

Cabinet

Thursday 14 September 2023

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

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

Officers

Amy Bridgewater-Carnall, Senior Committee Services Officer
Monica Fogarty, Chief Executive
Nigel Minns, Executive Director for People
Mark Ryder, Executive Director for Communities
Benjamin Brook, Chief Fire Officer
Sarah Duxbury, Director of Governance and Policy
Andrew Felton, Director of Finance
Rob Powell, Executive Director for Resources
Steve Smith, Director of Commissioning Support Unit

Others Present

Councillor Barbara Brown
Councillor Tim Sinclair

1. General

The Leader welcomed everyone to the meeting.

(1) Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Andy Crump, John Holland and Jerry Roodhouse.

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

There were none.

(3) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 13 July 2023 were agreed as an accurate record.

(4) Public Speaking

There was none.

2. 2023-24 Financial Monitoring - Forecast position at Quarter 1

Members received a report which outlined the forecast financial position of the organisation at the end of 2023/24, based on the information known at the end of the first quarter.

Councillor Peter Butlin introduced the report, highlighting the £0.883m overspend. He reminded Members that every authority was operating in difficult times as could be seen in the media and highlighted the recent, unfortunate situation that Birmingham City Council had just announced. He also made reference to the challenges faced by all Local Authorities in Children's Services, Adult Social Care and with Home to School Transport budgets.

Councillor Butlin went on to itemise the pressures on finances despite significant additions to the budget in some areas. He confirmed that the Budget Member Working Group were closely scrutinising the situation and continuing to identify measures to keep the budget down. He concluded by reminding Members that the report was a precautionary note, politically and across the organisation, that these pressures being experienced in local government across the country.

The Leader made reference to this being the first quarter report, explaining that there was a degree of variance to be expected at this time of the year. She felt the report demonstrated a shared understanding of the Council's position and how everyone could work together to resolutely solve problems. She concluded by encouraging all Cabinet members to work with their departments and recognised that the leadership team had a shared role in solving these issues.

Councillor Butlin proposed the recommendations as laid out and, having considered the report, it was

Resolved

That Cabinet:

- 1) notes the forecast overspend of £0.883m (0.2%) that would need to be funded from the Directorate and General Risk Reserves at the end of 2023/24;
- 2) notes the forecast delivery of savings for 2023/24 of £6.314m, and the consequent shortfall against the target;
- 3) asks Corporate Board to bring forward, as part of the Quarter 2 Financial Monitoring Report, an action plan to address service overspends in 2023/24;
- 4) notes the forecast capital spend for 2023/24 of £174.420m; and

5) notes and approves the movement in the forecast spend on the capital programme of £13.972m from 2023/24 into future years and notes the carry forward of S278 contributions of £10.504m.

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

Cabinet received a report which detailed the annual review and summary of upheld complaints issued by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman in the financial year 2022/23.

The Portfolio Holder for Customer & Transformation, Councillor Yousef Dahmash introduced the report and signposted Members to key information including the number of complaints received and national trends. He assured the meeting that neither he nor officers were complacent and were continuing to look at ways to improve the customer contact journey for residents. He outlined a number of projects underway in Adult Social Care, housing support funding and the customer platform work which was ongoing. It was hoped that these measures would help to prevent complaints progressing to the ombudsman.

The Leader recognised that complaint levels had improved year on year despite the increased demand on services. She applauded the work of all staff involved in helping to improve systems for the public.

Councillor Yousef proposed the recommendations, and it was

Resolved that Cabinet note the annual review and summary of upheld complaints issued by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman in the financial year 2022/23.

4. Update on the Warwickshire Bus Service Improvement Plan

Members received a report which summarised the progress made by Warwickshire Enhanced Partnership (EP) in implementing the Warwickshire Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) since publication in October 2021.

The Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning, Councillor Matecki introduced the report. He highlighted the work of the Partnership Group and the list of prioritised capital and revenue measures outlined in the appendices. Further government funding had now been secured which would help to maintain existing services and enable enhanced marketing. Further detail was provided in Appendix D which proposed how the additional revenue funding would be allocated. Councillor Matecki concluded by advising that a further report would be published detailing future allocation of funding in 2024/25.

Councillor Sinclair addressed the meeting and outlined the work of the Council's Cross Party Working Group, applauding the level of member involvement and collaborative work with officers. He noted that whilst the environmental implications were often noted, the economic detail was not always highlighted and he felt that sound public transport had a positive impact on the economy.

Councillor Matecki thanked Councillor Sinclair for his comments and proposed the recommendations as laid out.

Resolved

That Cabinet

- 1) Agrees the list of prioritised capital and revenue measures (Appendices A and B) taken from the Warwickshire Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) supported by the Warwickshire County Council Cross Party Working Group;
- 2) Approves the programme of revenue-funded measures (Appendix D) aligned to the Warwickshire BSIP being brought forward for delivery through the £2.072m BSIP Plus revenue grant allocation for 2023-24 awarded to the County Council by the Department for Transport, including adding the measures onto the Warwickshire Enhanced Partnership Scheme; and
- 3) Agrees to a further report being taken to Cabinet seeking approval of a proposed programme of revenue-funded measures aligned to the Warwickshire BSIP to be funded by the £2.072m BSIP Plus revenue grant allocation to the County Council for 2024-25, including adding the measures onto the Warwickshire Enhanced Partnership Scheme.

5. Devolution for Warwickshire & West Midlands Combined Authority

On 13 July 2023, Cabinet considered a report about the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and devolution for Warwickshire. At that meeting, Cabinet resolved to explore the opportunity for Warwickshire County Council, as a two-tier authority area, to become a full constituent member of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and other options that may be available and to report back to Cabinet.

This report outlined the progress and work to date following the previous decision in July 2023.

The Leader, Councillor Isobel Seccombe, outlined the report and reminded Members of the discussions and outcome following the Cabinet report considered in July. The timescales surrounding the decision had resulted in work having to be undertaken at pace and the Leader thanked those officers who had contributed extensively. It was felt that a consultation would have had to be initiated quickly and with no extension to the timeframe being given, officers and members were not comfortable at the speed of the decision and the complexity of the work required. Councillor Seccombe recognised the benefits that had been gained by going through this process with more insight being gained into the operational arrangements.

She assured that the Council would continue to have conversations with the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUC), as well as Districts and Boroughs to seek out a devolution deal.

Following a question from Councillor Sinclair regarding a realistic timeframe for the work, he was advised that a specific time could not be confirmed at this stage, but discussions would continue throughout the next electoral cycle.

Having considered the report, and having heard from those present, it was

Resolved

That Cabinet

- 1) Formalises its decision not to progress the opportunity for Warwickshire County Council to become a constituent member of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) at this time; and
- 2) Reconfirms its commitment to the WMCA as an active non constituent member of the WMCA and agrees to pursue the opportunities for Warwickshire that the exploration work has highlighted, as set out in this report.

6. Council Plan 2022-2027 : Integrated Performance Report Quarter 1 2023/24

Members received a report which provided a retrospective summary of the Council's performance at the end of Quarter 1 (April 2023 – June 2023) against the strategic priorities and Areas of Focus, set out in the Council Plan 2022-2027.

Cabinet was asked to consider and comment on organisational performance and refer the report to Overview and Scrutiny Committees to consider the information relevant to their individual remits.

Councillor Dahmash introduced the report and highlighted the key performance levels and positive metrics. He recognised the challenges being faced, with demand rising for nursing care and the pressures with the delegated school's grant. He encouraged Members to access the wealth of information on Power BI and noted some of the detail relating to HR data, absences, vacancies and the unsettled pay award. Finally, Councillor Dahmash referred to external factors which he assured officers were acutely aware of and who were working daily to improve processes.

The Leader reminded the meeting that this report would be considered at the Overview and Scrutiny Committees, enabling further opportunities for involvement by Members.

Resolved

That Cabinet:

- 1) Considers and comments on the Quarter 1 2023/24 organisational performance; and
- 2) Agrees to refer the report to Overview and Scrutiny Committees to consider, in detail, the information relevant to their individual remits.

7. Youth Justice Plan 2023-2024

Councillor Sue Markham introduced the report which proposed that Cabinet recommend the Warwickshire Youth Justice Service Strategic Plan 2023/24 to Council for approval. The plan was attached at Appendix 1 to the report and summarised the performance for the period 2022/23 and set the vision for the Warwickshire Youth Justice Partnership to deliver great services.

The report was an annual statutory requirement which presented the plan for the upcoming year. Councillor Markham noted that although serious violence offences remained low, there had been a slight increase in incidents in Warwickshire. She reiterated the key importance of prevention and early intervention by officers, expressing her pride for the team of officers and the Youth Justice Partnership. Councillor Markham also highlighted the recognition given to volunteers at the Children and Families Awards recently.

Councillor Seccombe added her congratulations to all of the winners and stated that all of the staff involved fully deserved the recognition for their work.

Councillor Markham proposed the recommendations and

Recommended to Council the Warwickshire Youth Justice Service Strategic Plan 2022/23 for approval.

8. Reports Containing Exempt or Confidential Information

Resolved:

That members of the public be excluded from the meeting for the items mentioned below on the grounds that their presence would involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1972.

9. Exempt Minutes of the 13 July 2023 Meeting of Cabinet

The exempt minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 13 July 2023 were agreed as an accurate record.

10. Addition of Capital Funds to the MTFP for additional Children's Home Capacity

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property, Councillor Peter Butlin outlined the exempt report.

Resolved that the recommendations be approved, as set out in the exempt report.

(The meeting ended at 2:33pm)

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Chair