

Cabinet

Thursday, 11 June 2020

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

Councillor Izzi Seccombe (Chair)
Councillor Peter Butlin
Councillor Les Caborn
Councillor Colin Hayfield
Councillor Kam Kaur
Councillor Jeff Morgan
Councillor Jeff Clarke
Councillor Andy Crump
Councillor Heather Timms

Officers

Monica Fogarty, Chief Executive
Nigel Minns, Strategic Director for People
Mark Ryder, Strategic Director for Communities
Rob Powell, Strategic Director for Resources
Mark Ryder, Strategic Director for Communities
Paul Williams, Democratic Services Team Leader

Others Present

Councillors

Adkins, Bell, Boad, Brain, Chilvers, Cooke, Falp, Fradgley, Holland, Kondakor, O'Rourke, Redford, Rickhards, Roodhouse, Singh Birdi, Stevens, Webb, P. Williams

1. General

Councillor Izzi Seccombe (Leader of the Council and Chair of Cabinet) welcomed everyone to the meeting. Before the main business of the meeting was commenced, Councillor Seccombe took time to remember Councillor Bill Olnier who had passed away in May. The meeting was told that Councillor Olnier had been a friend to all and that his experience in supporting the public sector and his commitment to the people he served would be greatly missed. Cabinet observed one minute's silence in memory of Councillor Bill Olnier.

(1) Apologies

Apologies had been received from Councillor Richard Chattaway who was in poor health. The

meeting united in expressing to Councillor Chattaway their best wishes.

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

No declarations of interest were made to the meeting.

(3) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 14 May 2020 were agreed as a true and accurate record for signing by the Chair. There were no matters arising.

(4) Public Speaking

No persons had registered to speak at this meeting.

2. Covid - 19 Recovery and Reform

Councillor Seccombe introduced the published report explaining that it was one of a suite of three for consideration by Cabinet on Covid-19 recovery. Officers across the council were commended for their ongoing hard work and ability to adapt to new ways of working. Particular mention was made of the proposal to establish four short-life member working groups that will focus on how recovery from the current pandemic can be optimised.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse (Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group) expressed his group's broad support for the principles and processes set out in the report. The matter, he stated, was complex and pace would be required if the working groups were to achieve their aims. A major concern for Councillor Roodhouse was the impact of the pandemic on learning. There already exist significant gaps around poverty. It would be necessary, he suggested, to review the child poverty strategy in the light of current circumstances.

Councillor Maggie O'Rourke emphasised the need to give thought to health and well-being issues as well as to the economy. Waiting lists at hospitals are already under pressure and a second Covid-19 spike could see a serious further depletion of services.

Councillor Kam Kaur (Portfolio Holder for Customer and Transformation) drew Cabinet's attention to the diagram on page 16 adding that it illustrated the complexity and interrelationships of the issues to be addressed. She stressed the need for Councillors to make a useful contribution to the ongoing work.

Councillor Helen Adkins (Deputy leader of the Labour Group) thanked the meeting for its comments regarding Councillor Bill Oler and for its support for Councillor Chattaway. She welcomed the proposals as set out in the report and looked forward to contributing to their implementation.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

- 1) approves the proposed recovery objectives and principles as set out in paragraph 2.2 of the report;
- 2) approves the revised Council Change Portfolio as set out in paragraph 2.6 of the report;
- 3) supports the approach to partnership working at regional, sub-regional and county level, and approves the joint recovery statement (Appendix A);
- 4) authorises the Chief Executive to commence the activity required to develop a recovery plan for presentation to Cabinet in September, with associated delivery plans; and
- 5) approves the establishment of four time-limited cross-party Member working groups aligned to the four recovery themes set out in paragraph 2.6.3 and chaired by the relevant Portfolio Holder, with nominations for membership to be sought from Group Leaders.

3. Warwickshire Place Shaping Programme

Councillor Peter Butlin explained that the place shaping agenda had been in development since before the Covid-19 crisis. However, early thoughts have been revised to take account of the current and future position. Work has been undertaken to identify all the assets held by the County Council and by district and borough councils across Warwickshire. The key is to stimulate growth and to provide an environment that will enable businesses to flourish. Cabinet was informed that the Covid-19 crisis could lead to 100000 job losses across Warwickshire. However, the strengths that have made the Warwickshire economy strong in the past still exist and can be exploited.

Councillor Keith Kondakor noted that the place shaping programme could provide many opportunities for transport, citing electric bus development, new cycle routes and NUCKLE. Councillor Kondakor also pointed out that reduced patronage on buses and trains has damaged their viability.

Councillor Butlin expanded on the point made regarding electric buses. Not only would these increase connectivity, their use in Warwickshire would highlight that the county is a centre for electric vehicle development.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

- 1) Approves the objectives for the Warwickshire Place Shaping Programme, as set out as set out in paragraph 3.1 of this report.
- 2) Agrees to investigate the establishment of a Warwickshire Recovery and Investment Fund (WRIF) to support the County's post-Covid19 economic recovery and long-term place development.

3) Authorises the Strategic Director for Resources to establish effective governance arrangements for the Place Shaping Programme, including close collaborative working with key partners, and a robust framework for effective programme delivery.

4. Covid-19 Economic Recovery

Councillor Izzi Seccombe informed Cabinet that the current Covid-19 crisis had damaged the economy. There was no certainty of what the future of the economy held but it will be important to build on Warwickshire's past successes and learn new lessons.

Referencing page 39 of the published agenda and report pack, Councillor Jerry Roodhouse suggested that the proposed member working groups will need to focus on a very few key items. Councillor Seccombe agreed with this point in principal but suggested that before any attempt is made to shorten the list of proposed outcomes, the member groups should meet and report.

Resolved:

That Cabinet approve:

- 1) the proposed approach to economic recovery for Warwickshire County Council as set out in this paper, as an initial framework to inform the Place, Economy & Climate theme of the Change Portfolio, to be taken forward with members and partners.
- 2) the set of short-term support measures (set out in paragraph 2.7) recommended to support businesses and the economy in this immediate recovery foundation stage subject to the availability of funding.
- 3) the proposal to increase by £2.5m the indicative funding allocation of the "Place Shaping and Capital Investment Feasibility Fund" to a total of £7.5m, enabling this fund to support up to £4m of proposed economic recovery work, balanced by a reduction in the other investment funds proposed in section 3.

5. SEND Change Programme

Councillor Colin Hayfield (Portfolio Holder for Education and Learning) introduced the report and invited questions. Councillor Helen Adkins (Deputy Leader of the Labour Group) welcomed the report but emphasised the importance of parental choice. She stated that some parents will prefer to see their children in mainstream schools and questioned whether there will be the capacity in special schools to manage increases in demand.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse expressed his concern over the increasing backlog of Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) work. He also sought assurance that stakeholders including parents and carers will be engaged with as part of the development process.

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers (Leader of the Green Group) welcomed that the matter is to be considered by the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee. One area of concern was the increasing demand for SEND services. Councillor Chilvers observed that SEND funding in Warwickshire is lower than in other parts of the country.

Councillor Peter Butlin observed that SEND is a national issue that has seen the age range of young people supported increase along with parental expectations of the service. He concluded by stressing the need to lobby government for additional funding.

Councillor Hayfield responded the points made by members. He agreed that many parents wish to see children educated in mainstream schools. Efforts to manage work around EHCPs will continue although the need to review a child's EHCP on a regular basis adds to the workload. It was, he agreed, good that the OSC will be reviewing the programme. In concluding, Councillor Hayfield stressed the importance of early intervention but noted that funding for this service area has been cut.

Resolved:

That Cabinet

- 1) Approves the development of a SEND & Inclusion Change programme, adopting as a framework the four elements set out in paragraph 2.1
- 2) Supports the further detailed scoping of the SEND Change Programme, with proposals for prioritisation of projects across the four work streams including the DSG recovery plan to be brought back to Cabinet in July

6. Delegated Budget Scheme - Covid Response and Long Term Scheme Proposals

Councillor Jeff Clarke (Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning) introduced the report and summarised its key elements. In response Councillor Keith Kondakor observed that a number of the work types listed on page 45 of the agenda pack were on-going maintenance. They were not new projects. In addition, Councillor Kondakor requested that greater emphasis be placed on sustainable schemes such as bus shelters and the installation of cycle stands at shops.

In response to a question from Councillor Adkins around scheme progress during and post Covid-19, Cabinet was informed that an officer from each area will work with contractors to ensure that as much gets done as possible.

Resolved:

That Cabinet supports the proposed changes to the Delegated Budget Scheme and implements them for the 2021/22 financial year.

7. Historic Bridge Maintenance Programme - Capital Programme Entry

Following a brief introduction by Councillor Jeff Clarke, Councillor Seccombe outlined the project. There were no questions from the floor.

Resolved:

That Cabinet recommends that Council:

- 1) Approves the addition of the Historic Bridge Maintenance Programme to the capital programme at an estimated cost of £6.30m, funded from the Capital Investment Fund (CIF) and the Department for Transport (DfT) Challenge Fund

Subject to the approval by Council of the recommendation above that Cabinet:

- 2) Approves the submission of applications for planning permissions, any other requisite consents and any other agreements with landowners or agencies.
- 3) Authorise the Strategic Director (Communities) to invite tenders, where the expected individual contract value requires and enter into the appropriate contracts on terms and conditions acceptable to the Strategic Director (Resources)

8. 2019/20 Financial Outturn Report as at 31 March 2020 – Capital and Revenue

Councillor Peter Butlin (Deputy Leader – Finance and Property) briefed Cabinet on the key elements of the published report. As part of his introduction Councillor Butlin highlighted that it will be necessary to use some reserves as part of the financial management around Cod-19. In addition, he noted that there is expected to be slippage on projects owing to the impact of the pandemic.

Councillor Keith Kondakor emphasised the usefulness of separating out Covid-19 related projects. He noted that the pandemic had led to an acceleration of some projects such as the new telephony system. Concerning the additional funding that has been made available for the reallocation of road space, Councillor Kondakor observed that where projects are unable to progress, the funding should be reassigned. On this latter point Cabinet was informed that the funding for reallocation is set to come from central government.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

- a) Notes the net spend of £272.8m in 2019/20 and the consequent revenue underspend of £14.2m for the organisation at the end of the One Organisation Plan 2020;
- b) Notes the explanations and mitigating actions put forward by Services for variations to budgets, and the implications on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, as set out in paragraph 3.2;
- c) Notes the capital spend in 2019/20 of £109.6m and its financing;
- d) Approves the carry forward of specific services' revenue budget from 2019/20, to support the delivery of the Council Plan in 2020/21, as outlined in paragraph 5.7 and Appendix O; and

e) Notes the current reserves position for the organisation, and the implications of diverting funds held for longer term plans and risk mitigation to meet any unfunded Covid-19 costs.

9. Treasury Management Outturn 2019/20

In introducing the report Councillor Peter Butlin thanked officers for their management of the council's finances particularly during the current crisis. He noted that very low interest rates are hampering investment and stated that the Public Works Loans Board was being lobbied to move to new lower debts.

Resolved:

That Cabinet notes the Treasury Management outturn in respect of 2019/20.

Any Other Business

Councillor Jeff Morgan (Portfolio Holder for Children's Services) reported that a number of laptop computers have now been distributed to vulnerable families and that a request has been submitted to the DfE for a further 140 to be provided to young carers.

The meeting rose at 14:58

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Chair