

Cabinet

Thursday 14 December 2023

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

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

1. General

(1) Apologies

None.

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None.

(3) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 9 November 2023 were agreed as an accurate record.

(4) Public Speaking

None.

2. 2024/25 Budget and 2024-29 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) - Background Information and Options

Councillor Peter Butlin, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property explained that this was the opening detail for the MTFS as provided by Corporate Board which set out the options available to Cabinet and the other groups during their budget preparation. Referring to previous meetings when he had outlined the various pressures facing the Council, Councillor Butlin explained that the

demand for services in Children's Services, SEND, and Home to School Transport continued to exceed budgeted financial resources. Despite this, the Council was considered a well-run authority which made the right decisions at the right time and this would be reflected in each group's budget proposals to Council in February 2024.

Councillor Butlin noted that there had been lobbying regarding the level of government funding by the Local Government Association, County Councils Network and all Cabinet Members had written to government ministers on the issue, but the Chancellor's autumn statement had not made any increased funding available to local government and the higher-than-expected increase in the National Living Wage had actually added a further burden of nearly £3.5m to the cost pressures faced by the Council.

Unlike previous years, there was therefore little flexibility in the setting of a budget for 2024/25 and Corporate Board were suggesting the need to set Council Tax at a minimum level of 4.92%. The Office for Budgetary Responsibility forecasts also suggested council tax headroom of 3% core and 2% adult social care levy across all years, but government officials had made it clear that this could not be guaranteed due to national elections in 2024.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse commented on the challenging set of papers before the Cabinet and considered that the political groups would need to work more closely together to benefit the residents of Warwickshire.

Councillor John Holland lamented the lack of protection for local government in the Chancellor's autumn statement.

Councillor Isobel Seccombe considered that this was a challenging budget period for the Council despite its good financial management practices and thanked the Finance Team for their work to date.

Councillor Butlin advised that the final Local Government Settlement was expected in the week following the meeting, but additional funding was not expected, and he suggested that the final position would reflect the paper that was before the Cabinet at this meeting.

Resolved

That Cabinet

1. Agrees to develop its draft 2024/25 Budget and 2024-29 Medium Term Financial Strategy proposals, taking into account the information and advice of presented in the report; and
2. Authorises Corporate Board to begin any preparatory work necessary to deliver the budget proposals, prior to the final decision on the budget on 8 February 2024.

3. Education Capital Programme 2023/24

Councillor Kam Kaur, Portfolio Holder for Education, advised that this report sought approval for four projects to be added to the Education Capital Programme, as detailed in the report, in relation to Warton Nethersole CofE Primary School, St John's Primary School, Shottery St Andrews CofE Primary School and Cubbington CofE Primary School. The report also sought an increase in the

pupils on roll at the specialist resourced provisions at Paddox Primary School and Water Orton Primary School as outlined in section 3 of the report.

Councillor Jenny Fradgley looked forward to the results of the project at Shottery St Andrews CofE Primary School and Councillor Marian Humphreys welcomed the project at Warton Nethersole.

Councillor Isobel Seccombe considered it was important for children to be supported through their education to become active members of their community and welcomed the efforts of schools to support that aim.

Councillor Peter Butlin advised that he had recently visited Warton to view three housing developments driving the need for the project there, one of which was being developed by the Council itself and offered 40% affordable housing, and he therefore very much welcomed the report.

In conclusion, Councillor Kaur thanked the Education Sufficiency Team for their work to date.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. **Recommends to Council** the addition of £2.868m to the capital programme to deliver the scheme at Warton Nethersole CofE Primary School to be funded by developer contributions and the Department for Education (DfE) Basic Need Grant.
2. Approves the proposals for alterations at St John's Primary School:
 - a. To increase the capacity from one form entry (210 places) to two form entry (420 places).
 - b. To establish specialist resourced provision (SRP) for up to 14 learners with SEND.

and **recommends to Council** the addition of £6.335m to the capital programme to deliver the scheme at St John's Primary School which will be funded from developer contributions and the DfE Basic Need grant.

3. Approves the addition to the Education Capital Programme of £0.328m to deliver the proposed schemes at Shottery St Andrews CofE Primary School and Cubbington CofE Primary School
4. Approves the increase of pupils on roll at the specialist resourced provisions at Paddox Primary School and Water Orton Primary School as outlined in section 3 of the report.
5. Subject to Council's agreement to the required additions to the Capital Programme, delegates authority to the Executive Director for People, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property, to invite tenders and enter into the appropriate contracts or (where the scheme is school led) to make the necessary funding arrangements for these schemes on terms and conditions considered acceptable to the Executive Director for Resources.

4. Water Contract

Councillor Peter Butlin, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property explained that this report sought approval to contract for the Council's water related services through the relevant Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO) framework which would provide the Council with a more advantageous position.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Approves the Council entering into a framework agreement for Council buildings with the Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO) under their 'Water, Wastewater and Ancillary Services' framework, for an initial 2-year period, with the option to extend for a maximum of 24 months.
2. Authorises the Executive Director for Resources, to enter into all agreements necessary to implement this decision on terms and conditions considered acceptable to them.

5. Community Pantries - Sustainability Options

Councillor Heather Timms, Portfolio Holder for Environment, Climate & Culture explained that the Community Pantries proof of concept had been a successful project. Demand for services at all three locations (Lillington, New Arley, and Camp Hill) had surpassed original expectations and continued to increase, intensified by the ongoing cost-of-living challenges. The project enabled the Council to reach people who were not previous service users, taking them into employment or maximising their benefits so that they could move forward in their lives rather than relying on food banks, etc. Councillor Timms considered it was desirable for the Community Pantries to be sustainable and community-led in the long term and therefore sought support for the strategy laid out in the report which included giving consideration to the making of a final time-limited allocation of funds to balance costs as part of the 2024/25 MTFs budget proposals as transitional funding needed over the next two financial years to support the community pantries moving to operational sustainability thereafter.

Councillor Isobel Secombe noted that the Community Pantries project had commenced two years previously and it had been well received by residents and wrap around services alike.

Councillor Marian Humphreys commented on the valuable support that was provided through the project.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse welcomed the report and sought an experience sharing exercise with Rugby Borough Council to feed into Task and Finish Group work that was taking place at the Borough Council.

In response to questions, Councillor Timms clarified the referral process that was in place and noted that over 1000 people had been referred to the project and 508 of them had moved through the system thanks to the involvement of wraparound services but demand was continuing. She

also confirmed that officers would be happy to share their experiences regarding the project with Rugby Borough Council.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Endorses the strategy set out in the report of making the community pantries sustainable over the longer-term, with consideration of short-term support provided by the County Council; and
2. Agrees to consider including a final time-limited allocation of £541,000 to fund the balance of the costs as part of the 2024/25 MTFS budget proposals to be considered by Council in February 2024 as transitional funding needed over the next two financial years to support the community pantries moving to operational sustainability thereafter.

6. Proposed Changes to On-street Pay & Display Parking

This report was introduced by Councillor Jan Matecki, Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning, who explained that on-street parking charges should be comparable to or higher than off-street parking. However, since 2018 on-street parking had not increased to a comparable level, so this report sought approval to raise on-street parking charges in the defined locations to £1.40 per hour to redress this issue, a sum which was below inflation. Approval for an annual review and adjustment of prices was also sought together with a review of parking restrictions. Councillor Matecki explained that the result would be an improved experience for shoppers and improved air quality in towns.

Councillor John Holland noted that this was a sensitive topic and shared his experience of aligning different parking needs in town centres to meet the different needs of residents with permits, business customers requiring on street parking and employees who needed to park all day utilising car parks.

Councillor Isobel Seccombe reflected on her experiences with seeking to ensure that on street parking was cheaper than off street parking to deter people driving around looking for a cheap space, and providing only short stay car parks in towns with park and ride services. She considered it was important to implement a clear policy and set of principles that was workable for the various councils involved to create a more pleasant shopping experience.

Councillor Heather Timms commented on the use of park and ride facilities for day tippers and the need to optimise their use through investment.

Councillor Andy Crump considered that the reasoning for the changes needed to be publicised.

Councillor Matecki explained that parking permit revenue was not currently covering the cost of running the scheme and that there were restrictions on how the revenue could be spent in any event. He pointed out the reduction in the cost of parking for 15 minutes and hoped this would be helpful to businesses which needed space for customers attending for short visits.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Approves the increase of on-street charges in Leamington, Warwick, Kenilworth, Stratford and Rugby as set out at paragraphs 4.3 and 4.4 of the report, subject to completion of the required statutory process¹.
2. Requests the Executive Director for Communities in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning to undertake an annual review of the on-street Pay and Display charges that considers the District and Borough off-street pricing structures.
3. Requests the Executive Director for Communities in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning to undertake a review of the existing on-street Pay and Display hours of restriction to create a more consistent and simplified model across the town centres, and authorises the Executive Director for Communities to take such steps and to make any changes as are necessary to achieve such a model subject to the completion of the required statutory process.

7. Accommodation Related Support Services Approval to Tender

Councillor Margaret Bell, Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health explained that Accommodation Related Support was previously known as Housing Related Support. She explained that the Council had duties under the Care Act to make provision under the prevention agenda. A £1m reduction had already been agreed in the budget for 2025/26, leaving a budget of circa £2.8m, and this paper was brought as a result of a consultation with partners (including district and borough councils) about the focus for this remaining funding to ensure the proposed service redesign resulted in a more efficient and effective service with improved customer journey. The report comprehensively set out the proposals.

Councillor Marian Humphreys highlighted the importance of intervention for saving money in the longer term. She noted the difference in recovery rates when intervention occurred at an early stage.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse noted the thorough consultation that had taken place. He made a plea for the procurement process and output measurements that would be used to measure the contract, to not be too onerous in terms of the number of performance indicators that the companies delivering the services would need to meet, although the importance of being able to clearly measure outputs was recognised. He also noted the transition ages set out in the report and considered that some thought as to how this would be reflected in the contract would be required as many companies ceased delivery at age 18. He also considered that Scrutiny would want to keep a close eye on the delivery of these services.

In response, Councillor Bell considered that procurement was a balance between service delivery and not being too onerous in setting out how that was achieved, and explained that in this instance there would be two contracts in place. She also agreed with comments that it was important to get the transition arrangements correct.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Approves proceeding with the proposals to re-structure Housing Related Support (HRS) services to support delivery of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) savings 2025 – 2026; endorsing the recommendations on the service redesign outlined in section 5 of the report.
2. Authorises the commencement of procurement activity to implement the proposals and delegates to the Executive Directors for Children and Young People and Social Care and Health (in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Children and Families and Social Care and Health) the implementation of the proposals, including the de-commissioning of existing Housing Related Support services and the subsequent award of the redesigned Accommodation Related Support contracts and entering into of agreements required to implement this decision on terms and conditions acceptable to the Executive Director of Resources

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 9 November 2023 Meeting of Cabinet

The exempt minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 9 November 2023 were agreed as an accurate record.

10. Disposal of Land in Alcester

Councillor Peter Butlin, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property presented this exempt report.

Resolved:

That the recommendations as set out in the exempt report be approved.

11. Various Property Disposals

Councillor Peter Butlin, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property presented this exempt report.

Resolved:

That the recommendations as set out in the exempt report be approved.

12. WRIF Bid Update

Councillor Peter Butlin, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property presented this exempt report.

Resolved:

That the recommendations as set out in the exempt report be approved.

The meeting rose at 2.46pm

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Chair