

Cabinet

Thursday 14 July 2022

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

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

Others Present

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers
Councillor Judy Falp
Councillor John Holland
Councillor Marian Humphreys
Councillor Jerry Roodhouse

1. General

(1) Apologies

Councillors Andy Jenns and Jeff Morgan.

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None.

(3) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 16 June 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.

(4) Public Speaking

None.

2. A Financial Framework for the 2023/24 Medium Term Financial Strategy Refresh

Councillor Peter Butlin (Deputy Leader, Finance and Property) explained that the report summarised the emerging financial picture, strategic principles and refresh proposals and timescales for the 2023/24 budget setting and the five-year Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) refresh to 2027/28. Councillor Butlin drew attention to the six key principles, set out in the report, that would inform the MTFS refresh. He noted that inflation considerations, and the impact of this on both revenue and capital, dominated the principles and, in making provision for the impact of inflation, further prioritisation of resources would be required.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse welcomed the timing of the report and the clear guidance provided by the six principles. He expressed concern about the impact of inflation, particularly regarding capital and capital projects, and expected to see some reprioritisation as a result.

In response to questions from Councillor Andy Crump regarding considerations around principle 2, relating to potential Council Tax increases in light of increasing pressures on household budgets, Councillor Butlin advised that a cautious approach would be taken and, at this stage, he did not anticipate that Council Tax, which was subject to a ceiling set by central government, would increase above the levels set in the previous years' budget. In terms of planning assumptions, current projections suggested a £15m likely gap on the revenue budget across the five years of the MTFS, so Cabinet were being asked to support a £20m initial savings target for officers as a starting point.

Resolved that Cabinet:

1. Notes the emerging financial position within which the 2023/24 budget and 2023-28 Medium Term Financial Strategy will be developed;
2. Agrees the strategic principles that will form the basis of the Medium Term Financial Strategy, as set out in paragraph 2.4 of the report;
3. Subject to the agreement of the principles, approves the proposals for the refresh of the 2023/24 Medium Term Financial Strategy and Capital Strategy, as set out in Sections 3 and 4 of the report ;
4. Notes the requirement for the Authority to set a sustainable balanced budget which shows how income will equal spend over the short- and medium-term; and
5. Approves the timetable for agreeing the 2023/24 budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy Refresh.

3. Education Capital Programme 2022/23

Councillor Peter Butlin (Deputy Leader, Finance and Property) introduced this report which highlighted the latest changes and additions to the Education Capital Programme and detailed projects at Bishops Tachbrook CofE School (Warwick District), Briar Hill Infant School and St Margaret's CofE Junior School (Warwick District), Oakley Grove all through school (South Leamington/Warwick), Griffin School (Rugby gateway), Stratford upon Avon High School, Shipston High School (Stratford-upon-Avon District) and Lighthorne Heath Primary School (Stratford-upon-Avon District).

Councillor Kam Kaur (Portfolio Holder for Education) informed Cabinet that work would be undertaken to understand the need for school places and ensure that they were in the right place going forward.

Councillor Judy Falp welcomed provision in the Bishops Tachbrook and Whitnash area which supported encouraging parents to choose schools in their local area rather than requiring car travel.

Councillor Margaret Bell welcomed the sufficiency work highlighted by Councillor Kaur, noting that the geographical spread of projects in the report did not reflect need across the whole of the county and she looked forward to further discussions. Councillor Marian Humphreys echoed this comment and also looked forward to engaging on this piece of work. Councillor Jonathan Chilvers queried the future funding position of the education capital fund and how projects may need to be prioritised in future. In response to these comments, Councillor Kaur advised that the education capital programme existed to make sure the Council could meet its statutory duty to provide school places and the sufficiency work would consider the whole picture, recognising the growth that was taking place throughout Warwickshire, engaging with headteachers and providers, and considering how current facilities were being used.

Councillor John Holland expressed concern regarding the additional funding required for Oakley Grove and considered that a review of the project should be undertaken. Councillor Butlin responded that inflation was driving costs up and this would have an impact on delivery, together with new regulations in terms of sustainability, regardless of the site that the school was built upon and he did not consider a review was, therefore necessary and Councillor Holland may wish to take up his concerns with the district in terms of how they allocated the site through the planning process.

Resolved

That Cabinet recommends to Council to:

1. Increase the Capital Programme allocation for Oakley Grove All through School by £6.000 million to £56.000 million to be funded from Department for Education Grant.
2. Increase the Capital Programme allocation from Stratford-upon-Avon High School by £2.2 million to £13.773 to be funded from the Department for Education grant
3. Add the scheme for refurbishment and remodelling of Shipston High School and the addition of a sports hall to the Capital Programme at a cost of £10.532 million funded by £10.023 million from the Department for Education grant and £0.509 million from developer contributions

That Cabinet

1. Approves the addition to the capital programme of £2.361m funded from the Department for Education grant and developer contributions to deliver the remaining schemes outlined in Section 3 of the report.
2. Authorises, subject to Council's agreement to the required addition to the capital programme, the Strategic Director for People, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property, to invite tenders and enter into the appropriate contracts on terms and conditions considered acceptable to the Strategic Director for Resources.

4. A Countywide Approach to Levelling Up in Warwickshire

Councillor Isobel Seccombe (Leader) presented this report which set out the proposed approach to Levelling Up in Warwickshire. She noted that there had been wide-ranging collaboration to develop the approach set out in the report and drew particular attention to the appendix which set out the principles to the approach to levelling-up. Essentially, the report set out a long-term joined up partnership approach, informed and targeted to communities of place and interest based on clear data and insight and interventions which would aim to address the root causes of communities' issues, building on the strengths found in the relevant communities.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse noted that the report would also be presented to and debated at district and borough level. He suggested that some flexibility on the delivery of projects would be beneficial and rather than focussing on geography, a wider cultural and generational change would be more productive, for instance, an improvement of early years facilities on a wider scale would also deliver results within the communities of interest. He also advocated for the involvement of local councillors in bringing ideas to the table and requested that the process of doing so be shared at an early stage.

In relation to comments Councillor Roodhouse made with regard to the performance of housing associations, Councillor Seccombe acknowledged that changing the quality of housing could result in changing outcomes for health, perception of place and an associated perception of uplift in opportunity. However, she noted that the districts and borough had a closer relation with the housing associations.

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers recognised the reasoning for a focus on the Lower Super Output Areas, but considered that local level plans should capture and recongise the fact that some areas fell just outside the measures for inclusion.

Councillor John Holland welcomed the move forward through consensus and mutual agreement and noted the success of place-based approaches but also considered that it would be important to look at cross-county quality of services to achieve levelling up for disadvantaged communities that lived in a wider geographical area (eg with regard to SEND).

Reflecting on her experience with the Green Shoots project, Councillor Heather Timms considered community power in terms of levelling up, and emphasised the need to build some resilience in those communities which were traditionally slow to engage on projects and required greater levels of support.

Resolved that Cabinet approves and adopts the Levelling Up approach as attached in Appendix 1 to the report.

5. Home Office White Paper - Reforming Our Fire and Rescue Service

Councillor Andy Crump (Portfolio Holder for Fire & Rescue and Community Safety) summarised this paper which presented the recommended response to the 'reforming our fire and rescue services' white paper. He noted that it would depend on what aspects of the consultation made it into the final reforms that would dictate how much of an issue the reforms presented for Warwickshire.

Resolved that Cabinet approves the White Paper “Reforming Our Fire and Rescue Service” Consultation Response found in Appendix 1 of the report that is due for submission by 26 July 2022 to Home Office.

6. Modern Slavery Statement

Councillor Isobel Secombe (Leader) introduced this statement which was produced annually and published through central government. The statement set out what steps the Council had taken during the previous financial year to ensure that modern slavery was not taking place in any part of the Council's business or supply chain.

Resolved that Cabinet:

1. Approves the County Council's updated Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement for the financial year 2021/22; and
2. Authorises the Strategic Director for Resources to publish the Council's Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement on the Central Government Registry alongside the estimated turnover for the Council in the year covered by the statement.

7. Digital & Data Strategy

Councillor Kam Kaur (Portfolio Holder for Education) presented this report on behalf of Councillor Andy Jenns. She noted that the Digital & Data Strategy 2022-2025 built on the existing strategy which had been the basis for decision making for ICT investment and development since 2018. The strategy had delivered a great deal for the Council and had been fundamental to maintaining full service delivery during the pandemic.

Councillor Margaret Bell welcomed the strategy and opportunities to automate in order to make life easier for customers. In response to comments from Councillor Bell regarding service areas working together on digital delivery, Councillor Kaur noted that there were mechanisms in place to support working in an integrated way where a good business case existed.

Councillor Andy Crump noted that some residents struggled to access digital services and Councillor Kaur acknowledged that the pandemic had driven more users onto digital platforms but this was not necessarily their preference and other methods of engagement would remain in place.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse asked if the digital roadmap would be considered by Scrutiny and was advised that it was intended to use the roadmap to deliver the strategy. The Strategic Director for Resources would explore what was possible in this regard.

Resolved that Cabinet endorses the Council's refreshed Digital & Data Strategy 2022-2025 attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

8. Construction Framework Contract 2023-2027

In presenting this report, Councillor Wallace Redford (Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning) noted that the existing Construction Framework Contract, which delivered highway and structural construction services to Engineering Design Services, was due to expire on 31 December 2022 and this report sought authorisation to commence a procurement process so that a new

Framework could be established. Councillor Redford explained that an internal Framework was preferred as the best route to procurement rather than external Frameworks or other procurement options, such as SCAPE, as it provided many benefits including bespoke terms and conditions, financial assessments to be undertaken at the time of the project, being less resource intensive than procuring separate contracts, provision for relationship building with suppliers, pre-qualification processes based on quality, evidence of experience and financial status and the use of local and national suppliers. The 2019 Framework consisted of four financial lots where works were procured based on the scheme's estimated construction costs and it was anticipated that a similar structure would be used for the new Framework as set out in the report.

In response to a question from Councillor Jerry Roodhouse, Councillor Redford advised that assurances projects were developed and funded would come through the project board.

Responding to a question from Councillor Jonathan Chilvers, Councillor Redford advised that the existing relationship with Balfour Beatty to undertake "small" jobs would continue.

Resolved that Cabinet

1. Approves the Strategic Director for Communities proceeding with a Public Contract Regulation 2015 compliant procurement process, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning, for the provision of a Framework Agreement with multiple Lots for highways and structural works of varying price ranges.
2. Approves and authorises the Strategic Director for Communities to enter into all relevant contracts for the provision of Framework Contracts for the Provision of Engineering and Construction Works on terms and conditions acceptable to the Strategic Director for Resources.

9. Updated Fair Access Protocol

Councillor Kam Kaur (Portfolio Holder for Education) explained that the Fair Access Protocol governed how children were placed in schools outside of the normal school admissions rounds to avoid anyone being out of a school place for too long and hence damaging their education. The protocol tried to balance the needs of the child with the ability of schools to take a child and looked to ensure no school received a disproportionate number of children where they had difficult or challenging behaviour. The update sought to make the protocol compliant with the 2021 Admissions Code and more specifically define what constituted challenging behaviour.

Resolved that Cabinet agrees the Warwickshire County Council Fair Access Protocol for Mainstream Primary and Secondary Schools as set out in Appendix A to the report.

10. Brownsover Community Infant School Change in Age Range

Councillor Kam Kaur (Portfolio Holder for Education) summarised this report which sought the extension of an infant school (Reception to year 2) to become a full primary school (reception to year 6). In order to ensure Brownsover was then fit to be a full primary school, a range of capital works were required to establish an appropriate key stage 2 learning environment costing £0.96m (£0.51m developer funding and £0.45m from basic needs).

Resolved that Cabinet:

1. Approves changing the age range at Brownsover Community Infant School from 3 to 7 to 3 to 11 with effect from September 2026
2. Authorises applying to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator in relation to the proposed reduction in the school's Published Admission Number (PAN) from 60 to 30 from September 2023
3. Approves the addition of £0.965 million to the capital programme to deliver the scheme outlined in section 1 of the report, funded from Department for Education capital grant and developer funding.
4. Authorises the Strategic Director for Communities in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Education to invite tenders and enter into the appropriate contracts on terms and conditions considered acceptable to the Strategic Director for Resources, to make the necessary funding arrangements for these schemes

11. Adoption of the Warwickshire Minerals Local Plan 2018-2032

Councillor Isobel Secommbe (Leader) noted that the Cabinet had received a letter from Barford Residents Association relating to this item on the agenda.

Councillor Wallace Redford (Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning) introduced the report, explaining that this was the final stage of the long running process towards the adoption of the local minerals plan for Warwickshire. Inspectors had approved the revised version, which addressed all the main and minor modifications previously raised and consulted on.

Resolved that Cabinet recommends to Council that the Warwickshire Minerals Plan and Policies Map be adopted with all the Main Modifications recommended by the Planning Inspector and any Minor Modifications proposed by the Strategic Director for Communities.

12. Reports Containing Exempt or Confidential Information

Resolved

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

13. Blue Boar Farm Minerals Update

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

Resolved:

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

14. Integrated Sexual Health service - joint service with Coventry. Approval to Tender

Councillor Margaret Bell (Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health) introduced this item and summarised the exempt report.

Resolved:

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

The meeting rose at 3.06pm

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Chair