

County Council

Tuesday 15 March 2022

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

Councillor John Horner (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 Jenny Fradgley, Councillor Sarah Feeney, Councillor Bill Gifford, Councillor Brian Hammersley, Councillor John Holland, Councillor Dave Humphreys, Councillor Marian Humphreys, Councillor Andy Jenns, Councillor Kam Kaur, Councillor Jack Kennaugh, Councillor Justin Kerridge, Councillor Christopher Kettle, Councillor Sue Markham, Councillor Jan Matecki, Councillor Sarah Millar, Councillor Penny-Anne O'Donnell, Councillor Bhagwant Singh Pandher, Councillor Caroline Phillips, Councillor Wallace Redford, Councillor Kate Rolfe, Councillor Jerry Roodhouse, Councillor Isobel Seccombe OBE, 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 and Councillor Andrew Wright

Others Present

1. General

(1) Apologies for Absence

Councillors Pete Gilbert, Claire Golby, Chris Mills, Jeff Morgan, Daren Pemberton, Will Roberts, and Martin Watson

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

Councillor Judy Falp declared a personal interest relating to the properties concerned at minute number 2 – Children's Services Residential Proposals.

(3) Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on 8 February 2022 were agreed as an accurate record for signing by the Chair subject to noting the presence of Councillor Drew.

(4) Chair's announcements

1) National Child Exploitation Awareness Day

Councillor John Horner (Vice-Chair of the Council) made the following statement:

“This week is Child Exploitation Awareness Week in Warwickshire to support the National Child Exploitation Awareness Day on Friday, 18th March 2022. Child exploitation is when an abuser takes advantage of a young person under the age of 18 for their own personal gain. This can take many forms, including sexual exploitation or encouraging or coercing the child to commit crime. It often comes with the promise of something they desire as a reward and without knowing they are being exploited.

The awareness week aims to highlight the issues surrounding child exploitation; encouraging everyone to think, spot and speak out against abuse and adopt a zero tolerance to adults developing inappropriate relationships with children or children exploiting and abusing their peers.

Representatives of the Council’s CE Team are present in the antechamber today and I would encourage all Members and visitors to visit the team before you leave today to make a pledge to educate ourselves more about child exploitation and how to spot the signs.”

2) Death of Former County Councillor Helen McCarthy.

Councillor John Horner (Vice-Chair of the Council) made the following statement:

“It is my sad duty to inform Council of the recent passing of former County Councillor Helen McCarthy.

Helen, a Conservative Councillor, served the Studley Division for 8 years from 2001 to 2009. In that time, she sat on the Children, Young People and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Stratford Area Committee.

Our condolences go to Helen’s family.”

Councillor Isobel Seccombe spoke in memory of Helen McCarthy noting that she was elected at the same time and served two terms of office. She reflected on Helen McCarthy’s background in education and how that had helped make a difference to the work of the Council, and Helen McCarthy’s love for Studley, the division that she had represented.

Councillor John Horner also paid tribute to Helen McCarthy, fondly reflecting on memories of working with her at the Parish Council.

3) Royal British Legion

Councillor John Horner (Vice-Chair of the Council) informed the Council of a recent fundraising event he had attended arranged by the Mayor and Mayoress of Shipston-on-Stour to raise funds for the Royal British Legion through the sale of ‘cooking for heroes’ cookbooks. He welcomed enquiries from members on how to purchase a copy.

(5) Petitions

1) 20mph speed limit zone in the central area of Shipston

The Chair welcomed representatives of the Shipston 20mph Campaign Group to the meeting to present a petition against seeking speed control in Shipston-on-Stour.

Jacey Jackson, Shipston Speedwatch Co-ordinator, stated that the increase in traffic speed, volume and weight on the A3400 had increased since she moved into the village in 2013 and that she had been volunteering with Speedwatch to monitor speeds on the main roads in and out of Shipston since 2017. The group had provided details of 1718 speeding incidents to police and in 2018, a survey had found 80% of vehicles were exceeding the speed limit. As the country emerged from the pandemic, residents along the main roads were finding the speeds unbearable and the petition was launched as a result. 1080 signatures were collected and those choosing not to sign were generally supportive but sceptical of enforcement capability. She urged the introduction of a 20mph zone to begin a change in driver psychology to improve the lives of residents and sought discussions with highways engineers to seek to address the local issues.

Town Councillor John Dinnie explained that residents wanted a 20mph area covering the bulk of the town and other measures on the approaches to slow traffic. He noted that the Town Council had opened discussions with the County Council's road safety team and would be hosting a site visit in May 2022 when advice would be sought on speed control measures. He welcomed sensible discussions around the key danger zones in the town and considered that enforcement was a separate issue for the police.

Councillor Wallace Redford (Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning) thanked Ms Jackson and Mr Dinnie for the petition adding that he would consider it and provide a response.

2) Safe Cycling Network to the proposed new Kenilworth School

The Chair welcomed George Bell and Isodora McAinish to the meeting to present a petition supporting a safe cycling routes in Kenilworth.

Isadora McAinish stated that the Pedal to Protect campaign had been set up in response to her own and George Bell's desire to cycle more and that other young people were put off from doing so due to the dangers involved. She noted that the route to the new school could take one hour or more to walk and that there were no safe cycle routes, despite there being provision for 544 bike racks with the potential for 240 additional ones. She asked the Council to consider introducing segregated off road cycle paths together with pedestrian and cyclist friendly measures to support a change in home to school travel habits.

George Bell stated his view that Kenilworth was being left behind in the development of cycle routes, with the narrow roads often being cited as a barrier. He considered that there were simple measures that could be introduced around changing priorities at junctions, reducing speed limits and traffic calming measures and the creation of off-road cycle paths. He understood that funding was available for such projects. He also reflected on the #JustOneJourney project which sought to help tackle climate change by encouraging young people to walk or cycle for one journey more. Recognising that the new school would open in

18 months' time, he urged the Council to take action.

Councillor Wallace Redford (Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning) welcomed Isadora McAinish and George Bell for their involvement in local issues at a young age and thanked them for the petition. He added that the Council was keen to work closely on more detailed plans and that officers would be pleased to meet with them to discuss the issues and improvements that could be made.

(6) Public Speaking

None.

2. Children's Services Residential Proposals

Councillor Isobel Secombe introduced the report and moved the recommendation. In doing so she stated that the paper set out the funding requirements to deliver phase two of the Internal Children's Homes Project. She noted that the project was a diversion from previous policy and that the first registered residential children's home in the project was shortly due to open. Expansion into other areas of the county was being sought.

Councillor Marian Humphreys seconded the recommendation. In doing so, Councillor Humphreys emphasised the importance of providing specialised units for the children who needed them to support their learning of life skills.

Debate

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse welcomed the quality of provision that this report provided for and applauded the process that had been undertaken with local members in the implementation of the first phase. He considered that this different offer in the market was good for the sector since it would provide a beacon of good practice.

Councillor Kate Rolfe welcomed the local engagement that had taken place during the development of the first children's home and hoped that this would be replicated in the proposed new locations.

Councillor Tracey Drew asked how this project fitted with the Council's commitment to fund fostering and adoption services including the recruitment of foster carers and adopters and how the risk of homes expanding in size could be mitigated against.

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers echoed the sentiments of Councillor Rolfe, applauding the team for their exemplary engagement work.

Councillor Jeff Clarke considered that this report represented a positive step to bring children being cared for out of the area care back into the county where they could remain close to their families. The savings that this would generate would mean the Council could support more people in future.

Councillor Sarah Feeney welcomed the report, considering that it was critical to provide looked after children with the care they needed in the areas they came from and lived in. It also had a

positive impact in terms of travel reduction and the proposed small units were beneficial due to their resemblance to a family home.

Councillor Barbara Brown endorsed previous comments in the context of developing looked after children in the county and the challenge to the private sector. She considered that there were more areas in the county where provision needed to be considered in future.

Councillor Kennaugh welcomed the proposals and also sought an expansion of the project into more areas in the county.

By way of reply, Councillor Seccombe advise that the project fitted alongside fostering and adoption within Warwickshire. She considered that the cost and demand of caring for looked after children was outpacing the Council's ability to help and support children and that this project provided for choice in the system where different models were needed. The project ensured that children were not taken too far away from their network of support and she recognised the appropriateness of maintaining small family sized units and stated that there was no intention for them to expand in size. Councillor Seccombe applauded the engagement work the team were undertaking with councillors and local communities and welcomed a continuation of this work.

Vote

A vote was held. Councillor Judy Falp abstained from the vote in accordance with her prior declaration. Of those voting, the recommendation was agreed unanimously.

Resolved

That Council approves the allocation of £2.054 million funding from the Capital Investment Fund (CIF) to deliver phase two of the Internal Children's Homes Project and approves the addition of the project to the Capital Programme at a full cost of £2.054 million.

3. Appointment of Representatives to the Local Pension Board

Councillor Andy Jenns introduced the report and moved the recommendation.

Councillor Jill Simpson-Vince seconded the recommendation.

Councillor Sarah Millar noted the current makeup of the Board and noted the lack of gender diversity in the membership.

Councillor Bill Gifford commended the proposed appointments.

Councillor Andy Jenns noted the point about gender diversity and that this could be a consideration in future but on balance he considered that the recommendations were the most sensible option for the time being.

Vote

A vote was held. The recommendations were agreed unanimously.

Resolved:

That Council

1. Approves the appointment of Mr Mike Snow as a Scheme Member representative on the Local Pension Board.
2. Approves the appointment of Mr Jeff Carruthers as an Employer representative on the Local Pension Board.

4. Notices of Motion

Paper free meetings

Councillor Piers Daniell proposed the following motion as set out on the agenda:

This Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019. Despite this we have continued to print and post out large agenda packs to support Council meetings and committees. The Council has now completed the digital update for members with the use of Surface Pros.

Therefore this Council welcomes the positive impacts for the climate and resources, provided by this motion and;

1. agrees to operate all public meetings and task and finish group meetings without printed papers, instead distributing them to Members and relevant Officers by electronic digital means
2. will work towards operating all functions, involving all members of staff and associated contractors, without the need for or with minimised use of printed papers
3. will offer appropriate training to Members and Officers to enable them to use electronic digital alternatives to printed papers effectively
4. recognises that exceptions and reasonable adjustments for those who require them will need to be made (for example as a result of legal or regulatory requirements or due to the document size and/or images or content concerned).

In moving the motion, Cllr Daniell stated that, upon election in May 2021, he had been impressed with the high level of technical abilities the council possessed. He noted the high volume of paper the council used for council, committee and board meetings through external printers for non-exempt paperwork and internal staff for exempt papers. He noted that the cost of printing over the previous financial year had been circa £16,000 but that this could increase to pre-pandemic levels and he considered that the time had arrived when printing and posting papers was an exception rather than a rule. He considered it was counter to the declaration of the climate emergency if policies that were resource hungry and wasteful were not reconsidered. He explained that the motion made provision for those who needed papers to continue to receive them upon request. In time, Councillor Daniell hoped that modernisation of the chamber would further allow for a reduction in paper.

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

Amendment 1

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers proposed an amendment to add a point 5 stating “recognises that IT equipment also has a significant carbon and resource footprint particularly in the manufacturing process and requests that a paper be brought to Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee detailing these impacts and how they could be minimised.”

In moving the amendment, Councillor Chilvers advised that the addition sought to provide context in terms of carbon emissions. He advised that the paper used by the organisation equated to about 26 tonnes of carbon emissions per year. In terms of laptop and device manufacture (not including usage) for the whole organisation, this equated to 1784 tonnes of carbon emissions over four years. This meant that even when factoring in the life of the device, the manufacture of electronics was about 20 times more carbon intensive than paper use and, therefore, if the life of the Council's IT could be extended by 5% this was equal to the elimination of paper in the organisation. 1 million tonnes of carbon dioxide were emitted on Warwickshire's roads per year. If journeys could be reduced by 1% that would equate to 10,000 tonnes of carbon emissions compared to the 26 tonnes produced through the organisation's paper use.

This was seconded by Councillor Tracey Drew who reserved her right to speak.

Councillor Daniell did not accept the amendment, stating that the proposed amendment covered a big topic which warranted a debate of its own. He noted that the Council had already invested in technology and transport was not the intended subject of the motion. His intention was to send a message that the Council was seeking to be as efficient as possible.

Amendment 2

Councillor John Holland tabled an amendment that deleted points 1 and 2 of the original motion and replaced them with “that the presumption is that councillors will opt in to receiving printed versions of papers rather than opting out as is currently the position.” He considered that this was the original aim of the motion and recognised that making reasonable adjustments was not enough, since this could lead to disagreements between staff and councillors, and failed to recognise that there were legislative requirements around the use of display screens.

Councillor Caroline Phillips seconded the amendment.

The amendment was circulated by email.

Debate

As a point of order, Councillor Adrian Warwick sought to clarify that legal advice been sought on the motion and he did not consider that there was any issue with regard to its legality.

Councillor Sarah Boad noted that paper use had reduced significantly since her election when there was no email or internet. She considered that it had been difficult to engage in virtual meetings during the pandemic without a second device. She also considered that there were other practices that had a greater impact on the carbon footprint of the council, for instance car

journeys to Shire Hall and single-use plastics. She noted that Royal Leamington Spa Town Council had not issued paper packs for over two years so this was not an unusual practice to introduce, but that complex documents such as the budget paperwork should still be provided in hard copy. In considering the amendment, she considered the point was valid in terms of lengthening device life and that it was key to use devices sensibly rather than recycle and reuse them. However, she considered that the proposed amendment from the Green group needed a separate debate. She suggested that printing contracts and devices would also require some reconsideration if the motion was agreed.

Councillor Jenny Fradgley supported the principle of the motion, noting that Stratford-on-Avon District Council had a similar approach. However, she noted that there were some issues with paperless meetings for those with disabilities that needed consideration. She welcomed the offer of more training and the bundling of documents delivered electronically in a clear and transparent way.

Councillor Peter Butlin considered that the Council's carbon footprint was only a minor part of the motion and he welcomed the financial savings that could be made. He noted that use of electronic devices did not come easily to all and that support, along with a personal desire, to use them was required. He also considered that the amendment from the Green group was a separate debate and that the simplicity of the original motion was a strength as its primary focus was on efficiency and saving money. He welcomed the motion's recognition that people with disabilities would be accounted for and did not consider that the Labour group amendment was required as a result.

Councillor Tim Sinclair supported the motion and welcomed the changes that it would deliver. He also concluded that the Green group amendment was a topic that required separate debate.

Councillor Tracey Drew expressed the view that it was important to look at the motion in context and the wider carbon footprint of meetings, not focussing on elements of the process in isolation.

Councillor Caroline Phillips considered that the original motion was contradictory and considered that proper provision needed to be made for those individuals who needed to continue to use paper copies. She did, however, welcome further training on electronic devices.

Councillor Adrian Warwick emphasised that the motion did not attempt to remove paper from those who needed it and he recognised that there would always be exceptions to the rules. However, he considered that computers were a part of life, but paper was becoming less so. He referenced the Council's successful community computer scheme which saw products recycled and reused in the community. Whilst he recognised that the move to paperless meetings did not have a big environmental impact, small actions added to the bigger picture. He also considered that the motion would have an impact on saving officer time as well as money spent on resources.

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers supported the opt in system proposed. In response to Council Boad, he advised that the carbon dioxide emissions from the use of a small car was equivalent to 61 sheets of paper. In terms of the climate emergency, the motion provided for a very small impact so he considered that there was a wider context, as he had set out in the amendment, and he looked forward to future debate on the topic.

Councillor John Holland considered that the chamber was in favour of reducing paper use and avoiding unnecessary expenditure. However, he considered the point in the original motion about

reasonable adjustments required more clarity to avoid disputes in the courts, and a presumption from opting out to opting in would solve the problem.

Councillor Piers Daniell considered that the motion had both financial and environmental benefits and set the right tone. He considered that the challenges of the Green group amendment had been adequately addressed in the debate and considered that the wording for the making of reasonable adjustments was suitable. Furthermore, he considered that it was clear that the Council was moving towards a paperless way of working and this reflected the approach of town, district and borough councils.

Vote

A vote was held on the Green group amendment which was lost. A vote was held on the Labour group amendment which was also lost. A vote was held on the original motion was carried by a majority.

Resolved

This Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019. Despite this we have continued to print and post out large agenda packs to support Council meetings and committees. The Council has now completed the digital update for members with the use of Surface Pros.

Therefore this Council welcomes the positive impacts for the climate and resources, provided by this motion and;

1. agrees to operate all public meetings and task and finish group meetings without printed papers, instead distributing them to Members and relevant Officers by electronic digital means
2. will work towards operating all functions, involving all members of staff and associated contractors, without the need for or with minimised use of printed papers
3. will offer appropriate training to Members and Officers to enable them to use electronic digital alternatives to printed papers effectively
4. recognises that exceptions and reasonable adjustments for those who require them will need to be made (for example as a result of legal or regulatory requirements or due to the document size and/or images or content concerned).

Integrated Care Services

Councillor John Holland moved the following motion, which was seconded by Councillor Caroline Phillips:

This Council supports the establishment of Integrated Care Systems and identifies the patient route from hospital to home as one of the priorities for Warwickshire. This Council commits to exploring closer links between the services commissioned and delivered by the NHS and the Council and lobbying the Government for suitable funding for Councils in regard to such services.

Amendment

Councillor Margaret Bell proposed a friendly amendment which was seconded by Councillor Andy Jenns. The amendment stated:

This Council supports the establishment of Integrated Care Systems and identifies the patient route from hospital to home as one of the priorities for Warwickshire. This Council commits to exploring closer links between the services commissioned and delivered by the NHS and the Council and lobbying the Government for suitable funding for Councils in regard to such services; and the continued review of the funding required for Councils in regard to such services; lobbying the government as necessary.

Councillor Margaret Bell highlighted the motion as considering an important development facing all bodies looking at health and adult social care, with the direction being one of integration of the pathways between the organisation. The integration of systems provided a focus on health inequalities and improving outcomes for residents. It was important to keep stays in acute hospitals as short as possible, but with the smooth extension of care to the community and to the home. There was some way to go to make the pathway as smooth as possible. There were many challenges, including data sharing, which were being addressed in the background. Funding was not yet topping the agenda, but in the future some reassessment of the configuration of funding would be required.

Councillor Andy Jenns seconded the amendment and reserved his right to speak.

The amendment was accepted as friendly by Councillor Holland as a friendly amendment.

Debate

Councillor Sarah Feeney expressed the view that she did not think the community understood what was happening and what it meant for them. She highlighted what she considered to be a major gap between the NHS and care, and hoped that the integration of care services would bring about better outcomes for the elderly and disabled. She considered that it was important that health services were joined up and delivering outcomes for residents.

Councillor Boad highlighted the Hospital to Home Service which was successfully provided by Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service and she hoped that this work would continue to find support.

Councillor Caroline Phillips noted that data sharing was seen as a stumbling block and expressed her hope that such challenges could be swiftly overcome so that outcomes for residents could be improved.

Councillor John Holland expressed the view that health and care services disproportionately supported elderly residents who required support. He considered that the joining up of services would not be easy but it was a prize worth working for. He considered that there had been a change in committees towards delivering services in the way residents wanted to receive them and he understood that there were significant costs involved and that the case for funding was being raised through the Local Government Association and elsewhere.

Vote

A vote was held on the new substantive motion that incorporated the friendly amendment and Council agreed the motion unanimously.

Resolved

This Council supports the establishment of Integrated Care Systems and identifies the patient route from hospital to home as one of the priorities for Warwickshire. This Council commits to exploring closer links between the services commissioned and delivered by the NHS and the Council and the continued review of the funding required for Councils in regard to such services; lobbying the government as necessary.

Support for Ukraine

The following motion as set out on the agenda was proposed by Councillor Isobel Seccombe:

Warwickshire County Council is disturbed by the horrific devastation in Ukraine, and the escalating humanitarian crisis facing 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;

- a. Condemns the unprovoked Russian invasion of Ukraine and stands in solidarity with the people of Ukraine and their families and friends, including those local to Warwickshire.
- b. Stands ready to provide support to those affected by this War and will open our arms to people displaced and affected.
- c. Will work with and support the efforts of our local communities to provide help and comfort to those in need.

In proposing the motion, Councillor Seccombe stated that world events had moved apace over the previous three weeks, and she felt that no-one in the chamber would fail to be moved by the plight of the people of Ukraine, who were previously living very similar lives to those of the people in the United Kingdom. She was moved by the photographs, videos and stories that were coming from the war zone, expressed her horror that 80 years of peace in Europe was at an end and she supported the continuation of peace talks. She considered that the motion expressed the Council's feelings of support, empathy and consideration for the Ukraine and she was in no doubt that chambers all over the country were doing the same. She expressed the view that bullies and dictators thrived when people did not stand up to them and silence would condone and support the behaviour. She stated that the motion supported democratic freedom, a process which Ukraine had possessed since 1991 when the Soviet Union had ended. The Council was looking forward to what it could do to support the people fleeing Ukraine, largely women and children, and recognised that Warwickshire residents wanted to support them.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse seconded the motion and reserved his right to speak.

Amendment

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers proposed an amendment which sought the addition of the word “government” to point ‘a’ of the motion, so that it read: “a) condemns the unprovoked Russian government’s invasion of Ukraine and stands in solidarity with the people of Ukraine and their families and friends, including those local to Warwickshire.”

In proposing the amendment, Councillor Chilvers stated that the people of Ukraine were facing the invasion and destruction of their own homes and towns in an unimaginable way. He believed that the chamber stood in solidarity with the people of Ukraine, and were ready to support and welcome Ukrainian refugees who arrived in Warwickshire. He was disappointed to bring the amendment, having suggested various versions to try and get agreement, before needing to submit a formal amendment to indicate that not all Russians were in support of the Russian government’s actions. He did not consider that the situation would get any easier and that everyday Russians in the county might face hostility and abuse. He, therefore, sought the amendment as an important nuance that the Russian government was not the same as all Russians. He did not believe that this amendment detracted from the overall thrust of the motion that the Council stood with Ukrainians at this horrific time.

This was seconded by Councillor Tracey Drew who reserved her right to speak.

Councillor Seccombe did not accept the amendment, stating that the focus of the motion was support for the people of Ukraine.

Debate

Councillor Bill Gifford expressed his disappointment that there had been any amendment to the motion and he considered that the original motion had been carefully thought through to show support for the people of Ukraine. The amendment made little difference to the context of the motion but the fact that an amendment was being debated was lamented as he had hoped for a single motion with cross-party support. He applauded the efforts of people in Warwickshire who were sending donations and aid to the Ukraine and noted that he had received many emails from residents asking how they could provide support and what support the Council was providing. He welcomed the commitment from the Council to support communities to help the people of Ukraine.

Councillor John Holland reflected on the attack on the Ukraine and how it was important to stand together and do whatever was possible to provide support. He noted that refugees, mainly women and children, would be arriving in the county, not just in shock at their loss, but also filled with worry for family and friends. He welcomed the motion which demonstrated Warwickshire was ready to welcome them.

Councillor Jan Matecki noted that his own family had benefited from the generosity of the United Kingdom when they had been displaced during the second world war. The motion was about showing compassion and support to the people of Ukraine and he urged that the motion be supported unamended.

Councillor Tracey Drew stated that the Green group supported the motion but wanted to acknowledge that there were two countries involved and it was the government of one, rather than its people who were creating the conflict.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse reflected on conflicts in Chechnya, Aleppo in Syria, and now Ukraine which had seen images of death and destruction and the indiscriminate use of weapons and the prospect of nuclear war. He considered that the unamended motion allowed the chamber to unite and speak as one voice. He was saddened by the amendment as he felt the sentiment could have been reflected in a speech. He wished to register his disappointment at the way the Home Office had been dealing with refugees and hoped that a message could be shared with MPs. He noted that the Council would be asked to take responsibility for refugees entering the county but that the funding support would be unlikely to match the responsibility but that the motion acknowledged that the Council was ready to support them nonetheless. He reflected on a conversation he had had with his mother about war and her experiences of war, and it was clear to him that standing together, demonstrating compassion and love, would be a force to beat evil and that was how to support Ukraine at this point. He urged the chamber to stand as one behind the motion.

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers did add to the debate further.

Councillor Isobel Seccombe stated that Warwickshire was a friend to Ukraine, that the Ukrainian people would find warmth and support here, and that the Council would do its utmost to help, and would do it despite the challenges it would create. In the wider sense, this was a stand in support of democracy, and that the loss of democratic freedom for the people of Ukraine would not be tolerated

Vote

A vote was held on the Green group amendment which was lost. A vote was held on the original motion which was agreed unanimously.

Resolved

Warwickshire County Council is disturbed by the horrific devastation in Ukraine, and the escalating humanitarian crisis facing 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;

- a. Condemns the unprovoked Russian invasion of Ukraine and stands in solidarity with the people of Ukraine and their families and friends, including those local to Warwickshire.
- b. Stands ready to provide support to those affected by this War and will open our arms to people displaced and affected.
- c. Will work with and support the efforts of our local communities to provide help and comfort to those in need.

5. Member Question Time (Standing Order 7)

(1) Question to Councillor Redford from Councillor Bill Gifford

“Councillor Redford at the Council Meeting in February you reflected on the frustration caused by road closures and provided reassurance that active discussions were taking place with utility companies to improve their performance in this regard.

How many meetings have there been with the utility companies since the Council Meeting and what has been agreed with the utility companies?”

In response Councillor Redford advised that the network management team was in regular contact with utility companies and he provided a flavour of the work that had been carried out:

- Network Rail - Four meetings and approximately 20 phone calls with Network Rail directly as well as 183 emails in particular relating to the Princess Drive and Rugby Road works. This had resulted in Network Rail recognising their lack of early engagement with residents and prompted them to issue letters to affected residents and businesses. They had since promised to do better on this in future.
- Severn Trent Water - Monthly strategic performance meetings were held with Severn Trent Water managers alongside individual scheme meetings. There were currently two major schemes operational (at least two meetings per scheme) and over 20 emails. Severn Trent Water had also been given notice on serious failures under the Caution of Notice of intended prosecution for over running works.
- Cadent Gas - Fortnightly management meetings were held as well as site meetings and they were active on give sites, with more than 50 emails related to coordination of these works.
- Western Power Distribution - Quarterly management meetings were held, currently operational on two major schemes with multiple meetings and email exchanges having taken place.
- Virgin - Fortnightly meetings were being held and whilst there were no works at the time of the meeting, some works were due to commence.

Additionally, the team held quarterly coordination meetings with representatives of all the major utility operators. In future, the team would be looking for tighter completion times for the works.

Councillor Gifford welcomed the response. He was pleased to hear those meetings were taking place and hoped that timescales for works could be reduced to a level that was satisfactory for residents.

(2) Question to Councillor Bell from Councillor Tim Sinclair

The Nicol Unit at Stratford Hospital, within my Division, is well appreciated by locals and although patients often prefer to be looked after in their own home, sometimes it's not appropriate or possible to do that. So, I'm keen that the number of in-patient beds and the services offered at the Nicol Unit are at least maintained, or ideally increased. What reassurances can the Portfolio holder give me that the Council is using its influence to protect and/or enhance the facilities at the Nicol Unit?

Councillor Bell responded that the services provided at the Nicol Unit and the Ellen Badger Community Hospital were being reviewed in the context of the wider health and social care offer in South Warwickshire. The review had a focus on the discharge to assess process which provided additional time for recovery and assessment away from the acute hospital environment. The work to lead the review was collaborative between Warwickshire County Council, South Warwickshire Foundation Trust and the CCG who were working to ensure the right outcomes for the patients and to deliver services that were appropriate for the future direction of travel. The Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee had considered an initial paper on the review which provided a number of options, and the overview and scrutiny committee had recommended an additional option to consider the increase in the number of beds (or at least the flexibility to increase the beds in response to demand). The overview and scrutiny committee would continue to exercise its functions to help with the outcomes of the review and support the citizens of Warwickshire generally. Councillor Bell was also closely linked with the leads for the review and provided support and challenge as it developed, and was aware that the project team was also keen to engage with local communities in South Warwickshire as the review process continued. Councillor Bell offered to put Councillor Sinclair in touch with the leads for the review which he welcomed.

Councillor Kate Rolfe noted that the proposals put forward at Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee were raised by herself and accepted cross party.

(3) Question to Councillor Redford from Councillor Drew

“WCC has stated that K2L is a priority yet progress is understood to have stalled. Could an update on this progress be provided, please, together with any available target date for the build?”

In response, Councillor Redford accepted that the K2L scheme had stalled but he offered assurance that whilst there were some challenges to be overcome, the council was in collaboration with external specialists on topographical and drainage surveys, more traffic modelling was being undertaken and intrusive ground investigations had been undertaken on the full length of the route. Initial designs were required for the cycleway and retaining structures between North Leamington and the Berwick roundabout and there were several conceptual designs for the new pedestrian cycle bridge across the River Avon and the flood plains. There were two initial feasibility designs and options for the route between the A425 and the B4115 junction were being considered. All these challenges were taking time and it was clear that it would take a bit longer than originally thought to finalise the scheme. The complexity and scope of having the pedestrian cycle bridge across the Avon was causing issues and officers were working with Sustrans and Adkins to deliver the best possible solution that conformed with the Environmental Agency conditions. Councillor Redford added that costs of building materials had increased, adding to the financial challenges of the project. It was difficult to provide a firm start date for the project but he would advise Members as soon as this was known.

Councillor Drew requested that the issue be actively monitored.

(4) Question to Councillor Timms from Councillor Fradgley

“Please may I ask for an update on the Highways Verge Policy. I have many residents asking about their status in biodiversity planting on county land. The year is moving on and it is time to start doing work to establish wildflower seed.”

Councillor Timms responded that the draft policy had been sent out to all members in the previous week and comments were being sought as the final step in the consultation process. The consultation had been very diverse in its range, and Councillor Timms asked that any comments be sent to the policy team by 8 April 2022 so that it could be published and documented as an operational policy.

Councillor Fradgley agreed that her question had been submitted prior to the policy being circulated for consultation and hoped that her question had spurred the process on. She noted that a number of town councils had projects ready for implementation and were awaiting the final policy before proceeding with them. Councillor Fradgley asked if town councils could obtain the county view on projects before the policy was operational, as the projects would be time-sensitive.

In response, Councillor Timms advised that the answer was yes. She acknowledged that the policy had taken some time to come forward and noted that several concerns had been received from district councillors which needed to be addressed before it could be circulated to county councillors. Councillor Timms wanted to ensure everyone was aware of the process and who was responsible for what was going forward. The consultation was, therefore, key, but if there were individual projects that could go forward in advance, sight of them was to be welcomed.

(5) Question to Councillor Redford from Councillor Feeney

"I would be grateful if Councillor Redford could detail the parking enforcement activity for Rugby and more particularly for Benn division and could he comment on the number of staff deployed and roughly how many hours a week they are active in Rugby"

In reply, Councillor Redford advised that there was not a reporting mechanism that allowed data to be provided for individual electoral divisions. However, he did have details of the number of hours that staff had been deployed in Rugby over the period in question and he would provide this to Councillor Feeney after the meeting.

(6) Question to the Leader from Councillor Feeney

"I am sure that we all agree that our staff are the most valuable resource we have. Our staff have worked incredibly hard during the pandemic and I am sure we would all agree that it would be right to recognise all staff, but particularly those groups of staff who have delivered frontline services and carried on working in our buildings during this time. We would particularly like the Council to recognise the cleaning staff who worked tirelessly to keep everyone safe during this time and ask that a special event be held and the cleaners invited to receive some recognition from the Chairman of the Council and we would also be grateful for any consideration to be given to a wider meaningful recognition of staff groups as well".

In response, Councillor Isobel Secombe stated that she realised there would be some councillors who were not familiar with what the Council had been doing and welcomed the opportunity to explain. Over the previous two years, the cleaning and caretaking teams had been pivotal in maintaining the estate to ensure that the Council remained Covid 19 secure and that the Council operated effectively. Focus had been given, by all levels of leadership, to recognise the work that had taken place. The Council, as part of its People Strategy, had invested time and effort in enhancing the approach to recognise its employees, including cleaning staff and the teams had been continually

recognised by Corporate Board and also from across the group leaders who had throughout the last two years sent messages of support and thanks. Additional support and flexibility wherever possible had been given to the teams. The Council had initiated the introduction of the 'High Five' app for instant recognition by all colleagues as well as the corporate team. There was also a staff 'shout out' which featured in the Corporate Board and Strategic Director broadcasts. The Council had regularly recognised and celebrated the work of its cleaning staff. Additionally, the Council held 'Star Awards' for which staff nominated individuals and teams for recognition, and there was also involvement in the Leader and Chairman awards. These events had taken place online for the last two years but in normal times they would have been held in person and were attended by herself and the Chairman. The Council's cleaning and caretaking colleagues worked all over Warwickshire so it would be difficult to pull them all together. Whilst they made a brilliant contribution, they were not alone in what they contributed, and therefore in recognition of what all staff had achieved over the pandemic, the Council had offered an extra day's holiday to all employees. Staff were valued and the People Strategy made this very clear.

Councillor Feeney sought further clarification on how elected members could show the value of cleaning staff, as she considered that quite often they were the unsung heroes of an organisation, and she believed they should be recognised in particular.

Councillor Seccombe recognised the cleaning staff's fantastic contribution but this was the same with other frontline services such as children's services and adult social care. All staff contributed to the team that was Warwickshire and she felt what had already been done was 'above and beyond'; the feedback from staff supported that view and she got the sense that people liked working for Warwickshire.

(7) Question to Councillor Timms from Councillor Feeney

"I'd be grateful if you could update full Council on the provision of support for those in food poverty. Could you outline the schemes planned, how much money has been allocated in total for those schemes in particular."

In reply, Councillor Timms advised that there were two strands to the response: one was the Local Welfare Fund, and Warwickshire was one of the few councils who had always retained this fund for people in crisis. It had been extremely useful for distributing the Household Support Fund. Since October 2021 £2.41 million had been spent, including the Hub vouchers for school meals which would continue through the Easter holidays. In Warwickshire, there was also the Food Forum which was bringing forward the Food Strategy and this was a really important partnership approach with health, district and borough councils, and voluntary sector partners. There were three main focuses of the Forum: affordability and access including food poverty, education and choice and a priority around sustainability. As part of this, there were also community supermarkets, known as community pantries, which fell under the remit of the Food Forum and one had opened in Lillington. This provided a referral system which was a more sustainable option than food banks and allowed extra support to be given by Warwickshire Community and Voluntary Action (CAVA) and the Citizen's Advice Bureau. It was a wraparound pilot project and some mobile pantries would be opening in the north of the county: the locations had been informed by data suggesting where they were most needed. The project was costing £350,000. Councillor Timms looked forward to seeing how the project could be made more sustainable in the future.

Councillor Feeney asked Councillor Timms to elaborate on the location of the pantries.

Councillor Timms advised that the mobile pantries would be opening in Camp Hill and New Arley.

Councillor Boad welcomed the opening of the permanent pantry in Lillington and the support that it offered to families.

(8) Question to Councillor Redford from Councillor Millar

“Are there any lessons to be learnt from the planning and co-ordination of roadworks in and around Leamington Spa.”

Councillor Redford stated that there were lessons to be learnt and it had shown how important the Princes Drive corridor was in Leamington Spa. He advised that in future, if any works were needed at Princes Drive that required a closure, consideration would be given to overnight closures to keep the route open. In addition, as traffic flows were nearly back to pre-pandemic levels, the Council was trying to make sure that any other works in the Leamington Spa area that could impact on the works at Princes Drive did not take place at the same time to enable traffic to flow more easily than it had done in the previous month.

Councillor Millar noted that in response to Councillor Gifford’s earlier question, Councillor Redford had indicated that Utility Companies were writing to residents and local businesses, and she asked if there was a list of where the letters were being sent as she had not received any correspondence.

Councillor Redford indicated that he would investigate this issue.

(9) Question to Councillor Timms from Councillor Millar

“I am seeking to understand the progress that the Council has made on energy efficiency measures on its own estates and then to follow up about the proportion of Green Shoots funding that had gone into energy efficiency projects.”

Councillor Timms advised that the carbon footprint for 2021, which were the latest figures available, showed a reduction in the use of gas by 13% and of electricity by 19%, however, those reductions were largely due to the change in the use of the buildings due to agile working away from offices and the hybrid model of working that was being moved towards. This would be an ongoing process of looking at what buildings were required for the future so there was a lot of work to be done around the council estate. In terms of actual recent schemes, there were two: the Bedworth Fire Station where an air source heat pump replaced a gas boiler and solar panels installed on the Elliot Park Innovation Centre. The finalisation of the programme to replace streetlights with LEDs throughout the county continued. In common with other councils, there was a big challenge around decarbonising the estate and the Council was putting together its Sustainable Future Strategy following an initial presentation to Cabinet in November 2021. Once that was completed it would be presented to Cabinet in October 2022, looking at full costs and the plan for how further funding could be applied for.

The first found of Green Shoots had seen a total of £205,000 spent on energy efficiency, including a project on changing streetlights to LEDs, and five projects on renewables. This equated to about 33% of the amount that was awarded for Green Shoots.

Councillor Millar asked what measures would be taken on energy efficiency in the future to make sure that the Council was not lagging on lagging and that residents were insulated against price shocks.

Councillor Timms responded that the Sustainable Future Strategy would include the energy efficiency of buildings and what buildings were needed for the future. The work was taking place and the outcomes would be presented to Cabinet for approval in October 2022.

As the time limit for questions had been reached, the Chair announced that all remaining questions would receive a written response.

6. Any Other items of Urgent Business

None.

The meeting rose at 12.42 pm

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Chair