

Cabinet

Tuesday 25 January 2022

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

Councillor Isobel Seccombe OBE (Chair)
Councillor Margaret Bell
Councillor Peter Butlin
Councillor Andy Jenns
Councillor Kam Kaur
Councillor Wallace Redford
Councillor Heather Timms

Others Present

Councillors Jonathan Chilvers, Sarah Feeney, John Holland, and Jerry Roodhouse.

1. General

(1) Apologies

Councillors Andy Crump and Jeff Morgan.

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None.

(3) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 7 December 2021 were agreed as an accurate record.

(4) Public Speaking

None.

2. Developing Our Council Plan 2022

Councillor Isobel Seccombe (Leader of Council and Chair of Cabinet) explained to the meeting that the Council Plan presented to the meeting built on the draft version presented to Cabinet in December. She advised that the document underpinned the medium term financial strategy and

its style and presentation had been developed to ensure the final, adopted version was more engaging and provided clarity on the ambitions of the Council going forward. She drew attention to the three strategic priorities and seven areas of focus set out on page 5 of the plan.

Councillor Andy Jenns welcomed the Plan, applauding its style and structure. He noted that it was a strategic document which would be underpinned by a delivery plan that would more clearly define the actions to achieve the priorities set out.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse also welcomed the Plan and noted its use as a strategic document. However, he considered that there were a number of strategies which had recently been refreshed (eg the Domestic Violence strategy and Heritage and Culture Strategy) that underpinned its aims and ambitions and he suggested that these should be identified within the Plan together with URLs to make them easy to locate.

Councillor Seccombe noted that efforts had been made to ensure the Council Plan was a concise document. She advised that the Council's strategic framework was due to be refreshed from 1 April 2022, and whilst there were many strategies within the framework, she agreed that it would be helpful for them to be identified and made more easily locatable.

Resolved:

That Cabinet

1. Approves the Council Plan and supporting State of Warwickshire evidence base for submission to Full Council in February 2022.
2. Authorises the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader to make such minor amendments to the Council Plan as she considers necessary in advance of it being presented to Full Council for approval

3. 2022/23 Budget and 2022-27 Medium Term Financial Strategy - Updated Information

Councillor Peter Butlin (Deputy Leader of the Council) introduced the published report which provided an update on the current financial position:

- The Local Government finance settlement was broadly positive for 2022/23 and provided £5.4m more funding from Central Government had been estimated from the Comprehensive Spending Review, although nearly £2m of this funding came with new expectations and costs in Adult Social Care, so only £3.4m was available to use to balance the budget reported in December.
- Additionally because the settlement was only one year and the Government Department for Levelling Up, Communities and Housing had signalled that the fair funding review would be implemented for the 2023/24 settlement it was unclear what impact this would have on core grants from Government moving forward.
- A cautious approach had been adopted, and a 25% reduction in core grants had been assumed, meaning that only £0.2m of the £3.4m available in 2022/23 had been assumed would carry forward on an on-going basis from 2023/24 at this stage.
- In terms of Council tax and business rates the final positions from some Districts and Boroughs were awaited. In respect of Council Tax, initial indications suggested the overall tax base had increased more than planning assumptions and there should be an overall surplus on the collection fund.

- The report also provided an update on reserves, which were key to managing the short-term budget position, as was the review of the general risk reserve to ensure that appropriate financial mitigations were available should any risks escalate to become real issues.
- Since December there had also been a number of additional unavoidable spending pressures identified through the latest 2021/22 financial monitoring and issues that had emerged late in the process, totalling £0.77m.

There were no questions or comments on the report.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Notes the latest resource and spending information and the impact on the emerging budget proposals;
2. Notes the Strategic Director for Resources' risk assessment on the level of general reserves, as detailed in Appendix A;
3. Publishes, in light of the information provided, their 2022/23 budget resolutions for recommendation to Council on 8 February 2022; and
4. Authorises the Strategic Director for Resources to incorporate the outstanding resource information into the budget resolutions to be considered by Council on 8 February 2022.

4. Allocation of 2022/23 Dedicated Schools Grant

Councillor Peter Butlin (Deputy Leader of the Council) explained that the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) was the ring-fenced grant from Government that provided each local authority with an allocation of funding for schools and services for pupils. He indicated that the report outlined the context and position for each of the four blocks of the DSG, and the current proposed allocations.

Councillor Isobel Seccombe clarified that the Council was the accounting body but that the funding was distributed straight to the schools.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse welcomed the support of the Schools Forum, although he expressed disappointment that not all the members had been able to support the transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block. He noted that deficits in the High Needs DSG was a national issue that needed to be addressed and that continued pressure needed to be applied on this point. Councillor Seccombe considered that this had been an issue in the spotlight for some time and the associated White Paper was still awaited.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Approves the allocation of the Schools Block DSG, as outlined in Section 3 of the report;
2. Approves the Early Years allocation of funding for all early years providers as outlined in Section 4 of the report;
3. Approves the proposed allocation of the High Needs DSG budget for 2022/23, as set out in Section 5 of the report; and
4. Supports the proposals for allocating the 2022/23 Central School Services DSG budget, as set out in Section 6 of the report.

5. Treasury Management Strategy and Investment Strategy

Councillor Peter Butlin (Deputy Leader of the Council) presented the Treasury Management Strategy and Investment Strategy for endorsement. He noted that this was an annual report but that it held more significance this year due to the implications of the Warwickshire Property and Development Group and the Warwickshire Recovery and Investment Fund.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse commented on the level of external debt and borrowing and the associated loan to value rates set out in the report which could result in significant pressure. In response, Councillor Butlin advised that the £431m of external debt was well below the operation boundary of £590m which it was not expected debt should exceed and the authorised statutory limit was £709m which the council could not legally exceed. Compared to other local authority borrowing profiles, Warwickshire was still in a strong comparative position.

Resolved:

That Cabinet recommends to Council that:

1. The Treasury Management Strategy for 2022/23 (Appendix 2 to the report) be approved with effect from 1st April 2022.
2. The Investment Strategy for 2022/23 (Appendix 3 to the report) be approved with effect from 1 April 2022.
3. The revised lending limits for the Warwickshire Property Development Group come into immediate effect (Appendix 3 to the report at Annex 7).
4. Council requires the Strategic Director for Resources to ensure that gross borrowing does not exceed the prudential level specified (Appendix 2 to the report, Section 3.13, Table 10 "Authorised Borrowing Limit").
5. 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 to the report at Annex 7).
6. Council delegates authority to the Strategic Director for Resources to undertake delegated responsibilities in respect of both strategies (Appendix 2 to the report at Annex 7, and Appendix 3 to the report at Section 2.5).
7. Council requires the Strategic Director for Resources to implement the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy (Appendix 2 to the report at Section 2.8-2.20).

6. 2021-22 Financial Monitoring - Forecast Position as at Quarter 3

Councillor Peter Butlin (Deputy Leader of the Council) presented this report, noting that in terms of the revenue forecast, an overall overspend was still forecasted since the position at quarter 2. He noted that there had been a small increase in the remaining service variance, but this only left a net overspend of £0.55m, which was well within the acceptable tolerance.

There were no questions or comments on the report.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Notes the adjusted forecast overspend of £0.551m that would need to be funded from the Directorate and General Risk Reserves at the end of 2021/22.
2. Notes there is a forecast adverse variance of £0.747m in the delivery of 2021/22 savings.
3. Approves the carry forward of £0.072m from Environment Services forecast underspend to enable the purchase of a replacement recovery vehicle for County Fleet Management reducing running cost as well as future maintenance costs.
4. Notes the forecast capital spend for 2021/22 of £138.529m, of which £124.363m is capital payments controllable by the County Council and the balance, of £14.166m, relates to schemes funded by s278 developer contributions where the timing is not directly controllable by the Council.
5. Approves the carry forward of the reprofiled spend on the capital programme of £29.255m in 2021/22 into future years and note the carry forward of s278 contributions of £2.576m that is not directly controllable by the Council.

7. Revenue Investment Funds 2021/22 - January 2022 Report

Councillor Peter Butlin (Deputy Leader of the Council) introduced this report which contained a single bid for the SEND and Inclusion Change Programme funding for Phase 2 costs being incurred in the current financial year.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Approves the SEND & Inclusion Change Programme Phase 2 bid as detailed in section 2 amounting to £0.969m from the Preventing Vulnerability Investment Fund.
2. Authorises the Strategic Director for Communities to procure and enter any agreements to give effect to the above proposals on terms and conditions acceptable to the Strategic Director for Resources.

8. Warwickshire Recovery and Investment Fund Investment Strategy

Councillor Peter Butlin (Deputy Leader of the Council) explained that the report presented a strategic document outlining the Warwickshire Recovery and Investment Fund's investment activities. The objectives of the WRIF were comprehensively detailed in the report.

Councillor Isobel Secombe noted that an annual review had been promised and whilst it was still early days, this was an exciting opportunity for Warwickshire and the business sector.

Resolved:

That Cabinet approves the Warwickshire Recovery and Investment Fund Investment Strategy attached at Appendix 2 to the report.

9. Better Care Fund Plan 2021/22 Submission

Councillor Margaret Bell (Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health) introduced and summarised this report which sought approval of the Better Care Fund 2021/22 Plan, following assurance and confirmation of approval to spend by NHS England, to enable a Section 75

agreement between Warwickshire County Council and Coventry and Warwickshire Clinical Commissioning Group to be entered into.

Resolved:

That Cabinet delegates authority to the Strategic Director for People to enter into the proposed section 75 NHS Act 2006 agreement, with Coventry and Warwickshire Clinical Commissioning Group for delivery of the Better Care Fund Plan for 2021/22, on terms and conditions acceptable to him and the Strategic Director for Resources.

10. Delivering a Healthier Warwickshire – Physical Health Improvement Services – Approval to Tender

Councillor Margaret Bell (Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health) introduced this report which outlined the approach to the re-tendering of adult physical health services in Warwickshire. In summarising the report, Councillor Bell noted that the Council commissioned seven physical health and wellbeing services for adults across eight contracts which were approaching their expiration deadline. This presented an opportunity to review the current model of commissioning to ensure that the next commissioning cycle met current need, principles, and objectives to serve the population of Warwickshire.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse highlighted the financial implications of the contribution of £90,000 from the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) not being secured. In response, Councillor Bell noted that the CCG was in the process of becoming an Integrated Care System (ICS) which had caused some delay but, as there was universal recognition for the importance of the affected service, she was expecting the funds to materialise along with further funding from the NHS.

Councillor Sarah Feeney asked about the link to GP Services and the difficulties patients faced securing face to face appointments. Councillor Bell advised that the report did not cover GP Services but that GPs would be asked, as part of the co-production work, what was working well for them. Health checks were an important part of the service which would continue to link in to GP Services in this regard.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Notes the key lines of enquiry relating to the recommissioning of the physical health and wellbeing services that are in scope.
2. Approves the commencement of a procurement process for the provision of an integrated adult physical health and wellbeing service by Warwickshire County Council.

Authorises the Strategic Director for People, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health to enter into all relevant contracts for the provision of adult physical health and wellbeing services on terms and conditions acceptable to the Strategic Director for Resources.

11. Warwickshire Design Guide

Councillor Wallace Redford (Portfolio Holder for) presented this report, noting that there was currently no documentation that set out Warwickshire County Council's expectations to support developers and designers preparing to deliver improvements to the highway network. He

noted that the proposed new 'Warwickshire Design Guide' would provide comprehensive guidance in respect of all transportation infrastructure and the design of roads having regard to current trends in national and local transportation policies, the call for the flexible application of design standards and to take account of their environmental impact. He explained that the new guide superseded '*The Warwickshire Guide 2001 – Transport and Roads for Developments*' and was a highly important document for the wider community as it set down the standards of safety, sustainability and accessibility of built development that would endure for generations. Councillor Redford advised that the new guide would be a live document available on the Council's website and it would be reviewed annually to ensure it was up to date.

Members welcomed the report. Councillor Heather Timms particularly welcomed the transparency of the guidance in terms of the work of the Team and availability to the public.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Approves and adopts the Warwickshire Design Guide attached at Appendix 2 to the report; and
2. Authorises the Strategic Director for Communities to make such modifications to the Warwickshire Design Guide as he may from time to time consider to be appropriate, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning, in light of new evidence or changes in relevant legislation, standards, codes and guidance.

12. Establishment of Warwickshire Property and Development Group (WPDG) Subsidiary

In presenting this report, Councillor Peter Butlin (Deputy Leader of the Council), noted that the broad principles of requesting the Warwickshire Property and Development Group to operate the County Council's leased estate management services was made by Cabinet in July 2021. Councillor Butlin advised that, following a review, it had been concluded that the most appropriate and tax efficient way to set this up within WPDG was to establish a subsidiary company to perform this role. He noted that this was a sensible course of action which did not present any financial or non-financial issues for the County Council and it was proposed to repurpose a redundant dormant company already owned by the Council, which was originally set up to safeguard a potential company name for WPDG. Council Butlin explained that the transfer of this existing company to WPDG, and to allow an appropriate name change to reflect the new estates management functions it would take on, was considered simpler and more efficient and cost effective than WPDG having to set up a completely new subsidiary from scratch and WCC having to close the redundant company.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Approves the establishment of a subsidiary company by Warwickshire Property and Development Group Limited (WPDG) for the delivery of estate management services.
2. Authorises the Strategic Director for Resources to undertake any arrangements he considers necessary to implement the above approval.

13. Reports Containing Exempt or Confidential Information

Resolved:

That members of the public be excluded from the meeting for the items mentioned below on the grounds that their presence would involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1972.

14.Exempt Minutes of the 7 December 2021 Meeting of Cabinet

The exempt minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 7 December 2021 were agreed as an accurate record.

15.Warwickshire Recovery and Investment Fund Investment Bids

Councillor Peter Butlin (Deputy Leader of the Council) introduced this item and summarised the exempt report.

Resolved:

The recommendations as set out in the exempt report were agreed.

16.Contracts for Property Maintenance Services of Building, Mechanical & Electrical Works

Councillor Peter Butlin (Deputy Leader of the Council) introduced this item and summarised the exempt report.

Resolved:

The recommendations as set out in the exempt report were agreed.

17.Warwickshire Property and Development Group (WPDG) Business Plan

Councillor Peter Butlin (Deputy Leader of the Council) introduced this item and summarised the exempt report.

Resolved:

The recommendations as set out in the exempt report were agreed.

The meeting rose at 2.52pm

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Chair