

County Council

Thursday 1 July 2021

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

Councillor John Horner (Vice-Chair), Councillor Jo Barker, Councillor Richard Baxter-Payne, Councillor Brett Beetham, Councillor Margaret Bell, Councillor Parminder Singh Birdi, Councillor Sarah Boad, Councillor Barbara Brown, Councillor Peter Butlin, Councillor Jonathan Chilvers, Councillor Jeff Clarke, Councillor John Cooke, Councillor Andy Crump, Councillor Piers Daniell, Councillor Judy Falp, Councillor Jenny Fradgley, Councillor Sarah Feeney, Councillor Bill Gifford, Councillor Clare Golby, Councillor Brian Hammersley, Councillor John Holland, Councillor Dave Humphreys, Councillor Marian Humphreys, Councillor Andy Jenns, Councillor Kam Kaur, Councillor Jack Kennaugh, Councillor Justin Kerridge, Councillor Christopher Kettle, Councillor Sue Markham, Councillor Jan Matecki, Councillor Sarah Millar, Councillor Chris Mills, Councillor Jeff Morgan, Councillor Bhagwant Singh Pandher, Councillor Daren Pemberton, Councillor Caroline Phillips, Councillor Wallace Redford, Councillor Howard Roberts, Councillor Will Roberts, Councillor Jerry Roodhouse, Councillor Isobel Seccombe OBE, Councillor Jill Simpson-Vince, Councillor Tim Sinclair, Councillor Mejar Singh, Councillor Richard Spencer, Councillor Heather Timms, Councillor Mandy Tromans, Councillor Robert Tromans, Councillor Martin Watson, Councillor Adrian Warwick and Councillor Andrew Wright

1. General

(1) Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors:

Yousef Dahmash
Jackie D'Arcy
Tracey Drew
Penny-Anne O'Donnell
Kate Rolfe

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

No declarations of interest were made.

(3) Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on 25 May 2021 were agreed as an accurate record to be signed by the Chair.

(4) Chair's announcements

1. Retirement of Kieran Amos, Chief Fire Officer

Councillor Pete Gilbert (Chair of Council) made the following statement.

“Kieran has been the CFO in Warwickshire for just over 2 years, although it feels like much longer.....for positive reasons of course!

Kieran has created an environment of trust, empowerment and feeling valued - Kieran is a real people person. He has led significant cultural change across Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service changing the complete look and feel of the organisation. Kieran has personally led, against some challenge at times, the EDI work across Warwickshire and in partnership with Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire.

Kieran served the communities of Surrey, West Sussex, and Warwickshire and has also worked nationally on the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme and within the National Resilience team working on the response to Chemical, Biological, Radiation, Nuclear and Explosive incidents.

Kieran has built on the excellent working relationships with the wider County Council bringing his unique style to the How We Work Board and Council EDI Group. Not only has he been Chair of the County Council Chief Fire Officer group he has added significant value across the whole of Warwickshire by being the Co- Chair of the Local Resilience Forum in Warwickshire.

It is however worth noting that when Kieran first became CFO in Warwickshire, he decided to take the first three weeks off to get married!!

We thank Kieran and wish him all the best for the future”.

Councillor Andy Crump (Portfolio Holder for Fire and Rescue and Community Safety) stated that Kieran Amos is a larger than life character. He is a well-respected individual who has worked with many different people. He is a great ambassador who will always go that extra mile for those he serves.

Councillor Sarah Boad (Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group) paid tribute to Kieran Amos stating that he had brought a breath of fresh air to the organisation. He has taken a fresh look at diversity as evidenced in part by the attendance of a suitably decorated fire and rescue appliance at a Warwickshire Pride event. He has brought the service much closer to the community and shown that it is not just concerned with putting out fires.

Councillor Judy Falp informed Council that as soon as Kieran Amos had started in his new role, she approached him over services for Whitnash. Since then he has done a great of work with the local forum in Whitnash. He is a real pleasure to work with and will be greatly missed.

Councillor Izzi Seccombe (Leader of the Council) expressed her sadness at seeing Keiran Amos leaving. He has always been highly enthusiastic and has displayed great warmth and humanity. His ability to bond with people has been a real gift.

Councillor John Holland (Leader of the Labour Group) noted that attending a fire or other incident can be distressing for fire crews. Kieran has always managed his staff very well and looked after their interests.

2. Death of Former County Councillor John Whitehouse

Councillor Pete Gilbert made the following statement, “It is my sad duty to inform Council of the recent passing of former County Councillor John Whitehouse.

John, a liberal Democrat Councillor, served the Kenilworth Abbey Division for 12 years from 2005 to 2017. In that time, he sat on the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and was his group’s spokesperson on children and young people. A keen advocate of cycling he was the council’s cycling champion and was a strong lobbyist for cycle facilities including the proposed new route from Kenilworth to Leamington.

Our condolences go to John’s family”.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse (Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group) expressed his sadness at the death of John Whitehouse who he had first met in 2005. He had worked hard on securing safer routes to schools and promoting 20mph speed limits. He was very thorough and had an eye for detail, working on issues relating to HS2 and to his hometown of Kenilworth. When the social care precept was introduced John Whitehouse had strong views on how much this should be. He did not prevail, but he stuck to his position. When he left the council, he continued to work for the Liberal Democrat Party and for the people of Kenilworth. He will be sorely missed.

Councillor Izzi Seccombe stated that John Whitehouse never seemed to age. He was a significant character with a true eye for detail. He displayed a wisdom and sought change for the good regardless of the politics around it.

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers (Leader of the Green Group) expressed his sadness at John Whitehouse’s death. He had learned a great deal from John when sitting next to him on the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He was always worth listening to.

Councillor John Holland echoed the views previously expressed adding that when members of Warwick Town Council had met the Warwick Area Committee and asked for help with an issue it had been John Whitehouse who had provided it.

Council stood in memory of John Whitehouse.

(5) Petitions

The Chair welcome Chloe Fojtik to the meeting to present a petition against part night streetlighting.

Ms Fojtik stated that the petition had been started in March 2021. It was being presented on behalf of those who had signed it. People had been asked to recount bad experiences they

had had whilst walking along unlit streets at night. Fifty responses were submitted, all from women. Only two had reported their experiences to the police. An example was provided of a woman who six years ago had had her handbag snatched on an unlit road. The victim has succeeding in securing the return of her keys and passport but lost £80 in cash. She had tried to report the incident to the police but on the two occasions she had attended the police station it had been shut.

Ms Fojtiz added that the wide use of LEDs in streetlights has made them cheaper to operate. This is a serious issue, she concluded, that requires attention.

Councillor Wallace Redford (Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning) Thanked Ms Fojtik for the petition adding that he would consider it and provide a response.

(6) Public Speaking

None

2. Warwickshire Recovery and Investment Fund - Addition to Capital Programme

Councillor Peter Butlin (Deputy Leader – Finance and Property) explained to the meeting that the WRIF had been through a lengthy process of development with the business case having been approved by Cabinet. The WRIF is concerned with economic recovery and investing in Warwickshire businesses, many of which will require additional support in the future. Councillor Peter Butlin stated that WRIF should help save over 4000 jobs in Warwickshire whilst creating over 2000 more. It is a wise investment to help people get back in to work. The WRIF is a major investment of over £130m. It will not make much money for the Council but as it is a loan scheme, as opposed to a grant scheme, it will be possible to keep money moving around.

Councillor Kam Kaur (Portfolio Holder for Economy and Place) seconded the motion and reserved her right to speak.

Councillor Sarah Boad stated that WRIF is an exciting and forward-looking scheme. She recognised that the amount of money to be committed was sizable but added that she was satisfied that appropriate safeguards are in place. The money, she said, must be repaid. If it is not, then the scheme will founder. The Council has few opportunities to influence business but WRIF will provide leverage on issues such as climate change and innovation.

Councillor Adrian Warwick emphasised the need to protect jobs. That the Council is able to develop this scheme is indicative of prudent management of the budget. He acknowledged that the scheme carries risks but noted that safeguards are in place to reduce these.

Councillor John Holland welcomed the cross-party support being expressed for this project. He asked that other initiatives such as ethical investment and climate change be allowed to feed into the process. Councillor John Holland stressed that prosperity in a community is not solely about money.

Councillor Sarah Feeney (Deputy Leader of the Labour Group) noted that signs of economic recovery are appearing. Businesses are changing how they work but there remains a need to help hard to reach groups and those who are struggling.

Councillor Izzi Seccombe thanked Councillor Peter Butlin and the officers for their hard work. The process has taken a long time, she said, but the WRIF needs to be up and running as soon as possible. There is a genuine desire to see businesses grow and to exploit the skills and ability that exist in Warwickshire. This serves too to support residents.

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers commended the work that has been done. He had been concerned over the risks around the project but is reassured regarding safeguards. Councillor Jonathan Chilvers stated his intention to abstain from the vote. He reminded the meeting that there is a limit to the amount that the Council can borrow. It has already invested in a number of invest to save schemes and there will be other priority schemes that might have benefitted from the £130m earmarked for WRIF.

Councillor Chris Kettle welcomed the WRIF programme in the light of the damage that has been done during the Pandemic to the local economy. He counselled that any applications from businesses for support should be processed as quickly as possible.

Councillor Kam Kaur, who had seconded the motion, welcomed the cross-party support for WRIF being displayed in the chamber. The scheme will be a major help to businesses that are struggling she added.

In closing, Councillor Peter Butlin thanked members for their support adding that WRIF is not only about financial matters it is about helping people to get back onto their feet. He agreed that there is a need to expedite applications and to ensure that tax-payers' money is protected.

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

Resolved:

That Council approves the addition of the Warwickshire Recovery and Investment Fund to the Capital Programme at a cost of up to £130 million, funded from additional borrowing and phased over the five years as set out in paragraph 4.3.

3. Treasury Management Strategy and Investment Strategy

Councillor Peter Butlin explained the need to update the council's investment strategy in the light of the decision made concerning WRIF. He stated that although there is a need to increase borrowing the council has historically been at the low end compared to other local authorities.

Councillor Kam Kaur seconded the motion and reserved the right to speak.

There were no additional comments by members. Councillor Kam Kaur stated that the strategies provide necessary assurances around controls and risk management and Councillor Peter Butlin concluded by stating that it is good to see the council investing in Warwickshire's people.

Resolved:

That:

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

4. A452/A46 Developer Improvement Works

Councillor Wallace Redford introduced this report and summarised its key elements explaining that with new developments it is desirable to construct supporting infrastructure early on. At Thickthorn in Kenilworth for this to happen it would be necessary for the council to forward fund the project and reclaim the money through Section 106.

Councillor Martin Watson seconded the motion and reserved the right to speak.

Amendment

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers tabled the following amendment.

"Add at the end of the first paragraph as part of the recommendation:

Work to safely connect designated cycle paths from the East of Kenilworth spine road to the Thickthorn roundabout and K2L and improving cycle connections at the St. John's gyratory will be prioritised with this section 106 funding. The funding will not be used for works relating only to the possible dualling of the A452 to Bericote".

In supporting the amendment Councillor Jonathan Chilvers stated that very often with infrastructure developments cycling and walking are almost forgotten being left until the end. They should be given priority as set out in the local transport plan. He added that there remains design work to be undertaken around Thickthorn. Connections need to be prioritised at the St John's petrol station and the link down the spine road to the A46. The report, he stated, refers to future proofing the junction against future traffic growth. This, he suggested, is inappropriate, it being preferable to reduce the amount of road traffic through cycling and walking.

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Will Roberts who reserved the right to speak.

Councillor Sarah Boad supported the Green Group amendment expressing her concern over the proposed dualling of the A452 to Bericote. She added that people need to get into the habit of cycling and walking.

Councillor John Holland suggested that the published report is untrue as it refers to improvements at the junction. The scheme as proposed would bring no improvements. Dualling at Bericote will place more traffic onto the A46 and this will, in turn, have an impact on Warwick town centre. He requested a delay to the scheme to allow for more consideration to be given to it. It was also noted that there remain in the area a number of schemes that are as yet unfinished. It would be better to finish these than commence another one, he concluded.

Councillor Peter Butlin informed council that there is no requirement to improve on the current position at the roundabout. There is, however, a requirement to mitigate against any negative impacts the associated development might bring. Councillor Peter Butlin stated that if rates of cycling were trebled this would amount to 6% of journeys. In addition, people are reverting to their cars and are reluctant to use public transport. Council was assured by Councillor Peter Butlin that based on previous precedents the money invested up front would be secure.

Councillor Bill Gifford supported the amendment emphasising the need to address the climate emergency through modal shift.

Councillor Sarah Feeney noted references in the report to uncertainty around the overall cost of the scheme and to the need to conclude negotiations. In view of these Councillor Sarah Feeney asked whether the council would be making a decision prematurely.

Councillor Will Roberts (Seconder of the amendment) stressed that the Green Group amendment was about placing active travel to the fore. There is time, he concluded, to bring about improvements at the roundabout.

Councillor Martin Watson (Seconder of the motion) state that whilst he supported the development of cycle routes, he could not support the proposed amendment.

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers (Mover of the amendment) stated that whilst he agreed with the principle of forward funding there remains a need to ensure that cycling and walking infrastructure is considered and delivered early on. He expressed a willingness to remove the reference to Bericote.

Councillor Wallace Redford (Mover of the motion) reminded members of the benefits of forward funding and stressed that the overall scheme concerns mitigation against the impact of development.

Vote on Amendment

A vote was held on the Green Group amendment – This was lost

Vote on original motion

A vote was held on the original motion as set out in the report. This was carried.

Resolved:

That Council approve the use of Capital Investment Funding of up to £6.6m to forward fund road improvements on the A452/A46 interchange to enable the proposed development in the area, on the basis that any of the funding which is not spent on those improvements will be refunded to the Capital Investment Fund and any which is spent will be recovered from local developer(s) through Section 106 funding.

5. Appointment of Proper Persons

Councillor Andy Jenns (Portfolio Holder for Customer and Transformation) moved the motion.

Councillor Dave Humphreys seconded the motion and reserved the right to speak.

There was no debate.

Vote

A vote was held. The motion was carried unanimously.

Resolved:

1. That Council notes and reaffirms the appointment of the Assistant Director for Business and Customer Services as the Proper Officer for Registration Services as set out in the constitution and authorises the post holder to carry out the duties and powers of the Proper Officer,
2. That Council confirms the delegation, on a temporary basis and until such time as the Strategic Director for Resources determines, of the role of Proper Officer for Registration Services to the Service Manager (Universal Services) Business and Customer Services, as the Tier 3 Manager responsible for Registration Services,
3. That the Delivery Lead Governance Services be appointed Scrutiny Officer,
4. That Council authorises the Strategic Director for Resources to make any changes to the constitution necessary to implement the decisions of Council.

6. Appointment to the Horton Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Margaret Bell (Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health) explained to council that although the Horton Hospital is in Oxfordshire it serves residents from south Warwickshire. The joint health overview and scrutiny committee had extended an invitation to Warwickshire to send a representative. In the past this had been Councillor Wallace Redford as Chair of the Warwickshire Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Jo Barker seconded the motion and reserved the right to speak.

There was on debate.

Councillor Jo Barker (Seconder of the motion) informed council that the future of the Horton Hospital has been threatened at least four times. She stated that it is essential for the council to have a representative at the joint committee.

Councillor Margaret Bell (Proposer of the motion) expressed her support for Councillor Clare Golby to be the council's representative.

Vote

A vote was held. The motion was carried unanimously.

Resolved:

That Council agree to nominate Councillor Clare Golby as the Council's representative on the Horton Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

7. Audit and Standards Committee - Annual Report 2020/21

Councillor Andy Jenns introduced the published report and moved the motion stating the Audit and Standards Committee had undertaken some very valuable work over the last 12 months. He thanked members of the committee and John Bridgeman, the Chair of their committee for their hard work.

Councillor Parminder Singh Birdi seconded the motion and reserved the right to speak.

Councillor Bill Gifford observed that at present the Audit and Standards Committee has no Vice Chair. If John Bridgeman, the Chair, left for any reason or was unable to attend a meeting not having a Vice Chair would present problems.

Councillor Parminder Singh Birdi (Seconder of the Motion) welcomed cross party support for the report. He echoed support for John Bridgeman and agreed that a new independent member should be recruited. In addition, the work of officers and internal and external auditors was commended.

Vote

A vote was held. The motion was carried unanimously.

Resolved:

That Council endorses the Annual Report of the Audit & Standards Committee.

8. Annual Monitor of use of the Urgency and Call-In procedure 2020/2021

Councillor Izzi Seccombe moved the motion and explained the need on occasions to take decisions urgently. Over the last year, some urgent decisions have been related to the Pandemic and some have not.

Councillor Dave Humphreys seconded the motion and reserved the right to speak.

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers praised officers in the way urgent decisions are managed. He noted that decisions can be delivered quickly whilst maintaining transparency. Councillor Jonathan Chilvers asked if the model could be developed further so that more decisions could be reached quickly. In addition, efforts should be made to ensure that other stakeholders are informed of upcoming urgent decisions.

Councillor Dave Humphreys (Seconder of the motion) commented on the way in which urgent decisions have increased in number. He asked that members be kept informed of them as they arise.

Councillor Izzi Seccombe (Mover of the motion) stated that she is happy to look at ways in which the system can be improved but cautioned against any attempt to by-pass the current system that involves all members. Regarding engagement with the public she suggested that the use of social media should be explored.

A vote was held. The motion was carried unanimously.

Resolved:

That Council notes the content of the report.

9. Overview and Scrutiny Report 2020/2021

Councillor Clare Golby (Chair of Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee) moved the motion. Council was informed that scrutiny is a key element of its work. It has a tangible impact on people's lives and serves to ensure their safety and save money. Officers were thanked for their hard work. New members were particularly encouraged to read the report as it contains much information that will be of use to them.

Councillor Adrian Warwick (Chair of the Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee) seconded the motion and reserved the right to speak.

In the absence of the Chair of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Yousef Dahmash, Councillor Margaret Bell noted that his committee had undertaken some thorough work around educational outcomes and SEND. The highlight of meetings was when young people were able to attend to share their experience. This year young people with experience of care spoke regarding the House Project.

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers thanked Councillor Dahmash for his hard work as Chair of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He added that there is a danger of trying to do too much in committee meetings and expressed support for the idea of getting people in from outside to contribute to meetings. The use of MS Teams to hold briefing sessions was seen as a positive development to be encouraged.

Councillor Chris Kettle thanked Councillor Wallace Redford for his work on the Horton Joint HOSC. It is important, he said, to ensure that changes are not made by those outside of Warwickshire without appropriate engagement.

Councillor Adrian Warwick (Seconder of the Motion) acknowledged that Overview and Scrutiny is vital to the work of the council. Acting as a critical friend, looking at what has gone well and not well, it has been aided over the last year by the timely deployment of MS 365 and the hard work of officers.

A vote was held. The motion was agreed unanimously.

Resolved:

That Council notes the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2020/2021

10. Terms of Reference for the Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Local Pension Board

Councillor Peter Butlin moved the motion and introduced the published report.

Councillor John Horner seconded the motion adding that the board is a legal requirement of the Pensions Regulator.

A vote was held. The motion was agreed unanimously.

Resolved:

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

11. Revised Member Code of Conduct

Councillor Izzi Seccombe moved the motion and explained that the previous code of conduct had been agreed in 2012. Since then few incidents with members had been reported. The LGA had undertaken review work at the request of a number of councils that considered the guidance on codes of conduct needed updating. Councillor Izzi Seccombe that there is an expectation of behaviour in the council. There is a need to consider how we are regarded by our communities.

Councillor Andy Jenns seconded the motion and reserved the right to speak.

Councillor Bill Gifford stated that members should be proud of how they behave. He stated that the Audit and Standards Committee had been told that there had been no complaints recorded against councillors. If there had been any disagreements, they had been managed without recourse to the code of conduct.

Councillor Andy Jenns (Seconder of the motion) agreed with all that had been said regarding the conduct of councillors.

A vote was held. The motion was agreed unanimously.

Resolved:

That Council approves the adoption of the revised code of conduct as set out in Appendix 1.

The meeting adjourned at 12.10.

12. Notices of Motion

The meeting reconvened at 13.15

Motion 1 Bus Service in Warwickshire

Councillor Sarah Boad tabled the following motion.

“It is noted that the provision of local bus services in the County have suffered during the pandemic with a reduced frequency of the service and a large drop in the number of passengers.

It is also noted that a good and regular service is essential to achieve the modal shift required to reduce the number of car journeys.

This Council resolves to set up a cross party task and finish group to work with officers to draw up a fully costed Bus Service Improvement Plan for approval by Cabinet by the end of October 2021:

The plan should:

1. include an aim to deliver a comprehensive service for Warwickshire;
2. encourage greater use of buses;
3. encourage greater uptake and use of bus passes;
4. investigate the use of electric and hydrogen buses”

In presenting the motion Councillor Sarah Boad explained that bus services in Warwickshire have been badly affected by the Covid Pandemic with the number of customers and services falling significantly. People struggle to move around finding difficulty in accessing hospitals of appointments for example. Bus services should be reliable, comprehensive and reasonably priced. Bus use, she stated, is more environmentally friendly than travel by car. Council was asked to agree to the establishment of a cross-party working group to assist in the development of the BSIP.

Councillor Bill Gifford seconded the motion and reserved the right to speak.

Amendment 1

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers proposed a friendly amendment. This was to add a further point to the plan stating,

“incorporate the 'Bus Services Motion Enhancement Schedule' as approved by Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September 2020”.

This amendment was accepted by Councillor Sarah Boad.

In presenting the amendment Councillor Jonathan Chilvers explained that whilst the council has no direct control over bus providers it does have levers to be used to influence their decisions. The need to work closely with the operators is very important.

Councillor Will Roberts seconded the amendment and reserved the right to speak.

Amendment 2

Councillor Wallace Redford proposed a friendly amendment. This was to remove the end of October 2021 deadline and add a sixth point stating,

“Consider the impact of new working patterns such as home working on demand for services”.

In presenting his amendment Councillor Redford recognised the need to encourage bus patronage adding that post-Pandemic there will be new working patterns to accommodate. He welcomed the establishment of a working group.

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Martin Watson who reserved his right to speak.

Councillor Sarah Boad accepted the amendment as friendly.

Debate

Councillor Sarah Feeney suggested that it will be important to review how children access school by bus. Air quality needs to be improved as does access to services by older people living in rural areas.

Councillor John Holland stated that it is important to have an understanding of the people who use buses. Fewer people travel to work by bus now but bus passes for the elderly have been a success. Councillor Holland added that the removal of a school bus service in Warwick will lead to an increase in car traffic in the town centre.

Councillor Izzi Seccombe reminded council that the project work being discussed will not review home to school transport. She agreed that bus services in rural areas are inadequate but noted that volunteer run bus services have been successful.

Councillor Peter Butlin welcomed the motion. He had witnessed a reduction in bus funding in the past adding that one bus a day is insufficient for communities. He cited a proposal for a light rail system in Coventry which the council may engage with. In addition, he has been briefed on electric and hydrogen bus development.

Councillor Judy Falp commented on the reduction of bus services serving her division adding that journeys that take 10 minutes by car, take almost an hour by bus. Public transport, she added, should be considered as an overall package combining buses and trains.

Councillor Bill Gifford (Seconder of the motion) stated that there is a need to develop a public transport ethos in Warwickshire. He hoped that people who work at home will begin to use public transport, but buses need to be punctual and regular. He concluded by suggesting that people who

use trains are different to those who use buses. Train users should be encouraged to use buses too.

Councillor Sarah Boad (Mover of the motion) confirmed that the motion did not concern itself with school transport. She suggested that volunteer buses may, in some instances aggravate difficulties in securing good commercial services. In addition, bus services are rarely frequent or regular enough to be of use to commuters. She agreed that bus journeys usually take longer than the private car.

Vote

Council voted on the new substantive motion that incorporated the two friendly amendments. Council agreed the motion unanimously.

Resolved:

1. Bus Services in Warwickshire

It is noted that the provision of local bus services in the County have suffered during the pandemic with a reduced frequency of the service and a large drop in the number of passengers.

It is also noted that a good and regular service is essential to achieve the modal shift required to reduce the number of car journeys.

This Council resolves to set up a cross party working group to work with officers to draw up a fully costed Bus Service Improvement Plan for consideration by Cabinet.

The plan should:

1. include an aim to deliver a comprehensive service for Warwickshire;
2. encourage greater use of buses;
3. encourage greater uptake and use of bus passes;
4. investigate the use of electric and hydrogen buses;
5. incorporate the 'Bus Services Motion Enhancement Schedule' as approved by Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September 2020;
6. consider the impact of new working patterns such as home working on demand for services.

Motion 2. 20mph Speed Limits

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers tabled the following motion.

“This Council will produce a costed plan for Cabinet consideration to introduce 20mph speed limits in all residential areas across Warwickshire as part of the Speed Management Strategy refresh”.

In presenting his motion Councillor Chilvers stated that there is a desire to continue the 20mph debate started previously. He stressed that he was not pursuing the concept of 20mph zones but rather 20mph limits. He suggested that some people have expressed a desire for a 20mph speed

limit in their road and he asked why this could not be provided for all. It was acknowledged that a transition to 20mph would carry a financial cost but this could result in a reduction of 20% in accidents. The investment, he suggested, would see a return in a year.

Regarding enforcement it was recognised that many people would not adhere to a 20mph speed limit. They may, however, travel at 25mph.

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers noted that Councillor Wallace Redford was to table a friendly amendment but asked that it include a deadline of January 2021 for the work to be completed.

Councillor Will Roberts seconded the motion and reserved the right to speak.

Amendment

Councillor Wallace Redford proposed the following by way of an amendment.

This Council will ~~produce a costed plan for Cabinet consideration to introduce~~ establish a cross party working group to consider the evidence, cost, impact and/or benefit of 20mph speed limits in all residential areas including schools and other sites of wider interest across Warwickshire as part of the Speed Management Strategy refresh and to report the outcome of this work to Cabinet.

Councillor Redford recognised that 20mph limits are becoming more of an issue but stressed that one size does not necessarily fit all. Lower speeds bring recognised benefits in terms of safety. He concluded by stating that the police will need to be consulted on any proposals.

Councillor Chris Kettle seconded the amendment and reserved the right to speak.

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers accepted the amendment as friendly.

Debate

Councillor Bill Gifford stated that 20mph is safer and feels safer. He agreed that there should be 20mph limits as opposed to zones which can be expensive to install.

Councillor Andy Crump agreed with the amended motion adding that there continue to be too many people killed in car accidents. He agreed that one size would not fit all and added that safer travel; officers have now been appointed. One of their tasks will be to consider bespoke schemes.

Councillor Jill Simpson-Vince cautioned that whilst 20mph speed limits will suit some urban roads they will be inappropriate for others. In addition, some serious accidents happen at low speeds especially when reversing.

Councillor Justin Kerridge commended the motion. He had driven at 20mph through his neighbourhood and rapidly became used to it. The secret, he suggested, is to have a can-do attitude and not to seek excuses for inaction.

Councillor John Holland reminded council that 20mph speed limits serve to improve air quality as well as safety.

Councillor Clare Golby wanted to make it clear that the council is not seeking to introduce blanket 20mph speed limits immediately. Many people do not like 20mph limits. There is a need to look carefully at the issue and seek the views of residents. In considering the matter careful assessment should be made of alleged savings to emergency services of reduced speed limits.

Councillor Peter Butlin reminded council that funds have been made available for advisory 20mph speed limits near to schools. There should be no blanket approach, but consideration should be given to situations where a 20mph speed limit would be appropriate.

Councillor Chris Kettle (Seconder of the amendment) asked council to demonstrate leadership around this matter. 20mph speed limits have been shown to improve safety and many residents would choose to have them. In addition, lower speeds make the introduction of active travel schemes less costly.

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers (Mover of the motion) noted that road safety officers have plenty of evidence regarding 20mph speed limits to draw on. It will be important to see a break down of the figures. He concluded that where 20mph speed limits have been introduced it has been found that the larger the area the greater the levels of compliance.

Vote

A vote was held on the amended motion. Council agreed the amended motion unanimously.

Resolved:

This Council will establish a cross party working group to consider the evidence, cost, impact and/or benefit of 20mph speed limits in residential areas including schools and other sites of wider interest across Warwickshire as part of the Speed Management Strategy refresh and to report the outcome of this work to Cabinet.

13. Member Question Time (Standing Order 7)

Question 1

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers to Councillor Heather Timms.

We all want to be able to do more tree planting, but we need to maintain public support by looking after our current trees well. How many trees owned by the authority are currently awaiting pruning works following inspection? Given the current rate of jobs being done and new trees added how long will it take to clear the current backlog?

Response from Councillor Heather Timms

Tree works are categorised between 1 and 5 based on the urgency of the work required. Dangerous works are priority 1 (within 2 hours) and priority 5 (aspirational works) are when budgets allow.

The county council keep on top of the Cat 1 and 2 priorities jobs, and any long-term backlog is generally more aspirational priority 5 works. Looking on the database the primary bulk of works for

priority 3 to 5 are catching up from January 2020 and we would not classify this as a significant backlog of work.

WCC forestry have adopted a revised approach within the last 6 months to aim to reduce the backlog of the smaller category 3 and 4 works within the urban highway by having a dedicated team working through the backlog. The team will also address any priority 5 works if it is reasonable to do so (for example they are already on the street with traffic management) however we do not want to slow the team too much by doing Priority 5 works.

Cllr Chilvers raises an important point as it is critical that when we bid for additional funding for tree planting that we also ensure that sufficient provision is made for maintaining the trees into the future.

Question 2

Councillor Bill Gifford to Councillor Margaret Bell.

The County Council's Dementia Strategy should have been refreshed or renewed in 2019. I fully understand the strain that officers have been under since the start of the Pandemic, but when do you expect the strategy to be refreshed?

Response from Councillor Margaret Bell

Councillor Margaret Bell stated that officers of the council are currently working with colleagues in Coventry and Warwickshire on a refreshed strategy. This is being carried out through the Health Care Partnership. With consultation being carried out in August it is expected that the strategy will be presented to Cabinet by the end of the calendar year.

As a supplementary question Councillor Bill Gifford asked that social media pages be checked as they are out of date. This was agreed.

Question 3

Councillor Jenny Fradgley to Councillor Heather Timms

British agriculture is currently facing many challenges, (Climate Change, fragility of food systems, new trade deals, shortage of workers, an aging population-to list but some), and I'm sure that, Cllr Kam Kaur, whose portfolio covers viability in agriculture, is as keen as I am that this council does all it can to support our local farmers through encouraging the purchase of local produce wherever possible.

This council has a number of contractual arrangements where it might be possible to have an impact in this area, including the provision of meals in schools, the meals on wheels service and in care homes.

Would the Portfolio Holder support my request that the appropriate overview and scrutiny committee examines what steps this council can take to support local agricultural producers through its purchasing policies and contractual arrangements.

Consideration should also be given to developing a Food and Growing Strategy to ensure food production in Warwickshire continues its current high standards and viability into the future?

Response from Councillor Heather Timms

Councillor Heather Timms reminded council that it is for each overview and scrutiny committee to determine its work programme.

The council has a strong focus on social value and its policy is to support local jobs. In this there is a desire to focus on food production. Councillor Timms stated that she is the Chair of the “Food Forum” which was set up in 2020 to consider food procurement.

14. Any Other items of Urgent Business

None

The meeting rose at 2.40 pm

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Chair