Organisational Plan is a broad statement of priorities that provides a direction of travel for the Council over the next medium term and that his Group would not be opposing this high level plan but that the Liberal Democrat Group would seek to influence the next stage of planning which he hoped would take account of the priorities his Group had set out in their budget statement circulated to the Leader in January. Councillor Roodhouse looked forward to overview and scrutiny committees having an input into the next stage and to reviewing delivery against the action plans that will be needed to support the One Organisational Plan.

Councillor Keith Kondakor referred to the importance of waste reduction across all sectors, not just household waste, and proposed that the word 'household' be removed from the strategic objective on waste. This proposed amendment was

seconded by Councillor Jonathan Chilvers and was accepted by Councillor Izzi Seccombe.

Councillor Izzi Seccombe, in responding to the debate, gave assurance that there will be plans under these objectives with targets that will be performance monitored, and that the Overview and Scrutiny Committees will play an important part in monitoring progress.

The proposal to agree the strategic objectives, as amended, was put to the vote and was agreed as set out below, with two abstentions.

Resolved

That, subject to the removal of 'household' in the strategic objective relating to waste, the Council approves the proposed OOP 2020 strategic objectives 2019-20.

3. 2019-20 Budget and Medium Term Financial Planning Framework

A Conservative Group Proposals

Councillor Peter Butlin, Deputy Leader of the Council, presented the Conservative Group Budget proposals as set out in the appendix to item 3 on the agenda. Councillor Izzi Seccombe, Leader of the Council seconded the proposals.

Councillor Butlin reminded the Council that approximately 90% of the £67m savings agreed in 2017 had been achieved at the same time as staff had successfully delivered projects, many of which were highlighted in the video circulated to members.

Councillor Butlin referred to the Council's two key priorities of growing the economy and of looking after the most vulnerable in Warwickshire's communities. He stated that the economy in Warwickshire is strong with 30% growth since 2009, unemployment at a record low of 1.8%, and he cited examples of how working with partners is key to achieving this healthy economy. He added that there has been national recognition of the challenges facing local government and that as a result Warwickshire will receive one off social care grant of £6m and £1.2m for vulnerable pupils.

Councillor Butlin highlighted the following adjustments to the savings plan:

- Investment of £6m in children's social care
- Investment of £6m in managing the demands and pressures in education services in relation to pupils with special educational needs and disabilities.
- Investment of £200,000 to support the Warwickshire Education Strategy supporting schools to help children reach their potential.
- Investment £5m to protect elderly and vulnerable adults in conjunction with partners in the NHS.
- Reduction in savings required of the Fire and Rescue Service by 60% and retention of second tenders at Coleshill and Stratford.
- No further savings to be required of the Youth Justice Service.
- Investment of £2m in Community Capacity and Prevention

- Investment, alongside partners, in mental health in two areas -street triage and support for parents experiencing mental ill health.
- Support for residential breaks and mentoring for care leavers
- Use of £500,000 from the concessionary travel underspend to invest in community transport, working alongside commercial providers, so supporting those who are isolated or lonely.
- Increase of £75,000 to enable more frequent inspection and maintenance of street trees.
- Investment of £400,000 in waste management to meet the growth in demand due to housing growth and reduction in savings required of a further £400,000.
- Investment of £200,000 to support district and borough councils in the development of their local plans and transport strategies as well as meeting demands of business growth across the County.
- £300,000 of the sugar tax fund to be allocated to schools for healthy eating projects and the development of a scheme with partners to extend breakfast clubs to more schools in the north of the County.
- Investment of £1m to help develop activities for the Coventry City of Culture which will benefit both Warwickshire and Coventry.
- Extension of the homelessness programme for a further two years.
- Increase the Capital Investment Fund by £12.5m to deliver schemes with a safety focus.

Councillor Butlin also emphasised the importance of the new Capital Strategy set out at Appendix A of the proposals and thanked officers for their assistance in developing this.

Councillor Butlin also thanked the Finance Team and the Budget Working Group for their assistance in developing the budget proposals.

B Green Group Amendment

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers, Leader of the Green Group, presented his Group's proposals as set out at Appendix A to these minutes and was seconded by Councillor Keith Kondakor.

Councillor Chilvers welcomed some of the Conservative Group proposals (including the allocation of the underspend in concessionary travel for use on bus services, the investment in social workers and protection of the Youth Justice Service) but added that there were areas which he would change.

Councillor Chilvers observed that there were £15m of cuts which were falling on services such as health visitors and drug and alcohol rehabilitation and that the £13m being put in was mainly to manage demand. He added that this meant that there remained a real term cut of £15m and that Government should be challenged to provide a better financial settlement. Councillor Chilvers also expressed concern that cuts were being made to preventative services, there is a lack of funding to support the stepped approach in children's services and that (whilst he supported the additional funding for the homelessness project) there had been large cuts in housing related

support services, and cuts in drug and alcohol services which will undermine the effectiveness of the homelessness project.

Councillor Chilvers highlighted the following proposals in the Green Group amendment:

- £8.6m from the Capital Investment Fund to fund the highest priority Schemes and funding to progress the schemes.
- £385,000 a year for flood risk measures as part of ensuring the authority meets the challenge of climate adaptation.
- £400,000 one off money to incentivise district and borough councils to help reduce waste.
- Funding for family support workers in schools (2019/20 and on- going)
- £1m grant fund, particularly aimed at young people.
- £100,000 a year for three years for domestic violence as there is a current under resourcing of the service.
- One off funding to ensure agreed recommendations on air quality and reduction of plastic are implemented.

Councillor Chilvers thanked the Finance Team for their work in helping the development of the proposals.

C Labour Group Amendment

Councillor Richard Chattaway, Leader of the Labour Group, moved the amendments set out at Appendix B to these minutes and was seconded by Councillor Alan Webb.

Councillor Chattaway referred to the concerns expressed by the Local Government Association, County Councils Network and councils across the country, that local government and public services are under resourced. Councillor Chattaway explained that the first of his amendments sought to ensure this message is made to Government.

Councillor Chattaway acknowledged that some parts of the County were doing well and that improvements had been made but he was disappointed that there were still gaps in areas of the County and also that the views of the public were not always taken into account. Councillor Chattaway cited the issue of part-night street lighting where the expectation had been that lights would be switched back on once the savings were made from the roll out of the LED replacement programme.

Councillor Chattaway expressed concern that the funding from the sugar tax was subject to stringent rules and requested a guarantee that no Warwickshire school will miss out on a fair allocation of the funding and that the expertise of groups in the community be used to assist in the breakfast club initiative. Councillor Chattaway also reiterated his concern regarding the removal of chaperones from school buses, the high level of debt in some schools, the need for more support for the Armed Forces covenant and to look again at how best to secure the future of Old Shire Hall.

Councillor Chattaway also suggested that a clearer picture be provided of where money is being spent and that the service estimates produced by officers after the budget meeting are available earlier in the budget process.

The Council debated the Conservative Group Proposals and the amendments referred to above.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, explained that given the pressure on officers during this period of Transformation, his Group had decided not to take up officer time in producing a formal budget proposal but to instead set out the Group's priorities by which the Group would seek to influence the Conservative Budget. Councillor Roodhouse concluded that although he welcomed some of the investments, they did not go far enough and his Group would not be supporting the Conservative Budget proposals.

The Council adjourned for lunch at 1pm and reconvened at 1.45pm.

Seconders and summing up

Councillor Alan Webb, Deputy Leader of the Labour Group, in seconding the Labour Group amendments, referred to the burden that the council tax increase will put on local people and that the public will be paying more for less service. Councillor Webb added that the financial pressure on the council meant that for every good thing that could be put in the budget, something else has to come out which meant it was difficult to set a fair budget. Councillor Webb urged members to support the Labour amendment and in particular to request that Government provide adequate funding.

Councillor Keith Kondakor, Deputy Leader of the Green Group, in seconding the Green Group proposals, stated that he considered the growth and employment figures referred to by the Deputy Leader were misleading as the population is changing. There are more families moving into Warwickshire (and more students moving out) and the employment figures for those living in Warwickshire does not take into account that many who live in Warwickshire are employed outside of Warwickshire. He added that there also needed to be a housing policy that addressed the increasing number of void properties.

Councillor Kondakor highlighted the importance of tackling climate change and urged support for the Green Group proposals in relation to flooding (including ensuring flood resilience is included in new buildings) and also in tackling pollution and access to work by focusing on making public transport a viable option. He added that the Group continued to argue for fewer large road projects and a redesign of the Bermuda Connectivity Scheme and were also proposing £50,000 to look at whether there were some areas where part night lighting could be removed, subject to consultation with the public to identify priority areas.

Councillor Izzi Seccombe, in seconding the Conservative Group proposals, thanked members for their contributions and acknowledged that local councils are faced with a reduction in government grant at a time of increased levels of demand. Councillor Seccombe emphasised that it is a challenge to be doing more with less but that Warwickshire County Council had taken a robust approach in its financial planning which meant the Council was in a relatively good position.

Councillor Seccombe welcomed the additional money that had enabled some areas of savings to be revisited but also recognised that this was one off money and that the Council would need to continue to plan ahead and set robust budgets. Councillor Seccombe added that she would continue to argue for more funding and would ensure

a robust response to the Fair Funding Review consultation, which would include highlighting the low level of funding compared to neighbouring authorities and the difficulties and extra costs of delivering services in a large rural area whilst also recognising that Warwickshire has pockets of deprivation.

Councillor Seccombe referred to the two key priorities and welcomed the economic growth in the area and the work being undertaken to grow skills for the future. She recognised the challenges faced by the motor industry and the technological revolution that was underway and assured the Council that they would be talking to government about how best to support the industry. Councillor Seccombe explained that the second key priority to support communities and individuals to be safe, healthy and independent was being met through close work with partners and Warwickshire County Council is recognised as good to do business with. The budget proposals focus on supporting independence, building communities and preventing people from becoming more reliant on services. She added that the Council's confidence rating with residents is high and that it is a credit to staff that performance has been high during a time of challenge and that the ongoing transformation programme will ensure the Council stays fit for the future.

Councillor Richard Chattaway in responding to the debate, made the following points:

- the time period of 30 years for the transformation of Nuneaton is too long;
- the time taken for a young person to receive a mental health assessment remains too long;
- the debt levels held by schools is too high;
- there is a need to review the response times in the Fire and Rescue Service
- there should be a review of the capacity to deliver the capital programme, in particular for the smaller schemes.

Councillor Chattaway added that he was concerned that there was £900,000 less to spend on Public Health.

Councillor Chattaway concluded that the 5% increase in council tax will hurt people and questioned whether the assets and reserves of the Council were being put to the best use for the residents of Warwickshire.

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers, in responding to the debate, made the following points:

- District and borough councils need to be incentivised if the amount of recyclable waste put into general waste is to be reduced
- Road building is not always the driver of economic growth and there are alternative ways to drive growth
- No group has put forward an indication of how much they will commit to providing cycle/walking infrastructure
- The budget does not acknowledge that the effect of serious cuts is a reduction of service and that it is not possible to provide the same service.
- It is not responsible to plan to send more waste to incineration or to assume roads drive economic growth (and not allocate a figure for cycle ways and paths), or to ignore the impact of climate change, in particular flooding.

Councillor Peter Butlin, in responding to the debate, made the following points:

- That the Leader of the Council has worked tirelessly for more money for the Council and would continue to do so. He added that he would rather not be increasing council tax but has to in order to continue to provide services to the standard people expect.
- There is common ground between the groups. The Conservative Group proposals include putting more money into adult social care, children's services, public health and public safety.
- Nuneaton Town Centre regeneration will go forward and consideration will be given to funding from the Capital Investment fund and private investment.
- Highways maintenance has been recognised by government as an issue and resulted in additional funding for potholes.
- The Group took the decision to not take out the fire tenders.
- There is a need to put money into cycle routes but there are also other initiatives needed to entice people out of cars including into public transport.
- Flood alleviation is being reviewed and the majority of responsibility relies with the Environment Agency.
- JLR are facing reductions in employees but are also increasing investment in battery powered cars and new technology. In addition, there are companies interested in coming to Warwickshire.
- The districts and boroughs are responsible for housing and waste collection but the Council is responsible for ensuring the right infrastructure and connectivity for housing and in improving waste management.
- £2m is being invested in mental health.

Councillor Butlin concluded by thanking staff for the work they do for the people of Warwickshire.

VOTE

A vote was taken on the Green Group amendments at Appendix A, which was lost, the vote being 13 for, 33 against and 6 abstentions.

A vote was taken on the Labour Group amendments at Appendix B, which was lost, the vote being 17 for, 34 against and 1 abstention.

A vote was taken on the Conservative Group budget proposals. A recorded vote was taken in accordance with standing order 31.4 and the proposals agreed as set out below:

FOR (33): Councillors Barker, Bell, Birdi, Butlin, Caborn, Cargill, Clarke, Cockburn, Cooke, Crump, Dahmash, Gilbert, Gissane, Golby, Gran, Hayfield, Horner, Jenns, Kaur, Morgan, Pandher, Parry, Redford, Reilly, Roberts, Sargeant, Seccombe, Simpson-Vince, Stevens, Timms, Warwick, C Williams, and P Williams.

AGAINST (19): Councillors Adkins, Boad, Chattaway, Chilvers, N Davies, Falp, Fradgley, Gifford, Holland, Kondakor, Olnier, O'Rourke, Parsons, Phillips, Rickhards, Rolfe, Roodhouse, Skinner and Webb.

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Resolved

That Council agrees the 2019-20 Budget as set out at Appendix C to these minutes and authorises work to begin on the development of the 2020-2025 Corporate Plan and associated Medium Term Financial Plan.

4. Any other items of urgent business

None

The meeting closed at 3.15 p.m.

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Chair