

County Council

Monday 8 February 2021

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

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

Others Present

1. General

(1) Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Andy Wright.

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

Concerning agenda item 2 the following county councillors, as members of town and parish councils (which are in turn members of the Warwickshire and West Midlands Association of Local Councils) declared non-pecuniary interests for noting. Councillors Adrian Warwick, Sarah Boad, Dave Reilly, Bill Gifford, Judy Falp, Jo Barker, Andy Jenns, Dave Parsons, Mark Cargill and Ann Parry.

(3) Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on 15 December 2020 were considered by Council. Councillor Keith Kondakor requested a change to page 5 of the minutes. (Page 9 of

the document pack). The change was to the statement, “....in June 2019 Etone College missed out on wave funding”. This, he said should say, “....in June 2019 Nuneaton missed out on wave funding”. This change was accepted by Council. Taking account of the requested change the minutes were agreed.

(4) Chair's announcements

1. Death of Former County Councillor Mota Singh

Councillor Alan Cockburn (Chair of Council) announced the death on 31 January 2021 of former County Councillor Mota Singh. The meeting was informed that Mota Singh had been elected to the County Council in 1985 being the first Indian to serve on the Council. During his 24 years with the County Council Mota Singh served on the Police Committee and its successor the Police Authority. In 21 years on these bodies he served twice as Chair.

He also had a particular interest in social services and education.

In 1999 Mota became the Vice Chair of Council and in 2000 he became Chair. As Chairman, he met Prince Charles at Stratford Upon Avon, Her Majesty the Queen at a Buckingham Palace garden party, and escorted Prince Philip at the Royal Show at Stoneleigh.

Tributes to Mota Singh were paid by members of Council.

Councillor Parminder Singh Birdi remembered Mota Singh as a staunch socialist who was an inspiration to others through the commitment he demonstrated to the people he served for over 24 years.

Councillor John Holland commented on the length of time that Mota Singh served on the council. He would be remembered for being warm and friendly and always interested in people. Nothing was too much trouble for him. He commenced his working day as a post man and post driver at 4.30 in the morning. Having completed his duties, he would then commence his work for the community. Although he had been unable to complete his education in India, this was not a barrier to him. He would be greatly missed.

Councillor Sarah Boad had known Mota Singh since 1994. Membership of Leamington Town Council meant that they continued to work together until his retirement from politics in 2019. Mota Singh was notable in that he became Deputy Mayor of Leamington on his election to the Town Council. This was unusual and can be attributed to his record with Warwickshire County Council. He was a kind and gentle man who will be greatly missed.

Councillor Maggie O'Rourke knew Mota Singh through their work on equality and inclusion. He worked tirelessly, always finding time to listen. In memory of Mota Singh Councillor O'Rourke quoted Mahatma Gandhi. “The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others”.

Councillor Izzi Seccombe (Leader of the Council) remembered Mota Singh on the Police Authority. He was a quiet man who could fill the room with his personality.

Councillor Judy Falp observed that Mota Singh was gentleman. When she was out in

Whitnash with the late Bernard Kirton, Mota Singh would always find time to say hello and enquire after them.

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers (Leader of the Green Group) observed that Mota Singh was a breaker of boundaries who was always liked. As time moved on he became ever more popular in his community; Successive elections saw his majority grow. He would always listen and if he thought a cause was just, he would pursue with great tenacity. Councillor Janet Alty (Leamington Town Council) was a mutual friend who travelled with Mota Singh to India to visit the school set up in his son's memory.

Councillor Helen Adkins noted that Mota Singh's legacy has been to pass the baton on to colleagues who are the first female Sikh councillors in the area.

Councillor Wallace Redford had known Mota Singh for many years as the local postman. He always found time for a chat and a cup of tea and always had a real interest in people's wellbeing.

Councillor Alan Cockburn shared an interest in agriculture with Mota Singh whose family had farmed in the Punjab region of India. The Punjab, Mota Singh maintained, had the most fertile land anywhere in the world.

2. Death of Former County Councillor Lady Jean Liggins

The death in December 2020 of former County Councillor Lady Jean Liggins was noted. Lady Liggins served the County Council from 1985 to 1989. In 1990 she was awarded the CBE for her services to politics.

Councillor Les Caborn remembered that when he first stood for the County Council in Barford, Lady Liggins had introduced him to all the people he needed to know. In 1984 she narrowly avoided the bombing of the Grand Hotel in Brighton as she has left early for a meeting back at home. She decided not to stand for a second term with the County Council as it was, "not lively enough".

Councillor John Holland knew Lady Liggins quite well after she moved to Warwick. He informed Council that she insisted on being called "Jean" rather than "Lady"

Councillor Izzi Seccombe recognised Lady Liggins as a power in the Conservative Party. She was committed to serving her community and although gentle and quiet she showed great tenacity. Councillor Seccombe drew a parallel between Mota Singh and Jean Liggins who both showed great commitment to the people they served.

Councillor Sarah Boad had been at health-related meetings with Lady Liggins. She had demonstrated great commitment to public service.

Council observed a minute's silence in memory of Mota Singh and Lady Jean Liggins.

3. Mayor of Leamington's Quiz

Councillor Cockburn informed the meeting that he had attended a virtual quiz night organised

by the Mayor of Leamington Spa. Six teams were entered, and Councillor Cockburn's team had won.

2. 2021/22 Budget and 2021-26 Medium Term Financial Strategy

Councillor Peter Butlin (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property) introduced the item by thanking Virginia Rennie and Andy Felton for their assistance and hard work in developing the budget. He then proceeded to set out the Conservative Group's budget proposals as contained in the appendix to the published report. In doing so he emphasised the following points.

- The 2020/21 budget and Medium -Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) were agreed prior to the Pandemic when the Council's reserves and overall budget were in a healthy condition. Since March 2020 much has changed. The Council has lost three Councillors who are greatly missed, staff have transferred to home working, a shielding programme has been developed and delivered, additional support has been provided to care homes, PPE has been required to be sourced, food vouchers have been delivered to vulnerable children, laptops have been sourced and distributed to assist with children's education and the wellbeing of the Council's own staff has been managed.
- The challenges presented to Warwickshire have been significant. Unemployment levels have risen from 2% to 5%. Income levels have fallen and costs risen.
- The Autumn Settlement was delivered on a one-year basis when a three year settlement would have enhanced financial planning.
- The Council continues to be prudent, assessing risks and reviewing the MTFS on an annual basis.
- The Pandemic has resulted in delays to the Local Government Review, Fair Funding Review, Social Care reform and the review of business rates.
- Flexibility around financial management will be required to react to the Pandemic and its aftermath.
- The key word to focus on is "recovery". The evolving Warwickshire Property and Development Company along with the Warwickshire Recovery and Investment Fund are expected to assist with this.
- A series of funds are to be established. These include a Preventing Vulnerability Investment Fund, a Climate Change Fund and a Place Shaping and Economic Growth Fund.
- It is proposed that Council Tax is raised by 2.99%
- There is a need to optimise the use of the Council's estate.
- The high needs block is currently exceeding the funding being made available to it. A new facility is being developed at Exhall and high needs hubs are being developed around the county.
- Reserves will need to be managed carefully with an element of them being used to support recovery. Upskilling of the workforce will be required as will initiative to assist school leavers in finding work.
- Mental health is a major issue for young and old. Lockdown has had a negative impact and there is a growing need to help residents who are experiencing problems.
- The value of the County's country parks is recognised. Future developments for these will include active travel initiatives, and youth provision as well as music and theatre events.
- Road safety is importance. The wider use of 20mph speed limits is being considered.
- A review of household waste recycling centres is to be undertaken.

In summary, Councillor Peter Butlin recognised that the Council faces many challenges. It has a duty to ensure that residents can take advantage of the opportunities presented to them and to develop a sustainable future for them. 2020 demonstrated the strength of the Council. Councillor Izzi Seccombe seconded the motion and reserved her right to speak.

Amendments

Labour Group Amendment

Councillor Helen Adkins thanked finance officers for their hard work and proceeded to make the following points:

- It is recognised that there is a need to encourage economic growth.
- The government has failed to provide long term funding for local government.
- A 5% increase in Council Tax would be unacceptable.
- There appears to be no alternative but to increase Council Tax and the social care precept.
- Council Tax increases will not counter reductions in government funding. Therefore, further savings of £7.8m will be required of the Council in 2021/22. This will increase to 47.7m by 2026.
- A series of funds are proposed. These include an Educational Support Fund, an Investing in Communities Fund, a BAME Community Support Fund, a Council Tax Support Fund, a Tackling Health Inequalities and Well-being Fund, a Property Development Fund, a COVID Business Recovery Fund and a Climate Change Fund.

Councillor Dave Parsons seconded the amendments and reserved the right to speak.

Liberal Democrat Group Amendment

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse thanked finance officers for their hard work regarding the budget. In addition, he thanked staff from the County Council, NHS and support staff for their work during the Pandemic. He then made the following points:

- The position the administration finds itself in is fully understood.
- The Liberal Democrat Group is committed to work with any group for the benefit of the people of Warwickshire.
- The priorities for the Liberal Democrat Group lay in mental health and families recognising that there is also a need to provide more support for children's services.
- The Pandemic had seen a significant increase in calls to the safeguarding hub highlighting the pressures that families are currently under.
- Investment and climate change are of importance but mental health and families need to come first.

Councillor Sarah Boad seconded the amendment and reserved the right to speak.

Green Group Amendment

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers thanked officers for their work and made the following points:

- The impact of the Pandemic on jobs, businesses, mental health, debt, care homes and the way people work has been significant. In these uncertain times setting a budget is not easy.

- Central government has not provided a framework for local government to operate in. A one-year funding settlement is inadequate and there has been no settlement on social care or SEND.
- The government expects shortfalls in funding to be made good through Council Tax increases.
- A five-year financial plan is to be welcomed although it is acknowledged that a one year budget has to be set.
- The County Council has an excellent Youth Strategy that will rebuild work for young people. However, one off allocations of funding are inappropriate. The Green Group budget provides for permanent allocations of funding.
- Support for addiction services is important. If homeless services, mental health services and domestic abuse services are to work effectively so too must addiction services.
- Workers in care homes are under increasing pressure during the Pandemic. Many have witnessed traumatic deaths. Counselling should be provided to them.
- The climate emergency continues in the midst of the Pandemic. The Green Group budget places an additional £3m into the Climate Fund. Renewable energy should replace gas boilers in council buildings and schools. More tree planting should be undertaken and £2m should be made available for a transport transformation fund.
- Cycling and walking should be upgraded to the government's "Gear Change" standard. Consideration should be given to rail projects including the Honeybourne line and Warwick University station. In addition, neighbourhood zones should be introduced. For these to progress more staff will be required and strong business cases developed.
- The business plan for the Warwickshire Property and Development Company should be reviewed, delaying the launch of the company by a year. Social value needs to come to the fore. This is possible whilst still making a profit. The Green Group budget includes two new hubs for the excellent housing project for care leavers, growing a suite of modern, small care homes. Business cases for these should be brought forward sooner rather than later.

In summary Councillor Chilvers welcomed proposals from other groups mental health and inequalities. There is a need for consistency of investment in people in areas like youth services and addiction services and in addition the pace on climate change and transport transformation needs to be accelerated.

Councillor Keith Kondakor seconded the amendment and chose to speak. He made the following points:

- Town centres should have health centres in them. The Green Group budget makes provision to pump prime the development of one such centre in Nuneaton.
- Transport initiatives are too slow and late. There is a need for a second entrance to Nuneaton station on the Weddington side. This has been awaited for some time.
- Flood alleviation schemes should focus on higher in the catchment area. Funds should be assigned for works in woods and on farmland.
- Tree planting should be undertaken in a properly managed way. The right trees should be planted in the right areas.
- The Bermuda Connectivity scheme is too far advanced to cancel. However, it should be reinvented as a green transport project.

- The Property and Development Company is a good idea. However, it should not simply aim to build what the volume house builders do. The right houses should be built to meet the changes needs of the population.
- Some of the smaller household recycling centres may close if they are unviable. In addition, there should be a move towards repairing objects rather than disposing of them.

Amendment to Conservative Motion

Councillor Peter Butlin tabled an amendment to the Conservative Group motion. This was to reintroduce the £100K originally proposed to be removed from the domestic abuse budget. The funds would be taken from reserves. The amendment was seconded by Councillor Izzi Seccombe and agreed by all groups.

Debate

Members of Council made the following points:

Councillor Jeff Morgan (Portfolio Holder for Children's Services)

- Over the last year demand for children's services has risen significantly with more families in need of support.
- The incidence of reported domestic abuse has increased by 20% in the last 3 months.
- The high number of 841 children are in care in Warwickshire. This is partly due to delays in processing of caseloads and partly to a backlog of cases at the family courts.
- There is a need to stay in contact with children during the Pandemic.
- The Conservative budget proposes additional funds for children's care. This will be required to meet additional placement costs as well as higher costs in other parts of the service. Additional funds are proposed for children with disabilities and to double the capacity of the out of hours social care team. In addition, £900k is earmarked for youth services and £1m for people leaving care.
- Cabinet has agreed a change in policy and is looking to develop an Ofsted registered children's home in the south of the county. There is a plan to extend this initiative to other parts of Warwickshire.
- It is important to target young people who are in distress, providing mental health support and reducing self-harm and suicide.

Councillor Pam Williams

- The new emergency duty team is to be commended for its hard work.
- The Family Information Service was set up some time ago and provides an excellent service.
- That there are over 800 children currently in care is concerning. Special Guardianship Orders allow children to stay with their families. More foster carers are coming forward, but it is better if children can stay with their families.
- The Conservative budget is a budget for recovery.

Councillor John Holland

- The Pandemic has led to major economic challenges.
- During the economic downturn in the 1980s the County Council responded strongly by buying up land for employment development and working with colleges to ensure people had the right skills. Nothing like that seems to happen now.
- Cuts to the NHS budget have seen a reduction in services like school nurses whilst measures to improve child nutrition now extend largely to signposting to food banks.
- People in financial difficulty are not in a position to pay additional Council Tax charges.
- Plans for unitary status have so far not been progressed.
- A strong recovery plan is needed along with good leadership. This latter element appears to be missing from the administration's budget.

Councillor Clive Rickhards

- The Liberal Democrat budget provides resources for cycle routes, rights of way and forestry.
- Rights of way are presenting a growing problem. The team that supports them is very small but there is growing pressure from those who wish to see the routes opened up to motor vehicles. In addition, there is a greater need for maintenance.

Councillor Les Caborn (Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health)

- The administration's budget is one for Covid recovery.
- Two years ago, it was agreed that the Council will aim for bronze status with the "Thrive at Work" initiative. This focuses on the mental health of staff. The Council is 80% towards achieving the award. The Council has 17 "Listening Mates" and 450 staff have completed the wellbeing and resilience programme. Other businesses are being encouraged to introduce this initiative to their work forces.
- A combined bid of £12.5m for mental health has been submitted to government. It has been confirmed that £189k will be granted to support a suicide and bereavement service.
- £840k will be made available over three years for crisis admission
- £1.3m is to be made available to support mental health resilience work in the voluntary and community sector.
- A Living Well With Dementia Fund will be established to support a new strategy for the development of dementia and memory cafes. Assistive technologies to help people with dementia will also be explored.
- Young peoples' mental health services (outside of CAMHS) will be supported. Work is already underway on a self-harm reduction strategy.
- More funds are proposed to support the All Age Autism Strategy.
- Additional funds are required to support social care. It will be necessary to take the social care levy.
- Social care is changing. For example, the Fire and Rescue Service is engaged in hospital discharge and transport services.
- There is a growing awareness of the impact of Long-Covid.
- Families are reluctant to place their loved ones in care homes during the Pandemic
- Almost £3.5m will be put into Public Health.

Councillor Ann Parry

- HS2 is having a major detrimental impact on the countryside and on residents.
- Road closures around Southam are causing major distress to communities.
- The Liberal Democrat Group is seeking a major reduction in HS2 mitigation funding. This is regrettable.

Councillor Caroline Phillips

- Nuneaton has seen cuts in services to youth centres, children's centres and family support workers.
- Council Tax is increasing annually, and poverty is increasing. This is exacerbated by people having to wait five weeks to receive Universal Credit.
- A crisis with the SEND service has led to family breakdowns and there has been a significant increase in mental health problems generally.
- Additional funding now proposed is welcomed but cuts should not have been made previously.

Councillor Judy Falp

- The Green Group is to be thanked for negotiating for the Conservative amendment regarding the domestic violence support budget.
- Domestic violence is on the increase and it is likely that all elected members have encountered it at some point.

Councillor Jill Simpson-Vince

- The last 12 months has seen a great deal of change that has required the Council to be adaptable.
- The administration has been prudent over time and built up the reserves that are now being called upon.
- The implications of the pandemic are on a scale different to anything seen previous. Officers are to be congratulated on their hard work.

Councillor Maggie O'Rourke

- Thanks are due to the NHS, social care workers and to local government in general.
- Households are experiencing financial pressures, struggling to pay bills and experiencing job losses. Once the furlough period ends there will be further suffering.
- More funds are required to support local government if it is to survive.

Councillor Nicola Davies

- The Conservative Group amendment regarding domestic violence is welcomed.
- The Liberal Democrat budget provided £4m for families and young people and also looks to support cycle ways and forestry.

Councillor Adrian Warwick

- The proposed increase to Council Tax is 2.99% and not 5% as has been suggested.

- The government provides funds to the public sector, but that money has to be raised through taxes. Amongst other things it has supported furlough arrangements, business support and business loans. The government has done much to support local government through the pandemic.
- The County Council is developing two key drivers for recovery, the Warwickshire Property and Development Company and the Warwickshire Recovery and Investment Fund (WRIF). It is important to keep people in jobs and the WRIF will help to do this.
- The current administration has resisted using reserves in previous years. Now those reserves can be used to assist in service continuity and Covid recovery.

Councillor Colin Hayfield (Portfolio Holder for Education and Learning)

- The SEND budget is under significant pressure having seen an increase in demand.
- The County Council has no control over the Dedicated Schools Grant. It is passported by the Council from government to schools.
- There remain issues with some schools that are experiencing financial difficulties. The Council is not allowed to fund schools, but it can provide advice.
- The financial future of maintained nurseries is uncertain.
- There are ambitious plans to expand schools and build new ones. Work is underway on the new special needs facility in Exhall and the proposed new school at Higham Lane, Nuneaton has been given approval.
- Warwickshire has witnessed a 50% decline in school exclusions and its NEETs levels are below the national average.
- COVID has led to many thousands of school days being lost. There were already gaps in educational attainment across Warwickshire but these will be exacerbated by the Pandemic.
- The Nuneaton Education Strategy is beginning to produce positive results.
- Remote learning during the pandemic was patchy to begin with but has improved markedly. This has been helped by the distribution of laptops.
- Where staff and pupils are in school much has been done to make them as safe as possible.
- Schools have pulled together and much of the credit for this rests with officers of the County Council such as Ian Budd.

Councillor Jeff Clarke

- The transport infrastructure in Warwickshire is very good. It assists businesses to grow.
- Several major schemes have been completed including Stanks Island and the Northgate Junction in Warwick along with Coton Arches in Nuneaton.
- Further major capital projects in road and rail will be explored. It is also important to protect the county's environmental heritage.
- Modal shift is very important to the council. This is evidenced by the investment in the K2L cycle way project.
- There is a need to ensure the safety of children and other residents. This can be assisted through road safety schemes, active travel and cycle route development.
- In 2021/22 there will be no increase in the cost of residents' parking schemes or on street parking charges. A cross party working group is to be established to consider business parking.

- Warwickshire's roads are well maintained. £7m of pot hole funding will enable over 100 resurfacing and repair schemes.
- The winter gritting service is benefitting in investments in digital technology.
- A series of major capital schemes are being developed. These include Emscote Road, Warwick, A46 Stoneleigh junction and College Street, Nuneaton.
- £6.3m has been assigned for historic bridge repairs.
- Work is underway with the DfT on a new rural mobility initiative whilst a new electric bus scheme is being developed with Coventry.

Councillor Clare Golby

- The administration is proposing to invest heavily in targeted youth work.
- Family centres were reorganised, but they do still exist. The focus is on communities and not on bricks and mortar.
- The Council Tax Support Fund as proposed by the Labour Group is a statutory measure that is already undertaken by the district and borough councils.
- The chances of becoming a carbon free council are slim. Any proposals should be to become carbon neutral.
- Covid recovery should be prioritised over carbon reduction at this time.
- The government has provided over £31m Covid support to Warwickshire.
- It is not advisable to tell people that services no longer exist. If they believe this, they may not seek support when they need it.
- HS2 related funding is complicated. The Liberal Democrat Group wish to reduce this but in practice all expenditure by the Council on HS2 is refunded. Therefore, there is no advantage in reducing it. In addition, it would be difficult to explain to people living along the route of HS2 why any support should be withdrawn.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned for lunch at 12.30 reconvening at 13.15.

On returning it was confirmed by opposition groups that they agreed to the Conservative amendment regarding funding for domestic violence support services.

Debate (Continued)

Councillor Kam Kaur (Portfolio Holder for Customer and Transformation)

- The past year has presented a series of major challenges to the Council. Staff had, almost overnight, had to adapt to working from home. The Council had responded well, showing great agility and learning new skills. New services were introduced. These included shielding, a Covid hotline, the roll out of PPE, mass testing and a tracing service.
- That the council had recently invested in Microsoft 365 and new devices was a major help. In addition, the ongoing roll out of superfast broadband meant that many people in the county had been able to continue working.
- The 5G partnership in Leamington will bring advantages to the gaming sector.
- A Digital Infrastructure Strategy has been produced.

- Social media usage is increasing with over 10 million opportunities for people to see content on the County Council's account.
- Sickness levels have reduced to 8.45 days from an average in March 2020 of 10.9 days.
- The regular check-in surveys have shown positive results from staff. They have also displayed good levels of engagement.
- A new equality, diversity and inclusion programme has been established. This ongoing conversation will need to continue into 2021/22.
- Libraries continue to provide an excellent service. Befriending calls have been particularly successful.
- The Registration Service has been busy. At one point it was facing a major backlog of work particularly around the registration of births. That has now eased.
- It would not be appropriate to run down reserves unnecessarily.

Councillor Heather Timms (Portfolio Holder for Environment and Heritage & Culture)

- The Warwickshire Welfare Scheme is operating well.
- The voluntary and community sector has responded well to the pandemic. Additional funds are earmarked to support this area.
- The booking system introduced during the Pandemic at the household waste and recycling centres has been a success.
- A new waste management strategy is being developed. The County Council is leading with this.
- Real action is being undertaken around climate change. The County Council uses 100% green energy and aims to be carbon neutral by 2030.
- Other initiatives include the Green Shoots Grant, Solar Together, tree planting and eco schools.
- The country parks have seen new parking systems introduced.
- Tourism and culture will work together to support the recovery of industry. The City of Culture and Commonwealth Games will both be good for Warwickshire.

Councillor Andy Jenns

- The investment proposed for country parks is to be welcomed.
- The importance to concessions in the country parks should be recognised.

Councillor Andy Crump (Portfolio Holder for Fire and Rescue and Community Safety)

- Credit should be given to all staff and especially the Leadership Team.
- Since 2018 the Fire and Rescue Service has invested in new equipment including vehicles that reduce its carbon footprint.
- Two inspections have been held in the last few months. Both have been very positive.
- Work with partners including the Police continues. The sharing of facilities establishes a uniform presence in an area.
- £300k has been assigned for fire protection whilst capital expenditure will take the form of new training facilities.
- Water and road safety initiatives are aimed principally at young people.

- New flood protection schemes are being developed with the Environment Agency and Severn Trent Water. In addition, new approaches to flood resilience through woodland planting and natural flood management are being explored.
- The Trading Standards Service has provided much support during lockdown. Work has covered cybercrime with a focus on the elderly and vulnerable. Animal health and fair trading have also featured.
- Road and community safety have featured extensively.

Councillor Margaret Bell

- The prudential approach to budget management led to the creation of the reserves that have been needed during Pandemic and which will support the economic recovery.
- The government has provided much financial support in areas such as mental health. It is also providing resources for the rebuilding of new schools of which Hartshill will be one.

Councillor Dave Parsons (Seconder of the Labour Group Amendment)

- Councils have been under financial constraints for ten years.
- Resources have to be raised through taxes. The Council Tax is unfair as it penalises the less well off. Council Tax has risen 32.7% in ten years, a time of low wage growth.
- The government has reduced funding to councils whilst increasing their responsibilities. However, the cost of not delivering on education or social care would outweigh the costs delivering them.
- The Council is to be commended for its foresight around reserves but there remain many inequalities across the county.

Councillor Sarah Boad (Seconder of the Liberal Democrat Amendment)

- Thanks to staff for all their hard work during lock. Thanks too to schools and teachers which have not closed during lockdown.
- The mental health of children and families is of great importance. Working from home and home education have been particularly challenging.
- Domestic violence services need supporting especially at this time.
- Cycling and forestry should be supported. The importance of being outdoors has been highlighted but cycling needs to be made safe.
- The Liberal Democrat budget has included £150k for eco schools and partnership working with town and parish councils.
- The best way to support people is to support local government.
- A one-year financial settlement makes planning difficult.
- Previously each political group would develop its own budget. These were times of growth. However, since 2010 budgets have been required to be developed simply to manage cuts.
- The LGA needs to press government to recognise the role of local councils.

Councillor Izzi Seccombe (Seconder of Motion)

- Staff and members are thanked for their help in developing the budget.
- Prior to the Pandemic, Warwickshire had a very strong economy with low levels of unemployment.

- During the Pandemic the government has supported Warwickshire financially and through the furlough scheme.
- Officers of the council are to be commended for their hard work during the Pandemic. It should also be noted how much work has been done in partnership with the district and borough councils.
- Cross party work on Covid -19 recovery has been very successful.
- A number of initiatives such as business loans and grants are helping to safeguard jobs.
- The economy has already seen increases in new start-up companies.
- Local government has been pivotal in assisting communities. Its work has been supported by volunteers.
- The Council was fortunate in being in a strong financial position prior to the Pandemic.

Councillor Helen Adkins (Mover of Labour Group Amendment)

- The Council cannot continue to cut services and increase Council Tax.
- Additional funding is required for SEND, home to school transport, black and minority ethnic groups and to tackle health inequalities.
- Ten years of austerity has added stresses to the system.
- There is now a need to consider how best to press central government for more resources.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse (Mover of Liberal Democrat Group Amendment)

- Local government is often the victim of central government decisions. At one point in the past there was talk of Council Tax increases of 13%.
- The Pandemic has changed everything and there will be no going back to how things were previously.
- The Covid recovery cross party working groups were very successful. This model should be repeated.
- The Liberal Democrat Group amendment is not reliant on bids for funding. The budget lines are put against priorities.
- Children's Social Services will see more mental health and domestic violence cases.

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers (Mover of the Green Group Amendment)

- The Council is facing at least another five years of cuts to budgets and services.
- Suggesting that savings in the education budget will come from efficiencies is misleading. In practice services will be cut.
- Large capital highway projects such as the Stoneleigh junction with the A46 should be abandoned in favour of modal shift.
- The introduction of 20mph zones around schools are to be welcomed. These should extend into neighbourhoods.
- Tree planting is to be welcomed but the Council should be more advanced with this.
- Natural flood management is to be welcomed.
- The pace of change with transport and the climate emergency needs to increase.

Councillor Peter Butlin (Mover of the Conservative Group Motion)

- The last year has illustrated that local government can deliver. The council has been at the forefront of this.
- The proposed Conservative budget seeks to accelerate recovery.
- There is no case to delay the implementation of the property and development company. It is needed now to aid recovery.
- The Warwickshire Recovery and Investment Fund will safeguard and create jobs. It is currently forecast that up to 30k people in Warwickshire will lose their jobs due to the Pandemic.
- It would not be appropriate to raid reserves. The Conservative budget will draw on some reserves but only a relatively small amount.
- People's priorities are health, jobs, wealth, education and environment in that order. The priority must be to get the economy going.

Votes

Vote on Labour Group Amendment

Monica Fogarty (Chief Executive) explained the impact of the acceptance of the Conservative Group amendment on the proposed Labour Group Amendment. This would see the use of reserves increase by £100k in this year and in subsequent years.

A vote was held on the Labour Group amendment as it incorporates the Conservative Group amendment. The results were 8 for, 40 against and 1 abstention.

The amendment was defeated.

Vote on Liberal Democrat Group Amendment

A vote was held on the Liberal Democrat Group amendment. The results were 8 for, 38 against and 4 abstentions.

The amendment was defeated.

Vote on Green Group Amendment

Monica Fogarty explained the impact of the acceptance of the Conservative Group amendment on the proposed Green Group Amendment. This would see the use of reserves increase by £100k in this year and in subsequent years.

A vote was held on the Green Group amendment as it incorporates the Conservative Group amendment. The results were 2 for, 38 against and 5 abstentions.

The amendment was defeated.

Vote on Conservative Budget as Amended

The Conservative budget as amended became the substantive motion. Monica Fogarty explained the impact of the amendment on the levels of reserves, reducing these by £100k per annum. A recorded vote was held. The results were.

Votes for

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

Votes against

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

Resolved:

That Council agrees the 2021/22 Budget and authorises work to continue on ensuring the 2021-26 Medium Term Financial Strategy is aligned with and supports the delivery of the Council's ambitions as set out in the Council Plan.

3. Treasury Management Strategy and Investment Strategy

Councillor Peter Butlin moved the motion, explaining that unlike previous years when these documents were agreed, more or less as a matter of course, the Pandemic has led to changes in how the council manages its money.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Izzi Seccombe who reserved her right to speak.

Councillor Keith Kondakor expressed concerns over the projections being used for the Warwickshire property and Development Company. In particular he stated that house prices may drop significantly in line with reductions in demand for housing. In addition, construction inflation is increasing thus reducing profit margins. He suggested that the company could end up making a loss. A sensitivity analysis is required he concluded.

Councillor Seccombe chose not to speak.

Councillor Butlin concluded by stating that borrowing by the council has to date been low. He added that the risks of the project had been clearly set out.

Vote

A recorded vote was requested.

Votes for

Councillors Barker, Bell, Singh Birdi, Boad, Brain, Butlin, Caborn, Cargill, Clarke, Cockburn, Cooke, Crump, Dahmash, N. Davies, Falp, Fradgley, Gifford, Gilbert, Golby, Hayfield, Horner, Jenns, Kaur, Morgan, Pandher, Parry, Redford, Reilly, Rickhards, Roberts, Rolfe, Roodhouse, Sargeant, Seccombe, Shilton, Simpson-Vince, Timms, Warwick, C. Williams, P.Williams (40)

Votes against

Councillors Adkins, Chilvers, C. Davies, Dirveiks, Holland, Kondakor, O'Rourke, Parsons, Phillips, Webb (10)

Resolved:

That:

1. The Treasury Management Strategy for 2021/22 (Appendix 2) be approved with effect from 1st April 2021.
2. The Investment Strategy for 2021/22 (Appendix 3) be approved with effect from 1 April 2021.
3. The County Council requires the Strategic Director for Resources to ensure that gross borrowing does not exceed the prudential level specified (Appendix 2, Section 3.2, Table 10 "Authorised Borrowing Limit").
4. The County Council requires the Strategic Director for Resources to ensure that gross investment in non-Treasury investments does not exceed the prudential levels specified (Appendix 3, Annex 7).
5. The County Council delegate authority to the Strategic Director for Resources to undertake delegated responsibilities in respect of both strategies (Appendix 2, Annex 7, and Appendix 3, Section 2.5).
6. The County Council requires the Strategic Director for Resources to implement the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy (Appendix 2, Section 2.4).

4. Any Other items of Urgent Business

None.

The meeting rose at 3.06 pm

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Chair