

County Council

Tuesday 21 March 2023

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

Councillor Dave Humphreys (Chair), Councillor Christopher Kettle (Vice-Chair), Councillor Richard Baxter-Payne, 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 Yousef Dahmash, Councillor Piers Daniell, Councillor Tracey Drew, Councillor Judy Falp, Councillor Jenny Fradgley, Councillor Sarah Feeney, Councillor Bill Gifford, Councillor Peter Gilbert, Councillor Clare Golby, Councillor Brian Hammersley, Councillor John Holland, Councillor Marian Humphreys, Councillor Andy Jennis, Councillor Kam Kaur, Councillor Justin Kerridge, Councillor Sue Markham, Councillor Jan Matecki, Councillor Sarah Millar, Councillor Chris Mills, Councillor Jeff Morgan, Councillor Penny-Anne O'Donnell, Councillor Daren Pemberton, Councillor Wallace Redford, Councillor Will Roberts, Councillor Kate Rolfe, Councillor Jerry Roodhouse, Councillor Isobel Seccombe OBE, Councillor Ian Shenton, Councillor Jill Simpson-Vince, Councillor Tim Sinclair, 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 Jo Barker, Brett Beetham, Jackie D'Arcy, Jack Kennaugh, Howard Roberts, Mejar Singh and Bhagwant Singh-Pandher.

Councillor Caroline Phillips was also absent from the meeting.

(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 7 February 2023 were agreed as an accurate record for signing by the Chair.

(4) Chair's announcements

Engagements

The Chair reflected on the events that he had attended since the last meeting, including hosting former apprentice and current Family Support Worker, Umar Teerab, a care leaver from Sudan, as 'Chair for the Day'.

King Charles III Coronation

The Chairman noted that the Coronation of His Majesty The King and Her Majesty The Queen Consort would take place on Saturday, 6 May 2023. Alongside the weekend of national celebrations, the Council was working closely with the Lord Lieutenant, alongside District and Borough colleagues, town and parish councils and Warwickshire CAVA, to name but a few, on plans for a variety of local events and activities to mark the special occasion. More details would be shared with members in due course, but in the meantime, a dedicated County Council Coronation website contained all the latest information. The Chairman himself was looking forward to representing the Council at various celebratory events happening across the County.

Former Councillor Melanie Pinches

The Chairman stated that it was his sad duty to inform Council of the passing of former County Councillor Melanie Pinches. Mrs Pinches, from the Liberal Democrat group, served as a Warwickshire County Councillor representing Bidford-on-Avon between 1985 and 1989. The Chair extended condolences to her family and friends.

Councillor Jenny Fradgley paid tribute to former Councillor Melanie Pinches, a hard working and principled county councillor, of whom she had many memories.

Council held a one minute silence in tribute.

(5) Petitions

Road Safety at Trinity Road/Overwoods Road, Kingsbury and Baddesley & Dordon

The Chair welcomed Carol Davies to the meeting to present a petition calling for safety measures at Trinity Road.

Mrs Davies stated as follows:

"The petition is for 2 urgently required safety measures to Trinity Road. A 3-way set of traffic lights to Overwoods Road junction even if they are temporary traffic lights and most importantly the mph passing Piccadilly, the Kingsbury Oil Depot and EMR through to Kingsbury changing to 30mph.

Trinity Road is situated between Kingsbury and Jct.10 of the M42 motorway and it has had 4 deaths, many accidents and near-miss incidents over the years. One accident in particular is serious and has changed a young woman's life for ever.

The Kingsbury Oil Terminal that is situated on Trinity Road and was opened in the 1960s has grown to become the largest oil storage depot in the UK. Presently, there are 220 tanker loadings daily. These 220 tankers use Trinity Road every day with many of them returning to the Depot in the same day.

Trinity Road is an important multi-use road and is the only evacuation road for the community of Piccadilly which does add to its importance and needs to be as safe as it possibly can be.

Also on Trinity Road there is EMR Metal Recycling Plant which buys metal of all shapes and sizes, including scrap vehicles and trains.

The entrance to EMR is on Trinity Road near to the Oil Depot. HGVs regularly deliver to and collect from these premises. The number of HGVs including low-loaders and huge wagons has increased as the company itself has increased in the size of its site.

Accidents on Trinity Road have increased, and if traffic lights had been installed to Overwoods Road Junction 10 years ago; the tragic fatal accident to Maggie, her son Damian and her nephew Dion would not have happened and all three of them would be alive today; because Maggie would have taken notice of the traffic lights instead of being called on by another motorist.

Also, if the speed limit had been 30mph and the lights had been working Mason would have stood a chance of survival, but he was killed outright at 50mph. I understand that there is an ongoing investigation into this very tragic incident.

WHO – the World Health Organisation on the subject of road safety says that driving at speed- significantly increases both the likelihood of a crash occurring and the severity of its consequences. (For every 1% increase in mean speed, there is a 4% increase in fatal crash risk)

Between Kingsbury school and Piccadilly the speeds vary from 30mph at Kingsbury to 50mph passing EMR and the Kingsbury Oil Depot, then 40mph passing Piccadilly. We are seriously campaigning with the aid of our petition for this stretch of road on Trinity Road to be 30mph with all the rest of Trinity Road remaining 50mph.

If Trinity Road was an ordinary road with house frontages – the road would automatically be 30mph, but instead of house frontages it has hundreds of HGVs using this road at speeds not commensurate with the road's use by pedestrians, disabled people, motorists, cyclists and other road users.

During the day people from Piccadilly walk, sometimes with pushchairs, to the shops, hairdressers and doctors in Kingsbury and children from school walk back home to Piccadilly. The everyday usage of this road makes this particular road an exceptional road, requiring exceptional road safety because of its use by so many HGVs.

Safety assessments in the form of a "Road Safety Audit" (RSA) identifies opportunities for improvements in safety for all road users.

Trinity road is a unique road because there is no other road like it anywhere in the UK.

One accident on Trinity Road was very serious and she was lucky to get away with her life according to the doctors. She suffered a very badly fractured lower leg and much bruising to most of her body. She has to use walking aids to get about because of all the metal repair work to her leg.

I was told about all the accidents when knocking on doors with the petition and I was alarmed to hear of so many. One accident that could have been much worse was when a man was in a car being driven from Wood End along Trinity Road and when they got to Overwoods Road junction, a car rushed out of Overwoods Road and crashed into them. Luckily they only received minor injuries but the car was a complete write-off.

It has been pointed out to me that our MP Craig Tracey has been campaigning for traffic calming measures on Trinity Road for years and at one point a developer agreed to fund traffic lights at Overwoods Road junction. Unfortunately though HS2 then safeguarded the area so the developer could no longer build the houses so the money for the traffic lights disappeared.

Recently, I read about the road safety fund of £500,000 that Mr Philip Seccombe (Warwickshire Police & Crime Commissioner) has launched for initiatives tackling road safety, as part of his commitment to reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured on the county's roads. I really do think that consideration should be given to some possible financial assistance from this fund to enable the implementation of two safety measures to Trinity Road without further delay.

Also, because the Oil Depot has managed to develop so much land with their own site roads, lights and extra oil tankers, they should be asked for a contribution to the cost of the road safety measures to Trinity Road which they need to use every day for all their deliveries.

Perhaps EMR will contribute also

Four deaths is four too many. We have provided WCC with a petition signed by 1,000 people including the vicar of Kingsbury Church who was very keen to sign.

Mason's mother Dani cannot move on, she cries every day and although she has been told to think only of the good times she has shared with him when she does, she cries even more. She has been given numbers for bereavement counselling but she says she is too upset for that now. She has thanked me though for doing the petition because she said that the safety measures it is for, will help school children walking in the future along Trinity Road and Mason will not have died in vain."

Councillor Wallace Redford (Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning) thanked Mrs Davies for bringing these matters to the attention of the Council and for clearly demonstrating the view of local residents. He provided reassurance that he would consider the issues that had been raised and provide a response as soon as possible.

(6) Public Speaking

None.

2. Application for Dispensation

Councillor Isobel Seccombe moved the recommendation that a dispensation be granted for Councillor Mejar Singh which was seconded by Councillor Marian Humphreys. There was no debate but Council joined to wish Councillor Singh well.

Resolved

That the Council approves the absence of Councillor Mejar Singh from meetings of the authority on the grounds of ill health.

3. Education Capital Programme 2022/23

Councillor Peter Butlin (Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property) introduced this comprehensive report relating to three projects at Oak Wood Primary School, Evergreen School in Warwick, and Stratford Upon Avon School and moved the recommendations as set out in the report.

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

Amendment

Councillor Chilvers proposed the addition of the following paragraph to the Motion:

3. Requests that a costed net-zero option for all three projects is developed and reported to Cabinet for decision before tenders are requested for the projects.

In moving the amendment, Councillor Chilvers noted that although a costed net-zero option had not been included for these projects, he understood that there were plans to do so for future projects. He considered it unfortunate that this was not already taking place in view of the Climate Emergency that had been declared some time ago. He did not believe providing these costings would cause significant delay to the projects.

Councillor Tracey Drew seconded the amendment and reserved the right to speak.

Debate

Councillor Barbara Brown commented on the absence of east Warwickshire, particularly the Rugby area, from the report. She also stated that it would be helpful to have an understanding of the funding support that would be in place for children in the context of the expanded schools.

Councillor Jenny Fradgley expressed surprise that climate change considerations had not been built into the projects. She trusted that this could be done quickly and effectively.

Councillor Robert Tromans welcomed the proposed investment in schools, particularly for Oak Wood. He noted that it had been implied that the ecological impact of the developments had not been considered but it was his understanding that full net-zero would be likely to cost significantly more and he expressed concern at the delay this would cause together with the associated escalation of costs.

In support of the amendment, Councillor Tracey Drew believed that obtaining the costings would provide clear evidence of the funding reality and avoid retrofitting, leading to lower energy consumption in the schools.

Councillor Kam Kaur responded that the impact of any delay to the project while further costings were taken, would be that the associated planning applications would be delayed and 350 children would not have a school place in September 2024. She considered this would set an unacceptable precedent for Warwickshire children and their parents. Whilst she appreciated the sentiments of the amendment, she urged the Chamber to support the original motion due to the impact the amendment would have on children.

In response, Councillor Jonathan Chilvers questioned why costed net-zero options had not yet been built into the process and, in doing so, referred to a recent social media post by Councillor Butlin.

Councillor Peter Butlin responded that his personal views were not holding up the implementation of policy. He advised that the proposed costings would cause delay to the delivery of school places. Substantially different alterations, including the use of different products, would cause delay to these particular projects but net-zero options would be considered for future projects. In response to Councillor Brown, he pointed out that the Council had little input on the support provided in academy schools but in any event the focus of this report was on the delivery of school places and a capital project.

Vote

A vote on the amendment took place. The amendment was defeated.

A vote on the original motion took place which was carried unanimously.

Resolved

That Council:

1. Agrees the addition of £7.820 million to the capital programme to deliver the scheme at Evergreen School subject to Cabinet's approval to increase the number of school places.
2. Agrees the addition of £6.026 million to the capital programme to deliver the schemes at Oak Wood Primary School and Stratford upon Avon School

All to be funded from Department for Education High Need and Basic Need grants and developer contributions.

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

Councillor Peter Butlin (Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property) moved the recommendation as set out in the report. In doing so, he noted that the scheme was a necessity to support house building in the area.

Councillor Wallace Redford seconded the recommendation and reserved the right to speak.

Debate

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers considered that the proposal was unacceptable in its current form and considered it to be a hostile environment for pedestrians and cyclists. He considered there were improvements that could be made and the dominance of cars in the area was due to the limited options for pedestrians and cyclists.

Councillor Jeff Clarke welcomed the proposals which he considered to be much needed in the division and welcomed the provision of a pedestrian crossing. He was pleased to see that the funds for the upgrade had been secured from developers. He concluded by requesting the works commence at an early opportunity to support the progression of the housing development.

Councillor Sarah Feeney noted the considerable housing development in the wider area and supported the proposals which she considered would assist with traffic flow. She did, however, consider that an upgrade to the provision for pedestrians was needed.

Councillor Robert Tromans echoed comments regarding the level of housing development in the wider area and the subsequent pressure on the highway. He considered that the focus of the proposals should be on improvement to traffic flows and pedestrian safety. As one of the local members for the area, he noted that he had not heard calls from residents for cycle routes in this area.

Councillor Adrian Warwick noted that the crematorium was sited in this area and that the improvement to traffic flow would provide for a more dignified funeral procession to the site.

Councillor Tracey Drew stated that she had heard calls for cycle routes in the north of the county and expressed the view that following the declaration of a climate emergency and the housing development in the area, residents should be supported towards a modal shift from cars to cycles and walking.

Councillor Clare Golby, who represented Arbury division in Nuneaton, shared her experience of discussions with residents, noting that an interest in cycling provision or carbon footprint were not issues that had been raised with her. There were cycle routes in the area which were not used and she considered that it was important for local councillors to represent the views of local residents.

Councillor Marian Humphreys stated that she was a member of the Council's Cycling Liaison Group and this experience had led her to the understanding that the roads in Nuneaton were too hazardous for cycling as they were too narrow, and this is what had led to the local views that were being expressed by colleagues. However, she noted that there were areas outside the town centre where cycling would be suitable for leisure or travel to school and, in her view, this was where the provision of cycling routes should be supported.

Councillor Sarah Boad expressed her disappointment that residents were not being encouraged to cycle or use buses as this would reduce traffic congestion and play a part in alleviating the cost of living crisis. She considered that cycle schemes such as K2L were a necessity for those who would like to cycle in a safer environment.

Councillor Justin Kerridge who was an enthusiastic cyclist, encouraged people to give thought to it as a travel option and believed that the Council should be providing opportunities for cycling. However, he also considered that the view of local residents had to be taken into account.

Councillor Jenny Fradgeley noted that the government had issued guidance regarding active travel and that a climate emergency had been declared by this Council. However, the modal shift had to be encouraged and the support of the highways authority was needed to enable that to happen.

Councillor Will Roberts noted that the residents in Willes division that he represented had raised the need for more cycle routes with him. He noted the comments of Councillor Golby during this and previous debates and indicated that he would be pleased to accompany her to speak to residents so that he could hear their views and better understand local opinion.

Councillor Heather Timms expressed her commitment to active travel in all its forms and noted that there were many cycle routes in the county. She highlighted campaigns like Cycle Buddies which provided experienced support to less experienced riders and considered that the focus of efforts should be in this arena together with cycling to school.

Councillor Andy Crump noted that safe and active travel needed to be encouraged but funding needed to be spent wisely where it would make the most difference.

Councillor Wallace Redford noted that the scheme had been proposed due to heavy traffic in the area and that developer funding had been secured to address the issues. It was important to understand that the money was provided to improve the circumstances of local residents and that many of the views expressed during the debate were outside the scope of the report.

Councillor Peter Butlin noted that the local planning authority had permitted the development with S278 funding and the County Council was required to implement it. The developers had agreed to go beyond their obligations and were supporting improvements in the area and if it was possible to include a pedestrian crossing as part of the proposals then that would be done.

Vote

A vote was held. The recommendations were agreed by a majority.

Resolved

That Council approves 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.

5. Director of Public Health Annual Report 2022

Councillor Margaret Bell (Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health) moved the recommendation as set out in the report. In doing so, she noted that this year's report focussed on the connection between health and the rising cost of living. It was an informative and thought provoking report with evidence-based, specific and practical recommendations. Since publication,

the Director of Public Health had amended recommendation 2 (Housing) to advocate for a commitment to preventing new homes from being built with an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of less than A. Partners were being engaged to implement the recommendations.

Councillor Marian Humphries seconded the recommendation and reserved the right to speak.

Debate

Councillor Sarah Boad welcomed the report, particularly highlighting the user-friendly infographic presentation. She commended support for exploring the feasibility of free school meals for all primary school children and drew attention to cancer screening statistics, noting that these units needed to be close to home and easily accessible.

Councillor Bill Gifford commended the report for its readability and focus on the connection between the cost of living, poverty and health inequalities.

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers thanked the Public Health Team for the report and welcomed conversations which had taken place with Councillor Bell to increase the EPC rating target for new builds to an A rating. He expressed the view that an EPC rating of C was still a good target for existing properties. Councillor Chilvers considered that there was an awareness of the investment needed for retrofitting which would have an impact across a range of areas including a reduction of energy bills and carbon emissions together with health impacts. He hoped that the evidence base could be utilised to obtain funding for retrofitting.

Councillor Isobel Seccombe also commended the report. She was pleased to see the reduction in the life expectancy gap but was concerned about the levels of obesity reported. She noted national figures around unemployment included in the report and stated that she would have liked to see the Warwickshire figures included as she believed that these were below the national trend. In terms of fuel poverty she noted that the government had been contributing to energy bills since summer 2022 and considered that this had made a positive impact. Councillor Seccombe thanked the Public Health team for providing the data to drive evidence-based policy and applauded Mike Jackson for his artistic presentation of the information.

Councillor Judy Falp also praised the report and welcomed the visible partnership work that was taking place. She particularly supported the recommendation for all primary school children to receive free school meals but recognised that this was not only a funding issue. She concluded by acknowledging the hard work of the Public Health team and associated partners.

Councillor John Holland also thanked the Director of Public Health for the report, noting the recommendations around transport which linked to the previous debate. He considered that affordable housing was a key issue for residents and linked this to the rising cost of living and the association with stress and mental health. He noted that the 2019 Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (2019) had highlighted diversity across Warwickshire and mused over how many of the identified projects had come to fruition. He congratulated the Director of Public Health on her report and urged colleagues to support implementation of the recommendations to meet local needs.

Councillor Marian Humphreys welcomed the report and looked forward to receiving progress reports at Health and Wellbeing Board on the implementation of the recommendations.

In response, Councillor Margaret Bell thanked the Chamber for its support. In terms of cancer screening, she confirmed that Health and Wellbeing Board would be looking at access to services, including the use of the mobile screening unit. She recognised the challenges in housing but noted that work with district and borough councils would seek to address this. She noted that the Health and Wellbeing Board included a wide range of partners who recognised that variations in need across the county and health inequality was at the top of the health agenda. The report needed to be a living document with progress being monitored and including partnership support.

Vote

A vote was held. The recommendations were agreed by a majority.

Resolved

That Council supports the Director of Public Health Annual Report 2022.

6. Members' Allowances Scheme

Councillor Isobel Seccombe moved the recommendations as set out in the report. In doing so, she explained that Members allowances were indexed to increase in-line with the percentage pay award to employees but that this year, employees had received a flat rate increase which was not compatible with the Members' scheme. She pointed out that Members' allowances should be provided at a reasonable rate to attract a broad spectrum of people to stand for election. After considering the options, Group Leaders had considered that the average pay increase for a Warwickshire County Council employee (6%) was reasonable. It was also important to future proof the Members' Allowance scheme against a similar situation in subsequent years. Councillor Seccombe recognised that it was not an easy time to vote for an increase in pay but she was conscious that she did not want councillors to find difficulty in fulfilling their democratic roles.

Councillor Peter Butlin seconded the recommendation and reserved the right to speak.

Amendment

Councillor Chilvers proposed that an additional paragraph be added to the Motion at point 2 as follows:

“Requires all Groups to submit details of which councillors receive spokespersons allowances, for what role and what sum and that this information is published by the Council annually.”

In moving the above amendment, Councillor Chilvers stated that he supported the principle of the report which provided for allowances that would allow candidates to consider how they would manage financially if they were elected, perhaps by negotiating a reduction in hours with their employer knowing that the allowance would bridge any gap. The amendment focussed on the spokesperson pot and sought greater transparency of its use and publishing this in line with other allowances.

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

Councillor Seccombe accepted the amendment as friendly.

Debate

Councillor John Holland supported the proposal and welcomed the transparency that was being offered. He supported the ethos of a fair day's wage for a fair day's work and recognised the need for diversity in elected representation. He considered it would be dangerous to democracy if only retired people with a private pension could afford to stand for election because whilst employers were required to give time off for democratic duties, they were not obliged to do so with pay. He noted that Councillors did not have to claim all their allowance.

Councillors Bill Gifford considered this was a sensible approach and Councillor Clare Golby welcomed the amendment.

Vote

A vote was held and the motion (as amended) was agreed by a majority.

Resolved

That Council notes the report and recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel set out at Appendix 1 of the report and

1. approves the recommendations as set out in Section 1.7 of the report;
2. requires all Groups to submit details of which councillors receive spokespersons allowances, for what role and what sum and that this information is published by the Council annually; and
3. authorises the Strategic Director for Resources to make such amendments to the current Scheme as are required as a result of the decision of Council

7. Notices of Motion

(1) Labour Motion 1 – Library Membership for Children and Young People

That this Council commits to a refreshed approach to the promotion of library membership to the children and young people of Warwickshire.

Councillor Sarah Feeney proposed the above Motion and in doing so, she recognised that it was not an easy task to manage. She acknowledged the work that the library service conducted in terms of rhyme time, offering music and genealogy but stated that an important part of a child's journey was understanding that a library could provide information. She noted that an amendment had been tabled which she felt diluted the motion and as she sought the refreshed approach to be conducted rather than only be considered, she would not therefore be accepting it as a friendly amendment.

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

Amendment

Councillor Andy Jenns proposed the following amendment:

That this Council **recognises and celebrates the achievements of our library service, its staff and volunteers, and** commits **through scrutiny** to **consider further ways to promote its services** ~~a refreshed approach to the promotion of library membership to the children and young people of Warwickshire.~~

[Deletions shown as strikethrough. Additions shown in bold and underlined.]

Councillor Jenns was disappointed this was not accepted as a friendly amendment as he considered that it was in the spirit of the original motion. Whilst visiting some of the county's libraries the previous day, he had raised the motion with staff and whilst it had been agreed more promotional activity was needed, it was believed this should be targeted at secondary school children. Councillor Jenns advised that in 2020 the under 18 population of the county was 120,000 (circa 20% of the total population). In this age group, there were 44,546 registered borrowers (37% of the under 18 population) and of those 28,272 regularly borrowed books, and the total number of children's books issued between April 2022 to March 2023 was 650,947. These were impressive numbers but he considered that a review by scrutiny to see if alternative approaches would be beneficial would be welcomed.

Councillor Adrian Warwick seconded the amendment and reserved the right to speak.

Debate

Councillor Sarah Boad welcome the motion and supported the amendment which would see a report presented for scrutiny. She considered this would help to enhance levelling up work in deprived areas and she encouraged members to promote library services among residents.

Councillor Isobel Seccombe supported the amendment and review of the topic by scrutiny. It was desirable to promote the library service, but this had to be achieved without taking funding away from other projects. The amendment was in the spirit of encouraging more take up of library services, but not at the cost of something else.

Councillor Tim Sinclair was supportive of the spirit of the motion, noting that his own children had been reading from an early age and the library had played a large role in their lives. In his view, the original motion was not clear on the action to be taken beyond a 'refreshed approach' whilst the amendment made provision for a specific action and measurable improvement.

Councillor Bill Gifford expressed surprise that the original motion did not acknowledge the work of the libraries and was further surprised the amendment was not accepted as friendly. He stated that Warwickshire had one of the best library services in the country but it could be better promoted and it seemed a natural course of action for this to be investigated by scrutiny.

Councillor Judy Falp welcomed the motion. She reflected on her personal experiences and supported the view that gaps in membership were among secondary school children but that the digital offer could be attractive to them. She considered that scrutiny would be best placed to investigate the issue.

Councillor Kam Kaur noted that Warwickshire Library Service was a national exemplar and that a lot of the work that it undertook was not properly recognised. She welcomed the opportunity to promote the service and echoed the comments from Councillor Boad to link libraries and communities.

Councillor Andy Crump applauded the work of Library Services.

Councillor Adrian Warwick noted the outstanding work done by libraries and welcomed the opportunity to celebrate those achievements in the Council Chamber. He considered that the amendment strengthened the motion and had hoped it would be well received.

Councillor Andy Jenns considered that the Chamber was supportive of the spirit of the amendment and wanted to support a thriving library service.

Councillor John Holland expressed the view that the amendment would slow down the implementation of any promotional activity and urged Council not to support it.

Councillor Sarah Feeney stated that the use of the word “consider” in the motion was reducing and that the outcome of scrutiny work might be not to take the issue further if it was not affordable. She wanted children to have access to libraries and asked the Chamber not to ‘consider’ doing this, but to actually do it.

Vote

A vote was held on the Conservative amendment which was carried by a majority and became the substantive motion. A vote was held on the substantive motion which was unanimously supported.

Resolved

That this Council recognises and celebrates the achievements of our library service, its staff and volunteers, and commits through scrutiny to consider further ways to promote its services to the children and young people of Warwickshire.

(2) Labour Motion 2 – Petitions Scheme

That this Council undertakes to review its Petitions Scheme and commits to develop a protocol surrounding how the Council responds to petitions.

Councillor Barbara Brown proposed the above motion, expressing the opinion that the scheme required review with consideration being given to opportunities to debate the issues that were brought before the Council. She advocated for the formation of a Petitions Committee to look at petitions received, investigate the issues raised and recommend actions for debate.

Councillor Sarah Millar seconded the recommendation and reserved the right to speak.

Debate

Councillor Isobel Seccombe supported the motion in principle and concurred that the Chamber heard eloquent speeches from petitioners which seemed to have no tangible outcome. She considered that any change to the Scheme would require a change to standing orders and suggested that scrutiny consider putting a review of the Petitions Scheme on the work programme to investigate what would be appropriate for the future and the impact on standing orders.

Councillor Tim Sinclair was concerned that the motion was too vague and would have preferred to see specific actions and outcomes.

Councillor Andy Jenns referred to the petition received earlier in the meeting and his understanding of how hard the petitioner had worked to obtain the signatures required and made the effort to attend to speak, for what appeared to be an anticlimactic outcome.

Councillor Sarah Millar expressed admiration for the courage shown by the petitioner who had given a speech earlier in the meeting and agreed it must have been a disappointing experience. She reminded Council that there was new petition system in parliament and that in terms of proportionality every petition did not need to be responded to and debated, but she felt it was important to have a scheme that was pertinent and proportionate.

In closing, Councillor Barbara Brown stated that the motion could not be specific as it was related to something developmental and she welcomed Councillor Seccombe's sensible approach.

Vote

A vote was held and the motion was carried unanimously.

Resolved

That this Council undertakes to review its Petitions Scheme and commits to develop a protocol surrounding how the Council responds to petitions.

8. Member Question Time (Standing Order 7)

(1) Question to Councillor Wallace Redford from Councillor John Holland

The road and adjacent footpath for Priory Mews, Cape Road, Warwick were closed on 17 February 2022 due to subsidence and remain closed. Since then, no work has been carried out to repair the road and footpath. The highway and footpath are both blocked, causing considerable difficulty for residents in the street. Would the Portfolio Holder apologise to the residents for the loss of their right-of-way and vehicle access to their homes? When will repairs be completed?

Councillor Redford responded that there was a serious situation with subsidence in the area. It was not just affecting the road and the path, several houses had suffered subsidence to the extent that Severn Trent had purchased them. This was an ongoing situation. Severn Trent had taken control of the site and remained so. There was no likelihood of the road being opened until such

time that it could be done in a manner that was safe for residents and the workforce in attendance. This would be done as quickly as it was safe to do so.

In response, Councillor Holland noted that there were a number of residents whose homes were not affected by subsidence but they had still lost access, could not get their cars to their garages and the pedestrian route was difficult. It was an adopted highway which was the Council's responsibility. He considered the response to be unsatisfactory.

Councillor Redford advised that negotiations with Severn Trent to open part of the road as soon as possible were taking place but this remained in the control of Severn Trent. He would circulate more information as soon as he had further news.

(2) Question to Councillor Heather Timms from Councillor Sarah Millar

Please could you provide an update on the solar panel roll out scheme in Warwickshire "Solar Together" and the relationship between the scheme and the service/contract providers (GET UK). Residents in my division, and elsewhere in the county have paid deposits, had scaffolding put up, had scaffolding taken down, and other difficulties including basic contact with the scheme. What support is there for residents who have been disappointed, let down, and frustrated trying to do the right thing for the environment?

Councillor Timms responded that Solar Together was a scheme operated by iChoosr who registered customers, ran the option to find a supplier and passed the customers to the supplier, with customers then signing up to contracts directly with suppliers. A series of global events had had a significant impact on the supply chain over the past 12-18 months, not just in Warwickshire but more widely across the country and this, unfortunately, had impacted on a number of Warwickshire customers. The Council recognised how frustrated and let down they felt, particularly when they were trying to do the right thing

The Council was in regular dialogue with iChoosr and were assessing ways in which affected customers could be supported both directly and through iChoosr. A dedicated team of officers had been set up to liaise with affected customers (where the details were available), and the Council was reviewing the Scheme as a whole.

iChoosr were in constant contact with the supplier, GET, and also in regular dialogue with the Home Insulation and Energy Systems Quality Assured Contractors Scheme (HIES). However, as supplier, the responsibility to resolve the issues lay with GET. iChoosr were planning to liaise with all customers early in the week of the meeting to make them aware of the situation and provide support, whichever part of the process they were at.

Councillor Millar asked what pressure the Council could bring to bear on iChoosr to make sure customers were not experiencing these difficulties, potentially losing deposits and not receiving the solar panels or services they were expecting?

Councillor Timms repeated that a dedicated team had been set up to put that pressure on but the Council wanted to ensure that the supplier, GET, fulfilled their obligations.

(3) Question to Councillor Peter Butlin from Councillor John Holland

Will the Deputy Leader make a statement about the funding of a foot/cycle bridge across Europa Way to replace traffic lights?

Councillor Butlin responded that the Council had been working closely with Warwick District Council to develop feasibility plans for the bridge for more than a year including the Council investing £50,000 in early feasibility studies. While the Community Infrastructure Fund was in place, it was not sufficient to fund the cost of a project of this size. The District Council had welcomed this Council's release of funding to complete the feasibility work and involve architects which would move the project a step closer to a fully costed and workable design. This would allow the Council, working in partnership, to seek further external funding to deliver the project.

Councillor Holland responded that this sounded like it may be a positive scheme but his main concern was that the project was only required because of development in the area and, therefore, should be developer funded.

(4) Question to Councillor Peter Butlin from Councillor Will Roberts

On 2 March 2023, you posted on social media that you believe all net-zero targets should be scrapped. Considering meeting net-zero commitments falls within one of Warwickshire County Council's three strategy priorities in the 2022-2027 Plan, please can you clarify your position on this – do you believe all net-zero targets should be dropped?

In response, Councillor Butlin referred to his earlier statement and further stated that he was continually looking at the data to support the premise.

(5) Question to Councillor Wallace Redford from Councillor Sarah Boad

At a previous meeting, my colleague asked about the state of on-street parking meters in the centre of Leamington and it was reported that they would all be working within a few weeks. This was not the case. It is acknowledged that the units are old and parts are not available, however, residents needed the option to pay in cash not via Ringo. Can you provide an update that considers the needs of residents without smartphones.

Councillor Wallace Redford responded that he had been in correspondence with several residents who had raised this issue with him and he therefore had the information but not to hand. He would circulate the detail to Members.

Councillor Peter Butlin added his acknowledgement that the machines were out of date and breaking down on a regular basis, and stated a report was being drafted regarding the procurement of new machines with provision for cash, card and Ringo payments. Once permission had been granted, the procurement would commence.

9. Any Other items of Urgent Business

None.

The meeting rose at 1.15 pm

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Chair