

# County Council

Tuesday 8 February 2022

## Minutes

### Attendance

#### Committee Members

Councillor Peter Gilbert (Chair), Councillor Jo Barker, Councillor Richard Baxter-Payne, Councillor Brett Beetham, Councillor Margaret Bell, Councillor Parminder Singh Birdi, Councillor Sarah Boad, Councillor Peter Butlin, Councillor Jonathan Chilvers, Councillor Jeff Clarke, Councillor John Cooke, Councillor Andy Crump, Councillor Yousef Dahmash, Councillor Piers Daniell, Councillor Tracey Drew, Councillor Judy Falp, Councillor Jenny Fradgley, Councillor Sarah Feeney, Councillor Bill Gifford, Councillor Clare Golby, Councillor Brian Hammersley, Councillor John Holland, 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 Penny-Anne O'Donnell, Councillor Bhagwant Singh Pandher, Councillor Daren Pemberton, Councillor Caroline Phillips, Councillor Wallace Redford, Councillor Howard Roberts, Councillor Will Roberts, Councillor Kate Rolfe, Councillor Jerry Roodhouse, Councillor Isobel Seccombe OBE, Councillor Jill Simpson-Vince, Councillor Tim Sinclair, Councillor Richard Spencer, Councillor Heather Timms, Councillor Mandy Tromans, Councillor Martin Watson, Councillor Adrian Warwick and Councillor Andrew Wright

### 1. General

#### (1) Apologies for Absence

Councillors Barbara Brown, Tracey Drew, John Horner, David Humphreys, Mejar Singh and Robert Tromans.

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

None.

#### (3) Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on 14 December 2021 were agreed as an accurate record for signing by the Chair.

#### (4) Chair's announcements

The Chair noted that on 6 February 2022 Her Majesty The Queen became the first British Monarch to celebrate a Platinum Jubilee and indicated his intention to send a letter on behalf of the Council to Her Majesty to congratulate her as she celebrated this unprecedented anniversary.

## 2. Our Council Plan 2022

Councillor Isobel Seccombe moved the motion and presented the Council Plan which built on the draft version presented to Cabinet in December. She noted that the style and presentation of the plan had been developed to ensure the final, adopted version was publicly engaging and provided clarity on the priorities and actions of the Council going forward. This included more clearly setting out the Council's ambitions for Warwickshire, along with the three strategic priorities and seven areas of focus on page 5 of the plan. The Plan, which would be a working document, provided the principles for budget setting and service delivery. Councillor Seccombe also reflected on the State of Warwickshire report and her pride in the Council's achievements in the previous two years to support vulnerable residents and build a community that was responsive to those in need. She also welcomed the introduction of the Warwickshire Recovery and Investment Fund to support the business sector.

Councillor Andy Jenns welcomed the plan and noted the wide consultation that had taken place with the public, partners, staff and trade unions.

Councillor Bill Gifford welcomed the Plan. He stated that residents were frustrated at the delays in Leamington ('Leamington Closed for Business') caused by the Rail and Utility companies being given the maximum time not the minimum time to complete their works, in contrast to the approach of the County Council. He considered that the Council should share best practice with partners. He also commented that the Council could communicate bad news better not just good news.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse noted the strategies hyperlinked within the Plan but considered that there were more that could be included. He reflected upon emerging themes and data regarding exploitation of children and adults and expressed the view that this could have been reflected further across the priorities.

Councillor Jeff Morgan reflected on the position with regard to education in Warwickshire, which was generally good, but expressed dissatisfaction with the performance of Nuneaton Academy which created a gap in the excellent provision across Warwickshire and the impact that this had on children in the area.

Councillor Will Roberts noted the objectives in the Plan to tackle the climate emergency but did not feel that the aims of 2030 and 2050 made for a sufficient priority, particularly when compared with the West Midlands. His view that there was not enough emphasis on the climate emergency in the Plan and he, therefore, could not support it.

Councillor John Holland expressed some reservations about the Plan, particularly noting the impact of the Levelling Up agenda and the different priorities across the north and south of the county and urged that steps be taken to provide for local decision making to support local needs and delivery.

Councillor Kam Kaur expressed pride in the Plan and thanked the officers involved in its creation. She considered that the Plan set out the Council's ambitions, underpinned by the MTFs, and she noted the host of individuals whose views had played an important role in the Plan's development.

Councillor Jeff Cooke welcomed the design and layout of the plan and its comprehensive coverage of the Council's areas of activity. He considered that it clearly and concisely set out the Council's

aims and objectives. Referencing previous comments, he noted that work with partners was taking place in Leamington Spa to consider all aspects of development, including traffic management and flows and considered that this was a good example of partnership working.

Councillor Margaret Bell also welcomed the Plan and the State of Warwickshire report which had provided the evidence base for the Plan itself. She particularly noted the demographic of the county and the need to focus services and support on an older than average population. She considered that the report recognised the challenges that this presented and the need to shape services accordingly.

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers considered that the Plan contained some good elements which provided clarity and structure and enabled the public to hold the Council to account for the areas in which they had an interest.

Councillor Wallace Redford reflected on previous comments regarding the frustration caused by road closures and provided reassurance that active discussions were taking place with utility companies to improve their performance in this regard.

Councillor Sarah Boad expressed her hope that town and parish councils would feature strongly in partnership working. She reflected on the need to support the public to use of public transport which was key to several priorities, including climate change objectives, but noted the difficulties that this presented in terms of lengthy routes and reliability.

Councillor Tim Sinclair noted the evidence base in the State of Warwickshire and reflected on the strong performance of the Council in caring for its residents, protecting the environment and economy. Councillor Claire Golby echoed this sentiment but considered that the document presented stark reading for Nuneaton and Bedworth and expressed her hope that the Plan would help to improve the situation, particularly in terms of educational outcomes, life expectancy and reduction in crime. Councillor Golby respected the green agenda but felt that this was a longer term issue and that improving educational outcomes required immediate action and therefore this made it imperative to support the Plan. Councillor Judy Falp also supported the Plan in terms of its prioritisation for children and education.

Councillor Heather Timms expressed pride in the way the Plan set out the journey to net zero and how the transition would be managed.

Councillor Adrian Warwick noted the county's proud motoring heritage, recognising its importance to the economy and the freedom presented by car ownership. He felt it was, therefore, important to differentiate between car usage and car ownership to work with the green agenda.

In response, Councillor Seccombe welcomed the debate, drawing the conclusion that the Plan was easy to read, well presented and data driven. She considered that relationships with utility companies had already been strengthened and reflected on the great number of strategies that the Council owned and which were reflected in the Plan. She felt that safeguarding was a theme running through the document as was partnership. She commented that it was a strategic paper that provided the principles for the direction of work. She lamented the fact that the Green group had indicated that they could not support the Plan due to their views on the climate emergency as she felt that the overarching aim of the Plan was to provide better opportunities for the people of Warwickshire. Councillor Seccombe thanked those Members who had spoken and felt that the

Plan created a clear direction for travel, an awareness of where the differentials were not good enough and a way to drive opportunities and improve. She welcomed the ambition of the Council which she considered could be achieved through the implementation of the Plan.

## **Vote**

A vote was held. The motion was agreed by a majority.

## **Decision**

Resolved:

That Council approves the Council Plan (appended to the report at Appendix 1) and supporting State of Warwickshire evidence base (appended to the report at Appendix 2).

### **3. 2022/23 Budget and 2022-27 Medium Term Financial Strategy**

Councillor Peter Butlin, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property introduced the item by thanking officers for their assistance and hard work in developing the budget. He also thanked the budget working group for their assistance in developing the proposals. 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 challenges presented by the pandemic and the response of the Council and residents of Warwickshire to remain true to its ambition and vision.
- The strong financial base that allowed the Council to deliver on its ambitions and make a positive and lasting impact for the benefit of the people and communities of Warwickshire. The proposed budget continued to ensure that the Council's finances were robust and sustainable.
- The Council's commitment to the most vulnerable in the community, particularly highlighting investment of over £14 million to meet the growing numbers of elderly citizens and vulnerable adults who needed help and support; more than £10 million in children's social care services to meet the costs arising from the increasing numbers of children and families needing support; and just over £13 million to support children and young people with disabilities and those with Special Educational Needs.
- Continuing to seek efficiencies to deliver better value for money to taxpayers; driving cost reductions through investment in digital, data and automation, adopting more commercial approaches and continuing to support investment that provided for buoyant business and household taxbases
- Provision for a £5 million programme over the following three years to invest in digital technology and automation.
- Investment of over £3 million over the following five years to provide targeted support for young people to improve mental health, well-being and resilience, and provide activities that distracted from crime and county lines, meaning fewer children and young people entering the criminal justice system.
- Investment of £1.5 million in the Fire and Rescue Service to develop and embed joined-up approaches to fire prevention, protection and response as well as the promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace, making Warwickshire a safer place to work and live.

- Investing over £43 million in transforming Nuneaton town centre through investments in the transport infrastructure and the creation of a new library and business centre as part of a commitment to working with communities and partners to reimagine town centres and create vibrant, quality neighbourhoods.
- Investment of almost £0.5 million supporting early years providers, so that more children living in the most disadvantaged parts of the county would be school ready and could reach their potential.
- Investment of £450,000 a year to create the capacity to drive forward progress towards net zero targets for 2030 and no later than 2050 and to work with partners to plant a tree for every resident in Warwickshire.
- Provision for £120 million for investment through the Warwickshire Property and Development Group to deliver over 2,000 homes initially, 95,000 square feet of industrial space and 42,000 square feet of retail space; helping the residents of Warwickshire find a good place to live and work.
- The Council continued to secure significant foreign direct investment creating new jobs in the local economy. The Gaming sector had continued to grow through the pandemic and was proving to be a major employer in Leamington and the proposals sought to continue this growth by making available £140 million of loan finance available for businesses, both small and large, to support investment and growth in the local economy through the Warwickshire Recovery and Investment Fund.
- Recognising that commercial investments carried additional financial risks, the proposals ensured that funds were in place to cover financial and commercial risks.
- The priority areas for investment were clearly set out in the budget proposals, which related to the seven areas of focus in the Council Plan and put the resources in place to allow the Council to take the first steps to deliver on those areas of focus.
- The critical role of the reserves strategy which provided a clear framework to manage the 'rainy-day' money held to cover the financial risks and uncertainties faced whilst providing capacity for investment in Council Plan priorities.
- The pressures faced by residents in terms of rising household costs and the proposal to increase council tax by 3.75% instead of the 4% anticipated at the end of the previous year. This would be achieved by taking 2% of the maximum 3% of the opportunity to levy additional Council Tax, to fund rising costs and demand for adult social care and increasing council tax itself by 1.75%. Both elements were below the maximum increase possible and well below the rate of inflation at the time of the meeting.

In summary, in commending the budget to Council, Councillor Peter Butlin considered that the budget strategy he had set out would deliver a thriving economy and places, a county where people could live their best lives and provide a sustainable future for those who lived, worked in and visited Warwickshire.

Councillor Izzi Seccombe seconded the motion and reserved her right to speak.

## **Amendments**

### **Labour Group Amendment**

Councillor Sarah Feeney highlighted the following points in the amendment:

- The delivery of quality public services for all residents, particularly those most in need and address the causes of poverty by working with all sectors to deliver for residents.
- Supporting a skilled workforce with good opportunities, starting with investment in young children, focussing on the first 1001 days of life.
- Provision to invest in skilled and quality jobs, like engineering, to improve salary expectations for adults wishing to get on the property ladder.
- Investment to supply short term care so those at risk of being admitted to hospital could be cared for in their own homes and there was also a commitment to review the effectiveness of adult social care savings and, if demand did not grow as anticipated, to redirect resources to support those finding it difficult to exit hospital and who were in need of short term support
- Continuing to fund the community safety element of trading standards to deliver on residents' concerns about feeling safe in their communities
- The inclusion of proposals to protect SEND transport
- Provision of quality counselling for young people and investment in the Prevent strategy
- Removal of the annual allocation of £40,000 to mitigate the impacts of HS2 with an emphasis on the need to hold HS2 Ltd to account differently.
- Removal of the allocated funds for the repair and preventative maintenance of gaining vehicle activated speeding signs
- Removing proposals to drive income in country parks and ensure that they remained accessible for all families.
- Provision for further investment in the fire service improvement plan
- Removal of the allocation to increase the Council's business analyst capacity
- An increase in borrowing was not supported as she did not consider it was clear how the proposals to do so impacted on revenue and she was reluctant to see a reduction in revenue when there were important priorities to spend on.

Councillor John Holland seconded the amendment and reserved the right to speak.

### **Liberal Democrat Group Amendment**

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse highlighted the following points put forward in the Liberal Democrat Group amendment:

- The one-year local government settlement from the government was lamented as this did not provide any certainty for local government over the long term.
- An increase in investment for Dementia and Alzheimers care, particularly targeting young carers
- Investment in early intervention and prevention
- Investment in the acceleration of the work in communities around long Covid as identified by the Director of Public Health in her annual report 2020/21
- Noting that highways maintenance had received reduced investment on a national level, more investment was proposed for pothole and road maintenance
- Proposals to increase community councillor grants from £6,000 to £8,000 per year to further boost local communities after Covid. Councillor Roodhouse asked the Groups to consider this as an adjustment for permanent allocation.

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

## **Green Group Amendment**

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers thanked officers for their support to develop the budget proposals and highlighted the following points from the amendment:

- The rise in the cost of living cast a long shadow over the budget and whilst the Green Group had considered whether there was potential to reduce the rise in Council Tax, it had reluctantly been accepted that to continue providing key services, the 3.75% rise would need to be supported.
- A reduction in the size of the capital fund
- A focus on supporting families and strengthening communities. The permanent investment in youth strategy was applauded as a good direction of travel and the proposals provided funding for a fire and rescue service youth citizenship project together with investment in the crucial early days of life, focussing on the first 1001 days.
- Investment to increase capacity for addiction recovery programmes
- Protection of the public health budget and public health provision which had served the Council well during the pandemic and which brought evidence based expertise to areas like air quality, homelessness, addiction and planning.
- Protection and expansion of the capacity of the trading standards service
- Proposals for transport transformation would set out how to improve the direction in terms of reducing emissions on highways. £350,000 was also proposed to be injected into highways community action funds to support 20mph limits for those towns and villages that wanted them.
- An increased capacity in the forestry team to meet the increase in demand and to accelerate emerging climate change initiatives (ie tree planting schemes)

In summary, Councillor Chilvers noted that there was a deep responsibility to spend money wisely particularly with the challenges that would arise in the coming years and he believed the investment and plans in the amendment would better meet those challenges.

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

## **Adjustment to the Conservative Motion**

The meeting adjourned at 11.45am whilst the adjustment proposed by the Liberal Democrat group to increase community councillor grants from £6,000 to £8,000 per year was considered. Upon returning at 12.03pm it was confirmed by Councillor Peter Butlin that the proposed adjustment was accepted as a friendly amendment, which was agreed by Councillors Feeney and Chilvers.

## **Debate**

Members of Council made the following points:

Councillor Jeff Morgan (Portfolio Holder for Children, Families and Education)

- The pandemic had had a big impact on everyone's lives. Children in disadvantaged families had been the hardest hit.

- Further investment was being made in SEND and early years projects and there were ambitions to make savings through better contract management and more efficient use of taxes.
- OfSted had recently judged Children's Services as good and tribute was paid to officers and the Council who had voted to support policies which had assisted in this achievement.
- He welcomed proposals to create more OfSted regulated children's homes locally and additional investment to help create a better placement mix.
- There were strategies in place which recognised and prioritised support for the early years and the approach set out in the Leadsome report on the Best Start for Life was already implemented in Warwickshire.
- Investment of £0.7million was welcomed for targeted support for mental health and wellbeing and provide activities to distract from county lines.
- The proposed further £10.5million in increased investment in children and family services to meet costs arising from higher numbers of Looked-After Children, foster care and resident care costs was welcomed.
- Setting council tax at a reasonable level was to be welcomed in the current economic climate.

Councillor Penny-Anne O'Donnell discussed options under development in relation to early years which would provide support from the first 1001 days of life and demonstrated the Council's ambition for children and the levelling up agenda.

Councillor Sarah Millar supported investment in the first 1001 days which laid the foundations for children's futures, relationships and life outcomes. She considered that an investment in children was an investment in the communities around them, particularly when the impacts of Covid and the toll on mental health and wellbeing were well known and becoming more apparent.

Councillor Brett Beetham reflected on his experience as part of the budget working group. He noted that his community councillor grant had been fully utilised by community groups in his division in the first round and he was therefore very supportive of the proposed increase. He also supported the conservative proposals to continue investment in transforming Nuneaton which would be at risk if the opposition group proposals were supported. Councillor Beetham also welcomed additional funding in the Conservative proposals to improve the speed of autistic disorder spectrum diagnosis.

Councillor Marian Humphreys welcomed investment in special educational needs and disabilities and early years.

Councillor Wallace Redford (Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning)

- The budget proposals enabled the continuation of the value for money policies which were the trademark of the administration. The council was facing new pressures and the community would be expecting the Council to deliver on those issues.
- The proposals included investment of £6 million in cycle infrastructure schemes, part of a wider programme delivering 18km of new or upgraded cycling infrastructure, a further 11km with a value of approximately £6-8 million was being delivered as part of other transport infrastructure schemes.
- The provision of electric vehicle charging points was moving forward, with plans to install 150 electric vehicle charging points per year with a minimum target of 750 points by 2030.

- HS2 continued to be a major issue and committing to continued funding for the HS2 team was important to mitigating the impact of HS2 on local communities and holding HS2 Ltd to account.
- Across planning and transport, there was an agenda for change, innovation and creating opportunity by creating opportunities through additional capacity in transport planning. Funds were being invested in town centre transformation schemes, vehicle management, highways and the maintenance of vehicle activated signs as valuable road safety assets.

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

- Reflected on the council's track record of meeting targets and maintaining appropriate levels of reserves which had enabled the authority to be in a position to respond to the covid pandemic.
- Endorsement of funding to hold HS2 Ltd to account in view of the impact it had residents in Southam.
- Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service (WFRS) had a proposed total budget of £22,636,143 for 2022/23, an increase of £733,197 on the previous year budget (an increase of 3.3%). The budget further proposed that WFRS received an annual inflationary increase based upon a consistent methodology applied across the authority. £230,000 was being put back into the budget for the Day Crewed Plus (DCP) Mitigation and a time limited allocation of £775,000 in 2022/23 and £775,000 in 2023/24 had been included in the proposed budget for the improvements required following an assessment made by HMICFRS and the improvement that WFRS had determined was required for the communities of Warwickshire. Budget reductions had been identified in relation to third party spends where savings had been allocated across the authority. WCC. This would be challenging to achieve. Savings around the commercial training offer were identified, which were reliant on completion of the training facilities.
- WFRS was addressing environmental concerns with greener and electric equipment and had used new methods of tackling fires to avoid watercourse contamination.
- WFRS had dealt with several major fires over the previous year and condolences were extended to the relatives of the gentleman who lost his life in the fire at Leamington.
- In terms of flooding, there was commitment and consensus from partners to work together and be more joined up in the planning process and be better at enforcement. An officer working group had also been formed to deal with finding cost effective ways of dealing with flooding. This work would provide a better understanding of the risks to the community and through capital and other funding sources, there would be funding for schemes in all parts of the county. Work with the Regional Flood and Coastal Committees would assist the Council to find the most appropriate schemes to meet targets.
- Trading standards budgets were relatively stable but they were reliant on partnership funding to continue to protect vulnerable residents and animals in the county. The team had new initiatives with regard to the commonwealth games, Natasha's Law would see work take place with small and independent businesses to ensure the labelling requirements for pre-packaged foods were met, and work with estate and letting agents to ensure national standards were achieved with a focus on energy performance certificates.
- 2022/23 would see the realignment of resources in community safety to provide capacity to deliver against the serious violence prevention programme – as the Police Crime Sentencing and Courts Bill came into force, this would provide a big focus for partnership working with new initiatives for 2022/23, particularly with regard to the safety of women and girls and funding to distract young people from county lines.

Councillor Kam Kaur (Portfolio Holder for Economy and Place)

- Reflected on the changes that had taken place over the previous 12 months in terms of the organisation and the way it conducted business and the way the County Council had provided support to business over the course of the pandemic, safeguarded jobs and created new jobs.
- The Council was working with key stakeholders through a partnership with the Institute of Place Management to explore the key drivers of change and provide a toolkit to help town centres develop recovery and growth plans whilst also investing via the tech challenge to develop online platforms to support the online presence of town centres and creating new focal points through the installations resulting from the Art Challenge programme.
- Recognising the significant challenges faced by the tourism and hospitality sector, a marketing promotion campaign – ‘visit Warwickshire’ – had been undertaken that had reached a combined audience of 47 million people. A specialist business support programme had also been launched to support the sector.
- Despite difficult economic conditions, significant investment had been secured and a strong presence in key sectors had been maintained.
- In terms of the levelling up agenda, good progress had been made towards transforming Nuneaton.
- The Council was working closely with District and Borough Councils on place-based initiatives
- Since the establishment of the CSW broadband project in 2012, properties with access to superfast broadband had increased from 73.8% to 97.98% as at 31 January 2022
- Work continued with mobile network operators to upgrade and extend connectivity to 4g coverage across the county and to extend 5g connectivity.
- The Conservative budget was based on the ethos of “invest today for a better tomorrow” and the points outlined demonstrated that the authority was strongest when it worked as a team with partners and communities.

Councillor Judy Falp welcomed investment in early years and suggested that any options under development in this regard would benefit from reflecting on the positive delivery of the children’s centres.

Councillor Martin Watson welcomed being invited to take part in the budget working group and the pragmatic, sustainable and aspirational budget that had been delivered. He represented a division which was significantly impacted by HS2 and he recognised the need for HS2 Ltd to be held to account. Whilst he appreciated the sentiment that it should be self-policing, he recognised that as a commercial enterprise, some holding to account for their actions would be required.

## **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned for lunch at 12.56pm, reconvening at 2.00pm. Councillors Judy Falp and Daren Pemberton had left the meeting.

## **Debate (Continued)**

Councillor Adrian Warwick reflected on the impact of the pandemic and how the Council could make investments that would drive the economy. He welcomed the schemes already in place ie the Warwickshire Recovery and Investment Fund (WRIF) and the Green Shoots scheme and

considered that the green agenda could be driven by investment in industry. He considered that such investment would drive growth, which would drive job opportunities which would pay for homes, meeting the expectations of young people looking to the future and a home of their own.

Councillor Andy Jenns (Portfolio Holder for Customer and Transformation) welcomed the following points in the conservative budget

- 1.8m time limited investment into the digital roadmap as part of a programme to drive future cost reduction
- Allocation to business and customer services of £60,000 to provide capacity to respond to Stage 2 complaints in line with statutory duties
- An allocation of £167,000 to make permanent use of the LGA Graduate Scheme in the Council structure as this had a valuable impact on growing the leaders of the future.
- Additional funding for business support to reflect growth in social care and education and a time limited allocation for covid pressures
- Additional support for business analyst capacity which provided better value for money than using contractors
- He did not feel he could support the proposals in the alternative budgets to remove support for the HS2 team, as his division was significantly impacted by the project; similarly, variable speed signs on the A51 were greatly valued by residents in his division and so he supported funding to maintain them.

Councillor Jan Matecki reflected on the amendments that had been presented but considered that the Conservative budget proposals provided a better balance between spending and investment which supported and protected the vulnerable in the community. He welcomed moves to limit the council tax increase in light of the pressures residents would be facing over the coming months.

Councillor Margaret Bell (Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health) noted that the budget was wide-ranging in its support of health and social care and she highlighted the following areas in particular:

- Adult Social Care was the Council's highest spending service and it was a top priority for citizens, instrumental to keep them safe and at home independently. It was also crucial to assist the flow through hospitals.
- Increasing demand was not just about changes in population, people coming through the system needed longer and more intense care than in the past. There was also a reduction in the people who were self-funding and changes from the government needed to be taken into account. In recognition of this, the budget proposals made an additional allocation of £40 million towards the adult social care budget.
- Continuous improvement and different care pathways together with the use of digital and automation were being considered to help people shape their own solutions and be supported well at home.
- A review of the discharge to assess process had been agreed and the budget supported the extension of extra care housing for those who would prefer that type of setting.
- Adult social services was really good and had been recognised as such in the latest peer review. In order to continue to provide this good service, work with partners was required. The authority had improved partnership working further over the previous two years as organisations had come together to meet the demands of the pandemic.
- Current pressures in the care market were recognised and being addressed through mutual aid calls.

- It was noted that the government was allowing authorities to increase the adult social care levy by a further 1% in recognition of the pressures on this service area, however, in noting the financial burdens being faced by households currently, the conservative budget did not propose this addition.
- The wide ranging impact of the covid 19 pandemic on residents' health and wellbeing was recognised and investment in a number of supportive programmes had taken place.
- The budget proposals included an allocation of £60,000 to support a new dementia strategy which would include dementia friendly communities.
- The county was also facing reorganisation of the health and care system through the Integrated Care System. The authority was a key partner in shaping this for the benefit of residents. One of the key objectives of the ICS and also of the Council Plan was the reduction of health inequalities. The use of the health equity assessment tool had been embedded across the health and social care system with £100,000 in the budget to support this initiative. The recent SEND Inspection had highlighted the waiting times for autism diagnosis, which had provided a welcome focus in this area. The authority had worked with partners to agree a plan to achieve a target of 13 weeks wait by 2024, supported by proposed partnership funding of £2.56 million on a recurrent basis and also a non-recurrent investment of £5.4 million to reduce the waiting list down to meet the target.
- The Public Health team continued to ensure that health had a high profile in the organisation and had initiated a 'health in all policies' approach across the council.
- Thanks were extended to the staff working in this service area for their commitment to providing essential services to residents.

Councillor Heather Timms (Portfolio Holder for Environment, Climate and Culture)

- The proposed budget stated this Council's commitment to net zero carbon emissions by 2030 and the wider county by 2050. There was a strong and clear alignment of the Conservative budget to the Council Plan towards delivering on net zero commitments
- There had already been an investment of £200,000 to produce a new sustainable future strategy to deliver a properly costed plan and trajectory later in the year. This was supported by a permanent investment of £270,000 to accelerate the strategy which would embrace all the Council's partners. The budget delivered on the need for climate change action to be embedded in all actions including the Council's purchasing strategy.
- In the previous year £4 million had been committed for the investment fund for climate change. The first round of the £1 million Green Shoots Community Climate Change Fund had delivered many successful projects across Warwickshire and a second round was planned for the current year along with a Young Green Shoots initiative.
- A local COP26 sub regional conference was being convened for Coventry and Warwickshire public services, businesses and voluntary groups were invited to come together to agree joint actions.
- Warwickshire had introduced the first local government biodiversity net gain in the UK. Biodiversity and tree planting would be progressed through the proposed budget with a £450,000 investment for the forestry team, including a new tree planting team to meet plans to plant a tree for every resident in the county.
- As preparations for the commonwealth games in the region took place, the Visit Warwickshire campaign had reached an audience of 47 million. The heritage and culture team were equally prepared and had produced the Warwickshire Waterways strategy to support the developing of walking and cycling routes.

- Country parks were important green spaces welcoming nearly one million visitors per year. Although car parking charges were in place, the Conservative budget proposals would see free access to these spaces remain.
- The Conservative proposals would see the development of the events programme including the outdoor education offer through more ambitious commercial partnerships and dedicated marketing resources.
- Infrastructure investment in the proposed Conservative budget supported the Council Plan and its sustainable future priorities. This would include fundamental review of the household recycling facilities to continue excellent service to residents and a review of the commercial offer to ensure that businesses had access to local affordable waste services.
- She welcomed the proposed increase to community councillor grants by £2,000 and hoped they would be used to support community powered events which would build capability, address levelling up and support strong community spirit across the county.
- Councillor Timms extended thanks to the officers that had provided support to her over the course of the previous year

Councillor Christopher Kettle welcomed the strategy for children and young people in the conservative budget and considered that work to counteract county lines was to be particularly welcomed. He also considered the allocation to mitigate the effects of HS2 and provide a holding to account mechanism was essential to exert influence and protect residents.

Councillor Piers Daniell recognised that funding for education was a long-term strategy, and reflected on a recent visit to Southam College which was being rebuilt over four years with environmental concerns being addressed. He also welcomed the commitment to outdoor education and funding to support a new strategy.

Councillor John Holland (Seconder of the Labour Group Amendment)

- The County Council Network expected that government decisions would increase the costs on county councils in terms of adult social care.
- The Labour proposals included a funding project to improve discharge from hospital to home.
- Inflation was identified as a big risk and high inflation costs would have the greatest impact on the most vulnerable. The Labour budget had those vulnerable people in mind. Councillor Feeney had been working on the proposals for several months, involving new councillors in the Group and focussing the proposals on what residents and vulnerable people needed.
- Whilst he saw some merit in the opposition group amendments, he commended the Labour amendment.

Councillor Sarah Boad (Seconder of the Liberal Democrat Amendment)

- Funding for early years was to be applauded.
- Funding for Outdoor Education was welcomed.
- It was important to support vulnerable residents and reduce health inequalities and she commended the Liberal Democrat Budget for addressing these issues.

Councillor Will Roberts (Seconder of the Green Amendment) expressed thanks to those officers involved in pulling together the budget and made the following points

- He commended the Green amendments for proposing a budget that was fit for the future, with investment in key services and funds for projects like a fire and rescue service citizenship scheme and safer roads through the introduction of 20mph limits.
- The budget provided resources at the heart of those services that would deliver net zero sooner and sought to protect residents from climate emergency impacts.

Councillor Izzi Seccombe (Seconder of Motion) thanked the chamber for the contributions that had been shared.

- In supporting the Conservative budget, she welcomed the alignment to the Council Plan, particularly in terms of family support, the youth service, HS2 and investment in economic growth.
- In response to calls to introduce 20mph speed limits, Councillor Seccombe asked how this would be achieved when those proposals sought the removal of vehicle activated signs. She had yet to be convinced of any economic benefit to the proposals, particularly as new cars were no more fuel efficient at 20mph and in some areas the speed reduction would be detrimental and cause frustration.
- Investment in graduates and young people through apprenticeships was welcomed to provide hope to those individuals for their futures.
- Councillor Seccombe concluded by thanking those councillors who had taken part in the budget working group and also expressed her gratitude to Councillor Roodhouse for submitting his amendments at an early stage so that they could be considered and responded to.

Councillor Sarah Feeney (Mover of Labour Group Amendment) replied that:

- Investment was required for autism spectrum disorder diagnosis but the issue was about more than waiting times and more education in schools was needed. It was the right time to look at SEND transport, hence the proposed grace in the Labour budget.
- Investment in children's services was welcomed together with the pilot programme to develop children's homes in the county.
- Proposed investment in early years was crucial to providing the best outcomes for children.
- She considered that there were more conversations to be held regarding the holding to account of HS2 Ltd. She agreed monitoring was required but did not believe it was appropriate for this authority to pay for it.
- She noted that vehicle activated signs were not in place in some divisions.
- The comments of Councillors Falp and Boad on childhood development were welcomed and she suggested investment be considered to reintroduce the bookstart project.
- Spending in the proposed Labour budget was about serving communities with the ambition to support people. In the coming year, she considered many more families could fall into difficulty and the Council would be called upon to provide more.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse (Mover of Liberal Democrat Group Amendment) replied that:

- In terms of early years development he supported a retrospective look to see what elements of previous strategies could be adopted for the benefit of children now.
- In terms of staffing to implement the work planned in the proposed Conservative budget, he noted difficulties in recruiting care workers and questioned how Warwickshire and its services could be improved above other areas to support the retention of staff.

- Regarding child exploitation, he did not think enough work was proposed in the Conservative budget and hoped that members from across the chamber would be involved in developing the authority's approach.

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers (Mover of the Green Group Amendment)

- The Green budget had a focus on investing in skills and supporting mentoring young people who needed help moving into work
- The Green budget provided additional capital funding and it had been decided to invest this in people, particularly early years
- The proposals also sought to tackle cycle routes and walking, and he believed the proposals demonstrated how to support a transformation of transport to ensure people could walk and cycle for shorter journeys and only use cars when required.

Councillor Peter Butlin (Mover of the Conservative Group Motion)

- As with the Council plan, the Conservative budget was evidence and data driven
- The impact of rising inflation was understood from past experience and it was recognised that residents would be facing bigger household bills and, therefore, a conscious effort had been made to not take the maximum council tax increase. However, there was a balance that needed to be struck
- Capital projects were under pressure as building costs were increasing due to the use of materials by HS2. This meant that the Council's ability to deliver capital projects under original budgets had to be rethought, hence the borrowing identified
- External debt was well below the operational boundary and authorised statutory limits
- Employment figures were a good news story, and prospects were good even in the most deprived areas. People liked to do business in Warwickshire due to its infrastructure
- The increase in community councillor grants proposed by the Liberal Democrats was welcomed.
- Children's Services were doing well. The recent Ofsted report achieved a good rating, but the aim was to reach excellence.
- The Conservative budget had a focus on planning for the future. Children and young people had been adversely impacted by covid and their education had been jeopardised – the Conservative budget had been designed to give them a better chance, with new ways of delivering services at the core of the budget.

**Votes**

Vote on Labour Group Amendment

A vote was held on the Labour Group amendment. The results were 9 for, 37 against and 3 abstentions.

The amendment was defeated.

Vote on Liberal Democrat Group Amendment

A vote was held on the Liberal Democrat Group amendment. The results were 12 for and 37 against.

The amendment was defeated.

#### Vote on Green Group Amendment

A vote was held on the Green Group amendment. The results were 12 for, and 37 against.

The amendment was defeated.

#### Vote on the Conservative Budget as Amended

The Conservative budget as amended became the substantive motion. A recorded vote was held. The results were.

#### Votes for

Councillors Jo Barker, Richard Baxter-Payne, Brett Beetham, Margaret Bell, Parminder Singh Birdi, Peter Butlin, Jeff Clarke, John Cooke, Andy Crump, Yousef Dahmash, Piers Daniell, Peter Gilbert, Clare Golby, Brian Hammersley, Marian Humphreys, Andy Jenns, Kam Kaur, Jack Kennaugh, Justin Kerridge, Christopher Kettle, Sue Markham, Jan Matecki, Chris Mills, Jeff Morgan, Penny-Anne O'Donnell, Bhagwant Singh Pandher, Wallace Redford, Howard Roberts, Isobel Seccombe OBE, Jill Simpson-Vince, Tim Sinclair, Richard Spencer, Heather Timms, Mandy Tromans, Adrian Warwick, Martin Watson, and Andrew Wright (37)

#### Votes against

Councillors Sarah Boad, Jonathan Chilvers, Tracey Drew, Sarah Feeney, Jenny Fradgley, Bill Gifford, John Holland, Sarah Millar, Caroline Phillips, Will Roberts, Kate Rolfe, and Jerry Roodhouse (12)

#### **Decision:**

Resolved:

That Council agrees the 2022/23 Budget and authorises work to continue on ensuring the 2022-27 Medium Term Financial Strategy is aligned with and supports the delivery of the Council's ambitions as set out in the Council Plan.

#### **4. Treasury Management Strategy and Investment Strategy**

Councillor Peter Butlin, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property introduced and moved this report, noting that the external requirement to set a Treasury Management Strategy and Investment Strategy now had more significance due to the implications of the Warwickshire Property & Development Group and Warwickshire Recovery and Investment Fund. Councillor Warwick seconded the motion. There being no questions or comments on the report, Councillor Butlin thanked the finance teams for their excellent work and a vote was taken.

#### **Vote**

A vote was held. The motion was agreed unanimously

#### **Decision**

Resolved 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, Annex 7).
4. The County 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. 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 to the report, Annex 7).
6. The County Council delegates authority to the Strategic Director for Resources to undertake delegated responsibilities in respect of both strategies (Appendix 2 to the report, Annex 7, and Appendix 3 to the report, Section 2.5).

The County Council requires the Strategic Director for Resources to implement the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy (Appendix 2 to the report, Section 2.8-2.20).

**5. Any Other items of Urgent Business**

None.

The meeting rose at 3.30pm

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Chair