

# Cabinet

Thursday 13 June 2024

## Minutes

### Attendance

#### Committee Members

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

#### Others Present

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers  
Councillor Sarah Feeney  
Councillor John Holland  
Councillor Jerry Roodhouse  
Councillor Tim Sinclair

### 1. General

Councillor Isobel Seccombe extended congratulations from the Cabinet to the Council's Legal Services team who had achieved recognition in two categories at the Lawyers in Local Government (LLG) Awards for 2024:

- the 'Excellence in Training' award for providing a fully inclusive range of recruitment and development opportunities to foster the professional growth of legal careers within local government; and
- two finalists in the "Lawyer of the Year" category: Alison Freeth and Sioned Harper.

Councillor Seccombe also welcomed the shortlisting and subsequent high commendation of Brookmill Meadows in Warton, North Warwickshire for Small Residential Development of the Year at the Insider Media Midlands Residential Property awards. This was the first residential scheme from Develop Warwickshire, a joint venture between the Council, Warwickshire Property and Development Group and Vistry Group.

#### (1) Apologies

Councillors Yousef Dahmash and Sue Markham; Monica Fogarty (Chief Executive).

## **(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests**

None.

## **(3) Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 9 May 2024 were agreed as an accurate record.

## **(4) Public Speaking**

None.

## **2. Council Plan 2022-2027 Integrated Performance Report Year End 2023-24**

Councillor Isobel Seccombe, Leader, introduced this report on behalf of Councillor Yousef Dahmash (Portfolio Holder for Customer and Transformation) who had given apologies for the meeting. Councillor Seccombe noted that this report was part of Cabinet's regular programme of performance reports and summarised its key elements, particularly drawing attention to paragraph 2.4 which set out notable aspects of positive performance relating to: the percentage of children and young people with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) attending a mainstream school reaching the highest figure reported for 5 years, the percentage of Adult Social Care users with long term support who had received an assessment or review in the last 12 months continued to exceed the target of 80%, low levels of people awaiting a domiciliary care package to be commissioned despite increased referral numbers, and an increase in both engagement scores and our completion rate following the YourSay survey. She went on to note that there were also some areas of concern, detailed in paragraph 2.5 of the report, and particularly drew attention to challenges posed by demand for social care for those over age 65 and rising levels of staff sickness absence, which mirrored national trends.

Councillor Sarah Feeney focussed on the measures reported regarding the delivery of the Child Friendly Warwickshire Strategy, noting that 5 out of 7 measures were not on track. In particular she expressed concern for rising numbers of young people (under 18) hospitalised for alcohol and an increase in overweight (including obese) children aged 10-11. Councillor Margaret Bell responded that the Public Health team were seeking to address these issues. She noted that work was underway to utilise the data to target resources with a degree of sensitivity in relation to sending weight status letters to the parents of those children who measured as overweight/obese.

### **Resolved**

That Cabinet:

1. Notes the Year End 2023/24 organisational performance; and

2. Agrees to refer the report to Overview and Scrutiny Committees to consider, in detail, the information relevant to their individual remits.

### **3. Financial Outturn Report 2023/24**

Councillor Peter Butlin (Deputy Leader, Finance and Property) summarised the published report, noting that 2023/24 had been a challenging financial year for the Council with significant economic uncertainty and higher than expected levels of inflation and interest resulting in additional in-year costs. Demand in children's and adults' social care services, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and for home to school transport had continued to grow. The Council had overspent and the residual net overspend was £7.314 which, at 1.95% of the net revenue budget, was within the 2% tolerance set for an authority of this Council's size and complexity. Overall, £12.846m of planned savings were achieved (84.75%) and £175.518m capital expenditure was incurred in 2023/24 with the most significant investment made in Education (£65.879m) building new schools and extending existing ones.

Councillors Jerry Roodhouse and Sarah Feeney expressed concerns regarding the increasing costs of children's placements. In response, Councillor Butlin explained that the Council continued to invest in its own children's homes. In response to a question from Councillor Feeney, he acknowledged that pay structures in the private sector had an impact on staff retention and ways to attract and retain staff were being considered.

#### **Resolved**

That Cabinet:

1. Notes the net spend in 2023/24 and the consequent residual net revenue overspend of £7.314m 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 to the report;
3. Notes the delivery of £12.846m (84.75%) savings in 2023/24, a shortfall of £2.312m against the target, as set out in Section 4 of the report;
4. Approves the drawdown of £0.227m from Earmarked Reserves to support the delivery of the Council Plan in 2024/25, as outlined in paragraph 6.9 of the report and Appendix D to the report;
5. Approves the drawdown of £1.598m from the Revenue Investment Funds to support the delivery of the Council Plan in 2024/25, as outlined in Section 5 of the report and Appendix C to the report;
6. Notes the capital spend in 2023/24 of £175.518m; and
7. Approves the reprofiling of £43.496m Services capital spend from 2023/24 into future years.

### **4. Treasury Management and Investment Outturn Report 2023/24**

Councillor Peter Butlin (Deputy Leader, Finance and Property) opened this item by explaining that treasury performance for the year had been very strong, and the increased returns from treasury

management activity had assisted with managing down the Council's net residual overspend position which had been noted in the previous item on the agenda.

Members thanked the Treasury Management Team for their positive contribution to the Council's finances.

### **Resolved**

That Cabinet endorses the Treasury Management and Investment (Non-Treasury) outturn reports for 2023/24.

## **5. Menopause Services Task and Finish Review**

Councillor Margaret Bell introduced this report, placing on record her thanks to the Task and Finish Group, particularly the former Chair of the Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Claire Golby, who had instigated the review and Councillor Kate Rolfe who had led the Task and Finish Group. Overall, it had been a positive review with good outcomes as set out in the report and some recommendations to take forward.

Councillor Sarah Feeney expressed her gratitude for the work that had taken place to highlight this area of women's health and associated services.

Members welcomed the report.

### **Resolved**

That Cabinet welcomes and notes the report of the Menopause Services Task and Finish Review and endorses the recommendations it contains for the County Council.

## **6. Warwickshire Education Sufficiency Strategy 2024 - 2029**

Councillor Kam Kaur, Portfolio Holder for Education summarised the published report, noting that the Education Sufficiency Strategy was a core strategy which set out how the council would plan, develop and commission education provision for early years, school places, post 16 and SEND. She noted that there were a number of challenges and considerations which the strategy sought to highlight and address, including population changes and housing growth, the increase in pupils with recognised SEND, cost pressures, sustainability, and meeting the demand for early years provision as a result of recent legislative changes. To facilitate the delivery of this strategy four priorities had been identified as set out in the report: strategic planning, effective commissioning, partnership and collaboration and managing and supporting change.

Members welcomed the informative report.

### **Resolved**

That Cabinet endorses the Warwickshire Education Sufficiency Strategy 2024-2029 and **recommends it to Council** for approval.

## **7. Concessionary Travel - All Day Travel Trial Review**

Councillor Jan Matecki (Portfolio Holder for Transport & Planning) explained the background to the report, noting that a trial of all-day concessionary travel for holders of disabled person's bus passes below state retirement age had commenced in April 2023 with the aim of supporting access to education, training and employment. Costings of continuing the provision were included in the report and it was proposed to extend the trial until 31 March 2027, based on an estimated annual cost of approximately £40k per annum which could be funded within the existing concessionary travel budget.

Councillor Seccombe welcomed the supporting data that had been provided, noting that some people would not have been able to travel to work or to medical appointments without this provision and she welcomed the positive impact that the trial had made. Councillor Jan Matecki drew Members' attention to the responses from users at pages 322-328 of the document pack which demonstrated the impact of the trial.

That Cabinet:

1. Approves the extension of the all-day travel trial until 31 March 2027; and
2. Approves the retention of the current eligibility criteria, which provides access to the trial for people under the state retirement age who have a bus pass because of a qualifying disability.

## **8. Adult and Community Learning Service Accountability Agreement 2024/25**

Councillor Kam Kaur explained that following reforms by government seeking to transform adult and further education, Annual Accountability Agreements had been introduced for the first time in 2023/24. The agreements were two-part documents setting the overall expectations of providers in return for Department for Education (DfE) funding. Particular attention was drawn to the contribution to national, regional and local priorities that were set out in the statement.

### **Resolved**

That Cabinet:

1. Approves the Accountability Agreement (2024/25) for Warwickshire County Council's Adult and Community Learning Service attached to the report at Appendix 1;
2. Authorises the Executive Director for Children and Young People to submit the Accountability Agreement to the Education and Skills Funding Agency by 30 June 2024; and
3. Authorises the Executive Director for Children and Young People in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Education to approve and submit
4. future annual Accountability Agreements to the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

## **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 9 May 2024 Meeting of Cabinet**

The exempt minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 9 May 2024 were agreed as an accurate record.

The meeting rose at 2.30pm

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Chair