

Cabinet

Thursday 16 March 2023

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

Councillor Margaret Bell
Councillor Peter Butlin
Councillor Andy Crump
Councillor Andy Jenns
Councillor Kam Kaur
Councillor Jeff Morgan
Councillor Wallace Redford
Councillor Heather Timms
Councillor Martin Watson

Others Present

Councillor John Holland
Councillor Marian Humphreys
Councillor Jerry Roodhouse
Councillor Tim Sinclair

1. General

(1) Apologies

Councillor Isobel Seccombe

(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 February 2023 were agreed as an accurate record.

(4) Public Speaking

None.

2. Education Capital Programme 2022/23 and Approval of Statutory Proposals

Councillor Kam Kaur (Portfolio Holder for Education) opened this item and set out details of the four projects for addition to the capital programme, three existing projects requiring additional funding, and approval of a statutory proposal for an alternative provision free school in Warwick District as described in the comprehensive report and totalling £15.378 million.

Councillor Peter Butlin provided clarification that the total project costs of £15.378 million were funded by Basic Needs funding (£1.547 million), High Needs Grant (£9.956 million) and developer funding (£3.875 million).

Resolved

That Cabinet:

1. Approves the following proposal for prescribed alterations at Evergreen School:
 - (a) To increase the number of places for learners with SEND at Evergreen School by up to 40 places.
 - (b) Recommends to Council that £7.820 million be added to the capital programme to deliver the scheme at Evergreen School to be funded from the Department for Education High Needs grant
2. Recommends to Council that £6.026 million be added to the capital programme to deliver the schemes at Oakwood Primary School and Stratford upon Avon School to be funded from Department for Education High Need and Basic Need grants and developer contributions.
3. Approves the addition to the capital programme of £1.532 million funded from developer contributions and Department for Education grant to deliver the remaining schemes in section 3 of the report and supports development of the land edged red on the plan in Appendix 3 to the report as a new alternative provision free school.
4. Authorises, subject to Council's agreement to the required additions 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 or (where the scheme is school led) to make the necessary funding arrangements for these schemes on terms and conditions considered acceptable to the Strategic Director.

3. Improved Better Care Fund 2023/24

Councillor Margaret Bell (Portfolio Holder for Health and Adult Social Care) introduced this report, explaining that the Better Care Fund (BCF) was a joint programme with the NHS that aimed to enable people to stay well, safe and independent at home for longer and provide the right care in the right place at the right time. A specific part of the BCF; the Improved Better Care Fund (iBCF) was introduced in 2017 and was made available to local authorities to meet adult social care needs, reduce pressure on the NHS, support hospital discharge and support the social care market. The iBCF was initially received on a temporary basis but had been recurrent since its 2017/18 introduction. No inflation had been applied to the iBCF for 2023/24 so funding remained at £15.132m. The paper outlined the joint review of iBCF schemes in place in 2022/23 undertaken with the Integrated Care Board. The review recommended iBCF schemes continued in 2023/24 with some efficiencies applied and that one scheme was funded by an alternative, more suitable funding stream (Mental Health Street Triage to be funded by the ICB MH budget) as set out in the appendix to the report.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse commented that it would be important to monitor the delivery of services in light of the lack of additional funding. Councillor Bell advised that the lack of an increase to funding had been managed for the current year and agreed that monitoring of the provision of essential services was required.

Councillor Peter Butlin welcomed the work that had been undertaken to identify efficiencies and alternative sources of funding.

Resolved

That Cabinet

1. Approves the schemes to be funded from the Improved Better Care Fund pooled contribution of £15.132m by the Council for 2023/24 and the plan for resources as set out in paragraph 2.6 of the report and Appendix 1 to the report.
2. Requests that, following publication of the national Better Care Fund Policy Framework and Planning Requirements, the local Better Care Fund Plan for 2023/24 is developed for approval by Cabinet in advance of the submission deadline.

4. Developer-Funded S278 Highway Scheme Approval - Eastboro Way/Crowhill Road

Councillor Wallace Redford (Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning) informed Cabinet that following the grant of planning permission by Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council for the development of 360 houses at Sketchley Gardens, Nuneaton, by Crest Nicholson the construction of a signalised T junction at Eastboro Way/Crowhill Road to facilitate access to the new development was required. The works, with an approximate value of £4,409,900, would be fully funded by the Developer under the terms of a Section 278 agreement.

Resolved

That Cabinet

1. Recommends to Council the addition of £4,409,900 to the Capital Programme in relation to the Section 278 highways improvement scheme (signalised junction works) at the A4254 Eastboro Way/Crowhill Road intersection; and
2. Subject to the approval of Council to add the scheme to the Capital Programme, authorises the Strategic Director for Communities to procure and enter into any contracts and associated agreements required to implement the scheme on terms and conditions acceptable to the Strategic Director for Resources and subject to the requirements of the Section 278 Agreements with the Developer.

5. Electricity Contract Renewal

Councillor Peter Butlin (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property) set out the rationale behind the report, explaining that approval was sought to enter into a framework agreement for electricity for Council owned buildings through the East Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO) for four years from October 2024, with an estimated value over the life of the contract of £6.2m. The proposed framework would supply 100 existing buildings, at current annual consumption of around £1.2m (although it was anticipated prices would rise by 30-35% before the new framework was put in place). This was only a proportion of the total £5m electricity spend with the remaining usage contracted separately.

ESPO had demonstrated over many years that it's specialist buying expertise in the energy market and collective buying power within the energy market from its many customers, provided the skills and scale to negotiate longer term deals that offered value for money for the Council. This was particularly important as wholesale prices had increased by 295% in the previous two years, compared to an increase of 120% under the existing ESPO contract.

Councillor Martin Watson asked whether there was any obstacle to aligning the framework with the street lighting contract and Councillor Butlin confirmed that this contract represented a portion of the Council's total energy usage and he would look into how the Council's purchasing power could be utilised further.

Resolved

That Cabinet

1. Agrees to the Council entering a framework agreement (the (Electricity Procurement Service Agreement) for the purchase of electricity for council owned buildings with ESPO (East Shires Purchasing Organisation) for the period Oct 2024 - Sept 2028.
2. Authorises the Strategic Director for Resources, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property, to enter all required agreements to implement the recommendations in this report on terms and conditions considered acceptable to him.

6. Surface Pro Device Replacement

Councillor Andy Jenns (Portfolio Holder for Customer and Transformation) explained that the Council's existing devices had been deployed in 2019 and had proved reliable and simplified ICT support arrangements. He noted that the current need for devices had increased by 617 units since 2019 but the cost of replacement had been reduced by 24% per device. He stressed that existing devices would be returned to the leasing company, refurbished and resold.

Councillor Tim Sinclair questioned the additional 617 incremental head count and asked why there was a need to replace devices at this stage.

Councillor Andy Jenns advised that devices were four years old and this meant it was likely problems would begin to arise. It was essential that devices were reliable and that repair costs were limited. He indicated that paragraph 4.4 of the report explained that the increase in need had resulted from service response to the Council's priorities such as Children and Families, Adult Social Care, and Environment Services. Councillor Peter Butlin further explained that these were not additional employees, but rather that the Council's transformation process to become a modern digital authority had meant that existing employees had taken on digital roles and were working more efficiently using Surface Pros.

Resolved

That Cabinet authorises the Strategic Director for Resources to undertake an appropriate procurement process, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Customer and Transformation, and to enter into all agreements that he considers necessary for the replacement of the Council's current end user devices as set out in paragraph 1.3 of the report.

7. Museum Disposal of Items which do not meet the Collection Development Policy

Councillor Heather Timms (Portfolio Holder for Environment, Climate and Culture) explained that the Museum Service had undertaken housekeeping around the current collections to identify items that did not fit with the agreed development policy. Cabinet approval was required for the disposal of those assets now being released.

Resolved

That Cabinet approves the process of disposing of the identified items in Warwickshire Museum Service's collection which do not meet the requirements of the Museum Collection Development Policy (approved by Cabinet in January 2020) as listed in Appendix A to the report.

8. Member Working Group - Home to School Transport

Councillor Wallace Redford (Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning) reminded Cabinet that as part of the Budget approved at Council on 7 February 2023, it had been agreed to set up a Member Working Group on Home to School Transport, with a focus on demand and cost implications. The proposed Terms of Reference were appended to the report and nominations had been sought for Members to sit on the Group.

Councillor Tim Sinclair commented on the work that the Budget Working Group had undertaken on this subject which had identified a number of potential workstreams. He looked forward to considering each of these workstreams further and sharing the recommendations in due course.

Resolved

That Cabinet:

1. Approves the Terms of Reference for the Member Working Group on Home to School Transport, as set out at Appendix A to the report; and
2. Authorises the Strategic Director for Resources to establish and initiate the Working Group.

9. Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership Transition & Future Approach to Sub-Regional Economic Development

Councillor Martin Watson (Portfolio Holder for Economy) noted that Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) were established in 2011 to create strategic partnerships between the private and public sectors to drive forward growth across identified functional economic geographies. Following a review of LEPs by Government, and as part of proposals contained within the Levelling Up White Paper, LEPs were being dissolved and the core functions and activities that they undertook were being transitioned into appropriate local democratic institutions – set out as either Combined Authorities or upper tier local authorities.

Coventry & Warwickshire LEP was identified as being on Pathway 3, meaning that a bespoke solution needed to be developed locally due to the complexity of the geography given that part of the LEP was within the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA). Functions and activities of the Coventry & Warwickshire LEP would therefore be transitioned into both the WMCA and Warwickshire County Council, and it was important therefore to develop arrangements that enabled a continued focus across the whole Coventry & Warwickshire geography.

Officers in both Councils had been working with the LEP, other partners and stakeholders to develop a locally appropriate transition plan as set out in the report.

Councillor John Holland noted that the dissolution of the LEPs had been mentioned in the Chancellor's Spring Budget on 15 March 2023 and asked if this resulted in any changes to the report. Councillor Watson responded that there were no specific changes and the plans were robust and practical. A further report would be brought to Cabinet at a future date. Councillor Peter Butlin advised that the Spring Budget formalised the transfer of powers and a briefing note would be circulated to Members on the impact of Spring Budget.

Resolved

That Cabinet

1. Endorses the transition proposals and the approach to sub-regional economic development across Coventry and Warwickshire following the dissolution of the Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership as set out in paragraph 2.2 of the report.
2. Confirms the Council's commitment to the continuation of the functions of the Coventry and Warwickshire Growth Hub and requests a future report on the proposals for doing so.

10. Reports Containing Exempt or Confidential Information

Resolved:

That members of the public be excluded from the meeting for the item 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.

11. Rugby Parkway Station - Land Acquisitions

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

Resolved that the recommendations as set out in the exempt report be approved.

The meeting rose at 2.26pm

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Chair