

County Council

Tuesday, 13 October 2020

Minutes

Attendance

Alan Cockburn (Chair), Peter Gilbert (Vice Chair), Helen Adkins, Jo Barker, Margaret Bell, Parminder Singh Birdi, Sarah Boad, Mike Brain, Peter Butlin, Les Caborn, Mark Cargill, Jonathan Chilvers, Jeff Clarke, John Cooke, Andy Crump, Yousef Dahmash, Corinne Davies, Nicola Davies, Judy Falp, Jenny Fradgley, Bill Gifford, Daniel Gissane, Clare Golby, Seb Gran, Colin Hayfield, John Holland, John Horner, Andy Jenns, Kam Kaur, Keith Kondakor, Jeff Morgan, Maggie O'Rourke, Bhagwant Singh Pandher, Anne Parry, Dave Parsons, Caroline Phillips, Wallace Redford, Clive Rickhards, Howard Roberts, Kate Rolfe, Jerry Roodhouse, Andy Sargeant, Izzi Seccombe, Jill Simpson-Vince, Dominic Skinner, Heather Timms, Adrian Warwick, Alan Webb, Chris Williams, Pam Williams, Andrew Wright

1. General

(1) Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Neil Dirveiks, Dave Reilly and Dave Shilton.

The thoughts of Council were with Councillor Neil Dirveiks following his recent bereavement.

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

There were no declarations of interest made.

(3) Minutes of Previous Meetings

The minutes of the Council meetings held on 23 July 2020 and 22 September 2020 were agreed as an accurate record.

(4) Chair's Announcements

There were no announcements from the Chair.

(5) Petitions

There were no petitions to be submitted to Council.

(6) Public Speaking

There were no public speakers.

2. Statement of Accounts 2019/2020

Councillor Peter Butlin (Deputy Leader – Finance and Property) moved the recommendation and was seconded by Councillor Adrian Warwick who reserved the right to speak. Councillor Butlin explained the process that the Statement of Accounts had followed before reaching Council. He emphasised that the published balance sheet presented a snapshot of the position at 31 March 2020.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse (Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group) commended the report stating that it was evidence of good housekeeping albeit looking backwards. He highlighted the reported increase in violence stating that this was a cause for concern. Looking forward he observed that the impact of the Pandemic on business rates will be significant as will the outcome of decisions regarding the 2020 Comprehensive Spending Review.

Councillor Roodhouse concluded by highlighting the scale of deficits in schools adding that the Pandemic has meant the expected school finance recovery plan has not been delivered as expected.

Referencing page 131 of the agenda pack Councillor Keith Kondakor expressed the view that a 9% variation on property values will have a material impact on the accounts. He suggested that in view of the Pandemic, Brexit and the possibility of negative interest rates it is necessary to closely examine property values.

Councillor Andy Crump (Portfolio Holder for Fire & Rescue and Community Safety) thanked Finance staff for their hard work and added that the reserves set aside previously by the authority were of great use during the Pandemic.

Councillor Bill Gifford commended the accounts as clear and accessible.

Councillor Helen Adkins (Leader of the Labour Group) reminded members that a motion had been agreed at the May 2019 meeting of Council calling for a report on school deficits and the efforts being made by the authority to address them. That report had not been forthcoming and she asked members and officers to deliver it as soon as possible.

Vote

A vote was held. The motion was carried with one abstention.

Resolved:

That Council approves the 2019/20 Statement of Accounts.

3. Warwickshire Pension Fund Accounts 2019/20

Councillor Peter Butlin moved the recommendation. In introducing the report Councillor Peter Butlin emphasised the importance of the Pension Fund to present and former employees. He noted how the Fund's net assets had fluctuated as a result of the Pandemic but spoke of a general recovery.

Councillor John Horner seconded the motion and reserved the right to speak.

Councillor Keith Kondakor noted references to "stock lending" and counselled that this is a risky approach to investment. He also expressed concerns over the future value of property holdings (used as an investment) in the light of the Pandemic and Brexit.

In reply to Councillor Kondakor, Councillor Horner informed Council that stock lending is a frequently used and standard procedure. It is well established, and the Pension Fund is well protected.

It was acknowledged that property values have been reduced during the Pandemic. However, the Investment Strategy will address this.

Councillor Butlin expressed his confidence in the Pension Fund Investment Sub Committee adding that the former Chair, Councillor Bob Stevens was missed.

Vote

A vote was held. The recommendations were agreed with two abstentions.

Resolved:

1. That the Council approves the 2019/20 Pension Fund Statement of Accounts.
2. That the Council authorises the Strategic Director for Resources to make any amendments to the final version of the accounts to take account of any observations from the external auditors.

4. Annual Governance Statement 2019/20

Councillor Kam Kaur (Portfolio Holder for Customer and Transformation) introduced the report and moved the recommendation, being seconded by Councillor Parminder Singh Birdi who reserved the right to speak.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse expressed the hope that as the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) progresses a review of Directorate savings targets will be undertaken. In addition, he requested that the Brexit Impact Plan for Warwickshire be circulated to all members.

Councillor Kondakor noted that although Warwickshire County Council is well governed there is a need to be more robust around environmental issues. Whilst the accounts are thoroughly audited, environment issues need to be cross checked also.

Councillor Bill Gifford noted that the Chair of the Audit and Standards Committee, John Bridgeman had expressed concerns over ensuring that the County Council is prepared for a “hard Brexit”.

On the subject of Brexit, Councillor Kaur asked that a briefing session be arranged for all members. Concerning the MTFs she agreed that a number of aspects including savings targets will require a re-set. On the issue of the environment Councillor Kaur considered that the terminology around it requires review.

Vote

A vote. The recommendation was agreed unanimously.

Resolved:

That Council approves the 2019/20 Annual Governance Statement.

5. Capital Investment Fund 2020/21 Quarter 2

Councillor Peter Butlin moved the recommendations and was seconded by Councillor Izzi Seccombe who reserved the right to speak.

Councillor Butlin listed the projects for support and expressed his enthusiasm for the Capital Investment Fund which brings investment through growth.

Referencing paragraph 2.3 onwards (page 238) of the report Councillor Mark Cargill highlighted the challenges presented by the Birmingham Road in Stratford upon Avon.

On the subject of the Birmingham Road Councillor Kondakor observed that the Technical Panel had rated “sustainability, climate change and environmental impact” as 3.2 out of a possible 10. This, he felt was low. More should be done to raise the scores. He also called for traffic and air quality monitoring data to be made live.

A number of members expressed their concerns over the challenges facing Stratford and the Birmingham Road. It was noted that a failure over time by utilities companies to keep records of pipes, cables etc had complicated matters along the road. It was also suggested that a move away from the car would benefit the town.

Councillor Pam Williams thanked Councillor Butlin for supporting schemes in her area.

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers (Leader of the Green Group) questioned that the Birmingham Road scheme should be brought forward at all with its low scores. More should be done to improve the scores he added.

Regarding section 2.1 Kingsway Nursery and Children Centre Relocation Councillor Chilvers called for this to become an exemplar of high-quality sustainable building work. For example, it should not include a gas boiler.

Councillor Adrian Warwick reminded Council that there is much in the proposals that is commendable. Many of these have strong green credentials.

In summing up Councillor Butlin agreed that the Birmingham Road is a concern adding that on occasions when utilities are found to be not where they were expected to be it is of then the County Council that is impacted on financially.

Vote

A vote was held, and the recommendations agreed unanimously.

Resolved:

That Council:

- 1) Approves £3.615 million from the Capital Investment Fund for relocation work at Kingsway Nursery & Children's Centre and add to the Capital Programme at a full cost of £5.165 million.
- 2) Approves £3.025 million from the Capital Investment Fund for improvements to the A3400 Birmingham Road Corridor (Stratford) and increase the existing scheme in the Capital Programme to a full cost of £6.525 million.
- 3) Approves £2.002 million from the Capital Investment Fund for improvements to the A446 Stonebridge Junction (Coleshill) and add to the Capital Programme at a full cost of £2.378 million.
- 4) Approves £4.682 million from the Capital Investment Fund for improvements to the A429 Coventry Road Corridor (Warwick) and add to the Capital Programme at a full cost of £5.921 million, on the condition that CIL funding is secured from Warwick District Council.
- 5) Approves £1.968 million from the Capital Investment Fund for procurement of measuring equipment to support evidence led decision making in tackling the climate emergency and air quality and add to the Capital Programme at a full cost of £2.058 million.
- 6) Authorises the Strategic Director for Communities to procure and enter into any agreements to give effect to the proposals on terms and conditions acceptable to the Strategic Director for Resources.

6. Transforming Nuneaton (Highway Improvements) CIF Bid

Councillor Jeff Clarke (Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning) moved the recommendations and was seconded by Councillor Clare Golby who reserved the right to speak. Councillor Clarke summarised key elements of the published report.

Councillor Keith Kondakor tabled an amendment that stated,

That Council:

1. Approves the investment of ~~£21,704,000~~ to deliver four highway mitigation schemes along £1,900,000 to deliver A444 / Queens Road (scheme B) and A444 / Wheat Street (scheme C) along the A444 Nuneaton ring road as detailed in section 1.57 as part of the overall Transforming Nuneaton (Highway Improvements) Project to include appropriate enhanced bus and fully segregated cycle routes that may be required as part of future transport projects.

2. In the development of detailed designs for scheme A (Corporation Street/ A444) seek solutions which would allow the dandelion fountain to be retained and allow for greater improvements to air quality, bus and cycling opportunities around Midland Road/Corporation Street /Abbey Street.

3. In the development of detailed designs between Nuneaton railways stations and the town centre seek solutions which allow for improvements to the flow of pedestrians, buses, cyclists and other transport

4. That a bid be made to the Place Shaping & Capital Feasibility Fund to Progress the design of a new Nuneaton Transport hub connected to Nuneaton Railway station and new Northern station access in coordination with plans to change the road system to the south of the station so that a combined highway and transport hub project can be submitted to cabinet and full council within the next 6 months. Such a design should look at minimising impact on currently viable businesses.

5. Subject to the approval of recommendation 1 to 4 above, add the overall Transforming Nuneaton (Highway Improvements) scheme to the capital programme at a cost of ~~£29.6M~~ £23.13M as set out in Appendix 2.1 Capital Spending Profile, deferring £6M for Land Acquisition and £430K for temporary trees and temporary landscaping at site of possible transport hub.

(Struck through sections are deletions. Underlined sections are additions)

In support of the Green Group amendment Councillor Kondakor stated,

- Wheat Street is required as the venue of the proposed new library
- Corporation Street and the “dandelion fountain” roundabout require a review that will focus on cycling and walking.
- The Crown Pub should be bought and demolished to improve traffic flows by the railway station.

- It is important to identify the location of a new public transport hub before any other planning is undertaken.

Councillor Kondakor observed that the proposed project had scored 8.2 out of 10 for environmental considerations. This he suggested was unlikely to be achievable. Increasing traffic levels on the A444 will only increase air pollution. He closed by welcoming the funding but asked that the scheme be reviewed.

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers seconded the amendment. He confirmed that, in his view, the investment in Nuneaton was welcomed but did not feel that the current proposals were fit for the future.

Adjournment

To consider the Green Group amendment the meeting went into recess at 11.08 and resumed at 11.20.

Councillor Caroline Phillips welcomed the investment in Nuneaton but agreed with the Green Group amendment stating that more consideration is required before the scheme can go ahead. She asked that local members be given the opportunity to contribute to planning work on the scheme.

Councillor Jeff Morgan thanked Councillor Phillips for her comments regarding investment in Nuneaton and emphasised that the funding being discussed was part of a larger package worth almost £50m.

Councillor Dave Parsons (Deputy Leader of the Labour Group) agreed that members should have an opportunity to contribute to discussions on the scheme. Any planning should integrate consideration of car usage, public transport, cycling and walking. He concluded that investment is required but so too is local consultation.

Councillor Andy Sargeant called for segregated cycle routes to be considered where possible.

Councillor Izzi Seccombe reminded Council that there already exists a member group looking at the various schemes in Nuneaton. She agreed that engagement with partners is important but stressed that if investment is not made now it will be difficult to secure further investment in the future,

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse recognised that the report and recommendations before Council were focusing on the principles. He stated, it is important to ensure that those principles are correct before progressing further.

Councillor Peter Butlin stated that he served on the Transforming Nuneaton Board and Town Deal Board. The Transforming Nuneaton Board was a cross party body which had input into the scheme already. He stressed that for Nuneaton to grow it will be necessary for people to be able to access the town centre easily.

Councillor Clare Golby, the seconder of the original motion, emphasised the need to address traffic issues in the town centre. She noted that the transport hub had been referenced in the January 2019 prospectus. The proposal was to place it at the railway station.

Councillor Keith Kondakor questioned the proposal to plant trees where the transport hub may be placed. He added that a new entrance is required to the railway station from the Weddington side, that new cycle and bus routes are needed, that under the proposals the existing businesses would need to be relocated and that the dandelion fountain sculpture would be placed in storage. He concluded that the Queens Road, Wheat Street schemes should proceed but that more consultation was required with the local community.

Councillor Maggie O'Rourke did not consider that the Transforming Nuneaton Board is inclusive or representative. People should be able to get involved.

Councillor Jeff Clarke acknowledged that different people have different views on the proposals. He stressed that there will be an opportunity for people to express those views. The buying up of empty properties would not help the situation. Rather it would cost the Council money for little if any gain.

Vote

A recorded vote was requested for the Green Group amendment. The voting was as follows:

Votes for the amendment

Councillors Adkins, Boad, Chilvers, C. Davies, N. Davies, Falp, Fradgley, Gifford, Holland, Kondakor, O'Rourke, Parsons, Phillips, Rickhards, Rolfe, Roodhouse, Sargeant, Webb. (18)

Votes against the amendment

Councillors Barker, Bell, Singh Birdi, Brain, Butlin, Caborn, Cargill, Clarke, Cockburn, Cooke, Crump, Dahmash, Gilbert, Gissane, Golby, Gran, Hayfield, Horner, Jenns, Kaur, Morgan, Pandher, Parry, Redford, Roberts, Seccombe, Simpson-Vince, Skinner, Timms, Warwick, P Williams, Wright (32)

There were no abstentions. The amendment was lost.

A recorded vote was requested for the substantive motion. The voting was as follows:

Votes for the substantive motion

Councillors Adkins, Barker, Bell, Singh Birdi, Brain, Butlin, Caborn, Cargill, Clarke, Cockburn, Cooke, Crump, Dahmash, C.Davies, Gilbert, Gissane, Golby, Gran, Hayfield, Holland, Horner, Jenns, Kaur, Morgan, O'Rourke, Pandher, Parry, Parsons,

Phillips, Redford, Roberts, Sargeant, Seccombe, Simpson-Vince, Timms, Warwick, Webb, C. Williams, P. Williams Wright (40)

Votes against the substantive motion

Councillors Boad, Chilvers, Gifford, Kondakor, Roodhouse (5)

Abstentions:

Councillors N. Davies, Falp, Fradgley, Rickhards, Rolfe, Skinner (6)

Resolved:

That Council:

1. Approves the investment of £21,704,000 to deliver four highway mitigation schemes along the A444 Nuneaton Ring Road, as detailed in section 1.5, as part of the overall Transforming Nuneaton (Highway Improvements) Project.
2. Approves the addition of the overall Transforming Nuneaton (Highway Improvements) scheme to the capital programme at a cost of £29.6M.

7. Horton Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Proposed Revisions to Terms of Reference

Councillor Les Caborn (Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health) moved the recommendations. He was seconded by Councillor Jo Barker who reserved her right to speak.

Council was informed of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee which had originally been established to review changes to consultant-led maternity services. At the time of the creation of the joint committee Councillor Wallace Redford had been appointed as the County Council's representative on it. The committee is to continue in operation but will review the development of a masterplan for the Horton Hospital and the pursuit of capital investment into the hospital.

Councillor Jo Barker stated that she had been involved in several campaigns over time to keep the Horton Hospital open. It now appeared that fresh investment was to be made in the hospital.

Councillor Les Caborn closed by assuring Council that local members will be kept informed of developments at the Horton Hospital.

Vote

A vote was held, and the recommendations agreed unanimously.

Resolved:

That Council:

1. Agrees to amend the scope of the health scrutiny powers delegated to the Horton Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee to allow scrutiny of a masterplan for the Horton General Hospital and pursuit of associated capital investment.
2. Agrees to nominate Councillor Wallace Redford as the Council's representative on the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

8. Local Pension Board: Terms of Reference

Councillor Kam Kaur moved the recommendation and was seconded by Councillor Parminder Singh Birdi.

Council was reminded of the nature and purpose of the Local Pension Board and was informed that its work and frequency of meetings had increased over time.

Vote

A vote was held and the recommendation agreed unanimously.

Resolved:

That the Council approves the revised Terms of Reference for the Local Pension Board as set out in the appendix.

9. Appointment of Scheme Member Representative to LGPS Local Pension Board

Councillor Kam Kaur moved the recommendation and was seconded by Councillor John Horner who reserved the right to speak.

The structure of the Local Pension Board was explained as was the process followed in making the latest appointment. Councillor Bill Gifford expressed his support for the proposed appointment whilst Councillor Horner explained that the Local Pension Board was required, in part, as a response to the large number of employers who are members of the Warwickshire Pension Fund.

Vote

A vote was held and the recommendation agreed unanimously.

Resolved:

That Council approves the appointment of Mr Sean McGovern, Coroner for Warwickshire, as a Scheme member representative on the Local Pension Board.

10. Notices of Motion

Councillor Dave Parsons moved the following motion.

Affordable Housing

Recent research has clearly established that the increasing costs of private rental is a very significant factor in causing in work poverty and an affordable decent home is a fundamental requirement of good physical and mental health.

The LGA has recognised this and recommended that local authorities should be allowed to retain 100% of right to buy receipts and to set any discounts locally so that more homes to rent can be built or purchased.

In its role as a Public Health Authority and in support of its stated agenda to “level up” health inequalities and social inclusion across Warwickshire this Council urges the government to increase the supply of affordable housing and to urgently implement the LGA’s recommendations in the light of the developing recession associated with the covid pandemic and the expected health crises which will develop as a result of increasing levels of poverty and deprivation.

Councillor Caroline Phillips seconded the motion and reserved the right to speak.

In supporting the motion Councillor Dave Parsons stated that the government takes a lot of money from right to buy receipts. Up to 2018 £920m had been taken out of the housing market. This was money denied to local authorities to build new housing. Council was informed that in 2012 the then Prime Minister, David Cameron, had stated that every house sold under the right to buy scheme would be replaced within five years. This had not happened. Many houses that had been sold under right to buy had now been sold on and were being used as private rentals. Councillor Parsons requested that the Council ask the government to follow the advice of the LGA and allow local authorities to retain the revenue from the sale of houses to build new ones.

Amendment 1

Councillor Jill Simpson-Vince seconded by Councillor John Cooke tabled the following amendment.

Recent research has clearly established that the increasing costs of private rental is a very significant factor in causing work poverty and an affordable decent home is a fundamental requirement of good physical and mental health. The LGA has recognised this and recommended that local authorities should be allowed to retain 100% of right to buy receipts and to set any discounts locally so that more affordable homes to rent or purchase can be built. This council supports that recommendation.

~~*Warwickshire County Council, in its role as a Public Health Authority, and in support of its stated agenda to 'level up' health inequalities and social inclusion across Warwickshire this Council, urges the government to follow through on the recommendations in its White Paper "Planning for the Future" to look at development site viability and how those calculations are determined so that developers cannot choose to diminish or relinquish their affordable housing responsibilities, based upon individual site constraints increase the supply of affordable housing and to urgently implement the LGA's recommendations in the light of the developing recession associated with the covid pandemic and the expected health crises which will develop as a result of increasing levels of poverty and deprivation. Further this council asks that this support is included in its response to the White Paper consultation.*~~

Strike throughs are deletions. Underlining is additions.

Councillor Jill Simpson-Vince reminded Council that it is the District and Borough Councils that manage housing. All planning offices feature staff who work on securing affordable housing. Developers frequently use the argument of viability to avoid providing affordable housing. However, these assertions need to be challenged. The amendment recognises that the Planning White Paper sets out recommendations to remove viability from consideration in terms of the provision of affordable housing.

Councillor John Cooke reiterated that housing is a matter for District and Borough Councils. He noted that Warwick District Council adopts a strong position with developers when it comes to the provision of affordable housing.

Amendment 2

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse tabled a second amendment. This was seconded by Councillor Sarah Boad who reserved her right to speak. The amendment stated,

Recent research has clearly established that the increasing costs of private rental is a very significant factor in causing in work poverty and an affordable decent home is a fundamental requirement of good physical and mental health. The LGA has recognised this and recommended that local authorities should be allowed to retain 100% of right to buy receipts and to set any discounts locally so that more homes to rent can be built or purchased.

In its role as a Public Health Authority and in support of its stated agenda to "level up" health inequalities and social inclusion across Warwickshire this Council urges the government by writing to the Secretary of State to allow local authorities to build a new generation of Council housing which are zero carbon and to increase the supply of affordable housing and to urgently implement the LGA's recommendations in the light of the developing recession associated with the Covid pandemic and the expected health crises which will develop as a result of increasing levels of poverty and deprivation.

(Underlined text is additional).

Councillor Dave Parsons accepted this as a friendly amendment.

Adjournment for Lunch

The meeting adjourned for lunch at 12.28 and resumed at 13.30

On resuming the meeting, the Chair asked Councillor parsons if he would accept the Conservative amendment (number 1) as friendly. This was declined.

Adjournment

In order for members to fully understand the amendments and their relation to the original motion the meeting was adjourned from 13.35 to 13.44.

Debate

During the debate members made a series of observations as set out below.

- The District and Borough Councils are best placed to manage council run accommodation. They are the housing authorities that have a clear understanding on homelessness.
- Developers do not like having to provide affordable housing. They get little return on it and it can be seen as reducing prestige. They need to develop more of a social conscience.
- Recession will see a slow down in building. Local authorities can build through recessions and provide rental properties.
- Councils will build the type of housing that is needed eg for the over 65s.
- Councils should take over derelict and un-developed sites and also press developers to complete work on sites they have started to build on.
- As jobs disappear so does their ability to pay rents or mortgages.
- It is wrong to assume that housing is only a matter for the District and Borough Councils. People's physical and mental health relies heavily on good housing. The matter would be simplified by having a unitary council.
- Affordable housing is not necessarily affordable. It is still expensive.
- Affordable housing and energy efficient housing are not exclusive of each other. Also, affordable housing can be attractive.
- Modular housing should be given more consideration by volume house builders.
- There are a number of concerns over the Planning White Paper. These include a presumption in favour of the grant of planning permission, forcing of design guides onto local authorities which can lead to pastiche design and the way in which CIL will be calculated.
- As the County Council is not the housing authority its influence in this matter is limited. It has responded to the government consultation on the Planning White Paper, but the planning system sustains a monopoly held by the nine principal house builders.
- The argument of viability was used at Camp Hill, Nuneaton.

- There is a need for good quality housing that results in lower fuel bills.
- A policy framework is required which will prevent developers from exploiting loopholes in planning law.
- Some developers are prepared to work with communities to secure satisfactory outcomes.
- People are concerned over the future of the green belt. There is an increase in demand for housing driven by population growth and at the same time restrictions on land availability are pushing up prices.
- Problems with housing impact directly on the health service. This was emphasised in the Black Report (1980) into health inequalities.
- It is important not to dilute the original motion tabled by the Labour Group. Consensus between Groups would have been preferable.

Councillor Sarah Boad (Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group) expressed her disappointment at some of the comments made. The County Council, she stated, has been prepared in the past to debate matters that were not directly within its mandate. It is important to look out for the wellbeing of all people. The Liberal Democrat amendment had looked to the Council's climate change agenda. There are developments around Leamington where there are no solar panels. If fitted at the time of construction these can be much cheaper than when retro fitted. Councillor Sarah Boad agreed that affordable housing is expensive adding that developers slowly release land to ensure that prices remain high.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse agreed that the Council should be prepared to debate issues beyond its remit. With 1.2 million people on social housing waiting lists action is required to improve the availability of local authority housing.

Councillor Caroline Phillips called on the County Council to commence building social housing. She called for support for the LGA recommendations to be able to move away from a social precipice.

Councillor Jill Simpson-Vince called for a change in policy to place the onus on developers to prove why a site is not viable.

Councillor Dave Parsons expressed his disappointment that it had not been possible to achieve a degree of consensus. He reminded members that there is no bigger factor in health than decent housing.

Vote

A recorded vote was requested for amendment 1. The voting was as follows.

Votes for the amendment

Councillors Barker, Singh Birdi, Brain, Butlin, Caborn, Cargill, Clarke, Cockburn, Cooke, Crump, Dahmash, Gilbert, Golby, Gran, Hayfield, Horner, Jenns, Kaur, Morgan, Pandher, Redford, Roberts, Sargeant, Seccombe, Simpson-Vince, Timms, Warwick, C. Williams, P. Williams, Wright (30)

Votes against the amendment

Councillors Adkins, Boad, Chilvers, C. Davies, N. Davies, Falp, Fradgley, Gifford, Gissane, Holland, Kondakor, O'Rourke, Parsons, Phillips, Rickhards, Rolfe, Roodhouse, Skinner, Webb

There were no abstentions.

Resolved:

Recent research has clearly established that the increasing costs of private rental is a very significant factor in causing work poverty and an affordable decent home is a fundamental requirement of good physical and mental health. The LGA has recognised this and recommended that local authorities should be allowed to retain 100% of right to buy receipts and to set any discounts locally so that more affordable homes to rent or purchase can be built. This council supports that recommendation.

Warwickshire County Council, in its role as a Public Health Authority, and in support of its stated agenda to 'level up' health inequalities and social inclusion, urges the government to follow through on the recommendations in its White Paper "Planning for the Future" to look at development site viability and how those calculations are determined so that developers cannot choose to diminish or relinquish their affordable housing responsibilities, based upon individual site constraints. Further this council asks that this support is included in its response to the White Paper consultation.

11. Member Question Time (Standing Order 7)

Question 1 Councillor Jerry Roodhouse to Councillor Les Caborn

Q "This Council adopted the "Dignity in Care 10 points" following a motion in 2007. Could the Portfolio Holder confirm what actions have been taken to ensure that these 10 points have been followed through?"

A. This has been ongoing for some time and has become fully embedded in our quality frameworks. All our commissioned providers work to ensure quality and dignity of care. Their work forces are fully trained, and whistle blowing is promoted. The service specification that a care provider must adhere to is person-centric and ensures ongoing engagement with the families of those in care. Care plans are highly inclusive, and we work constantly with the CQC and Healthwatch to adapt care guidance for providers.

In response to a supplementary question from Councillor Roodhouse Councillor Caborn agreed to write to care providers regarding the Dignity in Care network.

Question 2 Councillor Jerry Roodhouse to Councillor Kam Kaur

Q. "Covid and working from home has shown how crucial a good broadband provider is along with a good connection. Customer experiences are very varied from these

providers and in some cases no responses are received to complaints. Will the Portfolio Holder undertake to write to the Secretary of State Rt Hon Oliver Dowden CBE, at the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport with a copy to the LGA highlighting these concerns and asking that stronger standards of customer care need to be introduced?"

A. I completely agree with you that secure and reliable access to fast Internet services has become critical to everyone, especially as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and the increasing need to work from home. I can inform you that we already have plans in place to improve digital connectivity across Warwickshire, including fibre and 4G/5G mobile connectivity.

Internet Service Providers are an additional link in the connectivity system, and it is also essential that they maintain a good level of performance. Overall, we are not aware of problems with any particular service providers but will certainly raise your concerns with DCMS.

I would suggest, at this stage, we speak with our contact in DCMS, one of the Senior Policy Advisers working within the Barrier Busting Task Force in DCMS and get these concerns shared with both OFCOM and the Secretary of State. Hopefully, by taking this course of action we can escalate and work towards a resolution of the problem.'

As a supplementary question Councillor Roodhouse asked that any letter go to the Secretary of State and the LGA. This was agreed.

Question 3 Councillor Jerry Roodhouse to Councillor Heather Timms

Q. "Increasing pollinators, and tree planting all help towards increasing our natural environment. WCC is a major landowner and along with school playing fields make up a substantial amount of land. Would the Portfolio Holder agree to write to all Academy's and Schools under LA control asking them to identify areas that do not need grass cutting and could be used to support pollinators and asking them also to identify areas where extra trees can be planted also to bring forward quickly a policy for the increase of pollinators and trees on County Council owned land?"

A. The County Council works hard to encourage biodiversity and has its own biodiversity strategy. It has been recognised as being the first local authority in the country to display bio-diversity net gain. Biodiversity is encouraged through the Covid-19 recovery plan and the Council Plan 2025. The Council's Forestry Team operates a tree planting scheme and works with voluntary groups and schools. A meeting was held with representatives of the Woodland Trust who currently work with Parish Councils. There is scope for them to work with schools also. A letter will be sent to schools to encourage tree planting.

Councillor Sarah Boad noted that tree planting is very popular. However, the HS2 project is resulting in the removal of trees apparently when there is little case for doing so. She asked Councillor Timms to write to HS2 with a request that fewer trees be felled. This she agreed to do.

Question 4. Councillor Bill Gifford to Councillor Les Caborn

“As Covid 19 numbers rise especially in and around the University of Warwick Campus, I am sure we are all concerned for the welfare of the young people who have moved into our area. What actions such as providing food and other basic commodities to students who are having to self-isolate at home are the County Council taking with Coventry City Council to ensure their safety and that any increased Covid-19 infections amongst Warwick University students do not spread to the wider community in Coventry and Leamington Spa?”

A. The County Council and Warwick District Council are working closely with universities and have established a clear student code of conduct. A joint letter has been sent to students and landlords and we are working to ensure robust data collection. Only a small proportion of Coventry University Students reside in Warwickshire. However, a significant number of Warwick University Students do. We have been responding to any local outbreaks of Coronavirus although the majority have been associated with the Coventry campus. Regular operational meetings are held with Coventry City Council Public Health and the universities.

A separate answer will be provided regarding the provision of food and other commodities.

Question 5 Councillor Dominic Skinner to Councillor Les Caborn

Q. “Significant changes are being proposed for the minor injuries unit at Stratford Hospital and at the Ellen Badger Hospital in Shipston. Local members only learned of these proposals through the media.

Can the Portfolio Holder assure members that the business case for these changes will be brought to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration?”

A. A briefing has been offered on the changes proposed in Shipston. Further discussions will be held with the provider and if any major changes are identified these will be brought before the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Question 6 Councillor Helen Adkins to Councillor Colin Hayfield

Q. “A motion was passed previously by Council to instigate a report on schools in deficit and Warwickshire and what measures the County Council is putting in place to support those schools. That report is awaited. Can the Portfolio Holder please provide an update on it?”

A. There is a working group that monitors school deficits. It was thought that a briefing note on the situation had been provided to the Children and Young People’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

In response Councillor Helen Adkins stated that a briefing was inadequate. It is important that a report is provided outlining the actions being undertaken.

Council was reminded by Councillor Seccombe that the County Council is not permitted to financially support schools that are in deficit.

Question 7 Councillor Keith Kondakor to Councillor Heather Timms

Q. "What actions are proposed to move towards single waste management arrangements?"

A. If this were to be progressed it would be through the Warwickshire Waste Partnership. At present the members of the Partnership show no desire to have single waste management arrangements. Discussions on the issue will be pursued through the climate change agenda.

Councillor Keith Kondakor observed that a move to electric bin lorries and greater education around waste would be of use.

Question 8 Councillor Dan Gissane to Councillor Leas Caborn

Q. "Despite assurances, waiting times for children's and adult mental health services continue to be unreasonably long. What is the County Council doing to see these times reduced? What is the County Council doing to signpost people to other providers and support groups?"

A. This has been discussed at Overview and Scrutiny at length. It is important to be clear of all the facts. (Councillor Gissane agreed to email Councillor Caborn with his concerns for a more comprehensive answer).

Question 9 Councillor Keith Kondakor to Councillor Jeff Clarke

Q. "Under the Transforming Nuneaton Plan the planting of a number of trees is proposed on the potential site of the transport hub. How will the trees eventually be re-located?"

A. The plans are under development, so it is not possible to provide a definitive answer on this. As fresh information becomes available so this will be fed through. It will be important to ensure that whatever landscaping is done is sustainable.

12. Any Other items of Urgent Business

None

The meeting rose at 15.23

.....
Chair