

County Council

Date: Tuesday 18 March 2025
Time: 10.00 am
Venue: Council Chamber, Shire Hall

Membership

Councillor Chris Mills (Chair), Councillor Andy Jenns (Vice Chair), Councillor Jo Barker, Councillor Richard Baxter-Payne, Councillor Brett Beetham, 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 Jackie D'Arcy, Councillor Tracey Drew, Councillor Judy Falp, Councillor Sarah Feeney, Councillor Jenny Fradgley, Councillor Bill Gifford, Councillor Peter Gilbert, Councillor Clare Golby, Councillor Brian Hammersley, Councillor John Holland, Councillor Dave Humphreys, Councillor Marian Humphreys, Councillor Kam Kaur, Councillor Dale Keeling, Councillor Jack Kennaugh, Councillor Justin Kerridge, Councillor Christopher Kettle, Councillor Sue Markham, Councillor Jan Matecki, Councillor Sarah Millar, Councillor Jeff Morgan, Councillor Penny-Anne O'Donnell, Councillor Bhagwant Singh Pandher, Councillor Daren Pemberton, Councillor Caroline Phillips, 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 Mejar Singh, Councillor Richard Spencer, Councillor Heather Timms, Councillor Mandy Tromans, Councillor Robert Tromans, Councillor Adrian Warwick, Councillor Martin Watson and Councillor Andrew Wright

Items on the agenda: -

1. General

(1) Apologies for Absence

(2) Members' Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-pecuniary Interests

(3) Minutes of the Meetings held on 6 February 2025 and 18 February 2025

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(4) Chair's announcements

(5) Public Speaking

To note any requests to speak on any item on the agenda in accordance with the Council's Public Speaking Scheme (see note at end of the agenda).

2. 2024 Director of Public Health Annual Report: The Power of People and Place: Celebrating and Inspiring Community-based Wellbeing

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3. Notices of Motion

To consider the following motions submitted by Members in accordance with Standing Order 5:

(1) Labour Motion 1: Warwickshire's Renewed Support For Ukraine

Warwickshire County Council is disturbed by the continuing horrific devastation in Ukraine, and the devastating effect 3 years of war has had on the Country. In light of this, and as a way of expressing support for members of our communities who are from or who have ties with Ukraine,

This Council:

1. Continues to stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine and their families and friends, including those local to Warwickshire;
2. Continues to support those families fleeing from conflict recognising that many are now concerned about renewing their permissions to remain in the UK by seeking ways which the Council can support those who may be struggling with applications;
3. Continues to seek ways in which a thriving Ukrainian culture can be supported during this difficult time and signpost people to existing community support groups including those supporting mental health problems caused by PTSD and other related conditions.

Proposer: Councillor Sarah Feeney

Seconder: Councillor Sarah Millar

(2) Labour Motion 2: Climate Resilience and Flooding Support

Warwickshire County Council recognises the important role that Councils play in climate resilience: through their role as

place shapers and community leaders at the forefront of adaptation efforts delivering essential services that protect public health, manage roads and infrastructure, and prepare people and places against flooding.

Recognising that climate impacts like warmer and wetter winters, hotter and drier summers, and more intense and frequent weather extremes as a result of climate change (recognised by this Council in its recently published Sustainable Futures Annual Report) are already impacting residents, like those residents affected by recent Storm Henk:

This Council:

1. Will further encourage affected/eligible residents and businesses to apply for the Property Flood Resilience (PFR) grant, offering up to £5000 (including VAT) to implement measures that will make their properties more resilient in the future;
2. Help residents and businesses to understand what other opportunities are available to them to forward fund the contribution required for accessing the PFR grant and thus make the grant as accessible as possible.

Proposer: Councillor Sarah Millar

Seconder: Councillor Sarah Feeney

4. Member Question Time (Standing Order 7)

A period of up to 40 minutes is allocated for questions to the Leader, Cabinet Portfolio Holders and Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

5. Any Other items of Urgent Business

To consider any other items that the Chair considers are urgent.

Monica Fogarty
Chief Executive
Warwickshire County Council
Shire Hall, Warwick

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Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

Members are required to register their disclosable pecuniary interests within 28 days of their election of appointment to the Council. Any changes to matters registered or new matters that require to be registered must be notified to the Monitoring Officer as soon as practicable after they arise.

A member attending a meeting where a matter arises in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest must (unless they have a dispensation):

- Declare the interest if they have not already registered it
- Not participate in any discussion or vote
- Leave the meeting room until the matter has been dealt with
- Give written notice of any unregistered interest to the Monitoring Officer within 28 days of the meeting

Non-pecuniary interests relevant to the agenda should be declared at the commencement of the meeting.

The public reports referred to are available on the Warwickshire Web
<https://democracy.warwickshire.gov.uk/uuCoverPage.aspx?bcr=1>

Public Speaking

Any member of the public who is resident or working in Warwickshire, or who is in receipt of services from the Council, may speak at the meeting for up to three minutes on any matter that features on the agenda for that meeting. This can be in the form of a statement or a question. If you wish to speak please notify Democratic Services in writing at least two clear working days before the meeting. You should give your name and address and the subject upon which you wish to speak. Full details of the public speaking scheme are set out in the Council's Standing Orders.

County Council

Thursday 6 February 2025

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

Councillor Chris Mills (Chair), Councillor Andy Jenns (Vice-Chair), Councillor Jo Barker, 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 Jackie D'Arcy, Councillor Tracey Drew, Councillor Judy Falp, Councillor Jenny Fradgley, Councillor Sarah Feeney, Councillor Bill Gifford, Councillor Clare Golby, Councillor Brian Hammersley, Councillor John Holland, Councillor Dave Humphreys, Councillor Marian Humphreys, Councillor Kam Kaur, Councillor Dale Keeling, Councillor Justin Kerridge, Councillor Christopher Kettle, Councillor Sue Markham, Councillor Jan Matecki, Councillor Jeff Morgan, Councillor Penny-Anne O'Donnell, Councillor Bhagwant Singh Pandher, Councillor Caroline Phillips, 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 Mejar Singh, Councillor Richard Spencer, Councillor Heather Timms, Councillor Mandy Tromans, Councillor Robert Tromans, Councillor Adrian Warwick, Councillor Martin Watson and Councillor Andrew Wright

1. General

Councillor Peter Butlin apologised for an error he made in disclosing exempt financial information at the Cabinet meeting which took place on 28 January 2025. Councillors Sarah Feeney, Jerry Roodhouse, Jonathan Chilvers and Judy Falp spoke in response to accept the apology and urged for improvements in the management of highways projects.

(1) Apologies for Absence

Councillors Richard Baxter-Payne, Brett Beetham, Pete Gilbert, and Sarah Millar.

(2) Members' Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-pecuniary Interests

Councillor Sarah Feeney declared an interest in item 2 on the agenda, '2025/26 Budget and 2025/30 Medium Term Financial Strategy', as the parent of a child in receipt of SEND services from the Council.

(3) Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on 17 December 2024 were agreed as an accurate record for signing by the Chair.

(4) Chair's announcements

Former County Councillor Ron Cockings.

The Chairman announced his sad duty to inform Council of the recent passing of former County Councillor Ron Cockings. Ron, who had been elected to the Council in 2001 as a Liberal Democrat but joined the Conservative Group in 2010, served as a Warwickshire County Councillor for Stratford upon Avon West and latterly Stratford South between 2001 and 2013. The Chairman extended the Council's condolences to his family and friends.

Councillor Kate Rolfe spoke in tribute to a good and loyal friend and her extended condolences. Councillor Sarah Feeney recognised the loss of a valued colleague who had served his community and Councillor Peter Butlin noted the good work he had undertaken in his division.

Engagements

The Chair informed Council that he had been invited to the Holocaust Memorial Day event in Warwick which had been very moving and he applauded the children who had given speeches.

(5) Public Speaking

None.

2. 2025/26 Budget and 2025/30 Medium Term Financial Strategy

Councillor Peter Butlin (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property) introduced the item by thanking the finance team for their assistance and hard work in developing the budget. He drew attention to the challenges of local government finance and media reports of Councils in financial difficulty who had been granted permission to increase their Council Tax above 4.99%, with the highest request being an increase of 25%, and offered assurance that Warwickshire County Council was not in this number. He noted the Council was in a relatively good financial position, performing well on CIPFA's Independent Financial Resilience Index, and the external auditors' annual Value for Money report had highlighted continued strong performance. However, this was another year when the Council had had to balance driving its strategic priorities with a response to events outside its control. A financial recovery strategy and spending controls had been implemented earlier in the financial year in order to address emerging concerns in the financial forecast due to the rising cost and demand for services. This early intervention had resulted in successfully bringing the in-year financial position back under control with the overspend now within the 2% tolerance allowed. He thanked all departments across the Council for their efforts in this regard. He then proceeded to set out the Conservative Group's budget proposals as contained in the appendix to the published report. In doing so he emphasised the following points:

- Continued uncertain political and economic environment, including increased national living wage and employers' national insurance contributions, the continuation of higher interest

rates, the impact of ongoing internal conflict, a new government and new policy environment that was still emerging and taking shape.

- The uncertain timing and impacts of key national policy choices around special education needs and disabilities (SEND) and the government's solution to the dedicated schools grant (DSG) deficit, adult social care reform, the broken children's social care market, home to school transport, climate change legislation and local government funding reforms, including the reset of business rates.
- Continuing demand for services as a result of a growing population of older people, increasing numbers of children and families needing support, and communities under pressure from the rising cost of living.
- This budget was recommended in the wake of a significant headwind from both pressures and demand which the Council had been able to navigate successfully because of financial resilience and long-term decision-making. However, considerable uncertainty, risk and opportunity remained in terms of the changes likely to flow from devolution, funding reform and policy changes in areas such as adult social care and SEND. The Government had chosen to delay adult social care reform until the Commission on Adult Social Care Reform reported in 2028, and with no guarantee they would act on the recommendations of that report. With regard to SEND, the Government were promising to put in place new legislation and address the financial override, however, he was not optimistic for the way in which this would be resolved.
- In such an uncertain environment, the budget proposals sought to maintain long-term resilience and sustainability, and left some headroom to deal with the uncertainties outlined.
- The Budget sought to continue to look after people and protect valued services for those most in need and universal services for all. It did not recommend the taking of short-term decisions that would place the Council's financial sustainability at risk or leave financial gaps to be closed in future years.
- The growth in demand was being felt across all services and the Council had to provide for the residents of Warwickshire, but the following areas were highlighted to underline a commitment to the most vulnerable in the community:
 - Investment of almost £47 million to meet the growing numbers and costs for supporting elderly citizens and those vulnerable adults who needed help.
 - Over £8 million in children's social care services to meet the increased costs and demand for children's placements
 - Over £7 million in home to school transport to ensure services were provided in line with policy whilst being able to respond to the increased demand and cost of the service for both mainstream and SEND transport.
- Investment was now taking place at unprecedented levels to meet the needs of the most vulnerable in communities, over the medium and long term, it was the strength of Warwickshire's economy, raising living standards for all, and shared countywide approach to creating opportunities that would bring the greatest benefits.
- The budget proposal made provision in the capital programme for nearly £132 million to support the delivery of the 2025 business plans of the Warwickshire Property Development Group (WPDG) and the Warwickshire Investment Fund (WIF).
- In addition to the capital programme, the proposals set out investment of over £122 million over the next five years to support a thriving economy with the right jobs, training, skills and infrastructure, over £40 million each year to maintain Warwickshire's infrastructure and to support services through the provision of tools to do the job, with over half of this funding going towards road maintenance.

- Although Warwickshire had not been chosen as one of the first group of councils to progress towards unitary status under the government's English Devolution White Paper proposals, it was critical that the capital and revenue investment funds and reserves were used wisely to support the substantial change that was coming.
- The reserves strategy provided a clear framework to ensure these funds were effectively managed to meet the financial risks and uncertainties that were faced whilst enabling room for investment in the delivery of the Council Plan.
- The Council had a strong track record delivering planned budget reductions over many years. The budget proposals included the delivery of a further £8 million of budget reductions over the following five years through better procurement, improvements in efficiency, increased income and delivering reductions in demand.
- Managing the demand and the cost increases facing Council services meant increasing the council tax was unavoidable. In the absence of other funding options, the proposals utilised the opportunity provided by the Government to levy Council Tax of 4.99%. This was made up of 2.9% core Council Tax, plus a 2% adult social care levy and was equivalent to an increase of £1.67 per week for a Band D dwelling.

Councillor Butlin summarised that the proposed budget strategy would deliver for those who lived, worked in and visited Warwickshire. It made difficult decisions and choices and addressed short-term challenges whilst retaining a commitment to delivering medium-term financial sustainability. It also retained flexibility as far as was possible in a complex and volatile context.

Councillor Adrian Warwick seconded the motion and reserved his right to speak.

Amendments

Labour Group Amendment

Councillor Sarah Feeney highlighted the following points in the amendment:

- The Council faced significant challenges and residents were concerned about care provision, the cost of care, provision for school places, and the SEND system. It was possible to make some changes in these areas whilst national policy change was awaited to address residents' concerns and frustrations.
- The amendment proposed the introduction of two time-limited posts within adult social care to look at supporting the flow within local hospitals, and to undertake personalised assessment of residents, supporting them to go home as early as possible after a stay in hospital and to support more people to go home after a stay in a short-term discharge to assess residential care beds.
- Parents were concerned about children struggling with mental health issues in school and the Labour Group believed that a project to enable those children to have a holistic pathway in place was required. This would help to address the current use of expensive and registered provision. Whilst the budget amendment did not set a specific saving for this, it would be positive to have some specialist expertise to support this work.
- The use of green bonds was supported.
- The adoption of estates was another issue that was raised as a concern by residents and whilst the amendment had not indicated a financial value for this, it was a key issue since estate residents were continuing to pay estate management fees as well as Council Tax

and it was incumbent upon the council, in her view, to resolve these matters quickly with developers.

- Close working with planning authorities in the county was also required to ensure that estates were built to meet minimum standards and robust discussions about infrastructure were also required.
- Areas where resident parking schemes were in operation were also in some of the poorest communities and it was argued that increases in charges were not beneficial, particularly as the process of moving to online permits was still being worked through. Residents did not understand the benefits of the scheme and did not feel it was delivering on its aims.
- Concern was expressed that public health reductions targeted the areas of prevention and support that were vital to the health of communities (eg treatment services for adult weight loss and community tuberculosis).
- Cuts to domestic abuse and sexual assault services were not supported by the Labour Group who were similarly unconvinced by cuts proposed in the library service. The key role that was played by volunteers in libraries was recognised, and whilst there were difficulties with solely community-led libraries when those who had previously committed their time and energies were no longer able to do so, it was felt that staff also had a key role to play and staffed libraries were the right model going forward. If there was sufficient money in the budget, the Labour Group would also have sought the removal of savings on Sunday opening hours, as this was the day that many residents had leisure time.
- She thanked officers for their hard work throughout the year and for their support in helping to prepare the budget resolutions.

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

Liberal Democrat Group Amendment

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse made the following points:

- Local government funding settlements had not been sufficient for many years and the new Labour government had so far continued to squeeze funding, and had exacerbated the situation due to the changes made to national insurance contributions and delaying reform to adult social care. This latter point was somewhat frustrating as it was clear from the numerous reports that had already been published what was required. Demand for SEND continued, despite some extra investment as a result of lobbying, necessitating the use of the override. Councillor Roodhouse did not consider the override was a suitable mechanism to deal with rising pressure in this service area. He also raised questions around delays to the public health grant and how much it would be.
- The Liberal Democrat amendment sought to provide funding on an ongoing basis to develop a new traded service pathway around emotionally integrated school avoidance, ie for children and young people who required an education setting other than school. It was provided for in the SEN strategy document and the Liberal Democrat amendment sought to provide the funding for it on an ongoing, not time limited basis.
- The Liberal Democrat amendment provided £161,000 for further development with the National Centre for Creative Health, working with the Library Service and Outdoor Education, particularly providing new services in libraries, and developing outreach work.
- The savings proposals had also been amended and funding provision for adult weight management, domestic abuse and the independent sexual violence advice was retained.

- The Liberal Democrat amendment sought the development of eco schools and to establish a growing grants programme.
- The work that Corporate Board had done with spending controls was recognised but the Liberal Democrat group was of the view that there could be a 10% reduction in the use of consultancies.
- Additional infrastructure was needed as local plans were developed and the Liberal Democrat amendment suggested a review of how Section 278 and Section 106 monies were spent, tightening that budget to ensure the funding was received from developers and projects were delivered on time.

Councillor Sarah Boad seconded the amendment and reserved the right to speak.

Green Group Amendment

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers thanked the finance team for their support to the groups in developing their budgets and drew attention to the following points:

- In common with most county councils, the Council was facing a difficult financial position. He considered it was difficult to see how issues like the use of the statutory override would be resolved. The situation would have an ongoing impact in terms of the ability to internally borrow. However, this Council was in a better position than most and the Council had a history of good decision-making but, in presenting a balanced budget, consideration had to be given to making savings in areas where they would not have previously been considered – eg public health, winter gritting, and homelessness.
- There was more the Council could do to provide the services that residents needed as well as make efficiency savings. He highlighted the House Project which provided support for care leavers as an area where the administration had achieved this.
- The amendment removed proposed cuts to children's centres. Whilst it was identified as a saving in later years of the medium term financial strategy (MTFS), due to the length of the procurement process, it would be affecting planning already. The Green Group wanted to retain children's centres as the best vehicle to provide positive intervention in the first 1,001 days of a child's life. This provided a preventative link to other budgets, for example speech therapy which now required parents to obtain an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) to access the service.
- Prevention played a key role in the Green Group's amendment.
- He welcomed the removal of Corporate Board's proposed cuts to youth club grants from the Conservative Group's proposals as he considered that this retention of youth provision supported some of the hardest to reach young people in the county.
- In terms of capital, the Green Group amendment did not change the numbers, but sought a full review of where capital spending was proposed to ensure that the basics were being prioritised, particularly in relation to highways and safe routes to school rather than large road projects with 'dubious benefits'. The Green Group amendment would also see a streamlining of the capital programme around the climate change agenda, ensuring income generation that not only improved the bottom line on reducing bills but also reduced emissions.
- Proposed budget reductions on libraries were removed by the Green Group amendment, due to the value for money of the service in terms of cost:benefit. Keeping libraries open in areas such as Rugby, Nuneaton and Leamington, on Sundays was important and it was

also important to ensure that appropriately paid staff were running them rather than relying on volunteers which made services less secure.

- He welcomed ideas in the proposals put forward such as the Liberal Democrat's eco schools and proposals from the Labour Group relating to Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs.

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

Debate

Members of Council made the following points:

Councillor Yousef Dahmash, Portfolio Holder for Customer and Transformation, drew attention to the following:

- The successful implementation of the new customer platform and the evolution and improvement of other customer-facing platforms thanks to the work of the ICT Team.
- Internal Change Programmes were also making an impact ensuring that resources were focused on the areas of change that delivered maximum impact and a refresh of the Council's delivery plan from 2025 onwards would be presented to Cabinet in the near future.
- The Council's Legal Services Team continued to go from strength to strength, making a significant contribution to the Council's MTFs through external trading.
- Similarly, the Communications Team were ensuring that the good work that the Council was doing, despite the challenging circumstances, was communicated to residents. This was particularly important to ensure that residents were aware of the support on offer, for example pensioners struggling following the removal of the winter fuel payment.
- He commended the work of the library and registration service and noted the role of the library service in supporting children to be school ready; on registering a birth, the offer to join the library and receive a membership card was made, which provided opportunities to talk about the services libraries offered to families. He noted comments regarding Sunday opening times and suggested an open dialogue on making the proposals work, not forgetting the role of the digital library service which could be further enhanced and promoted.
- Overall, he applauded the strong position of the services within his portfolio which had been supported by the budget proposals.

Councillor Margaret Bell, Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health, commented as follows:

- Adult social care was one of the highest spending service areas, with resource focused on safeguarding vulnerable adults and supporting those with care needs. At the time of the meeting, the Council supported around 8,000 Warwickshire residents with care and support needs, with around 5,700 of them supported to remain independently in their own homes. Keeping people safe at home for as long as possible was a key aim for the administration.
- The Council supported a range of residents with learning disabilities, mental health conditions, physical disabilities, or sensory impairments. However, there were significant pressures on the service and over the financial year, there had been a 5% rise in the number of people that adult social care was supporting. At the same time, the cost of care was rising due to the complexity of care being more significant than in the past and the cost pressures faced by service providers. In response to these pressures, the proposed budget provided for additional funding to protect those vulnerable residents. After considerable

discussion, the group had considered that it was necessary to take the full 2% adult social care levy.

- The focus for the service going forward remained on improving service pathways to enhance the information and advice provided to support people to remain independent for as long as possible. Alongside the Warwickshire Community Recovery Service, the Council worked with the NHS to help people leave hospital in a timely fashion. It had been a successful programme that would be continued. Discharge from hospital was a complex area which required systemic change and partnership working.
- The new Adult Social Care Strategy set out the offer to residents over the next five years.
- A visit from the Care Quality Commission was anticipated.
- No care providers had exited the local market due to business failure in recent years. This was a huge accolade to staff and the way that they worked in partnership with local providers despite the pressures they were under.
- A comprehensive review of domiciliary care was taking place and the service was due to be retendering in the coming months. The older people's dementia day opportunities offer had been reviewed and redesigned and was also out to tender.
- She applauded the role of Public Health in prevention activity

Councillor Kam Kaur, Portfolio Holder for Education commented on the following aspects of service delivery:

- Almost half of local authorities would not be able to balance the budget if the statutory override was removed and, whilst it was a source of some derision, no plans had been brought forward in its place.
- She commented on the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Assessment & Review Service (SENDAR), and the rising number of new EHCPs (1,115 in 2024, a 48% increase on 2023) and what this meant for the caseload and timeliness of issuing them. The budget proposals included an additional allocation of £685,000 to the SENDAR Team to support this increase in demand.
- Every new EHCP required an assessment by an education psychologist and because of the increase in assessments, the Council had had to recruit locums and associate educational psychologists to meet the demand. The budget proposal included time-limited funding to support the service to meet this demand.
- The budget proposal also provided for a time-limited funding allocation to support tribunals and mediations in the SEND system.
- Councillor Kaur also highlighted the successes she had seen in her portfolio area over the previous 12 months including new SEND resource provisions, the delivery of new educational capital projects, the opening of new schools and permanent expansions resulting in the delivery of over 11,000 new permanent school places in the last 10 years.
- The work of the Warwickshire Music Service was applauded and she urged councillors to take up any opportunities afforded to them to attend a performance.

Councillor Barbara Brown referenced the section in the Labour Group's amendment which made provision for two additional posts in children's social care to work on developing pathways with schools and with families for those children who had Social, Emotional and Mental Health issues. Whilst she recognised the work that was happening with the education service, she also considered that early intervention played a large part in supporting children and young people and their families and she, therefore, considered the proposed provision would play a key role in shrinking demand by providing this early intervention.

Councillor Judy Falp spoke in opposition to the proposed cuts to the library service. Whilst she understood the challenges in adult social care and SEND that led to budget pressures and non-statutory services becoming a target for cuts, she argued that some savings would undermine other work taking place in communities. She noted the library service savings in the Conservative budget proposal related to closure of the three main libraries on Sundays and making smaller libraries voluntary run. There had been no consultation on this proposal in Whitnash; she objected to the proposals since the Whitnash library was the only presence the County Council had in the town. The library offered a wider service than the provision of books and it was well used by young and older people. Councillor Falp explained some of the services that were provided from the building by professional employees and she urged reconsideration of the cuts which were considered counter-productive by all the opposition groups.

Councillor Martin Watson, Portfolio Holder for Economy, highlighted the following achievements within his portfolio area:

- Coventry and Warwickshire Investment Zone was an exciting project delivered in conjunction with Warwick District Council, Coventry City Council and West Midlands Combined Authority. There was over £20 million worth of capital investment into the site with a prediction to create over 10,000 jobs.
- Warwickshire was recognised as a good place for business and thanks were extended to the business support and the employability and skills teams, whose work was regularly considered in detail at Overview and Scrutiny. There had been over 54 foreign investment projects in the previous year which created or safeguarded over 2,000 jobs.
- Coventry and Warwickshire was the leading UK destination for foreign direct investment. Despite being a small shire county, more external investment was attracted into the economy than anywhere else in the UK.
- A record number of 918 businesses were supported in the previous year (361 in 2023) which demonstrated how much the support offer was required and welcomed by those businesses.
- Since the liquidation of Local Enterprise Partnerships, the careers hub had been absorbed by the Council and had engaged with 95% of schools within Warwickshire, positively impacting just under 90,000 young people.
- Over 577 individuals with learning disabilities and/or autism had been supported by the employment service to prepare for work and 471 had moved into paid employment.
- The Council also delivered the Warwickshire Work Well program in conjunction with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Integrated Care Boards, supporting 120 people since its launch in October 2024.
- A report was due to be presented to Cabinet setting out the opportunity for the Council to become a pathfinder with the DWP Connect to Work program. This would bring £2.5 million worth of investment into the county annually to help people into employment.
- Over 1,700 businesses had been supported in the previous 12 months through the business growth program utilising UKSPF funding.
- Since the launch of the Local Communities and Enterprise Fund, one of the pillars of the WIF, over £5 million worth of loans had been made to 87 businesses, leveraging £3.7 million worth of private sector investment and safeguarding 384 jobs.
- The budget recognised that this work needed to continue, as confidence in business was down – a recent report by the British Chamber of Commerce noting 68% of businesses

saying that they had real concerns around cost-based national insurance and the decrease in their revenue.

Councillor Tracey Drew highlighted the following elements of the Green Group's amendment:

- The adult social care teams were doing some welcome and innovative work around direct payments. However, uptake remained comparatively low. The funding provided in the amendment would make it possible to explore whether there were even better ways of increasing the uptake of direct payments and as a result having a greater impact on helping service users to remain living independently in their own homes.
- Some good work was taking place to support young people aged 18 to 25 in the period of their lives after they left foster care placements, but the Green Group's amendment provided for an increase in allowances which had remained static since 2020, to ensure that their development continued in a positive direction.

Councillor Penny-Anne O'Donnell, Cabinet Support Assistant for Adult Social Care & Health, commented as follows to provide reassurance around the prevention agenda:

- As Chair for the Children and Young Persons Partnership, she provided some context around the prevention agenda within the age range 0-19. The Partnership had been acting as an advisory panel on decisions around the delivery and development of the Healthy Child Program and associated public health activity in Warwickshire.
- Prevention was key to the efficient utilisation of resources. Within early years, for example, the focus was on pre-conceptual care and continuity of care through supporting the transition to parenthood. By supporting maternal health and family mental health, the aim was to reduce vulnerabilities and inequalities.
- Supporting healthy weight, nutrition and health literacy, along with managing minor illnesses and reducing accidents, allowed for a focus on improving resilience and promoting health literacy.
- Another area of high impact focus within early years was supporting health, well-being and development, and focusing children on being ready to learn and narrowing the word gap (a disparity in language development). This was directly linked to whether children needed greater stimulation or actually required speech and language therapy.
- The Integrated Early Years Delivery Plan continued to be very successful with a significant number of teams collaborating from within education, health, and social care to form a positive relationship with the Department for Education and the accredited Early Years Hubs, which meant that via referral routes, settings across Warwickshire had access to the Early Years Aspiration Network.
- Work with 0-19 (or 25 for those with additional needs) was looking at mental health, and the Empowering Futures programme was looking at school-age physical health, including maternity and pregnancy, early years, and school age. Health Visitors and school nurses were leading the Healthy Child Program where focus during the school years was on health and well-being reviews, early identification of need and reducing inequalities and risk through supporting resilience and well-being, ensuring that children were school-ready at age five but ready for life by age 24 by improving healthy behaviours and reducing risk taking.

Councillor Sue Markham, Portfolio Holder for Children and Families commented on the following areas of success for the Children and Families Service:

- The Council had joined Wave 2 of the Families First for Children Pathfinder Program. This was a national test and learn initiative following the independent review of children's social

care and all local authorities were expected to implement the recommendations by 2027. By becoming a Pathfinder, the Council was at the forefront of these reforms to children's social care and the Council and its partner agencies had achieved transformation in four critical areas: family help, child protection, family networks, and multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. These initiatives had resulted in a restructured children and family service, which included local family help teams. These teams provided support and led interventions for children requiring targeted early help, children in need, child protection, and children in care services. She was confident that the Pathfinder changes would make a positive difference to service delivery.

- Four children's homes had been opened across the county which were now registered with Ofsted and a further home was awaiting registration. The main objective of the Council in opening its own homes was for children who needed to be in residential care to remain in the county, closer to their school and their families, and to remain in their community. These homes provided greater stability for the child as they were houses rather than a traditional children's home and provided better value for money for the County Council.
- A further area of performance focus was the stability experienced by children in care and there had been some positive improvement in this area with children in care remaining with the same home, with foster carers or in a children's home, supported by the same social worker and the same school.

Councillor Jan Matecki, Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning commented as follows:

- Financial pressures remained challenging within the service, with some of the main pressures relating to home to school transport, which had seen demand increase by 20% over the previous three years, resulting in 12,000 children being transported daily. SEND pupils with EHCPs who required dedicated transport were also increasing at a pace of around 8% per year. These challenges were being met by the implementation of a home to school transport transformation delivery plan which contained a range of elements including network reviews using enhanced data to create more efficient routes and less contracts, encouraging more competition in the market, which included internal provision, improved contracting and procurement processes to drive efficiencies, and policy changes to tighten up eligibility and application of processes.
- The service was also taking a more strategic approach to some of the highway services which enabled a more dynamic and flexible approach to working to make further savings across the board. This included reviewing and reducing verge cuttings where appropriate whilst also ensuring that visibility was maintained at junctions and bends.
- The gritting of roads was better managed with strategic analysis of the gritting routes depending on weather forecasts rather than blanket spreading across the whole County.
- Street lighting operations had been reviewed and new technology explored which could reduce costs further.
- The service was making its spend go further by utilising technology, data and intelligence more effectively and not necessarily just cutting services and Officers continued to work hard to secure funding from grants to improve services.
- Highways had also delivered some important projects across the county including the A439 Warwick Road in Stratford-upon-Avon, Wolvey Roundabout, and secured planning permission for Rugby Parkway Railway Station.
- The Planning Team continued to face resourcing issues due to a national shortage of senior planners. Through the LGA Pathways to Planning Scheme, which sought to equip individuals to train as future planners, the Council had employed graduate planning apprentices. Despite these resourcing issues, 75% of planning applications were

determined within statutory timeframes and the Highways Development Management team responded to 99% of planning consultations prior to determination by the Local Planning Authority.

- Officers had held workshops with districts and borough councils to develop a streamlined process which would be trialled with Local Planning Authorities for smaller applications.

Councillor Andy Crump, Portfolio Holder for Fire & Rescue and Community Safety, made the following comments:

- The Council was one of only a few Councils that had a balanced five year MTFs and was in a good position with an unqualified set of accounts which had enabled the Council tax to be set at 4.99%, in contrast to some other authorities where significant increases had been levied. The Pension Fund was also in a good position, with assets exceeding liabilities. Some other authorities would welcome being in this position.
- Through WPDG, the Council had invested in Sucham Park an industrial scheme featuring commercial units in Southam, which had generated employment opportunities.
- There had been investment in Firefighter Training and Safety through the delivery of a new hot fire training facility. This had reduced the need for firefighters to travel outside the county for training and would also generate income.
- Resourcing to Risk had a permanent revenue allocation at the end of the 3-year period agreed by Cabinet (for years 4 and 5 of the MTFs) of £602k (with an additional £12k in the 5th year). These increases reflected pay increases over the time period.
- The Flooding Team had responded to a number of flooding events and Members were encouraged to ensure that residents were reporting any incidents.
- Similarly, the Community Safety Team were also leading on projects to support vulnerable residents and nighttime safety.

Councillor Heather Timms, Portfolio Holder for Environment, Climate and Culture, highlighted the following areas:

- Waste - an increase in recycling rates from households across Warwickshire had been identified over the previous year and there had also been a reduction in waste sent to landfill. There were contracts in place for the whole county for food waste collection. The contract for reuse shops at recycling centres had been tendered, and a renewed contract with AgeUK had been secured, ensuring more items would be reused and saved from landfill with money made by AgeUK supporting their work with Warwickshire communities.
- Country Parks attracted over one million visitors per year and their work included outdoor education and the early years agenda. All income from the parks was reinvested as they worked towards becoming self-financing and work to improve the commercial offer continued. Café facilities at Ryton and Pooley had been improved and visitor numbers and parking revenue had significantly increased. Broomey Croft Park at Kingsbury Waterpark had been refurbished and there had also been improvements at Stratford Greenway. The service offer across all parks had been improved and concession income had increased; solar panels had also been installed on café and toilet blocks at Ryton Pools and a lot of work was taking place regarding biodiversity.
- The Natural Capital Investment Strategy had been adopted and 24 community orchards had been approved.
- Warwickshire County Council emissions had reduced and work continued towards achieving targets. Bronze status as a Carbon Literate Organisation had been achieved which demonstrated how the focused approach of Carbon Literacy had helped capacity

build and embed carbon literacy thinking across services. Funding had also been provided to Warwickshire and West Midlands Association of Local Councils (WALC) to deliver the same training to town and parish councils.

- The target to sign up 50 schools to the Eco-Schools programme had been achieved; the offer had been developed in conjunction with Let's Go Zero and teams across the Council were already working with schools to ensure a joined-up approach.
- A dedicated Adaptation officer had been working closely with key services to help them develop climate risk assessments and accompanying action plans, including Fire & Rescue, Public Health, County Highways, Engineering Design Services and Transport teams.
- Cost of Living – Work continued with the voluntary sector, community-led schemes and the delivery of the Social Fabric Fund. The Citizens' Advice Telephony Service had seen an increase in calls from 3,500 to 12,500 which reflected the impact of the national budget.

Councillor Parminder Singh Birdi made the following points:

- Thanked councillors and officers for their work to support residents and thanked opposition groups for their budget ideas.
- Highlighted the risks identified by the Section 151 Officer which primarily related to national issues, eg the national insurance increase.
- He noted party promises before the general election regarding Council Tax increases but in some areas there had been significant increases.

Councillor John Holland (Seconder of the Labour Group Amendment):

- The English Devolution White Paper had announced the government's intentions to facilitate local government reorganisation for two tier areas. The process of unitarisation would see the abolishment of all six councils in the county and the emergence of a single tier of governance. This would result in substantial financial savings and improvement in the quality of service provided to residents. The amount of work associated with this process was also significant.
- The cost of living issue went back to the Truss-era and the inflation created by the budget at the time, and also the impact of Brexit.
- He believed the budget amendment provided solutions to the areas of difficulty highlighted during the debate relating to support for children, particularly children with additional needs, and home to school transport.
- He drew attention to the proposals in the amendment relating to Green Bonds.

Councillor Sarah Boad (Seconder of the Liberal Democrat Amendment):

- Councillor Boad highlighted the importance of library services and how well supported the activities that took place in library buildings were, eg craft groups, rhyme time, use of computer facilities, disabled badge applications, and bus pass applications. The Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) Working Group were also trialling whether bus services could be improved through the provision of paper timetables which were available at libraries. The libraries were well used resources and were particularly important for families from a deprived background. The Liberal Democrat amendment therefore sought to protect library services.
- She voiced concerns regarding the process of unitarisation as many district and borough council non-statutory services could be subsumed into the four main budget pressures highlighted by the debate.

- She expressed frustration at the new government, particularly relating to the increase in national insurance for which the Council would not be properly compensated, and the lack of understanding for the way in which two-tier councils operated, noting that the Deputy Prime Minister, Angela Rayner, had spoken about providing services for working people, when many of the Council's services were focussed around adult social care and children's social care.
- She considered that local government reorganisation was distracting for the real business of local authorities to serve residents.
- She highlighted the importance of Children's Centres to support those children who did not have the best start in life.
- She highlighted the extra funding in the amendment for casualty reduction.
- In terms of Highways, Councillor Boad emphasised her frustration regarding the difficulty of bringing delegated budget schemes to fruition.

Councillor Will Roberts (Seconder of the Green Amendment)

- Councillor Roberts noted the backlog of over 500 gully cleaning jobs and whilst there was some action taking place to bring that figure down, climate change and the resulting heavier rainfall were leading to worse surface flooding. In preventable cases, this was wasting officer resources and risking harm to residents attempting to unblock drains. The Green amendment sought to address this issue and was a prime example of where investment could prevent increasing costs.
- Overall, he noted that due to the financial pressures and service demand faced by the Council there was limited room to propose amendments.

Councillor Adrian Warwick (Seconder of Motion) thanked the chamber for the contributions that had been shared and commended the budget proposal, particularly commenting on:

- The budget had been a difficult one due to the national picture and service pressures but opposition groups seemed to agree with the majority of the proposals. He took the opportunity to address how some of the points raised were covered in the budget proposal.
- The Conservative government had similarly inherited a poor financial situation from the previous labour government. It had then had to negotiate a pandemic and a war whilst achieving strong growth.
- Concern had been expressed for elderly residents, who were in further difficulties due to the loss of the winter fuel payment.
- The administration had supported a hospital to home service provided by Fire and Rescue Service which utilised existing assets.
- He welcomed supportive comments as the Council found itself in the positive position of having a balanced five-year MTFS despite delays to adult social care reform and thanked the Finance Team for their work.
- He highlighted the work that had taken place through the WPDG and WIF to promote growth and the need to ensure that growth was not inhibited.
- He noted the risk factors set out in the budget, largely driven by the national context.
- Councillor Warwick echoed disappointment in the Government and the financial decisions which were impacting the Council, for example he noted that amendments proposed the addition of posts and reflected on how many additional posts could have been proposed if changes to national insurance contributions had not been imposed.

Councillor Sarah Feeney (Mover of Labour Group Amendment) replied that:

- She welcomed similarities with support for children with social, emotional and mental health needs, but considered that it was important to understand the pathways and options open to them.
- Comments regarding ensuring infrastructure projects were correct were also welcomed.
- She noted comments in the debate concerning homelessness and felt that this was an area that needed more work with district and borough colleagues.
- She welcomed the Portfolio Holder's comments about children being given library membership which she pointed out originated in a previous motion by the Labour Group and stated the Group was keen to explore how the library model could be promoted and protected. She welcomed comments around the services that were provided by fully staffed libraries, recognising that libraries provided a greater range of services than the traditional loaning of books.
- She shared views expressed regarding the statutory override but considered it was disappointing that the issue had not been addressed by the previous government.
- The Labour Group welcomed work to bring EHCP assessments into the statutory timeframe. She hoped that whatever changes were introduced by the Government they addressed requiring an EHCP in order to access speech and language therapy. It was important that young people could reach their full potential without delays to accessing support.
- She supported the new hot fire training facility which demonstrated the ability to invest to save.
- The Labour Group fundamentally disagreed with cutting services to abused women and those suffering severe sexual abuse.
- Noting comments regarding the government's promises on council tax, she asserted that the financial position was an inherited one and not what the government had thought it was. She stated that she was appalled at the rose-tinted view of the situation before the general election.
- Local government reform was badly needed and overdue. The English Devolution White Paper was about more than unitarisation – it offered real power and funding to local areas in the biggest decentralisation of power from central government.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse (Mover of Liberal Democrat Group Amendment) replied:

- He suggested sharing Portfolio Holder briefings ahead of future budget setting meetings so that the debate could focus on key issues rather than an annual review of performance.
- All the budget proposals were balanced because they had to be. However, each group had got to the point of balance by different routes and the Section 151 Officer had provided his risk assessments accordingly. The risk assessments highlighted partnerships and demand management of adult social care. Councillor Roodhouse expressed his dissatisfaction that reform in this area had been delayed until 2028 and urged his Labour colleagues to lobby MPs and Parliament to address this at the earliest opportunity as this was a key area of demand pressure.
- He underlined the need to understand the trajectory around service demand in order to identify the investments that needed to be made in SEND as there were issues, not only related to the Covid-19 Pandemic, which were coming forward and would have impacts into adulthood. He sought clarity on how these issues would be dealt with. He considered that elements of education such as creative arts and outdoor education had a role to play. Understanding this demand and unlocking this potential was key to the Liberal Democrat amendment.

- Acknowledging comments regarding local government reorganisation, he suggested that the reserve Council meeting date (18 February 2025) be used to debate the issue.
- Noting proposals regarding gully cleaning, he expressed the view that it would be more efficient and effective if this happened at the same time as road sweeping, but this would require the ability to deliver a service in conjunction with district and borough colleagues.

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers (Mover of the Green Group Amendment) replied that:

- He supported the work of Trading Standards which played a vital role in community protection and that was why the Green Group amendment removed the saving proposed in the Conservative budget.
- The Green Group amendment also removed the proposed reduction for counselling and support for survivors of sexual abuse.
- He noted Councillor Matecki's comments that part of the reduction for street lighting was due to genuine efficiency but he considered that half of it was effectively a service reduction which would see the amount of hours street lighting was on reduced. Nighttime street lighting was important to those residents who were commuting to and from work in the early morning or late at night.
- He welcomed the announcement of funding for Resourcing to Risk beyond three years and sought further detail from the Portfolio Holder.
- He echoed comments regarding the poor performance of the previous Conservative government.
- He concluded that the Green Group amendment, therefore, focussed on: highways basics - enabling children to walk and cycle safely to school and ensuring that drains were clear to protect residents and businesses from flooding; preventative services – he noted proposed savings in the Conservative proposal which would effectively cut preventative services centred in public health, libraries and childrens centres. He considered the Green Group amendment took a financially sensible long-term economic view with a commitment to relentlessly pursuing services that were not only more efficient but also better for residents.

Councillor Peter Butlin (Mover of the Conservative Group Motion) thanked Members for an interesting debate and replied that:

- In a tight fiscal position, options were limited and considering the variation proposed by the opposition groups was less than 1%, he concluded that there was general agreement with the budget proposed.
- Some of the opposition's proposals were answered by the Portfolio Holders in terms of the service delivery work that was already taking place despite the financial constraints.
- He explained the savings methodology, which was driven by better procurement, right sizing, artificial intelligence, technology, and data driven decision making. He considered that about 5% of the savings proposed were 'cuts' but these had been the subject of careful consideration.
- He noted that the statutory override was a piece of legislation that few agreed with, as it was directly in opposition to the first principle of local government finance to balance the budget. The government were not sufficiently funding statutory SEND services and were now essentially leaning on local government finances to plug the gap. He looked forward to this being addressed in the Spring Budget Statement with new legislation brought forward and trusted that the debt would be written off.
- He expressed his pride in the investment into mainstream provision which had been achieved and would also reduce home to school transport costs.

- He was also proud that the county's population growth suggested people liked to move to and live in Warwickshire.
- Turning to the risk assessment in the budget proposals, he asserted that these were largely due to central government and the impact that national decisions were having locally, eg winter fuel payments, the increase to national insurance contributions and the rise in the minim wage. Energy was also the most expensive in the western world and it had also risen despite election promises to reduce it. He noted claims of how government decisions would affect the farming community and hospitality sector.
- Councillor Butlin stated he would have welcomed the opportunity to be more flexible in the budget proposals and allocate more funding to services but it was necessary to focus on statutory services and look after the most vulnerable. He considered the budget achieved this aim. However, he recognised that different political groups would have different priorities.
- He recognised that although the Council was not in the priority stream for unitarisation, reorganisation would be happening and he viewed this budget proposal as placing the Council in a good place to move forward on reorganisation. Whilst he considered it would be an expensive process, he believed the savings would be considerable and the outcome would be the ability to deliver better services.
- He concluded by reiterating thanks to the Finance Team and thanked those Members who were supportive of the proposals.

Votes:

Vote on Labour Group Amendment

A vote was held on the Labour Group amendment. The results were 9 votes in favour and 41 votes against.

The amendment was defeated. 9 votes in favour and 41 votes against.

Vote on Liberal Democrat Group Amendment

A vote was held on the Liberal Democrat Group amendment. The results were

The amendment was defeated.

Vote on Green Group Amendment

A vote was held on the Green Group amendment. The results were 9 votes in favour and 41 votes against.

The amendment was defeated.

Vote on the Conservative Budget

The Conservative budget became the substantive motion. A recorded vote was held. The results were:

Votes for (36)

Councillor Jo Barker, Councillor Margaret Bell, Councillor Parminder Singh Birdi, Councillor Peter Butlin, Councillor Jeff Clarke, Councillor John Cooke, Councillor Andy Crump, Councillor Yousef Dahmash, Councillor Piers Daniell, Councillor Clare Golby, Councillor Brian Hammersley, Councillor Dave Humphreys, Councillor Marian Humphreys, Councillor Andy Jenns, Councillor Kam Kaur, Councillor Dale Keeling, Councillor Justin Kerridge, Councillor Christopher Kettle, Councillor Sue Markham, Councillor Jan Matecki, Councillor Chris Mills, Councillor Jeff Morgan, Councillor Penny-Anne O'Donnell, Councillor Bhagwant Singh Pandher, Councillor Isobel Seccombe OBE, Councillor Ian Shenton, Councillor Jill Simpson-Vince, Councillor Tim Sinclair, Councillor Mejar Singh, Councillor Richard Spencer, Councillor Heather Timms, Councillor Mandy Tromans, Councillor Robert Tromans, Councillor Adrian Warwick, Councillor Martin Watson and Councillor Andrew Wright

Votes against (14)

Councillor Sarah Boad, Councillor Barbara Brown, Councillor Jonathan Chilvers, Councillor Jackie D'Arcy, Councillor Tracey Drew, Councillor Judy Falp, Councillor Sarah Feeney, Councillor Jenny Fradgley, Councillor Bill Gifford, Councillor John Holland, Councillor Caroline Phillips, Councillor Will Roberts, Councillor Kate Rolfe, and Councillor Jerry Roodhouse

Resolved:

That Council agrees the 2025/26 Budget and authorises work to continue on ensuring the 2025-30 Medium Term Financial Strategy is aligned with and supports the delivery of the Council's ambitions as set out in the Council Plan.

3. Treasury Management Strategy and Investment Strategy

Councillor Peter Butlin, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property introduced and moved this report, noting that both strategies were statutory documents that full Council was required to approve on an annual basis before the start of the financial year. Councillor Butlin reported that the strategies in their current form had worked well and, therefore, only minor adjustments were proposed as detailed in the report.

Councillor Isobel Seccombe seconded the proposals and reserved her right to speak.

Councillor Adrian Warwick thanked the Portfolio Holder and officers for their work. He reflected on the importance of the Treasury Management strategy with regard to the Council's appetite for risk and the way investments had been made which had helped to secure the financial footing that underpinned the budget.

Councillor Jackie D'Arcy asked the potential future use of Green Bonds which had proved very successful at Islington Council.

Councillor Seccombe responded that Local Climate Bonds was a new opportunity which the Council may avail itself of in the future. He explained the context for investment and the Council's overriding principles for borrowing to minimise cost pressure and maximise opportunities for residents and business. It was clear that the future would be more challenging but the robust work that was undertaken would support the Council to meet those challenges responsibly.

Councillor Butlin reiterated the principles on which the strategies were built and stated that the Council's track record spoke for itself.

Vote

A vote was held. The motion was agreed unanimously.

Decision

Resolved that:

1. The Treasury Management Strategy for 2025/26 (Appendix 2 to the report) be approved with effect from 1 April 2025;
2. The Investment Strategy for Non Treasury Investments for 2025/26 (Appendix 3 to the report) be approved with effect from 1 April 2025;
3. The County Council requires the Executive Director for Resources to ensure that gross borrowing does not exceed the prudential level specified (Appendix 2 to the report, Section 3.16, Table 12 "Authorised Borrowing Limit");
4. The revised lending limits for the Warwickshire Property Development Group (WPDG) (Appendix 3 to the report, Annex 7) come into immediate effect;
5. The revised lending limits for the Warwickshire Investment Fund (WIF) (Appendix 3 to the report, Annex 7) come into immediate effect;
6. The County Council requires the Executive Director for Resources to ensure that gross investment in non-Treasury investments does not exceed the prudential levels specified (Appendix 3 to the report, Annex 7);
7. The County Council authorises the Executive Director for Resources to undertake such delegated responsibilities as are set out in Appendix 2 to the report, Annex 7, and Appendix 3, Section 2.5; and
8. The County Council requires the Executive Director for Resources to implement the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy (Appendix 2 to the report, Section 2.13-2.29).

4. Addition to Capital Programme - Electric Vehicle Infrastructure

Councillor Jan Matecki, Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning introduced and moved this report, which was seconded by Councillor Tim Sinclair. In moving the motion, Councillor Matecki reminded Council that just under £3m pounds had been secured from the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Capital Fund from the DFT. The purpose of the fund was to support delivery of additional publicly available charging infrastructure to encourage the uptake of electric vehicles. This would also help the drive towards more sustainable transport, better air quality and carbon net zero. The Council had worked closely with neighbouring local authorities as part of a consortium, led by the sub-national transport body

Midlands Connect, and the consortium would use its collective buying power to leverage as many new charge points as possible and promote the roll-out of charging infrastructure in parts of Warwickshire where delivery had been slow to date. Current projections were for the delivery of around 700-800 charge points, which would deliver around about 1,500 sockets in total, installed in on-street locations where residents had no off-street parking or where home charging would be deemed difficult. There was no expectation on the Council to provide any financial shortfall to allow the scheme to progress.

Councillor Bill Gifford praised officers for their work on understanding need and the potential locations for electric vehicle (EV) charging points. He highlighted his belief that Warwickshire had potential to be the center of electric battery power in the country, with the research taking place at Warwick University, the siting of the Gigafactory in Warwick District and , Jaguar Landrover introducing a new model that would be entirely electrically powered. He understood that one of the biggest concerns people had around EVs was around charging and he therefore welcomed the funding and proposals.

Councillor Sarah Boad also welcomed the investment and the work to identify the where charging locations were needed. She noted that current charging points were generally located in town centres or streets close to them and welcomed the potential to have charging points in neighbourhood shopping areas or other car parks. She recognised that for people without access to a driveway, charging was more complicated and had seen wires across pavements with rugs over the top, to enable people to charge their cars on-street, and welcomed more widely available charging points.

Councillor Sarah Feeney explained that EV charging was an issue that was raised frequently in the division she represented, Benn, where there was very little off street parking. A pilot had taken place in the previous year which had seen options to charge on-street explored and residents were keen to understand whether or not this would formally continue. She questioned the options that would be available in terms of mobility for the charging points since many residents with EVs were not always able to park in the space nearest the charging point.

Councillor Warwick welcomed the report and the investment and applauded the work of officers. He was an EV drivers himself and, in the division he represented, Fosse, he had been dealing with situations where residents did not have direct access to charge. He noted that officers had introduced the gully charging that had been described in the debate, and that government guidance on the continuation of this had been awaited. However, he understood that range anxiety was an issue for EV drivers and that the proposals would go some way to addressing this concern.

Councillor Jill Simpson-Vince shared her experience as a new EV driver, noting that there was a delay in having a home charging point installed and the careful journey planning that had to take place in order to understand where charging points were available. This experience had helped understanding of how sporadic provision was in some areas and how some EV parking spaces were take up with a non-EV. She therefore welcomed work to understand where there were gaps in provision and was interested in the wattage and speed of the proposed charging points as this affected how long the car was parked in a space.

Councillor Sinclair explained that he had taken part in the Electric Vehicle Charging Scrutiny Task and Finish Group (TFG) in 2022 which had looked into this issue. As part of this work he had spoken to EV drivers to understand their needs and anxieties around charging, and noted that EV users needed a place to charge, fair prices, reliability and on-street parking. He welcomed the funding and praised the work of officers to transform and accelerate provision across the county.

Councillor Matecki commented on the range of modern EVs and his experience as an EV driver. In response to comments made during the debate he explained that the proposals would seek a geographical mix of locations for charging points and there were many different models and innovations that could be explored. He explained the timeline for procurement and installation and commended officers for their work to date.

Vote

A vote was held. The motion was agreed unanimously.

Decision

Resolved

That Council approves the addition to the Capital Programme of £3.295 million for the installation and ongoing management of electric vehicle chargepoints (“the Project”) to be funded from a grant awarded under the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Fund and the addition to the Capital Programme of such other private sector investment sum as the Council may secure in support of the Project.

5. Any Other items of Urgent Business

None.

6. Exclusion of Press and Public

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.

7. Exempt Minutes of the 17 December 2024 Meeting of Council

The exempt minutes of the Council meeting held on 17 December 2024 were agreed as an accurate record.

The meeting ended at 1.40 pm

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Chair

County Council

Tuesday 18 February 2025

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

Councillor Chris Mills (Chair), Councillor Jo Barker, Councillor Richard Baxter-Payne, Councillor Margaret Bell, Councillor Sarah Boad, Councillor Barbara Brown, Councillor Peter Butlin, Councillor Jonathan Chilvers, Councillor Jeff Clarke, Councillor John Cooke, Councillor Andy Crump, Councillor Jackie D'Arcy, Councillor Tracey Drew, Councillor Judy Falp, Councillor Jenny Fradgley, Councillor Sarah Feeney, Councillor Bill Gifford, Councillor Peter Gilbert, Councillor Clare Golby, Councillor John Holland, Councillor Dave Humphreys, Councillor Marian Humphreys, Councillor Kam Kaur, Councillor Christopher Kettle, Councillor Sue Markham, Councillor Jan Matecki, Councillor Jeff Morgan, Councillor Penny-Anne O'Donnell, Councillor Bhagwant Singh Pandher, Councillor Daren Pemberton, Councillor Caroline Phillips, Councillor Kate Rolfe, Councillor Jerry Roodhouse, Councillor Isobel Seccombe OBE, Councillor Ian Shenton, Councillor Tim Sinclair, Councillor Heather Timms, Councillor Adrian Warwick, Councillor Martin Watson and Councillor Andrew Wright

1. General

(1) Apologies for Absence

Councillors Brett Beetham, Parminder Singh Birdi, Yousef Dahmash, Piers Daniel, Brian Hammersley, Andy Jenns, Jack Kennaugh, Dale Keeling, Justin Kerridge, Sarah Millar, Wallace Redford, Will Roberts, Jill Simpson-Vince, Mejar Singh, Mandy Tromans and Rob Tromans

(2) Members' Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-pecuniary Interests

The Chairman advised Members that the Dispensation Sub Committee had met earlier on the day of this meeting, and granted a dispensation for Members with relevant disclosable pecuniary interests to speak and vote at any meeting in relation to the issues of Devolution, the English Devolution White Paper, and/or proposed unitary local government in Warwickshire.

The dispensation applied to Members who were Elected Members or Co-opted Members of a District or Borough Council, or a town or parish council, within Warwickshire; or whose Spouse or Partner was an Elected or Co-opted Member of a District or Borough Council, or a town or parish council, within Warwickshire; or whose Spouse or Partner was an employee of the County Council or a District or Borough Council within Warwickshire.

There were no other interests declared.

(3) Public Speaking

The Chairman welcomed speakers to the meeting and advised that he was exercising his discretion to allow speeches up to 10 minutes.

Councillor George Cowcher – Deputy Leader, Stratford-on-Avon District Council

Councillor Cowcher noted that councillors across the county were faced with the proposition of creating something new for Warwickshire and Stratford-on-Avon councillors believed it was important to work together on the future arrangements. Whether the result was one new unitary council or more than one it was going to be a new council and not a development of either the County Council or any of the Districts and, therefore, everybody needed to play a part.

Councillor Cowcher made the point that the White Paper had two strands: local government reform and the strategic authority that the county would be working with for the future. He considered that the two were interlinked and could not be dealt with separately or sequentially and it was important that consideration of any strategic alignment sought the best fit for the people of Warwickshire. If the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) was not an option, other options needed to be explored and this would have implications for whether there was a preference for one or two unitary authorities in the county since the south of the county would have little in common with those authority areas adjacent to North Warwickshire and vice versa. It was important, therefore, to be clear that there was more than one option to consider for local government reform and vital to have an understanding of the arrangements for a strategic authority.

Councillor Cowcher emphasised that proposals should take account of how each council's assets and resources were accounted for. For example, he noted that Stratford-on-Avon District Council had sold its housing stock some years ago and as a result there were cash balances. This was money that had been contributed by council taxpayers in the District and it was important that the funding was ringfenced for people in Stratford and was not dispersed across the whole of the county. It was also one of the reasons why the District Council had been able to build positive relationships with town and parish councils and he recognised their importance in a rural district.

Finally, Councillor Cowcher noted that the county council elections would take place in May 2025. The legacy left behind for the new council was important and should not be unworkable. It was, therefore, the view of the District Council that the proposal to be submitted by the end of March needed to present at least two options, one of which was two new unitary authorities: one for South Warwickshire and one for North Warwickshire.

Councillor Ian Davison – Leader, Warwick District Council

Councillor Davison thanked Councillor Isobel Seccombe, Leader, and Monica Fogarty, Chief Executive, for meeting with the Chief Executives and Leaders of the five District and Borough Council in the previous week. He explained the meeting had proposed working together to gather evidence from multiple angles on the pros and cons of different unitary models, of which the viable options appeared to be a Warwickshire-wide unitary authority or a North

Warwickshire unitary authority alongside a South Warwickshire one.

He noted that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) had confirmed that, with elections due to take place in May, the new administration would not be bound by the current one and, therefore, decisions reached at this meeting would be open to change.

Councillor Davison asked the meeting to give thought to the most important considerations for the choices presented by reform. He noted that many questioned the government's wisdom of accelerating the simultaneous creation of strategic authorities across England and the unitarisation of county, district and borough councils. He considered the government was embarking on years of implementation chaos, while local councils were spending considerable sums on adult and child social care, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), home to school transport, homelessness, etc. Those services accounted for around 70 percent of combined budgets and, while optimistic assumptions might hope to make savings from unitarisation, this was perhaps looking in the wrong direction for change. Whilst reform may not be welcomed by all, central government was committed to creating unitary authorities and this was now the choice.

As Councillor Cowcher had stated, a major complexity in the choice was that the new unitary authorities needed to help unlock devolution, being the goal of the White Paper, which required universal coverage in England by strategic authorities. This was complex in the local context with several possible permutations but in terms of economic geography, Warwickshire should sit in a strategic authority with Coventry, whether that was inside or outside the WMCA. If that was possible, a single Warwickshire unitary might work, although the north and south would have the advantage of having populations about the same size as Coventry and Solihull. Alternative possibilities for strategic authorities included south Warwickshire joining a strategic authority with Oxfordshire or Worcestershire, while north Warwickshire could form a strategic authority with Staffordshire or Leicestershire. It was important that there was genuine consultation with residents and that those residents were presented with a real choice.

In conclusion, Councillor Davison asked Warwickshire County Council to work with the district and borough councils to agree what evidence should be considered in preparing the proposals. This may include the importance of economic geography, finance, residents' sense of identity and their trust in local government, and how likely non-statutory services like swimming pools and parks were to be cut.

Councillor Ish Mistry – Deputy Leader of Rugby Borough Council

Councillor Mistry read a statement from Councillor Michael Moran, the Leader of Rugby Borough Council. The statement noted that the government's English devolution White Paper was published on 16 December 2024 and included the government's intention to facilitate a programme of local government reorganisation for a two-tier area. On 5 February 2025, the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution, had written to the six Warwickshire Councils inviting them to work collaboratively to develop a proposal for local government reorganization. Subsequent briefing by government officials had clarified the intent and time scale regarding the local government reorganization. A special meeting of

Rugby Borough Council had been convened on 26 February 2025 to consider the matter. As such, the statement represented the view of the Leader and Cabinet of Rugby Borough Council only.

The statement went on to say that in response to the English Devolution White Paper, and determining the future structures for local government in Warwickshire, Rugby Borough Council's administration considered it imperative that the interests of residents, businesses and communities remained the sole driver for more streamlined and cost effective services, enabling the achievement of efficiency and better outcomes for communities. The administration recognised the specific challenges faced by Rugby Borough Council while uncertainty regarding local government restructuring remained, including but not limited to those relating to the Council's workforce, joint work with partners out in the community, resident understanding of the local government landscape, and the deliverability of corporate priorities which required long-term investment. Given these challenges, the administration understood the need to act positively and to collaborate and co-produce with all partners at the earliest opportunity, with the intent being absolute clarity and collective discussion of the creation of a new joint authority and not a takeover by Warwickshire County Council, a viewpoint which had been unhelpfully portrayed in the media.

In moving forward, the administration considered it imperative that due consideration was given to maintaining a genuine connection within all distinct communities, for example, by the new unitary authority having a physical presence in the major towns throughout the county, by ensuring that the new unitary authority had well thought out plans for engaging and involving communities and by ensuring that the role of the local council (including parish and town councils) was fully considered.

The recent commencement of discussions between the leaders and the chief executives of all six councils was welcomed. Honest, respectful, and open engagement in such discussion was essential to enable the Councils to cooperate and create an Interim Plan. The deadline for this (21 March 2025) and the deadline for the proposal (26 November 2025) was very tight.

Finally, the statement noted that the White Paper set out a clear vision to deliver devolution and local government reorganisation at pace and presented a significant opportunity for all areas to proactively self-determine the future structure of local government in Warwickshire to deliver a better outcome for all residents. If delivered effectively, this opportunity could directly benefit the residents and businesses of Rugby and Warwickshire.

Keith Kondakor

Mr Kondakor expressed the view that it was not a good time to hurry into local government reform and cautioned against making mistakes through rushing.

He stated that whilst the devolution of power to appropriate levels and giving power to communities was welcomed, the proposals seemed to be doing the opposite, with decision-making powers and jobs moved away from local districts upwards to a unitary authority. The borough where he lived (Nuneaton and Bedworth) had serious need for improvement but he was not supportive of moving its powers 20 miles south and this would not necessarily solve

the problems in any event. He cited what he considered to be poor decision making at Warwickshire County Council - the Bermuda Bridge project, building at Top Farm, changes to the Fire Service – as examples of decisions being ‘done to’ the local area which he considered had not been of benefit, and demonstrated that the local area did not have a strong enough voice. Mr Kondakor noted that smaller projects were also difficult to get off the ground, giving the example of a bus stop he was trying to have sited locally and he considered this would be even more difficult to achieve if there was a single, bigger local authority to deal with. In his view, there needed to be better options on the table.

Mr Kondakor stated that the proposal for two unitary local authorities should be considered. However, if this was the preferred option, there would need to be shared services to be economically viable as services like highways needed to be delivered on a reasonably sized contract. He also extolled the virtues of having a Waste Authority that merged activities across Coventry and Warwickshire (including the districts and boroughs).

He stated that consideration would also need to be given to the where the boundaries would be drawn. For instance, he questioned if Hinkley and Bosworth could form part of a North Warwickshire Council, or if The Cotswolds could join a South Warwickshire conglomeration. However, in his view, consideration should be given to other models, eg working towards a London-style of government where a strategic authority existed alongside well-funded local councils. This made a big difference to democracy with local councils providing local services and a strategic authority providing the bigger picture. In terms of the government’s proposals for the creation of authorities with populations of 500,000 or more, having a strategic authority and unitary authority/authorities made sense. He considered that if this two tier style was supported in London, then it could be implemented elsewhere. He stated that the main issue was for the model to enhance local democracy at town and village levels and to keep decision-making and jobs and services local where possible.

Mr Kondakor noted that important services were delivered locally, such as Council Housing. In Nuneaton and Bedworth, there were 5,000 council homes and the new model would need to consider how those services would continue to be delivered. It would also be important to consider the role of civic pride and how decisions on planning could be made locally.

He urged the Council to look at the options and seek a flexible solution that preserved the best parts of local government and retained enough local councillors at different levels to serve their communities. Reflecting on his own experience, he understood the roles of both borough councillor and county councillor and the public service that was provided.

Councillor Alan Boad, Warwick District Council

Councillor Boad welcomed the government’s decision to allow elections in Warwickshire to continue on 1 May 2025 and give the local councils a further eight weeks to submit an interim plan for reorganisation of local government. The proposals reached in that period would reshape local government to a form that would, in all likelihood, last another 50 years. It was also eight weeks to create a strategic authority, most likely led by an elected mayor, or to try to join another one.

He was of the view that the proposals should be jointly developed by an all-party group of councillors from the existing councils and no council should feel ‘done to’ by another since all

six councils would be abolished. However, the timescales were tight and therefore some agreed principles were needed.

Since there was a requirement to work with neighbouring authorities to identify the best solutions for the area, the County Council had to work as an equal partner, collaboratively with the districts and boroughs to arrive

At an agreed reorganisation proposal. It was also understood that the consultation was required at pace to meet the government's timeline, requiring the submission of an interim plan before 21 March 2025 and the full proposals for reorganisation by 28 November 2025. Warwick District Council believed that the consultations must start by answering three key questions:

1. What shape should the future of local government in Warwickshire take? Should there be one unitary authority for all of Warwickshire or would having two unitary authorities better serve the different communities of north and south Warwickshire? This would provide a proposal similar to the solution in Northamptonshire, which was divided into two unitary authorities formed in 2021, demonstrating that there was a precedent for reform with the population figures involved. Alternatively, should another solution be sought?
2. Should the future unitary local authorities attempt to join WMCA or work with councils from other neighbouring counties to form a new strategic authority? This was a crucial decision that had to be made, particularly given that WMCA had indicated that they did not want Warwickshire Councils to join.
3. This was supposed to be a bottom-up process, taking the opportunity to move powers down to parish and town councils. This must be addressed in this period, moving control down to the lowest possible level that could practically deliver solutions locally for local people.

Councillor Boad noted that these should not be party political matters and he supported the approach agreed at meetings of Warwick District Council and Stratford-on-Avon District Council to work on a cross-party basis and with other local councils to find the best outcome for Warwickshire's residents.

The Chairman noted that a written submission had been received from **Councillor Christopher Watkins, Leader of Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council** which he read out as follows:

“As the Leader of Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council, I want to make it known, as I have done many times already – that I support both the principle of devolution and of local government reform. This Government’s policy gives a clear opportunity to both my Borough and the whole of Warwickshire, to transform outcomes for our residents, businesses, and visitors.

Equally I am pleased that Government rejected Warwickshire’s request to join the priority programme. In partnership with my fellow District and Borough Leaders, I made clear representations to Government; to give Warwickshire the time to undertake this work.

This time has been afforded, and on this basis, I call to all Councils around Warwickshire to come together to explore all the options available. At the forefront of my mind is the

recognition for the communities, culture and senses of places that form up our County, and we owe it to them to strive for the best model possible, putting our communities at the forefront.

I hope, that in compliment with all Local Government organisations in Warwickshire, the various options can be duly explored, to establish the right outcome for all residents of Warwickshire.”

2. Unitary Local Government in Warwickshire

The Chairman advised that in common with his decision regarding the length of public speeches, he was also exercising his discretion to allow longer speeches, of up to ten minutes, from county councillors during this debate.

Councillor Isobel Seccombe, Leader, thanked the public speakers for attending to share their views and recognised the importance of those views to the debate.

In order to provide some context, Councillor Seccombe explained the activities that had taken place since the publication of the English Devolution White Paper on 16 December 2024. She noted that the government’s manifesto had included devolution, but it had been a surprise that local government reform was included within its proposals. Within three days of the publication, a meeting had taken place between the Leaders and Chief Executives of Warwickshire County Council and the District and Borough Councils to consider the implications, including the government’s deadline of 10 January 2025 to request to be included in the early wave of reorganisation. This Council had determined to make a request to be included in that wave for several reasons, not least to provide some certainty for the workforce. However, this was not taken forward by government.

At this point, Councillor Seccombe noted the difference between devolution and local government reform, stating that whilst they were inevitably joined together, they were separate issues for consideration. She pointed out that Warwickshire County Council had a devolution deal in place and, beyond the debate at this meeting, there would be a discussion regarding strategic authorities, being the direction in which the government had expressed it wished to progress. However, the debate at this meeting was focussed on local government reform, a piece of work that all six local councils were working on and the final goal of this work was a single tier of local government, either one or two councils, to deliver all the current services delivered across the existing two tiers. It was important for elected members across all councils to shape and be part of delivering the best model possible for local residents, taxpayers, businesses and young people. Although the government had not chosen to take Warwickshire forward in the early wave, there was still a lot of work to take place. On the same day the government had announced that Warwickshire would not go forward in the early wave, it had indicated the requirement for the delivery of an interim plan by 21 March 2025 and full proposals by 28 November 2025. The authorities needed to work to deliver the best model it could, that encompassed the delivery of all services across the existing two tiers, that would make savings. The government had also requested that funds were not spent on consultants.

Councillor Seccombe highlighted that there was a case for change and consideration would be given to a single unitary council model which she believed was the only sustainable outcome. She

noted that some of the proposals that the government had received were tidying up small unitary councils which were fundamentally failing financially and she did not believe anyone wanted to create a system and legacy that was bound to fail.

She valued the ethos and principles of councillors working for local people and considered that a single unitary council would work across the whole geography of the area. This was not about geographic change, as services would still be delivered on a locality basis and no doubt library services, leisure services and waste services would form part of those discussions. This was a real chance to ensure that the best of each council was represented whilst reducing costs and bureaucracy.

Looking ahead to the strategic authority, there was again really only one viable model to Councillor Seccombe's mind, and this was largely because for some years councils' funds had been spent with WMCA as non-constituent members. Each of the six councils was, to varying extents, involved financially and financially indebted to the combined authority. Local businesses had also benefitted from the arrangement. There was a lot to lose by walking away from the partnership and she did not consider opening talks with other areas was an appropriate way to behave when there was already a financial obligation to WMCA. Additionally, it was inappropriate to open discussions before the unitary model was known and she believed that combined authorities would want to understand the model before entering discussions also. She asserted her view that it was important to resolve local government reform within Warwickshire and adopt a sensible approach to the strategic authority to ensure that savings could be achieved without lessening of local place-based delivery or relationships. It was vital to simplify the system for residents and businesses to access their Council and she proposed that there was only one solution for Warwickshire, that would maintain local pride in the place, valuing small communities, market towns and local hubs and centres whilst protecting the interests of all of local taxpayers.

Councillor Adrian Warwick seconded the recommendation and reserved his right to speak.

Amendments

Councillor Sarah Feeney, moved the following amendment.

“Local Government reform is not solely about unitarising two-tier councils. Government has been clear in the White Paper that devolution of power to local communities will be through the establishment of new Strategic Authorities or widening the scope of those which exist.

It is crucial that future unitary government is not remote from local communities. The engagement of local communities in decision-making will be essential if devolved powers are to be exercised effectively.

The County of Warwickshire has a strong heritage, brand and identity which should be preserved and strengthened for future generations.

That Council therefore:

- 1. Supports the development of a proposal to Government for unitary local government for Warwickshire which meets the guidance, criteria and timeframes set out in the invitation received from Government*

2. *Opens discussions across the region with prospective Strategic Authority partners.*
3. *Seeks to establish clear guiding principles and rationale for proposals developed.*
4. *Seeks to involve local communities in local decision making in any proposals*
5. *Seeks to preserve the boundaries and the identity of the County in any proposals*
6. *Ensure the interim plans meet the requirements set out by the Minister of State for Local Government.”*

In moving the amendment, Councillor Feeney sought recognition that the old system of government was being abolished and there would no longer be a two tier system of local government. Whatever model was supported, whether that be one or two councils, they would be new councils and not a continuation of any other councils. This offered opportunities for new thinking and a simplified system for residents where one council would have full ownership of services and any problems residents encountered. She considered it was an amazing opportunity for residents to be at the heart of the proposals.

The Labour Group amendment spoke of involving local communities, not borough, district, town, or parish councils, because communities were the people elected members served and they were the people who needed to be involved and would need to be involved in any consultation process. Without their involvement, the reality was that there would be a struggle to persuade the public to accept the changes that were coming.

Councillor Feeney had heard the concept of North and South raised in the debate but no mention of the East, and she highlighted that Rugby often felt forgotten. Despite this there was belief in Warwickshire and the shared heritage across the County. People in Rugby shared the same hopes, fears and dreams as people resident in the north or south. They all wanted a functioning council or councils and a happy, secure and safe place to live. To an extent, she did not believe they minded what the model was, or the crest that was printed on their bins as long as the services were delivered and bins collected.

Looking ahead to the conversations that were needed in the coming weeks, the focus had to be on what was achievable for communities and residents. She had various proposals mooted about which councils or geographic areas to encompass as part of reorganisation. However, those areas already had their own visions and boundaries. This was not a blank piece of paper to start over. She did not think local government would look the way it did if there was a do-over and there would be lots of things that would be done differently. But that was not what was happening and the reality was that consideration needed to be given to what was possible for Warwickshire.

Councillor Feeney wanted to open discussions across the county with all stakeholders to make sure that everybody was engaged, with clear guiding principles and a rationale for the proposals. She felt that there was lot of different ideas being mooted at the present time and it was important to reach a common agreement.

She also emphasised the need to be part of a strategic authority as this would be the gateway to devolution and provide the ability to have more control of, for example, health, transport and

railways. It was important to be ambitious for Warwickshire and whether the end result was one or two unitary authorities, she hoped everyone agreed that elected members wanted a solution that would best serve residents.

Councillor John Holland seconded the amendment and reserved his right to speak.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse proposed the following amendment:

“That Council supports the development of a proposal to Government for unitary local government for Warwickshire which meets the guidance, criteria and timeframes set out in the invitation received from Government.

Warwickshire County Council endorses working with Councils at all levels across Warwickshire to explore the options for appropriate service delivery models for unitary status and considering the views of residents,

Council requests that consideration is given to:

- 1. Protecting the level of services currently delivered to the community by District, Borough, Town, Parish Councils.*
- 2. The geography, population and economic and community footprint of Warwickshire.*
- 3. Warwickshire’s relationships with its neighbours.*
- 4. The creation of town & parish councils where there are none.*
- 5. Views on which strategic authority the Council would be best to look at aligning with; and*
- 6. A high level cross party working group be established to support this work.”*

In moving the amendment, Councillor Roodhouse noted the commonality of language being used. Whilst there were different communities being represented, everyone wanted what was best for them and he believed it was important to keep this central in discussions. Councillor Roodhouse likened the task ahead as being like receiving a gift, which when unwrapped was a 3000 piece jigsaw with many of the pieces being the same colour. It took a long time to complete jigsaws of this type and the task ahead was very similar and it was important to ensure that all the right pieces, including devolution, were put together in the right places.

Councillor Roodhouse recalled the concept of ‘evidence judgement impact’, wherein as much evidence should be gathered from as many people as possible from as many sources as possible (partners, stakeholders, other local authorities, good examples of service delivery, best practice, etc) and then collectively try and come to a judgement over the particular elements as a way forward and think of the impact that that would have on residents in the end. In doing so, it was important to respect the views of each other.

He also noted that this was a top-down process, a process that was forced on local authorities, whether it was welcomed or not. At the same time, government was making other commitments around expenditure on defence, welfare and the NHS, but there was no commitment to increase

funding for local government. Local government was good at service delivery within the budgets made available and this meant that the Treasury generally considered it was possible to make more savings. For instance, the Better Care Fund had been frozen for around three years and the impact would be on hospital discharge services. However, gathering evidence, making good judgements and looking at impacts through the process of reorganisation, it may be possible to resolve some of these issues including council tax equalisation.

In conclusion, he welcomed the debate but asked for the opportunity to discuss around a table and find a solution that recognised the evidence judgement impact. He emphasised that the focus of the debate was serving residents and this was an opportunity to create a legacy for the future. At the same time, it was important to be realistic and recognise the process for what it was: a top-down process that included a government consultation rather than a discussion with local people.

Councillor Sarah Boad seconded the amendment.

The Chairman asked Councillor Seccombe if the amendments were recognised as friendly and, in recognition of the similar language being used in the amendments, she requested an adjournment to engage with the proposers of the amendments and reach a collaborative response.

The meeting adjourned at 10.56am and reconvened at 11.35am.

Councillor Seccombe advised the Chairman that she now proposed a new motion which was seconded by Councillor Sarah Feeney.

“The Labour Government, through the Devolution White Paper, has directed all two-tier Local Authority areas shall become Unitary Councils by 2028. Consultation will be undertaken by the Secretary of State through their department.

It is crucial that future Unitary Government is not remote from local communities and engagement with them is embedded within future structures.

The County of Warwickshire has a strong heritage and identity which should be preserved and strengthened for future generations.

The Council therefore:

- 1. Will develop a proposal to Government for unitary local government for Warwickshire which meets the guidance, criteria and time frames set out by Government.*
- 2. Seeks to quickly establish clarity from Government regarding the model to be progressed to enable the best use of time and resource.*
- 3. Commits to engage with Districts, Boroughs, Towns, Parishes and Communities in developing proposals, both existing and future emerging arrangements.*
- 4. Recognises the importance of the boundary and the identity of the County of Warwickshire in any proposals and will work with regional partners.*
- 5. Will continue to strive for the economic prosperity of the area even against adverse national headwinds.*
- 6. Agrees to establish a cross-party working group to support this work.”*

Councillor Martin Watson brought Members' attention to an amendment to the text on the printed version of the new motion that had been circulated prior to the meeting reconvening. As it was impossible to 'ensure' prosperity, the motion on screen, which Members would be asked to vote on, stated that the Council would 'strive' for economic prosperity.

Debate

During the course of the debate, the following points were raised:

- Public speakers were thanked for attending to share their views.
- It was considered that the motion provided a framework to develop a solution that was right for Warwickshire,
- The proposal to appoint a cross-party working group was supported. Given the amount of work that was required, some Members advocated for a high-level cross-party working group.
- The interim plan required by government did not require a preferred option to be stated at this stage, but it did require the plan of work to come to a decision to be laid out. It would be important to develop a wide evidence base for a preferred option.
- The government had already considered workable solutions to creating unitary councils and this had resulted in the development of guidelines around creating authorities that covered populations of a minimum of 500,000 along existing boundaries which showed a regard for heritage and civil communities.
- It was noted that the motion referenced becoming unitary by the year 2028, but it was pointed out that the government's timetable was already slipping. Of the priority groups identified in the first wave, it appeared that only Surrey were moving forward, meaning that it was likely implementation for the other priorities would slip. This could mean that implementation in Warwickshire could be 2029 or beyond.
- The need to make a positive difference to local people's lives through this process was emphasised.
- The simplification of residents being able to access services through one council was identified as a benefit of unitary local government, which was supported by the experience of Members who had simultaneously been county and district/borough councillors as opposed to that of Members who were councillors in one tier but not the other.
- The wisdom of creating two unitary authorities was questioned, and what this would mean, in particular, for the provision of adult social care, children's services, SEND services and the Fire Service where work had recently concluded on providing efficiencies to deliver service improvement. It was considered that creating two unitary authorities would limit the economies of scale which would bring efficiencies for a single unitary council. It was further noted by some Members that the government's proposals were to create unitary authorities of populations of 500,000 or more which it was suggested prohibited the possibility of creating two unitary authorities in any event and some Members suggested that no exceptional circumstances had

been identified to deviate from this guideline. It was, however, appreciated that some services would benefit from localised service delivery which could be delivered through a single unitary authority.

- Whilst some Members considered that more co-operative delivery of services would provide improvements for residents, others expressed suspicion with the experience of Cornwall being used as an example. It was explained that although unitarisation had eventually made savings for the unitary council that had emerged in Cornwall, it had not necessarily been so for the taxpayer, resulting in the reversion to district-style councils over time. It was noted that there were other areas (eg Somerset, Wiltshire, Cornwall, Shropshire and Cumbria) with unitarisation experiences which could also inform the evidence base. In the instance of Cumbria, two small unitary authorities had been created, which had then come together to create a strategic authority and this was a further option that could be considered for Warwickshire.
- The similarities between communities, but difference in localities was recognised along with the importance of local voices. A number of Members emphasised the need for local decision making by councillors with local knowledge, reflecting on the prior role of Area Committees.
- The retention of town and parish councils and their creation in Nuneaton and Bedworth and Rugby where they did not currently exist was supported. However, it was suggested that a dialogue with existing town and parish councils would need to be opened to understand how they would fit into a unitary model and what devolved powers parish and town councils could, or would like to, take on. The civic pride associated with town mayors was also noted.
- Noting the difference in council tax paid by Band D homeowners across the county and the higher populations in North Warwickshire, Nuneaton and Bedworth, and Rugby where a lower proportion of total council tax was paid, it was noted that significant work in this area would be required to bring the tax bases together.
- The strong economic links with Coventry and Solihull were highlighted as a reason to remain associated with WMCA rather than seek to create a strategic authority elsewhere. It was noted that some Warwickshire residents would also have personal links with these areas.
- Further information about funding formulas was highlighted as important to ensure that savings made in Warwickshire remained in Warwickshire rather than being redistributed to neighbouring authorities.
- The top-down approach to local government reorganisation was criticised, particularly for the use of government consultation rather than local councils running a consultation and the final decision on the submissions resting with central government. The value of locally led consultation was illustrated through the Resourcing to Risk consultation for Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service where proposals had been amended following consultation feedback.
- Government were also criticised for not understanding that the majority of the people that the council served were older people, people with special needs or children and not 'working people' as Angela Raynor had recently been quoted.

- Government were further criticised for the timing of local government reorganisation in light of delays to adult social care reform which would see a continual drain on county finances and savings required from non-statutory services. It was, therefore, important that any unitary proposals considered the legacy for the new council so that important universal services could be retained.
- Criticism was also levelled at the government's short timescales for the development of proposals which limited time to gather evidence rather than make assumptions and estimates. Conversely, Members were reminded of the work that was done at pace during the Covid-19 pandemic and urged not to fear the speed at which the work needed to be completed.
- Members were urged to be mindful of the Nolan principles and the importance of being open and transparent with the public about what it was possible to achieve whilst providing reassurance rather than misinformation.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Feeney thanked Members for their comments and the clear sense that it was the future that was under discussion, even if there was not yet agreement about what the future looked like. That agreement would hopefully come through the work of the cross-party working group. She noted discussion about savings, but she wanted to focus on reinvestment into services instead and the money that would go back into services to support the elderly and children whether that was through one unitary council or two.

Councillor Feeney reflected on the history of debate on unitary status in Warwickshire and how its value had long been recognised. She considered that the debate at this meeting had demonstrated the benefits of talking to find ways to accommodate differing viewpoints. She also supported calls for proposals to be backed by evidence and an understanding of the different arguments and how the numbers stacked up.

She also noted the sense of pride in place that had come through in the debate and moving forward it would be important to think about how place was considered and how the public felt and whether they had been listened to.

In conclusion, she considered the White Paper provided opportunities to make improvements for residents through the creation of a new council.

In reply to the debate, Councillor Secombe thanked public speakers and Members for their welcome contributions. She recognised the passionate response to the topic and hoped the Motion would provide a way to deal with what could be realistically achieved through an evidence based approach. The Council had a successful track record of delivering successful services based on evidence.

She asked colleagues to put their passions aside and understand the impact of this work because it was this that would leave a legacy that would affect Warwickshire residents for years to come. She encouraged reading the government's English Devolution White Paper to understand what councillors were being asked to do. The reality was that if services such as adult social care, children's services and SEND services were split they would not be able to achieve the high standards required to manage increasing costs. In particular, the placement of children's services into a Trust, which was a likely outcome of a two unitary model, should be avoided as this would limit control on service delivery.

Councillor Seccombe recognised the fantastic workforce at the Council and believed that the ability to attract the brightest and best employees to help shape the future, was to ensure that the workforce was confident in its elected members to create a sensible and pragmatic solution for the future of Warwickshire.

Councillor Seccombe also expressed her fundamental agreement that the future for a unitary council in Warwickshire lay with the WMCA, which had already delivered enormous value for the economy, for the workforce and the skills within the region. She cited the Investment Zone as an example which had created 9,000 new jobs, investment of £90 million pounds and the potential for businesses to thrive on the back of being an investment zone. She questioned if it was sensible to walk away from that.

In conclusion, Councillor Seccombe recognised that there was a lot of work to do at pace and she wanted to know from government what the next steps were after the submission of an Interim Plan on 21 March 2025 because she recognised that there was no time to waste. She urged colleagues to move forward together to make Warwickshire great.

Vote

A vote was held and the motion was unanimously supported.

Resolved

The Labour Government, through the Devolution White Paper, has directed all two-tier Local Authority areas shall become Unitary Councils by 2028. Consultation will be undertaken by the Secretary of State through their department.

It is crucial that future Unitary Government is not remote from local communities and engagement with them is embedded within future structures.

The County of Warwickshire has a strong heritage and identity which should be preserved and strengthened for future generations.

The Council therefore:

2. Will develop a proposal to Government for unitary local government for Warwickshire which meets the guidance, criteria and time frames set out by Government.
3. Seeks to quickly establish clarity from Government regarding the model to be progressed to enable the best use of time and resource.
4. Commits to engage with Districts, Boroughs, Towns, Parishes and Communities in developing proposals, both existing and future emerging arrangements.
5. Recognises the importance of the boundary and the identity of the County of Warwickshire in any proposals and will work with regional partners.
7. Will continue to strive for the economic prosperity of the area even against adverse national headwinds.
8. Agrees to establish a cross-party working group to support this work.

The meeting ended at 12.54pm

.....
Chair

County Council

18 March 2025

2024 Director of Public Health Annual Report: The Power of People and Place: celebrating and inspiring community-based wellbeing

Recommendation

That Council considers and endorses the 2024 Annual Report of the Director of Public Health and the recommendations within it.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Under section 73B of the National Health Service Act 2006 Directors of Public Health are required to write an annual report on the health and wellbeing of their population, and the local authority is required to publish it. As set out in statutory guidance, the content and structure of the report may be decided locally.
- 1.2 The Director of Public Health Annual Report is a vehicle for informing local people about the health of their community, as well as providing necessary information for decision makers in local health services and authorities on health gaps and priorities that need to be addressed.
- 1.3 This year's Annual Report focuses on the importance of assets (people and the built and natural environment) for community-building, influencing the social fabric of an area and ultimately improving health and wellbeing.
- 1.4 The focus of the report was based on feedback from a Voice of Warwickshire Survey (with 444 people from across Warwickshire) undertaken in June 2024 , which highlighted the value that people place on green spaces, proximity to amenities and their community and neighbours in relation to supporting their wellbeing.
- 1.5 The report provides a series of case studies from across Warwickshire to celebrate some of the fantastic assets and activities in the county. This is intended to be used to start a conversation about the role of people and place in promoting good wellbeing and helping to prevent ill health.
- 1.6 For the first time, this year's Annual Report will be presented as a mixed media video. The process for developing the content for the video has enabled extensive engagement to be undertaken with a wide range of stakeholders at all stages.

- 1.7 The use of a video format is an approach that has been taken by a number of local authorities across England over the last few years and aims to ensure wider dissemination and engagement with communities, groups, and agencies across Warwickshire. The video can either be watched in its entirety or by chapter and the content has been designed to ensure that clear language is used throughout.
- 1.8 A link to the Annual Report video and all accompanying documents were published on Warwickshire County Council's Director of Public Health Annual report website following Health and Wellbeing Board on 15 January 2025. [Director of Public Health annual report 2024 – Warwickshire County Council](#)
- 1.9 A short Executive Summary report (attached as Appendix 1) has been developed to accompany the video. This includes an overview of the health and wellbeing of the Warwickshire population and information on progress with the 2023 recommendations.
- 1.10 References for evidence detailed in the Annual Report are available on the Council's website.
- 1.11 A 'Find out more' document has also been produced and included as an online appendix to the report on the Council's website. This includes further information and reading, enabling people to find out more about the topics covered in the video.
- 1.12 The recommendations in the Annual Report aim to bring partners together to best utilise and celebrate the assets we have in Warwickshire (people and the built and natural environment) with the overall aim to improve the health and wellbeing of the Warwickshire population. The recommendations are included in full in both the Annual Report video and in the Executive Summary (Appendix 1).

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 None arising directly from this report.

3. Environmental Implications

- 3.1 None arising directly from this report, although the availability and use of the natural environment to improve health and wellbeing is a key focus of the Annual Report.

4. Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

- 4.1 The Annual Report was published in a digital format on Warwickshire County Council's website following Health and Wellbeing Board's consideration of this report on the 15 January 2025.
- 4.2 The Executive Summary and Appendices (references and further information) were also published on the Council's website on 15th January 2025.
- 4.3 A detailed communications plan has been prepared to ensure the Annual Report is communicated widely with partners and stakeholders across the Integrated Care System. We have aimed to maximise access to the report by residents of Warwickshire including making printed copies of the Executive Summary and Appendices available upon request for those unable to access the report on the website.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Director of Public Health Annual Report 2024 – Executive Summary

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s): Not applicable – county wide report

Other members: The report was shared with Health and Wellbeing Board prior to publication.

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The Power of People and Place:

**Celebrating and inspiring
community-based
wellbeing**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To accompany the report
available in video format



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Acknowledgements

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Design: Mike Jackson and Eleri Usher.

Data sources: This report utilises the most recently available published information from a variety of data sources as of 14/10/2024.

If you would like help accessing this information, please contact us on **01926 410410**.

Foreword

I am delighted to present the 2024 Director of Public Health (DPH) Annual Report, which focuses on the power of people and place in promoting community wellbeing.

This report is a celebration of our residents and the places in Warwickshire, showcasing some examples of how communities have come together and how our natural and built environment have been utilised to promote and support good health and wellbeing.

The report is shaped by our residents' views on where they live; residents emphasised the importance of open and green spaces, proximity to local amenities and their communities and neighbours. The five case studies featured in the report shine a spotlight on some of the valuable activity occurring across the county on these themes, recognising there are many more! It is clear from this report that the wider determinants of health, termed "building blocks of health", ensure the good health and wellbeing of our residents.

For the first time, Dr Shade Agboola has produced the report as a mixed media video with the aim of making the content accessible and allow the audience to visualise some of the valuable assets we have in Warwickshire. I am grateful to all partners in lending their expertise in creating this product and I especially would like to express my thanks to Shade and her Public Health team.



Warwickshire County Councillor Margeret Bell

Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health

Chair of the Warwickshire Health and Wellbeing Board

Introduction

Health and wellbeing are more than just avoiding illness or having access to healthcare. They include the ability to enjoy activities and generally have the resources needed to feel satisfied in life.

Our surroundings, from where we are born to where we grow, live and age, greatly affect our health and wellbeing. Estimates suggest that only 20% of our health outcomes are due to clinical care. Therefore, to make a positive difference, we need to focus on factors such as our communities, environment, transport, work, and housing as key building blocks of health.

This year's report celebrates the positive efforts in Warwickshire to address these areas. We recognise that these are challenging times for many, but despite the difficulties, there is much to be proud of. We have shared what residents value about their local areas and some examples of good work.

We hope this report inspires, encourages reflection, and sparks conversation on how we can work together to improve health and wellbeing through these building blocks.



Dr Shade Agboola
Warwickshire Director of Public Health



To watch the video and for more information click [HERE](#) or scan the QR code

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Recommendations

The Power of Built and Natural Assets

We value the many and varied assets that we have across Warwickshire and make the best use of the spaces and places that are available to ensure that everyone has access and choice.

R1: I recommend promoting the health and wellbeing benefits of the natural environment to improve community access and use of rural and urban green spaces across Warwickshire.

R2: I recommend that community-based services and amenities actively tackle social isolation, improve social connectivity and enable individuals and groups to take an active part in society.



The Power of Communities

It is more important than ever that we work alongside people and communities and recognise their strength, power and commitment to make positive changes where they live. We recognise and celebrate the contributions that people and communities make to improving health and wellbeing.

R3: I recommend supporting local communities wherever possible in designing and delivering community-powered solutions to prevent ill health and improve wellbeing.



The Power of Relationships

We value the voice and contribution of all communities and partners and recognise that thriving communities and services are built on relationships and trust. We listen to the voices of people living and working in Warwickshire and actively look for ways to engage with everyone. These shared values enable us all to make positive changes that improve health and wellbeing.

R4: I recommend that all partners within the Integrated Care System recognise the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector as both a service provider and a voice of local communities, and support the VCFSE Collaborative's active participation in designing, developing, and delivering local health and wellbeing services.



The Power of Prevention

Health and wellbeing is much more than the absence of illness. We recognise the impact that the social, environmental and economic environment has on creating the conditions for healthy lives. We prioritise preventative action to keep people and communities healthy and help reduce the demand on our local health services.

R7: I recommend that the health and care system in Warwickshire embeds prevention within the local healthcare offer, focusing on preventing illness alongside delivering treatment in line with national findings.

R8: I recommend using collective investment for community-based interventions to be prioritised for those which have shown the highest return on investment.



The Power of Working Together

Great wellbeing comes from looking at all aspects of life. We create and embrace opportunities for partnership working that promotes a holistic view of health and wellbeing to ensure that this is embedded in everything we do.

R5: I recommend that all partners on the three place-based Health and Wellbeing Partnerships accelerate the Health in All Policies approach across their activities and services.

R6: I recommend proactively designing public health improvements into Warwickshire's planning, growth and development using Section 106 agreements or other developer obligations where appropriate, targeting areas and population groups with the greatest inequalities to improve health equity for future generations.



The Power of the Possible

We believe that a healthy community for all is achievable. We support individuals and organisations to recognise their potential and take opportunities to tackle inequalities and make a positive difference.

R9: I recommend promoting and celebrating activities that contribute to positive community-based health and wellbeing across Warwickshire.

R10: I recommend that Warwickshire aims to be a national leader in community-led wellbeing by creating conditions for innovation and community-driven change.



The Power of People and Place: celebrating and inspiring community-based wellbeing

We know that health and wellbeing is influenced by where we are born, grow, age, work and live. We also know that people with good wellbeing have better health outcomes.

Healthcare only accounts for **20%** of our overall health and wellbeing. The remaining **80%** is the result of the building blocks of health such as employment, housing, communities and our health behaviours.

In Warwickshire, **4 in 5 people** report good or very good health. This year's annual report celebrates the many community assets in Warwickshire that contribute to community-based wellbeing and support our physical and mental health.

We hope this report inspires you to enjoy the fantastic resources available in Warwickshire which can help us all lead a healthier life.



What builds a Community? The Voice of Warwickshire!

In May 2024, Warwickshire County Council surveyed **444** members of the Voice of Warwickshire Panel to understand what they value most about their communities. This feedback provided insights into what supports community wellbeing.

Community spirit **Quiet Wildlife Walking** **Local amenities** **Cafes** **Trains** **Countryside** **Parks** **Schools** **Restaurants** **House prices** **Independent businesses** **Footpaths** **Mixed culture** **Rural** **Peaceful** **Walks** **Motorways** **Clean** **Railway** **Green Spaces**

When asked what they like most about where they live, the Panel highlighted the following top three themes:

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46% proximity to open and green spaces

Green Spaces: Warwickshire's green spaces, including parks, woodlands, canals, and allotments, provide opportunities for physical activity, socialisation, and relaxation. They support mental and physical health, helping reduce stress, enhance recovery from illness, and improve overall quality of life. *"I like that there are green spaces near to the house."*

29% proximity to local amenities

Libraries: Libraries in Warwickshire contribute to community wellbeing across all ages, providing activities to benefit those at any stage of life. Moreover, electric mobile libraries ensure access to resources in remote areas, further strengthening community bonds. *"All amenities are local with easy access."*

27% community and neighbours

Community and Neighbours: Belonging to a community positively impacts health and wellbeing because it means people feel listened to, confident, empowered and valued. Communities allow people to come together in the face of common challenges, such as the cost of living or international conflicts. Strong communities require support and investment. *"Sense of community spirit, nice friendly neighbours."*

Grassroots Activity: Grassroots activities are led, driven and often resourced by local residents. They encourage social connections, sharing of skills, and a sense of purpose. In Warwickshire there are a lot of activities happening that help reduce isolation, provide support and improve mental and physical health.

Building Blocks of Health: The broader social and economic factors that influence health and wellbeing include housing, transport, employment, and education. Warwickshire has a number of programmes that address issues like fuel poverty, connectivity, skills development and learning. These all play a crucial role in shaping long-term community wellbeing, beyond healthcare alone.

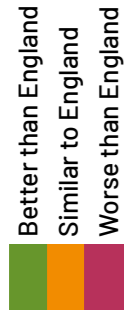
Let's celebrate The Power of...

- ...Place** making the most of our built and natural assets.
- ...Communities** making a difference to people's lives.
- ...Relationships** connecting people and building trust.
- ...Partnership** Working together to build partnerships to achieve common goals.
- ...Prevention** keeping people and communities healthy to help reduce the demand on our local health services.
- ...the Possible** tackling the toughest challenges to drive change.

Shows the current health performance of the Warwickshire county and allows comparisons of performance between the districts and boroughs. The values are coloured to indicate statistical significance compared to England. This is the most recent compiled and published data as of 30/11/2024.

The comparisons to England displayed by the colour coding in the key are determined by the upper and lower limit confidence limits of the data to signify if there is a significant statistical difference.

Key:



Indicator	Unit	England	Warwickshire	North Warwickshire	Nuneaton & Bedworth	Rugby	Stratford-on-Avon	Warwick	Period
Life Expectancy at birth (Male, 3 year range)	Age	78.9	79.4	78.1	77.5	79.4	81.0	80.1	2020 - 22
Life Expectancy at birth (Female, 3 year range)	Age	82.8	83.1	82.2	81.5	83.0	84.7	83.5	2020 - 22
Life Expectancy at 65 (Male, 3 year range)	Age	18.4	18.6	17.4	17.4	18.7	19.6	19.1	2020 - 22
Life Expectancy at 65 (Female, 3 year range)	Age	20.9	21.2	20.3	20.0	21.2	22.1	21.6	2020 - 22
Percentage reporting at least two long-term conditions, at least one of which is Musculoskeletal related	%	13.4	13.6	16.7	16.3	10.0	14.9	11.5	2023
Estimated prevalence of common mental disorders: % of population aged 16 & over	%	16.9	14.8	15.8	17.6	14.4	12.8	13.8	2017
Estimated prevalence of common mental disorders: % of population aged 65 & over	%	10.2	9.2	10.1	11.0	8.8	8.4	8.4	2017
Self reported wellbeing: people with a high anxiety score	%	23.3	21.2	21.1	15.8	20.8	18.0	28.4	2022/23
Self reported wellbeing: people with a low satisfaction score	%	5.6	5.2	*	13.2	2.8	*	3.5	2022/23
Deprivation score (Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019)	Score (Higher = more deprived)	21.7	15.6	17.9	23.5	14.1	11.7	12.0	2019
Children in relative low income families (under 16s)	%	19.8	14.9	18.2	21.1	13.6	11.8	10.9	2022/23
Fuel poverty (low income, low energy efficiency methodology)	%	13.1	16.2	18.1	17.4	15.5	16.5	14.7	2022
Percentage of people in employment	%	75.7	79.2	71.0	81.0	81.2	81.7	77.8	2023/24
Unemployment (Percentage of the working age population claiming out of work benefit)	%	5.0	3.6	3.6	5.1	3.6	2.9	3.0	2021/22
Sickness absence: the percentage of working days lost due to sickness absence	%	1.1	1.1	2.0	0.7	0.8	0.7	1.4	2020 - 22
Average Attainment 8 score	Score	46.2	47.9	43.2	42.9	48.2	51.5	52.2	2022/23
Percentage of physically active adults	%	67.1	67.4	65.8	55.9	64.9	74.8	73.0	2022/23
Percentage of physically inactive adults	%	22.6	21.4	20.0	30.3	25.9	17.2	14.7	2022/23
Air pollution: fine particulate matter (new method - concentrations of total PM2.5)	Mean - µg/m3	7.8	7.4	7.7	7.7	7.5	7.0	7.3	2022
Homelessness: households in temporary accommodation	per 1,000	4.2	0.9	*	2.0	*	0.9	1.0	2022/23
Homelessness: households owed a duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act	per 1,000	12.4	8.0	6.1	14.4	***	8.9	8.3	2022/23
Under 75 mortality rate from causes considered preventable	per 100,000	171.4	151.9	160.3	196.1	154.4	121.7	138.4	2020 - 22
Food Insecurity (INDIRECT measure) - percentage of local authority population living in areas at highest risk of food insecurity	%	**	10.9	14.8	31.5	8.0	1.0	1.8	2021
The percentage of the population with a physical or mental long term health condition in employment (aged 16 to 64)	%	65.3	75.3	80.0	65.8	82.1	85.1	71.7	2022/23
Gap in the employment rate between those with a physical or mental long term health condition (aged 16 to 64) and the overall employment rate	%	10.4	6.5	3.6	12.1	4.3	****	7.4	2022/23

* Value suppressed for disclosure control ** No data *** Value missing in source data **** Value not published for data quality reasons

Source: Office for Health Improvement & Disparities. Public Health Profiles. <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk> © Crown copyright 2024.

Progress on the recommendations from the 2023 Director of Public Health Annual Report: Breaking the silence: Working together to Prevent Domestic Abuse

Recommendation

Progress

Partnership working

R1. I recommend that system partners work together to collectively use the Warwickshire Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy to create a safe and encouraging environment for victim-survivors to report abuse by producing a plan of aligned and jointly prioritised actions collaboratively with the police, health partners and relevant stakeholders.

- The Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Partnership Board continues to have a strong partnership governance structure and set of priorities.
- The Safe Accommodation and VAWG Strategic Delivery Group, which is a sub-group of the VAWG Partnership Board, oversees the VAWG Strategy Delivery Plan, a jointly developed plan with clear actions and priority areas. Work to date has included setting up a victim-survivor engagement forum.
- The VAWG Communications sub-group, which is made up of a range of stakeholders, oversees the delivery of a VAWG communications plan, aimed at improving access to services and police reporting.
- The Safe Accommodation and VAWG Strategic Delivery Group has also worked collaboratively to improve the local response to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. During 2024, the group has worked in partnership to develop the Safer Warwickshire Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy 2025-2028, and accompanying Delivery Plan. This partnership strategy has been informed by a range of multi-agency engagement activities including consultation with victim-survivors of domestic abuse in Warwickshire and sets out five key objectives:
 1. Early intervention and prevention,
 2. Accessible services,
 3. Appropriate safe accommodation,
 4. Multi-agency delivery and
 5. Support to return home or move on.

Recommendation

Progress

Supporting child victims of violence and abuse

R2. Aligned with the Warwickshire VAWG strategy, I recommend dedicated resource and support is allocated to child victims to mitigate effects of violence and abuse across their life course and attempt to break cycles of abuse.

- Warwickshire County Council (WCC) has commissioned Refuge to deliver a dedicated children and young person's service to support child victims of domestic abuse. The service can support children and young people aged 4-17 and includes Children's Independent Domestic Abuse Advisors and Children's Refuge Support Workers.
- WCC also commissions Listening Ear to provide specialist domestic abuse counselling and therapy to adult and child victims of domestic abuse.
- The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) Warwickshire have used Ministry of Justice funding to fund a Children's Independent Domestic Abuse Advisor employed by Victim Support.
- The OPCC Warwickshire also commissions a Sexual Violence and Abuse Support Service, delivered by Safeline, which provides outreach and counselling to support child victims of sexual violence and abuse.
- The OPCC Warwickshire also co-commissions with NHS-England to provide a Children and Young People's Sexual Assault and Referral Centre and related crisis work.

Recommendation

Progress

Linking VAWG work with Coventry and Warwickshire (C&W) Suicide Prevention Strategy

R3. To support the delivery of the Coventry and Warwickshire Suicide Prevention Strategy, I recommend that workers in frontline services are equipped with the appropriate skills and tools to support people in crisis. This should include access to training to increase suicide awareness, to develop confidence to talk about mental health and suicidality and to improve knowledge of referral pathways.

The C&W Suicide Prevention Partnership identified suicide prevention training as a key priority to support delivery of the C&W Suicide Prevention Strategy 2023-2030. A suicide prevention training programme (funded by WCC and the Integrated Care Board) is being delivered across Coventry and Warwickshire which is contributing to the five key local priorities in the strategy:

- Target our approach for those groups and communities at a higher risk of suicide.
- Increase awareness to help change public attitudes about suicide.
- Promote suicide prevention as a priority within the wider health and wellbeing activity of system partners (public, private, Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise sectors).
- Share learning and data to ensure that prevention activity is targeted in response to locally identified priorities.
- Facilitate coproduction, collaboration and coordination to maximise the impact of suicide prevention activity across Coventry and Warwickshire.

Recommendation

Progress

Education

R4. I recommend WCC Education Services promote the opportunity for schools to participate in any training that has been commissioned by Warwickshire County Council relating to VAWG, or domestic abuse.

- The Warwickshire Heads Forum and Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) Network meetings have focused topics, which have included International Women's Day, Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls.
- Input from Refuge and Loudmouth Theatre
- The Domestic Abuse workplace policy guidance is now hosted on the WCC safeguarding website.
- A digital bulletin which is emailed to all Warwickshire settings features ongoing updates including from the multi-agency risk assessment conference, Operation Encompass, Refuge and wider specialist support. The bulletin also promotes Safeline and Loudmouth Theatre both of which offer services to schools to support with VAWG and Domestic Abuse. It also signposts to meetings of the Sex, Relationships Education Network hosted by Connect for Health.
- Violence against Women and Girls and Domestic Abuse is now included in DSL training and DSL updates to schools/colleges, alternative providers and early years. Where appropriate, learning has been shared from Domestic Homicide Reviews, and the importance of training has been emphasised.
- Specific training sessions around Domestic Abuse have been provided for education professionals. In 2022/23, 67 settings received training, followed by 68 settings in 2023/24. Feedback on the training is extremely positive.
- Brook Training on managing harmful sexual behaviours has been delivered to 70 professionals from across Warwickshire this year. There are plans to continue to offer this free training in the academic year 24/25.
- Where the Education Safeguarding Team carry out site-specific safeguarding audits, settings are encouraged to use signage to promote awareness of domestic abuse for staff and parents/carers.

Recommendation

Progress

Local health partnerships

R5. Local Maternity and Neonatal System (LMNS) to endorse and support work at a strategic level to increase referral rates into Refuge from Maternity Services where existing levels are lower than expected.

- In the period January to June 2024, Coventry and Warwickshire Local Maternity and Neonatal System (CWLMS) used their Complex Needs Pregnancy sub-group to complete a system wide deep dive into how our maternity system supports pregnant women experiencing, or at risk of Domestic Abuse.
- This multi-agency group took part in a collaborative session to understand both existing good practice and potential barriers to supporting pregnant women. This resulted in the development of a survey for midwives to understand Domestic Abuse specific training needs and a matrix document to compare differences and similarities in Domestic Abuse pathways across our three maternity trusts.
- The work undertaken was shared in a report for CWLMS Board in November 2024 with recommendations around actions to improve the equity of offer across the health and care system for pregnant women and ensure Domestic Abuse remains a strategic priority for all CWLMS partners.

Glossary of terms

Annual Population Survey (APS)

A survey in the UK, conducted by the Office for National Statistics, that gathers information from households to provide detailed data on social and job-related topics. It combines data from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and other sources, collecting information from around 122,000 households and 320,000 people each year.

Building blocks of health

The social, economic, and environmental factors that affect people’s health and wellbeing. Also known as Wider Determinants of Health.

Built environment

The human-made surroundings where people live, work, and engage in various activities. It includes buildings, roads, bridges, parks, and other infrastructure.

Community Powered Warwickshire

Warwickshire has adopted a community-powered approach by involving communities in decision making, working alongside communities to take practical action, and enabling communities to lead.

Demand-responsive transport (DRT)

A flexible service that provides shared transport (usually a bus) to users who specify their desired location and time of pick-up and drop-off and alters its routes accordingly.

Dialogue tool

An online platform where Warwickshire residents can share their ideas and feedback on community issues. It helps the Council gather input to improve services based on what people say. [Be part of the Warwickshire conversation – Warwickshire County Council](#)

Director of Public Health (DPH)

The DPH is the system leader for improving the health and wellbeing of residents, reducing inequalities in health outcomes and protecting local communities from public health hazards (infectious diseases and environmental threats). The DPH is a statutory chief officer of the local authority and the principal adviser on all health matters to elected members, officers and partners, with a leadership role spanning health improvement, health protection and healthcare public health.

Grassroots activity

Action by residents to make change in their local community.

Health in All Policies (HiAP)

An approach where health is considered in all areas of policymaking to improve the health of everyone. This means thinking about health impacts when making decisions in different sectors like transportation, housing, and education.

Health inequalities

Health inequalities are unfair and avoidable differences in health across the population, and between different groups within society. These include how long people are likely to live, the health conditions they may experience and the care that is available to them.

Integrated Care Board (ICB)

A statutory NHS organisation responsible for planning and commissioning health services for a specific geographical area. ICBs manage the NHS budget and develop strategies to meet the health needs of the local population. Locally the ICB covers Coventry and Warwickshire.

Integrated Care System (ICS)

These are partnerships that bring together NHS organisations, local authorities, and other partners to plan and deliver health and care services. The goal is to improve health outcomes, reduce inequalities, and provide more coordinated care. Locally, the ICS covers Coventry and Warwickshire.

Place-based Health and Wellbeing Partnerships

Partnerships made up of key stakeholders working together to improve local health and wellbeing outcomes for each 'Place' (in Warwickshire this is North, Rugby and South). They were established in 2020 to support the delivery of Warwickshire's Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Given their roots in local areas, the Place-based Partnerships have a key role in leading and delivering on work aligned to wider determinants of health and place and communities.

Section 106

Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 allows local planning authorities to enter into a legally-binding agreement or planning obligation with a landowner as part of the granting of planning permission. These agreements are a way of delivering or addressing matters that are necessary to make a development acceptable in planning terms. They can be used to support the provision of services and infrastructure, such as highways, recreational facilities, education, health and affordable housing.

Voice of Warwickshire Panel

A panel that gives people who live in Warwickshire an opportunity to share their views on a variety of subjects. Results from surveys completed by panel members are given directly to decision makers within Warwickshire County Council, to assist them when making plans and decisions.

Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) Sector

The collective term for the many non-profit organisations and groups that exist to serve the communities they are rooted in.

Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) Sector Collaborative

The mechanism for connecting the local VCFSE sector with the Coventry and Warwickshire Integrated Care System to work together to improve health and wellbeing.



This year's report has been shaped by your feedback on what is most valued by the Warwickshire community. We value your voice and are committed to providing a space where you can share your ideas on how to make Warwickshire a community-led driver for health as part of the Power of the Possible. After watching the report, we invite you to join the conversation. We couldn't capture everyone's perspective, so if you feel your voice wasn't reflected, please share your thoughts using the Dialogue tool. We encourage you to tell us about the positive activities happening in your communities and neighbourhoods and what you would like to see going forward for a healthier Warwickshire.

The Dialogue tool is a monitored discussion forum. It is a space where you can leave an idea and interact with others by commenting and reacting. We are using this space to discuss the following topics:

What do you value about where you live?

What activities are happening in your local area?

What are you involved in that improves your health and wellbeing?

What have you taken from our video and would like to pledge to improve or focus on within your area?

What would you and your community need to strengthen your local connections and improve your health and wellbeing?

Be part of the Warwickshire Conversation by signing up and finding out more [here](#).

The Dialogue tool will be open for 2 months from Jan to March 2025. We want everyone to feel welcome, heard, and respected. Please post comments in line with our [moderation policy](#). We will monitor the page and remove any responses that do not adhere to these guidelines. For more information about the Dialogue tool, privacy policy and terms of use please visit: [About the Dialogue – Warwickshire County Council](#).



Warwickshire County Council, Public Health

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