

Cabinet

Thursday 15 June 2023

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

Councillor Isobel Seccombe OBE (Chair)
Councillor Margaret Bell
Councillor Peter Butlin
Councillor Andy Crump
Councillor Yousef Dahmash
Councillor Kam Kaur
Councillor Sue Markham
Councillor Jan Matecki
Councillor Heather Timms
Councillor Martin Watson

Officers

Amy Bridgewater-Carnall, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Jan Cummings, Senior Solicitor
Sarah Duxbury, Assistant Director – Governance & Policy
Andrew Felton, Assistant Director Finance
Nigel Minns, Strategic Director for People
Mark Ryder, Strategic Director for Communities
Steve Smith, Assistant Director Commissioning Support Unit
Philippa Young, Strategy & Commissioning Manager, Transport and Highways

Others Present

Councillor John Holland
Councillor Marian Humphreys
Councillor Jerry Roodhouse

1. General

The Leader welcomed everyone to the meeting including the new members of Cabinet, Councillors Yousef Dahmash, Sue Markham and Jan Matecki.

(1) Apologies

Apologies were received from the Chief Executive, Monica Fogarty.

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

Councillor Andy Crump declared an interest in Agenda Item 12, WRIF PIF Bids for approval – June 2023, as the applicant was known to him. He left the room whilst the item was discussed.

(3) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 11 May 2023 were agreed as an accurate record.

(4) Public Speaking

There was none.

2. Financial Outturn Report 2022/23

Members received a report which provided an analysis and commentary on the financial position of the Council at the end of the 2022/23 financial year.

Councillor Peter Butlin introduced the report and set the scene with regards to the work undertaken over the last twelve months. He felt that the Council had performed well despite national and international events, with the finance team reacting well to the challenges. Councillor Butlin gave an overview of the overspend figures and highlighted that, whilst everyone tried their level best to keep within budget, this was not always possible due to the pressures on services. He also highlighted the additional income secured by the Legal Team along with additional finances being gained from the investments managed by the Treasury Management Team.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse thanked officers for the in-depth report. He raised a concern about the finances in relation to Home to School Transport and the budget for schools in general. He highlighted the mounting pressures that schools were under and hoped colleagues would join in him lobbying the DSG around this subject.

Councillor Butlin agreed with the frustrations relating to school budgets and reminded Members that the Council did have an excellent team of staff available to support schools in managing their budgets. He did not feel that education had received the attention from Central Government it should have and the situation for students had been compromised as a result of Covid.

Councillor Butlin proposed the recommendations as laid out.

Resolved to

- 1) note the net spend in 2022/23 and the consequent revenue overspend for the organisation at the end of the year;
- 2) note the explanations and mitigating actions for variations to budgets, and the implications for the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, as set out in Appendix A;
- 3) approve the retention of the surplus of £1.234m in the DSG Deficit Offset Reserve until there is greater certainty about the longer-term direction of travel of spend in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, as set out in paragraph 2.7;
- 4) note the delivery of £9.579m (93.5%) savings in 2022/23, a shortfall of £0.665m against the target, as set out in Section 4;

- 5) approve the drawdown of £0.920m from Externally Earmarked Reserves and Directorate Risk Reserves to support the delivery of the Council Plan in 2023/24, as outlined in paragraph 6.5 and Appendix C;
- 6) approve the drawdown of £7.624m from the Revenue Investment Funds to support the delivery of the Council Plan in 2023/24 and 2024/25, as outlined in Section 5 and Appendix D;
- 7) approve the approach to making good the Communities Directorate Risk Reserve at the end of 2022/23 and for 2023/24 as set out in paragraphs 6.9 to 6.11;
- 8) note the capital spend in 2022/23 of £117.352m; and
- 9) approve the reprofiling of £2.094m Services capital spend from 2022/23 into future years.

3. Treasury Management and Investment Outturn Reports 2022/23

Cabinet received a report which asked them to consider and endorse the Treasury Management and Investment (Non-Treasury) outturns for 2022/23.

Councillor Butlin introduced the report and reiterated the excellent job officers had undertaken, investing Council finances wisely and ensuring the best capital return possible. He highlighted the recent award that the team had been nominated for and congratulated them for the recognition they had received.

Councillor Izzy Secombe reiterated the Cabinet's gratitude to the Treasury Management Team for their work, in what had been a volatile time across the country.

Having received no further questions, Councillor Butlin proposed the recommendations as laid out.

Resolved that the Treasury Management and Investment (Non-Treasury) outturns for 2022/23 is endorsed.

4. Council Plan 2022-2027 - Integrated Performance Report Year End 2022/23

Councillor Yousef Dahmash introduced the report which provided a retrospective summary of the Council's performance at the end of the financial year. He reminded the meeting to be mindful of the wider national context, the impact of the war in Ukraine and the Covid pandemic.

Councillor Dahmash highlighted the access to the Power BI system which contained further detailed information relating to performance data and had the ability to be interrogated as desired. He summarised some of the positive performance results including the reduction in figures of children being subject to a Child Protection Plan. Councillor Dahmash signposted Members to section 4 of the report which highlighted the Management of Human Resources and the encouraging signs that sickness levels were improving, alongside the improved recruitment and retention data.

Councillor Roodhouse queried the level of commentary on a number of static indicators, which he felt could be separated out and contain more detail to demonstrate if they were moving in the right direction.

Councillor Kam Kaur advised that she and Councillor Dahmash had met with officers to discuss the performance framework and how to successfully review the figures and measures moving forwards.

Councillor Martin Watson encouraged the use of Power BI and welcomed the Warwickshire Outcome Measures which were detailed in table 1b of the report.

Councillor Dahmash thanked Members for the comments and reiterated that this was an ongoing process. He proposed the recommendations as laid out.

Resolved

That Cabinet:

- 1) Considers and comments on the Year End organisational performance;
- 2) To refer the report to Overview and Scrutiny Committees to consider, in detail, the information relevant to their individual remits; and
- 3) Agrees the proposed changes for the 2023/24 reporting period to the Performance Management Framework (PMF) as outlined in Appendix 1c.

5. Establishment of Specialist Resourced Provision at four Infant / Primary Schools

Councillor Kaur introduced the report which sought approval to establish four specialist resourced provisions – two located in Rugby, one in Nuneaton and one in Bedworth. Having looked at the infrastructure within the schools, officers had identified children with and Educational, Health and Care Plan's (EHCP) and wanted to help accommodate these within mainstream primary schools, which would be adapted to meet their needs. Approval was needed to add funds to the Capital Programme which would be funded from the Department for Education, the High Needs Capital Grant and developer contributions.

Councillor John Holland welcomed the proposal and sought clarification on whether the schools in question were maintained or academy schools. He also queried how the quality of the work would be monitored and what learning resources would be available for staff.

In response, Councillor Kaur advised that there were SEND training packs for schools which staff could access at no cost and confirmed the schools in question were part of academies. She reiterated the increased demand in SEND provision which needed to be met and hoped this work would encourage other schools to invite children with specialist needs. In terms of quality, Councillor Kaur confirmed that the Improvement Team engaged with Head Teachers on a quarterly basis, alongside Ofsted, to help provide a rounded approach on monitoring.

Councillor Seccombe welcomed the proposals and recognised the level of funding being utilised from developer contributions. She also highlighted the importance of pupils having the opportunity to be educated in their own communities.

Councillor Kaur proposed the recommendations as detailed in the report.

Resolved

That Cabinet:

- 1) Approves the establishment of specialist resourced provision at the four schools set out in Section 3 and approves the following additions to the capital programme to deliver the prescribed alterations required:

- a) For Abbey CofE Infant School, an addition to the capital programme of £0.048 million to be funded from the High Needs Capital Grant;
 - b) For Goodyers End Primary School, an addition of £0.089 million to the capital programme to be funded from the Special Provision Fund and the High Needs Capital Grant;
 - c) For St Andrew's Benn CE Primary School, an addition of £0.028 million to the capital programme to be funded from Developer Contributions;
 - d) For St Matthew's Bloxam CE Primary School, an addition of £0.026 million to be funded from Developer Contributions; and
- 2) Authorises the Strategic Director for People to invite tenders and to enter into any agreements necessary to deliver the provisions approved on terms and conditions considered acceptable to the Strategic Director for Resources.

6. SEND (Special Education Needs and Disability) - Improving the transport application experience

Councillor Jan Matecki introduced the report which outlined changes to the Home to School Transport application process and Home to School and College Transport Policy.

Councillor Matecki explained that an internal review had taken place to look at streamlining the service which currently transported 2000 students throughout the County, per day. This was at a cost of £18 million and public consultation took place between November 2022 and March 2023 to consider the proposals. One of the changes enabled parents and carers to apply for transport at the same time as they applied for the school place, providing officers with more time to undertake the necessary assessments and look at the options available. He also outlined a number of other changes including reviewing who needed transport and providing parents and carers with the option of transporting their own child and receiving a Direct Travel Payment in return.

Councillor Matecki advised that recommendation 2 in the report needed to be amended to refer to Appendix 4 and not section 1.12 of the report.

Having received no questions, Councillor Matecki proposed the recommendations as amended.

Resolved

That Cabinet

- 1) endorses the proposed change to the Home to School Transport application process as set out at paragraph 1.7; and
- 2) approves the proposed changes to the wording in the Home to School and College Transport Policy as set out at **Appendix 4**.

7. A New Local Transport Plan for Warwickshire (LTP4)

Councillor Matecki introduced the report which introduced the new Local Transport Plan for Warwickshire. He gave an overview of the level of consultation that had taken place including the engagement of a citizens panel of 30 individuals. Councillor Matecki advised that the plan set out the ambition to become carbon neutral and had been considered by the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee in April 2023.

The report committed to deeper engagement with District and Borough Councils and communities across Warwickshire.

Councillor Holland expressed a number of concerns including the six key strategies which listed 'Safety' as fifth on the list. He also noted that the 'Travel Choices Hierarchy' was unchanged from the plan produced twenty years ago and did not feel that the money being spent, matched the plan.

Councillor Holland also highlighted the problem that Warwick District Council had their own transport plan, leading to them following their own priorities and potentially putting County Council officers in an impossible position. He requested that the LTP4 be deferred for six months to allow the district and borough councils to outline their plans.

Councillor Roodhouse felt some sympathy with the comments made and referred to the wording of 'action plan' within the report. He stated that the wording was unclear at times and the language confusing and asked for clarification as to which 'action plan' residents had been consulted on.

Councillor Seccombe reminded the meeting that this was a high level document which touched on the discussions planned with the district and boroughs. She felt that the document provided flexibility as it outlined principles for moving forwards.

In response to the comments made, Councillor Matecki stated that he had found the plan easy to read and did not agree that the language was confusing. He advised that this was not a definitive document but rather outlined what the Council was aspiring to.

Philippa Young, Strategy & Commissioning Manager – Transport and Highways, provided clarification on the documents the Citizen's Panel had been consulted on and outlined the timeline for future consultation with local stakeholders.

Councillor Matecki moved the recommendations as laid out.

Resolved

That Cabinet considers the proposed new local transport plan for Warwickshire (LTP4) at Appendix A and recommends that it is put forward for adoption by Full Council.

8. Sustainable Futures Strategy

Councillor Heather Timms introduced the report which summarised the feedback gathered following wide engagement on the Sustainable Futures Strategy. She gave an overview of the different stakeholder groups involved and the proposed establishment of expert panels to help to further develop this work. The aim was to present the draft strategy to the Overview and Scrutiny Committees in September before submission to Cabinet in the Autumn.

Councillor Timms applauded the strong engagement from various groups and the ambition to extend that work further. She went on to assure the meeting that work was continuing on a number of actions as outlined in the report including Electric Vehicle Charging and tree planting. She concluded by advising that she was confident the Council was on track for achieving net zero by 2030.

Following a question from Councillor Dahmash, Councillor Timms advised that the theme based panels would comprise industry experts, with a wide range of stakeholders to help inform them.

Having received no questions, Councillor Timms asked Cabinet to approve the recommendations.

Resolved

That Cabinet:

- 1) Acknowledges the progress made since the approval for engagement of the draft Sustainable Futures Strategy in October 2022 and the stakeholder feedback summarised in Section 2 and Appendix 1;
- 2) Supports the establishment of theme based expert panels drawn from industry and Warwickshire communities to enable production of a final strategy and action plan; and
- 3) Requests that the draft strategy be considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committees in September, and the Members' Climate Emergency Group on 20 September for comment and any recommendations before consideration of the final Sustainable Futures Strategy and supporting action plan by Cabinet.

9. 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.

10. Exempt Minutes of the 11 May 2023 Meeting of Cabinet

The exempt minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 11 May 2023 were agreed as an accurate record.

11. WRIF BIG bids for approval - June 2023

Councillor Butlin introduced the item and summarised the exempt report.

Resolved:

That the recommendations as set out in the exempt report be approved.

12. WRIF PIF Bids for approval - June 2023

Councillor Butlin introduced the item and summarised the exempt report.

Resolved:

That the recommendations as set out in the exempt report be approved, following a minor amendment to the wording of recommendation 2.