

Cabinet

Thursday 14 October 2021

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

Councillor Isobel Seccombe OBE (Chair)
Councillor Margaret Bell
Councillor Peter Butlin
Councillor Andy Crump
Councillor Kam Kaur
Councillor Jeff Morgan
Councillor Heather Timms

Others Present

Councillors Jonathan Chilvers, Judy Falp, John Holland and Jerry Roodhouse.

1. General

(1) Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Andy Jenns and Wallace Redford.

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

No declarations were made at the meeting.

(3) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 9 September 2021 were agreed as an accurate record to be signed by the Chair.

(4) Public Speaking

Councillor Izzi Seccombe (Leader of Council and Chair of Cabinet) welcomed two public speakers to the meeting. These were Mr Ian Stevenson, Chair of Westwood Heath Residents Association, and Councillor Alan Marshall, Vice-Chairman of Burton Green & University of Warwick Parish Council.

Councillor Seccombe also noted that Mr Edward Clinton, a student at Warwick University, had



hoped to attend the meeting to speak but was unable to do so and he had made a written submission setting out the point of view of the students who were not supportive of the proposals since they did not consider the link road to be beneficial to them. .

1. Mr Ian Stevenson

Mr Stevenson made the following statement:

“We submitted a detailed 13-page response to the consultation which contains the detail behind the points I am about to summarise. In summary we oppose the A46 Link Road in its current form for a number of reasons.

Firstly, it is the unnecessary destruction of the Green Belt. The link road is around 5km long and would remove about 25 Hectares of land from the Green Belt between Coventry and Kenilworth, and effectively close the gap between the two towns. As a comparison, that's more than half the size of the proposed University of Warwick Eco Park

Secondly, the Link Road is not a link road. The original link road concept was to join the A46 at Stoneleigh to the A45 at Eastern Green (northwest of Coventry). These proposals only get half-way, terminating in a residential area within Westwood Heath. The remaining 6 or 7km of road that would take this to the A45 actually pass through existing residential areas and the proposal relies on those existing residential areas taking up the extra traffic that the link road will create. In short, it does not do what it says on the can.

The third point is the transport modelling does not take account of post-Covid ways of working. So it has all been designed for pre-Covid and we know there are substantial changes to behaviours including hybrid working, working from home and so on. Although the consultation report says this will be taken into account during the next phase, that's rather putting the cart before the horse if indeed the post-Covid ways of working change the way that the link road might be justified.

The fourth point is that we have uncovered lots of unsound data in the business case, there are gaps in the traffic assessment, pieces of development missing like Balsall Common which has recently put extra developments in their local plan, HS2 car park north of Coventry with 7500 places, Westwood Business Park is said to be growing but in fact it is shrinking as an employment area and I don't think these will not stand up to detailed scrutiny if and when this goes through the Department for Transport. In our report, we cited a number of areas in the way the consultation process was flawed with factually incorrect statements, and misleading and biased information as detailed in our report.

Finally, the active and sustainable transport options were not really considered as options, they were just tagged on the back of the link road itself and there was no “sustainable transport only” solution that was identified as part of the consultation. The consultation report says that will be done as part of the next phase but I question how you can proceed to an outline business case when that option has not yet been explored. In summary, you're spending £100m on a proposal that is little more than a bypass for the University of Warwick.”



2. Councillor Alan Marshall, Vice-Chairman, Burton Green & University of Warwick Parish Council

Councillor Marshall read out the following statement.

"In only 3 minutes I can but briefly state our concerns, but they were set out fully in a 7-page response sent to the County Council in February. Our concerns focus on Stage 3 and furthermore on what might follow in terms of providing the ultimate link with the A45 or A452 at Ballsall Common.

In short, our opposition is because first of all the strategy of the link road is particularly questionable as it is based on diverting traffic from strategic routes onto the local road network in Burton Green, Tile Hill and Eastern Green.

Although Option 3 removes through traffic from Stoneleigh Road and Gibbet Hill Road, it is at the expense of encouraging much more traffic to affect residents in Westwood Heath and Burton Green and the situation in Burton Green would also be worsened by traffic generated from the sizeable forthcoming housing developments over the border in Balsall Common and Berkswell.

Moreover, the Balsall Common Relief Road, allowed for in the Solihull Local Plan, will intersect Hob Lane and result in that narrow, winding road which goes past Burton Green School becoming an additional 'rat run' route to reach Cromwell Lane and Westwood Heath Road to join the Link Road to Stoneleigh.

There will be also serious worsening of environmental conditions and even more erosion of what remains of the Green Belt between Coventry and Burton Green – a huge amount has already been lost through the Local Plan and now by the construction that is underway of HS2.

There are still too many uncertainties remaining. What will be the implications of a railway station and interchange; indeed, will it materialize at all? Will a football stadium be built? Will employment numbers and working practices change significantly at the University post Covid?

It is also likely that traffic forecasts have been modelled on baseless population forecasts. Surely, given the recent Office of Statistics Regulation examination of Office for National Statistics projections for Coventry, it would be best to await the 2021 Census findings to be disclosed next year.

In any event, before any proposal for a Phase 2 link is determined, a decision in principle must be taken now about whether a Phase 3 link should be built and, if so, a clear strategy of where it would go should be decided and be incorporated in a strategic plan, whereas at present we seem to have only incremental plans that stop, unstrategically, at the Warwickshire border.

Without a defined, safeguarded route for a third phase, the uncertainty blights a core part of Burton Green."

Councillor Izzi Seccombe thanked both members of the public for their contributions and



advised that Cabinet would bring forward the A46 Strategic Link Road Consultation report to be considered as the next item.

2. A46 Strategic Link Road Consultation

In the absence of Councillor Wallace Redford (Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning) Councillor Peter Butlin (Deputy Leader, Finance and Property) introduced the published report which succinctly set out the process and response of the public consultation for the development of the A46 Link Road scheme. Councillor Butlin reflected on the background to the work and noted that the Outline Business Case, which was part of the Department for Transport (DfT) funding application process, was currently being produced to confirm if a scheme to provide a new transport corridor was viable.

A number of Members noted the environmental implications set out in the report together with the anticipated impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on travel habits. In response to these comments, Councillor Butlin advised that the Outline Business Case would be drafted in terms of the post-Covid reality and he indicated that the Chairman of the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be invited to consider the Outline Business Case at an upcoming meeting. Councillor Butlin also offered clarity that the scheme was fully externally funded with no match/top-up funding expected from the County Council. However, should there ultimately be a shortfall in funding then this could be a call on the County Council's resources.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Notes the feedback from the A46 Strategic Link Road consultation; and
2. Acknowledges that, as set out in the recommendations of Cabinet on 12 September 2019, a further report will be brought to set out the preferred scope of the new transport corridor.

3. Social Impact Fund

Councillor Heather Timms (Portfolio Holder for Environment, Climate & Culture) introduced this report, noting that Council had resolved to bring forward proposals for a fund to act as a catalyst for building stronger communities. Proposals for the fund had been considered by Overview and Scrutiny which had expressed general support. Councillor Timms explained that, subject to approval, the fund would launch on 4 November 2021 and it was recommended that the operation of the fund be commissioned to a third party as described in the report.

By way of clarification, Cabinet were informed that in order to promote inclusion, the source of funding for the proposals was the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) and this meant that it was linked to the areas most affected by Covid. It also aligned with the Council Plan and Community Powered workstream.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:



1. Approves proceeding with the establishment of a Social Impact Fund, using source funding of no less than £1,000,000 from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) and authorises the Strategic Director for Resources, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Finance and Property, to increase the value of the fund drawn from the COMF if the appropriate conditions are met;
2. Approves the capital element of the fund to be added to the Capital Programme and authorises the Strategic Director for Resources, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Finance and Property, to adjust the value of scheme in the capital programme depending on the balance of grant determinations approved;
3. Supports the operation of the fund to be delivered by a third party and authorises the Strategic Director for Resources to take all steps as he considers necessary to establish the fund; and
4. Notes the feedback from the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee as set out at paragraph 4.15 of the report.

4. Customer Service Excellence Standard Review June 2021

Councillor Kam Kaur (Portfolio Holder for Economy and Place) presented this report on behalf of Councillor Andy Jenns (Portfolio Holder for Customer and Transformation). The Review had taken place in June 2021 and had focussed on service users needs and preferences. Councillor Kaur noted that the review had taken place during the pandemic and welcomed how much had been achieved to protect the most vulnerable. The report identified positive partnership working with the district and borough councils, neighbours and partners. In response to questions, Councillor Kaur explained that the CRM system was being updated and this would lead to the availability of enhanced customer information.

Councillor Isobel Seccombe, Leader, extended the Cabinet's thanks to staff for their commitment to the residents of Warwickshire. Cabinet were pleased to see this recognition.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Notes the outcome of the Customer Service Excellence Review which took place in June 2021; and
2. Agrees the actions to address the partial compliances listed in the table in section 1 of the report.

5. Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman – Annual Review and Summary of Upheld Complaints

In the absence of Councillor Andy Jenns, Councillor Kam Kaur (Portfolio Holder for Economy and Place) introduced this report, explaining that the report presented the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's letter for the financial year 2020/21. The report noted that 50 complaints and enquiries had been received by the Ombudsman in relation to the Council and nine of those were subject to full investigations with an uphold rate of 67%. This was a positive



position, and lower than the national average. In respect of the steps taken to address the complaints, the Ombudsman found that the Council had complied with 100% of the agreed remedies but that in four cases, the remedy was implemented late and the Ombudsman had invited the Council to consider how it might make improvements to reduce such delays. Cabinet noted the lessons to be learnt in the report.

Resolved:

That Cabinet notes the annual review and summary of upheld complaints issued by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman in the financial year 2020/21.

6. Priority Worker Help to Buy Scheme

Councillor Peter Butlin (Deputy Leader, Finance and Property) summarised the published report, noting that permission was sought to further explore a Priority Worker Help to Buy Scheme, subject to the financial principles set out in paragraph 4.10 of the report. Ultimately the scheme would only be offered through Warwickshire County Council developed housing schemes where a business case justified the need and the financial analysis supported the ability to offer the Priority Worker Help to Buy Scheme, with the final decision resting with the County Council. Councillor Butlin noted that there had been a very positive discussion at Resources and Fire and Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the proposed scheme with their comments and recommendations summarised in the report (paragraph 1.4).

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Agrees to further explore the setting up of a Priority Worker Help to Buy (PWHTB) Scheme on the basis set out in paragraph 2 of the report, subject to compliance with the financial principles set out in paragraph 4.10 of the report;
2. Notes the observations made by the Resources and Fire and Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee and requests officers to continue to work with financial institutions to gather input as to how to further develop the final product to provide affordable help to priority workers who are or will be residents of Warwickshire; and
3. Requests officers make a further report to Cabinet on the detail of the PWHTB at the appropriate time in line for the first Warwickshire Property and Development Group (WPDG) site specific development likely to apply PWHTB.

7. Tackling Social Inequalities in Warwickshire

Councillor Jeff Morgan (Portfolio Holder for Children, Families & Education) opened this item, explaining the journey to the development of this strategy to tackle social inequalities in Warwickshire. The report identified a set of cross-cutting priorities to collectively tackle the key factors contributing to social inequalities in Warwickshire, resulting in improved outcomes for Warwickshire residents: developing the workforce and culture, improving access to goods, resources, services and communities, and supporting people to maximise and manage their income. A draft action plan was appended to the report.

Councillor Kaur noted the importance of working with partners to support the economy and the ties to social inequality and advised Cabinet that she would work closely with Councillor Morgan in this respect. Councillor Timms highlighted the connection with the Social Impact Fund. Councillor Morgan welcomed these comments.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Endorses the "Tackling Social Inequalities in Warwickshire Strategy" and accompanying draft action plan; and
2. Authorises the Strategic Director for People, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children, Families and Education, to approve the project budget allocation, action plan and future revisions aligned to the strategy priorities for the allocated budget between April 2021 and March 2024.

8. Warwickshire Children & Young People Strategy 2021-2030

Councillor Jeff Morgan (Portfolio Holder for Children, Families & Education) summarised the report which set out the establishment of the strategy with input from a wide range of professionals from across the sector. The aim was for Warwickshire to be a Child Friendly County where children were put at the heart of everything we do and where children were supported to reach their full potential. Children and young people had been asked whether they considered the area they lived in was child friendly and overall there was an 81% positive response. The strategy appended to the report was targeted at professionals in the sector and a child and parent friendly version of the strategy would be provided.

Cabinet welcomed the strategy.

Resolved:

That Cabinet approves the Warwickshire Children & Young People Strategy 2021-2030.

9. Warwickshire Bus Service Improvement Plan (National Bus Strategy)

In the absence of Councillor Wallace Redford, Councillor Peter Butlin (Deputy Leader, Finance and Property) presented this report which sought to establish the Warwickshire Bus Service Improvement Plan to introduce measures to improve bus patronage in accordance with the government's strategic plans. Establishment of the plan would ensure eligibility to bid for a part of the government's £3bn funding stream.

Members welcomed the focus on passenger feedback and the engagement that had taken place with both local councillors and the District and Borough Councils. The work of the Cross Party Working Group was complimented for their contribution to identify the key bus corridors that would be the subject of enhancements and for supporting marketing activities aimed at promoting the public engagement exercise which sought feedback from the community and stakeholders on bus services.



Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Authorises the Strategic Director for Communities, acting in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning, to prepare the Warwickshire Bus Service Improvement Plan (based on the details in this report) and publish and submit it to the Department for Transport as the basis of a bid for the allocation of funding; and
2. Authorise the Strategic Director for Communities, acting in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning, to prepare and consult on the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Schemes (based on the content of the Warwickshire Bus Service Improvement Plan) in accordance with section 138F of the Transport Act 2000 with the intention of asking Cabinet to approve them in Spring 2022.

10. Submission to the EIP Inspector of Proposed Modifications to the Submitted Minerals Plan 2018 and Next Steps Towards Adoption

In the absence of Councillor Wallace Redford, Councillor Peter Butlin (Deputy Leader, Finance and Property) explained that this report set out the remaining issues being addressed for the Inspector particularly in terms of a plan for extraction at appropriate sites with minimum impact on residents and habitats.

Resolved:

That Cabinet authorises the Strategic Director for Communities, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning, to:

1. Propose draft Main Modifications to the submitted Warwickshire Minerals Plan to the Inspector and carry out any necessary public consultation on them;
2. Take any other steps which he considers necessary or desirable to assist the Inspector to conclude his Examination and to enable Council to adopt a sound and compliant Plan (including making any further decisions as proposed modifications); and
3. Submit the Proposed Plan (together with any recommended modifications) to Council for a decision on adoption.

11. Exclusion of the 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 Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

12. Exempt Minutes of the 9 September 2021 Meeting of Cabinet



The exempt minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 9 September 2021 were agreed as an accurate record.

13. Property Disposal

Resolved:


The recommendations set out in the exempt report were agreed as published.

14. South Warwickshire and Nuneaton & Bedworth Local Plans - Calls for Sites

Resolved:

The recommendations set out in the exempt report were agreed as published.

The meeting rose at 3.28pm



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Chair

