

**Minutes of a Meeting of the North Warwickshire Area Committee held on 16 January 2008 at the Magistrates Court Building, Sheepy Road, Atherstone**

**Present: -**

**Members of the Committee**

**Councillors** Anne Forwood  
Peter Fowler  
Richard Grant (Vice Chair)  
Colin Hayfield  
Joan Lea  
Brian Moss  
Mick Stanley  
Ray Sweet (Chair)

**Officers** Phil Astle, Education Officer, School Organisation  
Bill Basra, Area Manager  
Dave Clarke, Strategic Director of Resources  
Ann Mawdsley, Principal Committee Administrator  
Bryn Patefield, Area Manager, Warwickshire County Council  
Highways  
Jo Roberts, Administrative Officer North Warwickshire  
Sian Stroud, Senior Solicitor

**Invited Speaker** Richard Dobbs, Assistant Director (Streetscape), North Warwickshire Borough Council

There were 7 members of the public in attendance.

**1. General**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**(1) Apologies**

There were no apologies for absence.

**(2) Members' Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests**

Councillor Anne Forwood declared a personal interest in Item 6 as a member of the Boards of the North Warwickshire Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) and the Volunteer Centre.

**(3) Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 November 2007 and Matters Arising**

The minutes of the North Warwickshire Area Committee meeting held on 21 November 2007 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

## **Matters Arising**

None.

### **2. Public Question Time**

There were no public questions.

### **3. 2008/09 Budget Presentation**

The Committee received a presentation from Dave Clarke, Strategic Director for Resources setting out the budget prospects for 2008/09 for Warwickshire County Council.

Dave Clarke added the following points:

- a. The presentation formed part of the consultation process for members of the public and elected members and outlined the information used by Members in deciding the Budget for 2008/09, which has been recommended by the Cabinet at their meeting on 13 December 2007 and would be put to full Council for agreement on 5 February 2008.
- b. In 2007/08, 82% of the overall County Council budget had been spent on services within the Children, Young People and Families and the Adult, Health and Community Services Directorates.
- c. In 2007/08 63% of money used for the County Council came from Government Grants, 8% from Charges and Reserves and 29% from locally determined Council taxes.
- d. The objective of the County Council in determining the budget was a desire to be more responsive in their services and, together with partners, to make the public sector more seamless.
- e. An important external driving factor for the budget was the Comprehensive Spending Review (CPR) published by Government. This CPR was the tightest spending review since 1997, with all Local Authorities being required to deliver 3% cash on target savings year on year and a 5% cap for 2008/09. Dave Clarke added that although grant allocations were higher than expected, Warwickshire County Council allocations were lower than those of other counties.
- f. The strategy of the County Council was to ensure that more money was not spent on service improvement and development than could be achieved in savings.
- g. The Cabinet budget proposals would:
  - fully fund inflation of the revenue implications of the capital programme
  - support limited service improvements
  - set challenging savings targets for Directorates, in particular the Directorates providing support services
  - implement a 3.9% Council Tax increase.
- h. The two areas with the highest cost pressures for the next three years would continue to be Adult Social Care and Waste. There would be a new review programme to look at delivering better value

for money and innovative ways of dealing with increased pressures and government directives.

- i. Dave Clarke noted that members of the public had an opportunity, before 5 February 2008, to influence the budget, and any comments could be forwarded to him at Shire Hall, and these would be passed on to the leaders of the political Groups.

During the ensuing discussion the following was noted:

1. The Chairs and Party Spokespersons of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees had met to scrutinise the Budget proposals and it was agreed that this had been helpful for Members and was an important part of the budget setting process.
2. It was agreed that a copy of the presentation would be posted onto the website for easy access for members of the public.

The Chair thanked Dave Clarke for his presentation.

#### **4. Flood Minimalisation**

The Committee received a presentation from Bryn Patefield, Area Manager, Warwickshire County Council Highways and Richard Dobbs, Assistant Director (Streetscape), North Warwickshire Borough Council on flood minimisation in North Warwickshire following a review of last summer's exceptional weather conditions. The following points were noted:

- a. There had been a multi-agency approach to the flooding, but it was pointed out that the different responsibilities of different agencies were complex and there was a need to do more jointly to ensure set-ups and procedures were in place for all partners working together.
- b. There were a lot of main rivers in North Warwickshire which were susceptible to flooding, and it was noted that there had been a great deal of concern and anxiety experienced by members of the public, even from those whose houses were not flooded.
- c. North Warwickshire Drainage Forum meetings were held on a six monthly basis, with representatives of all the stakeholders. It was noted that the intention was for this Forum to meet more regularly and attendance was open to agreed invitees only. Details were available from the County Council or the Borough Council.
- d. Areas for improvement were additional resources for sand bags and stock piles of sand, increased self help and better communication and guidance. Members were shown an "aqua sack", which could be potentially useful as it would be easy to store in its original form, and absorbed water to become a sand bag and fully watertight in 10 minutes.
- e. There was a need to consider the implications of climate change and innovative ways of tackling the increase in exceptional weather conditions. The need for this was evidenced by the fact that Warwickshire had experienced a 1:150 year rainfall in 1998 and a 1:200 year rainfall in 2007.
- f. The County Council were responsible for enforcement of clearance of ditches alongside highways, and the Borough Council in terms of

landowners. Discussions had begun with the Landowners' Association, but it was pointed out that many farmers no longer dredged ditches because of the new agricultural waste regulations.

During the ensuing discussion the following was noted:

1. Following some discussion about the possibilities for purchasing and supplying aqua sacks, it was agreed that Bill Basra would discuss the matter with Jackie Douglas and that expert advice be sought before any decision was made.
2. Members agreed that there was a need to review planning policies and infrastructure, where flood plains were used.
3. Ditches being clear were crucial to minimising flooding and discussions should continue with the Landowners' Association and Severn Trent. It was noted that following discussions with people living in Fillongley, it had been agreed that property owners would contribute towards having the ditches and gullies cleared.
4. Good communication was essential and warnings were posted on the Environmental Agency and County Council websites, and when possible, on the Borough Council website. This was important for the public and should include information on where sandbag and sand was available and the level of risk for different areas. It was agreed that this information could also be available through organisations such as Neighbourhood Watch, Parish Councils and One Stop Shops.
5. Members agreed that farmers played a vital role in events and they should be recognised as partners.
6. It was agreed that in order to ensure that the most appropriate plans, strategies and initiatives were put in place with partners worked closely together looking after the most vulnerable and preparing to deal with any future extreme conditions, that once the national report that was being prepared had been received and all experts (including Emergency Services) consulted, that a further, full report and recommendations be brought to the Committee.

The Chair thanked Bryn Patefield and Richard Dobbs for their presentation.

## **5. Changes to primary school priority areas in North Nuneaton**

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families seeking authorisation to undertake formal consultation on proposals to change the priority areas of primary schools in North Nuneaton. Phil Astle added that the need for a consultation had arisen from the change made to the admission number at Nathaniel Newton Infant School (agreed by the Area Committee) and the large housing development at the Shires. These events had led to the need to review priority areas of schools in the area and discussions had been held with all the schools included in the review to establish a shared understanding of issues.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were noted:

1. Members thanked Phil Astle and his team for the work they had done to bring a lot of clarity to the complex situation that had arisen.
2. Members requested that Parish Councils be included in the list of consultees.

Resolved:

That the Area Committee authorise the Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families to consult stakeholders, including Parish Councils, on proposals to change the priority areas of primary schools in North Nuneaton.

## **6. Report of the Funding Sub-Group**

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Performance and Development informing the Area Committee of proposals made by the Funding Sub-Group in relation to new applications and seeking endorsement of an approach for the allocation of remaining monies.

Resolved:

### Small Grants Schemes

1. That the applications in relation to the Girls Brigade (£440) and Baddesley Colt Football Club (457.57) be approved.

### Community Computers

2. That the six remaining community computers be allocated to the Polesworth Community Association (2), Hurley Community Association (1), 1<sup>st</sup> Warton Scout Group (2) and North Warwickshire Home Services Group (1)

### Social Inclusion Fund

3. That a sum of £1500 be allocated towards the development of a Warwickshire Wide Handbook for New and Emerging Communities.

### Well-Being Fund

4. That the applications for the Well Being Fund in relation to 'Come Dance with Us' and 'Recognising the new and emerging communities of North Warwickshire' be approved.

### Future Application of Funds

5. That the approach outlined in Section 6 be endorsed specifically the following:

- a) That the remaining Social Inclusion monies (£8491) be added to the Well Being Fund (£7631) to create a combined pot of £16,122.
- b) That a bid relating to the promotion of volunteering within the North Warwickshire be brought to the March meeting of the Committee. This bid will be for a three year communications project to assist in the delivery of a much wider project to increase the number of people involved in active volunteering within North Warwickshire. The bid will be approximately £10,000.
- c) That remaining monies be used to approve those Community Development Fund applications which narrowly missed approval at the last meeting of the Committee (attached as Appendix 2)
- d) That any shortfall arising from b) and c) above be met through the Small Grants Fund
- e) That any unspent Public Realm Grant monies remaining after the April round of Forums be used to top up the Small Grants pot for 2008/09.

**7. Provisional Items for Future Meetings**

The Committee agreed the provisional items identified for the meeting scheduled for 26 March 2008.

**8. Any Other Items**

The Chair noted that this was the last meeting for Bill Basra, as Alison Williams would be returning from maternity leave. The Chair thanked Bill on behalf of the Area Committee for the work he had done over the past 12 months and his commitment to the role working with Members and that he had made a substantial difference, particularly with the work done in terms of Local Area Agreements and Community Partnership working. The Committee wished Bill all the best for the future.

The Chair noted that this was the last meeting for Sian Stroud as she would be leaving on maternity leave and the Chair and Committee wished Sian the best of luck.

**Date of next meeting**

The Committee noted that the next meeting of the Committee would take place on Wednesday 26 March 2008 at the Council Chamber, North Warwickshire Borough Council offices.

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Chair of Committee

The Committee rose at 7.50 p.m.