

County Council

Tuesday 24 September 2024

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

Councillor Chris Mills (Chair), Councillor Andy Jenns (Vice-Chair), Councillor Jo Barker, Councillor Richard Baxter-Payne, Councillor Brett Beetham, Councillor Margaret Bell, Councillor Sarah Boad, Councillor Barbara Brown, Councillor Peter Butlin, Councillor Jonathan Chilvers, Councillor Jeff Clarke, Councillor John Cooke, Councillor Andy Crump, Councillor Yousef Dahmash, Councillor Jackie D'Arcy, Councillor Tracey Drew, Councillor Judy Falp, Councillor Sarah Feeney, Councillor Bill Gifford, Councillor Peter Gilbert, Councillor Clare Golby, Councillor Brian Hammersley, Councillor John Holland, Councillor Dave Humphreys, Councillor Marian Humphreys, Councillor Kam Kaur, Councillor Dale Keeling, Councillor Justin Kerridge, Councillor Christopher Kettle, Councillor Jeff Morgan, Councillor Penny-Anne O'Donnell, Councillor Bhagwant Singh Pandher, Councillor Daren Pemberton, Councillor Will Roberts, Councillor Kate Rolfe, Councillor Jerry Roodhouse, Councillor Isobel Seccombe OBE, Councillor Ian Shenton, Councillor Jill Simpson-Vince, Councillor Tim Sinclair, Councillor Mejar Singh, Councillor Richard Spencer, Councillor Heather Timms, Councillor Mandy Tromans, Councillor Robert Tromans, Councillor Adrian Warwick and Councillor Andrew Wright

1. General

(1) Apologies for Absence

Councillors Parminder Singh Birdi, Piers Daniell, Jenny Fradgley, Jack Kennaugh, Sue Markham, Jan Matecki, Sarah Millar, Caroline Phillips, Wallace Redford, and Martin Watson

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

The Chair noted that with regard to item 6 on the agenda, Notice of Motion, some members may be in the category of those affected by proposed changes to the winter fuel allowance. However, the wording of the motion indicated a personal interest not a pecuniary one, and those Members affected would therefore be able to engage in the debate and vote:

Councillors Margaret Bell, Sarah Boad, Barbara Brown, Peter Butlin, Jeff Clarke, John Cooke, Judy Falp, Bill Gifford, Brian Hammersley, John Holland, Dave Humphreys, Marian Humphreys, Andy Jenns, Chris Mills, Jeff Morgan, Bhagwant Singh Pandher, Kate Rolfe, Jerry Roodhouse, Isobel Seccombe, Ian Shenton and Heather Timms.

(3) Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on 23 July 2024 were agreed as an accurate record for signing by the Chair.

(4) Chair's announcements

(a) Death of Former Councillor Tricia Wilson

The Chair informed Council of the recent passing of former County Councillor Tricia Wilson (Liberal Democrat group) who had served as a Warwickshire County Councillor for Leamington Crown between 1985 and 1994. He extended condolences to her family and friends.

Councillor Sarah Boad spoke in memory of former Councillor Wilson commenting on her efficiency and effectiveness, noting that the evidence of her achievements were still visible in Leamington. She also commented on their personal friendship and the high regard in which she had been held.

Councillor John Holland also spoke in tribute, focussing on former Councillor Wilson's contribution to education.

Councillor Isobel Seccombe extended condolences to the family and friends of former Councillor Wilson and applauded all those who worked in service to their community.

(b) Other Announcements

The Chair provided an update on the engagements he had attended since the last meeting including celebrations of the Kings Awards for Enterprise to Arrowsmith Engineering (in the International Trade category), Triton Showers (Sustainable Development), Aston Martin Lagonda (Innovation), and Nuneaton Signs (Promoting Opportunity).

(5) Petitions

None.

(6) Public Speaking

The Chair welcomed three public speakers on agenda item 2 - Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service - Community Risk Management Plan, who raised a number of questions:

Jill Machado -

- What are Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service currently doing to support Firefighters in what must be a difficult time for them with the prospect of reduced salaries with resilience? If morale is low the increase of absences due to Mental Health is already the highest

reason for sickness in the brigade. This demoralizing is a potential to reduce availability, is this a self-fulfilling prophecy?

- Day crew plus is being removed as it's not in the Grey book, and neither is 'resilience', recall to duty is, but only for officers. There does not appear to be any clear plans as to how this work or be funded.
- A member of the B36 action group asked for statistics for each fire station on attendance for July. We would like to highlight that Bidford on Avon Fire Station has one of the highest responses. The decision to keep B36 as a manned station by Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service has been vilified. Can we seek assurance that Bidford 36 will not have a reduced status for the next 10 years?

Penny Barry -

- Can the council confirm there will be funding in place long term, without the continuous use of reserves, it is a recognized that whole-time resources are the most expensive type of fire cover; will the funding be available in 3 or 5 years' time?
- The Fire Brigade Union has told us. negotiations take time and duty systems take time to be put in place with no restraints, the timeline for the service staff consultation we believe is January 2025 – can you confirm this is correct? This will be 6 months from the proposal conception in July 2024, 14 months from the consultation start date, eating into your review time.
- Contracted on call, currently, there are many whole-time firefighters who have dual roles, whole time and on-call. Are you aware going forward as there seems to be uncertainty as to whether these dual roles will be available for these dedicated Fire Fighters. Several whole-time firefighters are officers in charge at whole time stations. Will their roles change, and what will be the impact if these roles are not filled by whole-time firefighters on leadership and available of appliances and the impact on training new recruits?
- Never forget, our firefighters are selfless, whenever everyone else is running away from a house or vehicle fire, they are running towards it. Yes, they are well trained but as we all know, fire and floods are unpredictable. They put their lives at risk.

Scott Haberton -

- Regarding the management of fire stations, particularly in terms of staffing rotas and the resulting morale. Could we have some insight into how this critical transition is being managed?
- Regarding recruitment, it is fantastic we are recruiting internally but I have not noticed any advertisements externally so I would like to know how ramp-up plan is being managed in terms of this recruitment effort?
- I have heard some training sessions have been cancelled for on-call firefighters. It seems counter-productive as we would like those people to possibly be contracted on-call. Is this

gap in training being resolved at some point and what the back up plan is if it is not?

The Chair invited Councillor Andy Crump (Portfolio Holder for Fire and Rescue and Community Safety) to respond. Councillor Crump agreed that firefighters were doing a great job and they had to be well trained due to the dangers they faced. They were an asset to the communities they lived and worked in.

He noted that the questions raised did not specifically relate to the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) but in the spirit of openness and transparency, he responded as follows:

- In terms of the timescales that had been referred to in the questions, if the service had done things more quickly, there would have been accusations of rushing, having preconceived ideas and not listening to residents, professionals and firefighters who had proposed reasonable alternatives.
- The radical changes were as a result of the consultation process and resulted in investment of £2.2m over three years. Funding settlements from central government were usually on a one year basis, so he could not provide long-term guarantees but the funding would be there for three years to recruit an additional 30 whole-time fire fighters, ensure stations and appliances were fit for purpose and training and facilities were available for staff. Work was ongoing to protect the budget for Fire and Rescue.
- The Fire Brigade Union had engaged and worked with the service and it was felt a strong working relationship existed. It was anticipated delivery would start in January 2025.
- In terms of firefighters with dual roles, the service was committed to minimising the impact on staff during this period of change. Fire fighters were being supported by the leadership team who would be meeting with staff on a planned basis to discuss proposals. Support was also available from occupational health teams, fire and rescue well-being ambassadors and the new Employee Assist programme.
- Regarding Grey Book models, work had taken place with Trade Unions to understand how the Grey Book could be applied and Councillor Crump was confident agreement could be found.
- Some of the points made required more detailed explanation and Councillor Crump would respond to those outside the meeting.

2. Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service - Community Risk Management Plan

Councillor Andy Crump (Portfolio Holder for Fire and Rescue and Community Safety) moved the recommendation as set out in the report. In doing so, he noted that there had been a high degree of openness and transparency around the Resourcing to Risk consultation and as a result it was felt appropriate to bring to Council this amendment to the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) which was made as a result of the new operating model.

Councillor Adrian Warwick seconded the recommendation.

Amendment

Councillor Sarah Boad moved an amendment which sought the addition of two sentences to the proposed resolution “The Community Risk Management Plan Assurance Panel be asked to look at the new KBM in 3.31 in the report and consider how it can accurately report the range of attendance times that make up the mean average. The Community Risk Management Plan Assurance Panel should report its findings to the Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee.” In doing so Councillor Boad complimented the process associated with the Resourcing to Risk consultation but considered that sufficient notice of this report being brought to Council had not been given. She noted that the issue of mean average attendance times had been raised frequently through the consultation as it was felt the figures could be deceptive and she was, therefore, seeking for the CRMP Assurance Panel to consider the most effective and transparent way of reporting attendance times.

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Kate Rolfe who reserved her right to speak.

Debate

During the course of the debate, councillors made the following points:

- In addition to the concerns of residents in South Warwickshire around response times, residents in Nuneaton and Bedworth were also concerned around the location of appliances.
- It was questioned whether there was sufficient resilience in place to meet the demands that increasing flooding was placing on the service.
- Resources and Fire and Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee already took an active interest in the performance figures of the Fire and Rescue Service and as part of this it was important that there were comparable figures between Services. Oversight of performance should therefore remain with existing Scrutiny mechanisms.

Councillor Kate Rolfe considered that those councillors representing divisions in the south of the county (especially Shipston, Tysoe, Wellesbourne and Bidford) which would be most disadvantaged by the mean average reporting, should support the motion.

Councillor Adrian Warwick considered that the change to performance indicators brought the service into line with the measures used by the Office for National Statistics. Councillor Warwick also thanked the Fire and Rescue Service for its response to pressures caused by flooding.

Making her reply, Councillor Sarah Boad expressed disappointment at the short debate. She considered the issue to be fundamental to the safety and protection of every resident in Warwickshire and whilst it was a service most would never use, it was of great comfort to all. She considered that the amendment would provide an opportunity to consider the best way to present the information to Scrutiny for review and the Liberal Democrat group would be unable to support the original Motion without a commitment to review the new KBM.

In response, Councillor Crump responded that the Resourcing to Risk Consultation had been about ensuring the right resources were available at the right times, that this was not an opportunity to rerun those issues and that Members had engaged with him informally during the

consultation. He echoed the views of Councillors Sinclair and Warwick regarding the scrutiny of the performance measures and noted that the new measure was utilised by the Office for National Statistics and the Home Office and had raised no objections from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS). In terms of the timing for bringing this report, Councillor Crump considered it provided a timely close to the process.

Vote

A vote was held on the Liberal Democrat group amendment which was lost.

A vote was held on the original motion which was agreed by a majority.

Resolved

That Council approves the updated Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service Community Risk Management Plan as set out in Section 3 of the report and Appendix 1 to the report.

3. Additions to the Education Capital Programme 2024/25

Councillor Kam Kaur (Portfolio Holder for Education) moved the recommendation as set out in the report. Councillor Peter Butlin seconded the recommendation and reserved the right to speak.

Debate

Councillor Jeff Clarke, Isobel Seccombe and Robert Tromans welcomed the report and the investment in school places which would benefit residents in their respective divisions. Councillor Seccombe applauded the community-use element of the facilities in Shipston. She welcomed that the proposals built upon previous investments at Kenilworth, Oakley Grove, and Fusilier Way, whereas Councillor Barbara Brown sought further investment in Rugby. Councillor Brown also asked for information regarding how the impact of the 20% uplift in building costs on the feasibility of Carbon Net Zero would be mitigated.

Councillor Butlin explained the Council's position on the delivery of school places and the £20m investment that had been made to meet demand. He noted that the development at Callendar Farm was in response to demand from housing developments in Nuneaton. Councillor Butlin had been delighted to be able to visit developments at Top Farm and Oakley Grove to see the results of the Council's investment.

In response to questions raised during the debate, Councillor Kaur noted that over the last five years two new secondary schools had been delivered in Rugby and work was taking place with developers to deliver another in Houlton. Regarding the impact of the 20% uplift in building costs on the feasibility of Carbon Net Zero, Councillor Kaur noted that whilst these were two important issues, on balance, it was preferred to deliver school places.

Vote

A vote was held. The motion was carried unanimously.

Resolved

That Council:

1. Approves the addition of £2.188m to the capital programme to deliver the scheme at Shipston High School, to be funded by developer contributions.
2. Approves the addition of £16.500m to the capital programme to deliver the new primary school at Callendar Farm to be funded by developer contributions and education capital funding from the Education Capital Investment Fund

4. Warwickshire ZEBRA2 Scheme

Councillor Richard Baxter Payne moved the recommendation as set out in the report. Councillor Yousef Dahmash seconded the recommendation and reserved the right to speak.

Debate

During the course of the debate, members welcomed the report which would see improved air quality and passenger experience. Members were also pleased to see that there had been a rise in bus usage and were keen to see more promotion of local bus services to drive this further. Members complimented the hard work of officers in delivering this scheme. Other Members questioned the exclusion of Stratford-upon-Avon from the scheme, noted the less frequent bus service in Warwick post-Pandemic and noted that in view of government intentions regarding devolution, the Council may have a more involved role in the provision of bus services in future. Councillor Chilvers asked whether the charging infrastructure would be available for other companies to utilise if it was exclusive to Stagecoach.

Councillor Baxter-Payne explained that Stratford-on-Avon District Council had not been in a position to engage with this scheme.

Vote

A vote was held. The motion was carried unanimously.

Resolved

That Council approves the addition to the Capital Programme of £13.864million to be funded from the confirmed Department for Transport (DfT) grant funding, Stagecoach Midlands and Section 106 developer contributions in respect of the Warwickshire Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA)2 Scheme.

5. Youth Justice Plan

Councillor Andy Crump (Portfolio Holder for Fire and Rescue and Community Safety) moved the recommendation as set out in the report.

Councillor Jeff Morgan seconded the recommendation and reserved the right to speak.

Debate

During the course of the debate, councillors made the following points:

- Officers involved in providing services were congratulated on their positive contribution
- Reoffending rates quoted in the report were 2.5 years old and whilst it was understood that central government were slow to release comparative national data, more recent data for Warwickshire would be welcomed to understand direction of travel in a more timely way.
- It was noted that the service was jointly funded and the security of long-term funding was questioned.
- The focus on prevention at the heart of the report was welcomed, however, it was also pointed out that with the prison service over-capacity there was room for improvement and tackling wider issues, for instance in education and supporting early years provision, would be helpful.
- References in the report to SEND and emotional wellbeing were welcomed and it was questioned whether education psychology would make an impact. In response, it was highlighted that the meeting of Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee had considered this issue in the previous week and a positive discussion on this point had taken place.
- Statistics relating to violence against the person had increased and an understanding of what could be done to diffuse this was sought.

Responding to the debate, Councillor Morgan noted that the Youth Justice Plan was a statutory requirement. He welcomed the local “child first” focus and, reflecting on his tenure as Portfolio Holder, congratulated the officers for their delivery of a high performing service in often challenging circumstances. Particularly noting a reduction in first time entrants and reoffending, he highlighted that Warwickshire was performing above average on most of the metrics set out in the report. He informed Council that whilst violence against the person was increasing, the numbers were actually very small and isolated cases presented a distorted picture.

Councillor Crump also highlighted the high performance and congratulated officers on their work. In response to questions raised, he suggested that Overview and Scrutiny could lobby for the more timely production of comparative data and stated that he was not aware of any plans to change funding received from partners.

Vote

A vote was held. The motion was carried unanimously.

Resolved

That Council approves the Warwickshire Youth Justice Service Strategic Plan 2024/25.

6. Notice of Motion

Councillor Penny-Anne O'Donnell moved the following motion, which was seconded by Councillor Adrian Warwick:

In their drive to be the Government of change Chancellor Rachel Reeves is proposing to restrict Winter Fuel payments to only those pensioners on pension credit. Winter Fuel payments play a significant role in helping older residents of Warwickshire and across the UK to afford heating during the coldest months thereby preventing 'heat or eat' dilemmas and safeguarding health.

Restricting winter fuel payments will impact over 107,000 residents across Warwickshire and will disproportionately impact rural communities where homes are more likely to be older and less energy efficient. Rural houses have on average 49.6% energy efficiency compared to 65.5% in city centres.

This will leave the most vulnerable Warwickshire residents, on fixed incomes, no time to plan for the extra financial burden which could in turn jeopardise not only their finances but also their health. Public Health England reports a 1.5% increase in excess winter deaths for every degree Celsius drop below 18°C, underscoring the critical need for adequate heating.

This Council resolves to:

1. Bring forward a Council-led local awareness campaign to ensure eligible Warwickshire residents are made aware of the availability and eligibility criteria of Pension Credit, including through the delivery of Council services and partnerships with the VCSE, to help ensure that all eligible pensioners in Warwickshire are supported in claiming their entitlement.
2. Requests that the Leader of the Council write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to ask for funding for a local advertising and outreach campaign to raise awareness about Pension Credit and other benefits, targeting pensioners who may be eligible but are not currently claiming.
3. Request that the Leader of the Council write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, urging a review of the decision to means-test the Winter Fuel Payment and asking the Government to ensure that vulnerable pensioners, particularly those who do not claim Pension Credit, are protected from fuel poverty.
4. Encourage all elected members to sign the 'Save the Winter Fuel Payment for Struggling Pensioners' petition being run by Age UK

In proposing the motion, Councillor O'Donnell stated that whilst she appreciated tough decisions were part of politics, tough choices did not have to be cruel and the impact of the loss of the winter fuel payment would be an increase in winter deaths. She stated that the British Medical Association noted that pensioners were more likely to be fuel poor, being more vulnerable during the winter months and spending more time in the home. AGE UK had spoken out against the lack of notice given and the compensation measures were the wrong choice. Councillor O'Donnell said that there would be a disproportionate impact on rural properties due to the rising cost of heating and limited access to health services. The proposals failed to consider the stigma which

would prevent pensioners from claiming pension credit and, in any event, many thousands were just above the cut off for the means test. She argued that a more compassionate approach was needed.

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

Debate:

During a robust and lengthy debate, Members made a number of points, commenting on both the national picture and the local impact. The key points from the debate which supported the motion were:

- The cut-off point to claim pension credit was below the new state pension full rate weekly payment, excluding anyone claiming the new state pension of £221.20 per week. This was perceived as a low figure which it would be difficult to live on. Additionally, some residents would be disproportionately affected – eg single pensioners, women, those with high energy needs due to disease or disability, and those living in energy inefficient homes.
- Reaching vulnerable groups to assist them in claiming pension credit would be difficult as they were unlikely to subscribe to the internet or possess a smartphone.
- The claim form was unwieldy and off putting. Additionally, people who devoted their time to caring for others did not have time to fill-in such lengthy forms. Assurance around support for the Citizens Advice Bureau and other voluntary bodies advising clients on the completion of the forms was sought.
- As people made difficult choices between eating and heating, there would be an increasing impact on GP services and COPD services.
- There was stigma attached to claiming pension credit and many pensioners would be too proud to do so. In any event, if all those who were entitled to claim pension credit did so, it would result in a net loss to the Treasury rather than a saving.
- There were other options open to the government such as basing the payment on council tax bandings.
- People were making efforts to reduce their bills in a number of ways – eg reducing the proportion of the rooms in their homes which they used in an effort to save fuel as the cost of moving home and the price to purchase bungalows was not economical, or travelling on buses during the day to keep warm.
- It was anticipated that local government would be expected to foot the bill to meet the gap in support that would be created by this new policy. Whilst this Council provided support through the Welfare Support Grant and Warm Hubs (and would continue to do so), that funding was for all residents in need to access and was not sufficient to fill the gap left by this decision from central government. It was also noted that it was not clear whether the criteria for using the Household Support Fund would enable its use for this purpose.
- The cessation of the Winter Fuel Allowance was not in the Labour Manifesto (although it had appeared for previous elections) and it was questioned whether this had always been intended.
- The Winter Fuel Payment was of significant support to those on fixed incomes with no other means of inflating their income. The government had supported other groups (Train Drivers and Junior Doctors were cited) to increase their incomes, as well as permission being given to energy companies to increase prices, so the direction of the government's choices was therefore clear.

- A more considered view may have been achieved if time had been taken to consult with MPs and capture their concerns.
- The point of rural heating policy was raised, specifically around the energy efficiency of rural homes not on the main network and using LPG gas was raised and it was hoped that some opportunities to develop local heat networks could now be explored.
- Councillors Brett Beetham and Robert Tromans shared the emotive experiences of their residents.

Conversely, the following points were made against supporting the Motion:

- Pensioners in receipt of other benefits were eligible for the winter fuel payment, not just pension credit.
- The new government had inherited the budget from the previous Conservative government and the new chancellor wanted to target resources where they were needed. Some changes were therefore anticipated in the Autumn Budget Statement on 30 October 2024 but there was a timing issue around informing people about the cessation of the Winter Fuel Allowance due to the date it was calculated from.
- In the context of the timing issue above and not knowing what was in the Autumn Statement, the Motion was poorly timed, although there was some sympathy for the feeling behind it. In response to this particular point, it was argued that winter was fast approaching and in the absence of information about what other action the chancellor would be proposing, now was the time to defend vulnerable pensioners.
- There would be a major publicity campaign regarding the change. It had been suggested that 80,000 people were entitled to pension credit and not claiming; this indicated that it was possible to identify who they were, and support could therefore be targeted appropriately. It was considered that this was an effort that the Council could support.
- The previous government was blamed for poor choices around NHS and GP services, the introduction of the bedroom tax, and cuts to local authorities resulting in spending pressures.
- Whilst it was agreed that application forms for pension credit were unwieldy, the previous government had had opportunity to update the process of application.
- Whilst it was a difficult choice, there were other people facing similar dilemmas, people who were using foodbanks and facing significant pressures on their finances, so a choice had to be made due to the poor financial position left by the previous government.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Warwick reflected on the impact that the pandemic and war in Ukraine had had on the national economy and the way that the government had dealt with it. He noted that locally 107,000 pensioners would be affected by the policy and he reminded the meeting that in the previous year they had also had additional help in the form of a cost of living allowance and the energy price cap was due to rise from 1 October 2024. Whilst he understood the comments that there would be a new budget announced at the end of October, he considered that people would already be cold and suffering by the time they could benefit from any new policies. He responded to comments regarding the inheritance of a £22bn black hole in the nation's finances by recalling that the previous government had inherited a poorly performing economy which had been turned around to be one of the best performing in Europe. In that context this seemed to be a minor saving with a devastating impact.

Responding to the debate, Councillor O'Donnell asserted that it was not opportunistic in terms of timing, but had been brought to represent the concerns of local residents. She noted the

comments that had been made regarding the application process for pension credit and the choices that the new government had had to take but asserted that the aim of the motion was to seek alternative solutions as there were other ways of applying the policy. She also thanked Members for sharing their residents' personal stories.

Vote:

A recorded vote was requested. The results were.

Votes for

Councillors Richard Baxter-Payne, Brett Beetham, Margaret Bell, Sarah Boad, Peter Butlin, Jonathan Chilvers, Jeff Clarke, John Cooke, Andy Crump, Yousef Dahmash, Tracey Drew, Judy Falp, Bill Gifford, Clare Golby, Brian Hammersley, Dave Humphreys, Marian Humphreys, Andy Jenns, Kam Kaur, Dale Keeling, Justin Kerridge, Christopher Kettle, Chris Mills, Jeff Morgan, Penny-Anne O'Donnell, Bhagwant Singh Pandher, Daren Pemberton, Will Roberts, Kate Rolfe, Jerry Roodhouse, Isobel Seccombe, Ian Shenton, Jill Simpson-Vince, Tim Sinclair, Mejar Singh, Rik Spencer, Heather Timms, Mandy Tromans, Rob Tromans, and Adrian Warwick (40)

Votes against

Councillors Barbara Brown, Jackie D'Arcy, Sarah Feeney, and John Holland (4)

There were no abstentions.

Resolved:

That:

1. A Council-led local awareness campaign be brought forward to ensure eligible Warwickshire residents are made aware of the availability and eligibility criteria of Pension Credit, including through the delivery of Council services and partnerships with the VCSE, to help ensure that all eligible pensioners in Warwickshire are supported in claiming their entitlement.
2. Council requests that the Leader of the Council write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to ask for funding for a local advertising and outreach campaign to raise awareness about Pension Credit and other benefits, targeting pensioners who may be eligible but are not currently claiming.
3. Council requests that the Leader of the Council write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, urging a review of the decision to means-test the Winter Fuel Payment and asking the Government to ensure that vulnerable pensioners, particularly those who do not claim Pension Credit, are protected from fuel poverty.
4. Council encourages all elected members to sign the 'Save the Winter Fuel Payment for Struggling Pensioners' petition being run by Age UK

7. Member Question Time (Standing Order 7)

Question on Notice

(a) Councillor John Holland asked Councillor Peter Butlin the following question:

It is reported that the last bank in Warwick will close next summer. A new bank hub is proposed staffed by the Post Office and with staff from the major banks each attending once per week on different days. Will Cllr Butlin ask our Property Officers to explore the possibility of locating this hub in Shire Hall, perhaps near the Post Office?

Councillor Butlin responded that he would undertake the exploratory work necessary to investigate the options to support this provision.

(b) Councillor Jerry Roodhouse asked Councillor Kam Kaur (on behalf of Councillor Matecki) the following question regarding Home To School Transport:

The County Council released a statement on the website September 4th stating "We are aware of the ongoing issues with bus passes and school transport and are working diligently to address them as swiftly as possible".

Could the Portfolio Holder state what caused the delay and is there a waiting list for passes - if so how many and for how long have these families been waiting and what actions have been taken to resolve the matter.

Councillor Kaur apologised to those families who had been affected, particularly to the young people in Year 7 who were using the buses for the first time. She explained that the system had not been able to cope demand and whilst a spike in demand at this time of year was not unusual, there had been a much higher rate of applications received after the May deadline than normal, leaving less time to organise an efficient network for those who required it. The current year had also seen fewer paid for seats available, further adding to the demand, and an increase in appeals. Over 300 calls and emails had been received and responded to and Councillor Kaur was pleased to say that the majority of issues had now been dealt with although the Council was still working with some individuals. Going forward, the Council would be looking at the system and communications. A briefing note on this topic would be shared.

(c) Councillor Sarah Feeney posed the following question to Councillor Seccombe (on behalf of Councillor Markham):

Residents are raising concerns that ADHD waiting lists are now so full that it is unlikely that some children will not get assessments by the time they finish their educational career. I raised this with Cllr Beetham last year in his report back to full council that ADHD waiting times were much longer than those for Autism. Please could you tell us what the waiting times for ADHD assessments are.

Councillor Seccombe stated that provision of this service was the role and responsibility of the NHS and they could be approached for a response direct. However, the Director of Children and Young People would be willing to support Councillor Feeney to obtain the information.

Questions without Notice

- (d) Councillor Jonathan Chilvers asked Councillor Heather Timms for an update on progress for rural local heat networks which Councillor Timms agreed to provide in writing.
- (e) Following on from item 4 on the agenda (Warwickshire ZEBRA2 Scheme), Councillor Jonathan Chilvers requested confirmation of whether the bus electric infrastructure was exclusively available to Stagecoach and Councillor Richard Baxter-Payne agreed a response would be provided.

8. Any Other items of Urgent Business

None.

The meeting rose at 1.40pm

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Chair