

County Council

Date: Tuesday 16 March 2021
Time: 10.00 am
Venue: Microsoft Teams

Membership

Councillor Alan Cockburn (Chair)
Councillor Peter Gilbert (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Helen Adkins
Councillor Jo Barker
Councillor Margaret Bell
Councillor Parminder Singh Birdi
Councillor Sarah Boad
Councillor Mike Brain
Councillor Peter Butlin
Councillor Les Caborn
Councillor Mark Cargill
Councillor Jonathan Chilvers
Councillor Jeff Clarke
Councillor John Cooke
Councillor Andy Crump
Councillor Yousef Dahmash
Councillor Corinne Davies
Councillor Nicola Davies
Councillor Neil Dirveiks
Councillor Judy Falp
Councillor Jenny Fradgley
Councillor Bill Gifford
Councillor Daniel Gissane
Councillor Clare Golby
Councillor Seb Gran
Councillor Colin Hayfield
Councillor John Holland
Councillor John Horner
Councillor Andy Jenns
Councillor Kam Kaur
Councillor Keith Kondakor
Councillor Jeff Morgan
Councillor Maggie O'Rourke
Councillor Bhagwant Singh Pandher
Councillor Anne Parry
Councillor Dave Parsons

Councillor Caroline Phillips
Councillor Wallace Redford
Councillor David Reilly
Councillor Clive Rickhards
Councillor Howard Roberts
Councillor Kate Rolfe
Councillor Jerry Roodhouse
Councillor Andy Sargeant
Councillor Isobel Seccombe OBE
Councillor Dave Shilton
Councillor Jill Simpson-Vince
Councillor Dominic Skinner
Councillor Heather Timms
Councillor Adrian Warwick
Councillor Alan Webb
Councillor Chris Williams
Councillor Pam Williams
Councillor Andrew Wright

Items on the agenda: -

9. Signed Minutes for Council 16 March 2021

3 - 22

Monica Fogarty
Chief Executive
Warwickshire County Council
Shire Hall, Warwick

County Council

Tuesday 16 March 2021

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

Councillor Alan Cockburn (Chair), Councillor Peter Gilbert (Vice-Chair), Councillor Helen Adkins, Councillor Jo Barker, Councillor Margaret Bell, Councillor Parminder Singh Birdi, Councillor Sarah Boad, Councillor Mike Brain, Councillor Peter Butlin, Councillor Les Caborn, Councillor Mark Cargill, Councillor Jonathan Chilvers, Councillor Jeff Clarke, Councillor John Cooke, Councillor Andy Crump, Councillor Yousef Dahmash, Councillor Corinne Davies, Councillor Nicola Davies, Councillor Neil Dirveiks, Councillor Judy Falp, Councillor Jenny Fradgley, Councillor Bill Gifford, Councillor Daniel Gissane, Councillor Clare Golby, Councillor Seb Gran, Councillor Colin Hayfield, Councillor John Holland, Councillor John Horner, Councillor Andy Jenns, Councillor Kam Kaur, Councillor Keith Kondakor, Councillor Jeff Morgan, Councillor Maggie O'Rourke, Councillor Bhagwant Singh Pandher, Councillor Anne Parry, Councillor Dave Parsons, Councillor Caroline Phillips, Councillor Wallace Redford, Councillor David Reilly, Councillor Clive Rickhards, Councillor Howard Roberts, Councillor Kate Rolfe, Councillor Jerry Roodhouse, Councillor Andy Sargeant, Councillor Isobel Seccombe OBE, Councillor Dave Shilton, Councillor Jill Simpson-Vince, Councillor Dominic Skinner, Councillor Heather Timms, Councillor Adrian Warwick, Councillor Alan Webb, Councillor Chris Williams, Councillor Pam Williams and Councillor Andrew Wright

Others Present

1. General

(1) Apologies for Absence

Councillor Seb Gran had extended his apologies stating that he would be late to join the meeting.

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

No declarations on interest were made.

(3) Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on 8 February 2021 were agreed as an accurate record to be signed by the Chair.

(4) Chair's announcements

1) Retirement of Jane Pollard, Legal Service Manager

Councillor Alan Cockburn (Chair of Council) announced the forthcoming retirement of Jane Pollard. He read out the following statement.

"Jane Pollard, Legal Service Manager, who many of you will know from her many years of committed service to the Council in roles within Legal and Scrutiny is retiring at the end of March.

Jane has been with the Council for 39 years and 3 months. Jane trained as a solicitor with the Council and went on to hold many roles including as a solicitor, managing the scrutiny function and as Legal Service Manager for the Corporate and Commercial Legal teams. Jane has practiced in many areas of law, as diverse as prosecutions, governance and child safeguarding.

When she started at the Council, women were not permitted to wear trousers, textbooks on practicing law still sounded surprised that women had joined the profession, and the legal team would have tea and biscuits at 3pm in the County Solicitor's office, with the fire lit on a cold day.

The Council and the legal profession have changed significantly during this time, but Jane has remained a constant. Jane is a force of nature who knows more about the workings of local government and the legislation that underpins it than the authors of Cross on Local Government Law and the Encyclopaedia of Local Government Law combined. She also has a razor-sharp commercial acumen and an ability to cut through the weeds to find the real issues. She has given the benefit of her wisdom and training to many colleagues during her time with the Council and has ensured that we have an excellent group in place to pick up where she leaves off.

She will be a tremendous loss to the Council but whilst we will miss her greatly; we wish her a long and very happy retirement".

Members joined to wish Jane Pollard a happy retirement.

Councillor Izzi Seccombe (Leader of the Council) stated that when Jane made a decision or offered advice you knew that it was sound. She was thanked for her help and guidance over the years (and for her Victoria sponge cakes).

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse (Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group) thanked Jane for her support over the years and for her guidance when she thought the constitution was not being adhered to. She had been a great asset to the council and to the people of Warwickshire.

Councillor Dave Parsons (Deputy Leader of the Labour Group) echoed the previous comments adding that when Jane provided advice it was given in a way that was clear and concise. She also displayed a great sense of humour.

Councillor Judy Falp stated that she had known Jane for many years. They had shared many experiences and she would be missed by the County Council and the district and borough councils.

2. Retiring County Councillors

Councillor Alan Cockburn noted that a number of serving councillors will not be standing in the May 2021 local elections. He invited any retiring members to say a few words.

Councillor Colin Hayfield stated that he had served 20 years on the council with 16 years on Cabinet. When he joined the county having served on a borough council it was like moving from junior to secondary school. The council provided a kind and friendly political arena and is staffed by kind and professional officers. He had undertaken various roles but as an archaeologist and historian he was happiest when he held the portfolio for museums and records. He stated that he will miss the camaraderie of the council but will not miss the traffic getting to Shire Hall. The new council, he concluded, will have many post-Covid challenges to face especially in the world of education.

Councillor Les Caborn had become involved in local politics in 1980. He moved to Warwickshire in 1986 and had served on Warwick District Council for 24 years. He had always tried to make a difference especially in rural areas. Now was the time to step aside and spend more time with his wife.

Councillor Alan Webb joined Rugby Borough Council in 1984. During his time there he served as Mayor and Leader of the Council. He was elected, along with his wife Mary, to Warwickshire County Council in 2013. His time in politics had been marked by the loss of some good friends. He closed by stating that unitarisation would place a greater burden on fewer shoulders.

Having been a County Councillor for 20 years Councillor Dave Shilton expressed his disappointment at not being selected to stand in the 2021 election. He had worked hard for Kenilworth and served on many committees with a view to making a difference to people's lives. He thanked officers with whom he had worked.

Councillor Mark Cargill thanked officers for their support during his term of office. He recognised that it is important to work in the interest of residents. The County Council is well run and professional. He would continue to serve the district and town councils in his area but felt that he wished to spend more time with his family.

Councillor Mike Brain joined the parish council in Long Marston in 2001. In 2002 he was asked to stand on Stratford District Council and did so for 19 years. He joined the County Council in 2013. Officers were thanked for their support to him. Also thanked was Councillor Wallace Redford who has always been there to help him. Finally, Councillor Brain remembered Councillor Bill Olnier who was a "true gentleman".

Councillor Alan Cockburn had served on the County Council for 20 years. In that time, he had been on a range of bodies including Cabinet. He considered that the County Council is well run and thanks to a degree of prudence, well financed.

Councillor Izzi Seccombe closed off this section by stating that the Council is made up of friends as well as colleagues. Politics happen, she said, but friendships run very deep. She thanked all those members who are retiring in May and remembered those Councillors who had passed on namely Bill Olnier, Richard Chattaway and Bob Stevens. Councillor Seccombe particularly thanked Councillor Les Caborn and Councillor Colin Hayfield both of whom will be leaving the Cabinet. She thanked Councillor Cockburn for his work as Chair of Council at a very difficult time. Finally she thanked Councillor Brain for his friendship over the years.

(5) Petitions

The Chair welcomed Mr Philip Stickley to the Council meeting. Mr Stickley had organised a petition against the proposed closure of the council's outdoor education centre in North Wales, Marle Hall. The petition had attracted almost 7000 signatures.

Mr Stickley explained that he had been a teacher in Warwickshire schools for 20 years and for 15 years had taken groups of young people to Marle Hall. His work now continues with an outdoor education charity. Mr Stickley stated:

- Young people in the UK are currently at the centre of an obesity and mental health crisis. One-third of young people are overweight or obese. One in ten have mental health problems.
- The current Pandemic has exacerbated the problems.
- Outdoor education plays an important part in helping to maintain wellbeing in youngsters.
- The council has an important role in helping to secure young people's wellbeing.
- The 2016 Nature Connections report identified benefits of outdoor education including health, the development of social skills, team working, improved behaviour and a greater understanding of nature.
- Outdoor education should be provided in settings such as Snowdonia. Some providers deliver their services in an enclosure which is a poor substitute.
- The staff at Marle Hall are experienced experts in walking, climbing, canoeing etc. Some other providers use gap-year students to deliver classes. This is not ideal as they often lack the experience they need.
- Outdoor education can be transformational. Parents are often amazed at the difference in their children when they return from their outing.
- Marle Hall is not run down. It carries fifty years of history with it having provided breaks for Warwickshire children since 1971.
- If Marle Hall is allowed to close it will be impossible to reproduce.
- Any proceeds from the sale of Marle Hall will be lost in general reserves.

Councillor Colin Hayfield (Portfolio Holder for Education and Learning) thanked Mr Stickley for the petition adding that he knows Marle Hall well and that the council recognises the value of outdoor education. Council was informed that no final decision has been made regarding the future of Marle Hall. All options will be considered.

(6) Public Speaking

There were no public speakers registered.

2. Warwickshire's Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-26

Councillor Les Caborn introduced the published report, explaining that the strategy provides a high level plan aimed at reducing inequalities and improving the health of citizens. The refresh has taken full account of the challenges presented by the Covid-19 Pandemic and has made use of the countywide Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. Councillor Les Caborn added that whilst people's health in Warwickshire is generally better than the national average there remain variations across the county. One in four adults will experience some form of mental health problem in their life and to help address this additional funding is to be provided. Health improvements can take a long time to be realised. For example, smoking cessation programmes have been successful but have taken 25 years to reach the stage they have. Prevention needs to be prioritised as does the need to make communities stronger. The Health and Wellbeing Board and Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee will monitor the delivery of the strategy.

Councillor Wallace Redford seconded the motion and reserved the right to speak.

Councillor John Holland agreed that mental health should be a high priority. It is difficult to move forward when cuts are being made to budgets. Children, he added, have suffered during the Pandemic as have people of working age. The key to successful service delivery is joint working especially with the district and borough councils.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse commended the document noting that it had been developed jointly with partners. He did not agree with the JSNA boundaries. Poverty and mental health, he concluded, are major challenges facing communities.

Councillor Nicola Davies commented that it is important not to overlook personal safety. Women need to be able to access open space and exercise opportunities in a safe way.

Councillor Johnathan Chilvers (Leader of the Green Group) questioned the ability to deliver the strategy at a time that cuts are being made to budgets.

Councillor Jo Barker stated that it had been a pleasure helping to develop the strategy. She suggested that health and wellbeing should be factored into every policy decision the council makes.

Councillor Neil Dirveiks welcomed the report but questioned why it did not contain any SMART targets. He asked if these were to follow.

Councillor Dave Parsons agreed that the document should include a series of targets that could be used to provide an indication of success. He was concerned over the continuing situation regarding inequalities and suggested that closer work with the district and borough councils could assist in relieving this. A study by Cardiff University was cited. In it the relationship between property rentals and in-work poverty was recognised.

Councillor Helen Adkins (Leader of the Labour Group) agreed that the strategy requires targets. She also echoed previous comments regarding the impact of budget cuts on services. Austerity she said, has had a serious impact on people's health and whilst the strategy is welcome it has been a long time in development.

Councillor Keith Kondakor agreed with comments over the length of time it takes to realise improvements in people's health. That more people are walking and cycling was commended but there remains a need to provide the infrastructure to support this. Health and wellbeing should be at the forefront of everything the council does. This has not been the case with the Transforming Nuneaton scheme.

Councillor Maggie O'Rourke explained that there is a common misconception that health and wellbeing is only about health. The factors that impact on wellbeing include transport, education etc. The challenges faced in Warwickshire are spread across the whole of the county. The two-tier system of governance only places barriers in the way of efforts to improve health and wellbeing.

Councillor Izzi Seccombe welcomed the strategy. She noted that the document will be supported by a delivery plan which will set out targets. The impact of strategies such as the one before Council is significant. For example, the life expectancy gap between the north and south of Warwickshire used to be 12 years. This is now down to 4 years. Changes in lifestyle and life expectancy can take many years to realise. For example, the health impacts of the mining industry in north Warwickshire are still apparent. Councillor Seccombe agreed that personal safety is paramount. The strategy is not just about health and wellbeing. It is about peoples' lives.

Councillor Wallace Redford, the seconder of the motion did not feel that the strategy was lacking in any way. Its priorities are clear.

Councillor Les Caborn thanked members for their comments. He noted that by working smarter more can be achieved for the same amount. The JSNA he added, is not a fixed document. It is constantly evolving. He agreed that personal safety is of great importance and drew council's attention to the engagement by the Police and Crime Commissioner in the production of the strategy. Councillor Jo Barker was thanked for the assistance she had given to the production of the document. Finally, Councillor Caborn confirmed that targets will be set and published.

A vote was held.

Resolved:

That Council approves the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-26.

3. Warwickshire's Director of Public Health Annual Report 2020/21

Councillor Les Caborn introduced this item thanking the Director of Public Health, Shade Agboola, and her team for their hard work over the last year. He commended the report adding that it is part of a suite of documents along with the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Covid-19 Recovery Plan. The use of case studies in the report was welcomed as was the focus on certain key areas such as self-harm, obesity, alcohol consumption and dementia. The role of the Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee was recognised as was the importance of working in partnership.

Councillor Margaret Bell seconded the motion and reserved the right to speak.

Councillor Keith Kondakor welcomed the report adding that attention should be paid not just to the homeless but also to those living in substandard accommodation. Mortality rates in Nuneaton and Bedworth remain very high. The causes of this phenomenon are well known. The Pandemic has not helped. Lockdown has led to weight increases and in many cases a general reduction in activity. Councillor Kondakor concluded by stating that it is important to deliver on reports such as the one before council. However, in order to do this it is important to have the funds.

Councillor Jill Simpson-Vince thanked the Public Health team, for their hard work. That they were able to produce an annual report as well as dealing with the Pandemic was remarkable. This view was echoed by Councillor Clare Golby.

Council agreed that the report should be included as part of the welcome pack for new members following the May 2021 elections.

Councillor Helen Adkins stated that the incidence of many serious health conditions including bowel cancer, diabetes, depression and self-harm made for harrowing reading. Austerity leads to health inequality she added. There is a need to invest in education, accommodation, employment opportunities and efforts to reduce child poverty. By reducing budgets people's lives have been jeopardised. These views were echoed by Councillor Dave Parsons who further commended the report.

Councillor Kam Kaur (Portfolio Holder for Customer and Transformation) challenged the view that reductions in funding had had an impact on life expectancy. She stated that the Transformation Programme had enabled the council to continue to deliver good quality services even allowing for reductions in funding. Further, it had enabled the council to invest in the future.

Councillor Margaret Bell, who had seconded the motion, thanked the Director of Public Health for her report. The extensive use of data allows practitioners to see where resources should be targeted. It has shown the impact of the Pandemic and of the resulting lockdowns. Councillor Bell called for the development of a health inequalities action plan. In addition, any communications need to be tailored to meet the needs of the communities they are aimed at. Prevention is very important as is the need to signpost people to services. Portfolio Holder meetings have been very useful and need to continue she concluded.

In closing, Councillor Caborn stated that a new homelessness action plan is to be created. He also stated that there will be a health dashboard on the Power BI. Finally, it was noted that acute providers such as the South Warwickshire Foundation Trust have acknowledged the need to take full account of the Director of Public Health's report when planning their own services.

A vote was held.

50 votes for the recommendation
0 votes against the recommendation
0 abstentions

Resolved:

That Council supports the Director of Public Health Annual Report 2020/21

4. Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service Integrated Risk Management Plan 2020 - 2025

Councillor Andy Crump introduced the report, reminding council that the IRMP had been considered by Cabinet and the Resources and Fire and Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Council was informed that there is a statutory duty to produce an IRMP which ensures that the service makes the best use of people, resources and equipment in a well managed and risk assessed way.

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

Councillor Sarah Boad (Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group) stressed the need for members to read and understand the IRMP. Regarding the responses to the consultation that had been undertaken Councillor Boad noted that 22% of respondents had objected to a proposal that the workforce of the Fire and Rescue Service should reflect the communities it serves. This was regrettable and surprising. The service has a good record regarding diversity, and it continues to work with communities to ensure that it recruits the correct people for the job.

Councillor Maggie O'Rourke agreed with Councillor Boad's comments adding that it is important to challenge peoples' prejudices. Having been the Labour Group Spokesperson on Fire and Rescue for a number of years she commended the service for its response during the pandemic and its support to the communities it serves.

Councillor Mark Cargill expressed his support for the Fire and Rescue Service and in particular for the staff at Alcester fire station. He had seen a mention on social media of a proposal to close Stratford fire station and sought clarification on the matter.

Councillor John Cooke commented on the size of the document pack and commended the service for its work during the Pandemic.

Councillor Keith Kondakor observed that the motorway system in Warwickshire places a major burden onto the service. He had heard that Bedworth fire station was set to lose an appliance and sought clarification on this. The service has done good work around fire prevention but there is a danger of it being stretched too thin he said.

Councillor Wallace Redford commended the report adding that the service is now firmly embedded in the community.

Councillor Adrian Warwick, who seconded the motion commended the service for its work around the Pandemic. The document before council set out priorities but it is important to appreciate that they are part of an evolving picture. He agreed with the concerns expressed around diversity but suggested that it is important to focus on the positives around the consultation. The technical ability of the service and its ethos are of importance. Finally, Councillor Warwick thanked the Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee for its work.

In closing Councillor Andy Crump acknowledged the contributions made by Councillors Boad and O'Rourke to the development of the Fire and Rescue Service. He agreed with comments made around diversity. The work of the Chief Fire Officer and his team was commended. Regarding the future of Stratford fire station Councillor Crump offered to brief Councillor Cargill on this at a later date. Responding to Councillor Kondakor's concerns over the appliance at Bedworth Councillor Crump stated that members should not always believe what they hear in their constituency. Any proposals for changes will be the subject of discussion with local members. Appliances need to be in the right place and the decisions around this will be based on evidence.

A vote was held.

49 votes for the recommendations

1 vote (Councillor Keith Kondakor) against the recommendations

0 abstentions

Resolved:

That Council:

1. Notes the outcome of the eight-week Draft Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2020-2025 consultation process.
2. Approves the IRMP 2020 - 2025 and the proposals therein.
 - **Proposal 1** - Ensure our workforce and ethos reflect the diverse communities we serve
 - **Proposal 2** - Assess our capabilities to improve our ways of working in response to any future pandemics
 - **Proposal 3** - Assess our overall resource capacity to ensure our personnel and physical assets are in the right place and at the right time to deliver our statutory duties
 - **Proposal 4** - Develop further opportunities to support the wider community health outcomes and help to protect Social Care and the NHS
 - **Proposal 5** - Implement digital solutions to enhance our service delivery
3. Authorises the Cabinet to approve the annual action plans to deliver the IRMP.

5. Appointment of Independent Persons

Councillor Izzi Seccombe proposed the motion and was moved by Councillor Peter Butlin. The importance of the independent persons was emphasised by Councillor Seccombe.

A vote was held.

53 votes for the recommendation

1 vote against the recommendation

0 abstentions

Resolved:

Council extends the term of office of the following independent persons until 19th October 2021

Mr David Stone
Mr Garth Murphy
Ms Maureen O'Sullivan
Mr Ray Tomkinson
Mr Howard Darling
Ms Mumtaz Goolam

6. Notices of Motion

Motion 1 - Family Support Workers

Councillor Caroline Phillips proposed the following motion.

"It has been reported to local councillors that a significant decline has occurred in the number of families accessing the aid of the Family Support Workers by as much as 30-40% in some settings in Warwickshire

In support of its commitment to the Family Support Worker service, this Council asks the Strategic Director for People to investigate the reasons why there has been a sharp decline in access figures and to report the outcome of the investigation to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee".

The motion was seconded by Councillor Corinne Davies who reserved her right to speak.

In support of her motion Councillor Phillips stated that Family Support Workers were now only available at children's centres for 16 hours a week. This was down from a maximum of 90 hours a week. The Family Support Workers are at the front line of support for incidents of domestic abuse. Their presence can help prevent problems turning into crises.

Amendment

Councillor Jeff Morgan tabled the following amendment.

"Regarding the concerns raised with some local councillors and to maintain the high number of families accessing the aid of the Family Support workers across the county, this Council will maintain its commitment to the Family Support Workers' service and will continue to work with providers to ensure effective service delivery to those most in need and asks that the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee keeps the Family Support Workers' service under review as part of its on-going performance monitoring".

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Pam Williams who reserved her right to speak.

Councillor Jeff Morgan stated that he could not accept the Labour Group motion as it was inaccurate. Across Warwickshire access to Family Support Workers is very high.

Debate

Councillor Dave Parsons suggested that the evidence is very clear. The Labour Group motion asks the council to investigate the circumstances behind a reported decline. Councillor Helen Adkins questioned why there appeared to be an effort to make it appear that there was no issue to investigate. Issues, she said, should not be brushed under the carpet.

Councillor Bill Gifford questioned whether the Conservative amendment could be regarded as such. The Labour motion was not unreasonable in his view.

Councillor Keith Kondakor supported the Labour motion adding that if Councillor Caroline Phillips had heard of a decline in access to services then the circumstances should be investigated. No criticism was being levelled at the service.

Councillor Pam Williams, the seconder of the amendment, stated that she has witnessed an increase in services provided by Family Support Workers. She suggested that with Covid recovery it may be a good time to review the service. No such review has been undertaken since 2007.

Councillor Corinne Davies, the seconder of the original motion, informed council that it can be difficult to contact Family Support Workers. Forms have to be completed or the council phoned. For some people this makes access difficult.

Councillor Jeff Morgan, the proposer of the amendment, reminded council that the reason behind the amendment was to contest the claim that service delivery by Family Support Workers had declined. If there are issues at some centres, then these need to be flagged up separately. He suggested that the Pandemic may have led to a drop in foot fall but a drop in attendance does not necessarily mean that services have been reduced in quantity. The Family Support Line can be used to access Family Support Workers. Their role has changed during the Pandemic. For example, they have not been involved in stay and play sessions.

Councillor Caroline Phillips, the proposer of the motion, noted that the figures on which the motion is based are for pre-pandemic levels of support. Telephone discussions and signposting are not good enough she added. Councillor Phillips closed by stating that family break down and debt contribute to ill health. There has been a decline to access to services in some areas and this should be explored.

Vote

A vote was held on the Conservative amendment.

Votes for the amendment 34
Votes against the amendment 19
Abstentions 0

The Conservative amendment thus became the substantive motion that was duly voted on.

Votes for the substantive motion 34
Votes against the substantive motion 17
Abstentions 0

Resolved:

Page 11

County Council

16.03.21

"Regarding the concerns raised with some local councillors and to maintain the high number of families accessing the aid of the Family Support workers across the county, this Council will maintain its commitment to the Family Support Workers' service and will continue to work with providers to ensure effective service delivery to those most in need and asks that the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee keeps the Family Support Workers' service under review as part of its on-going performance monitoring".

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned for lunch at 12.55

The meeting re-convened at 13.45

Motion 2 – Health Centres

Councillor Keith Kondakor moved the following motion.

"This council recognises the massive contribution health centres have played during the Covid pandemic. However, some areas are currently underserved with difficulty in finding suitable locations for blood tests, blood donations, vaccinations and other services. New health centres can reduce health inequalities as well as providing employment and footfall to our town centres.

Therefore, this Council,

1. Will seek with partners to identify resources to progress the development of a strategic business case for the planned provision of the health services within the Transforming Nuneaton project.
2. Requests the Adult Social Care and Health OSC to review the way in which the County Council can support, and the opportunities for, the inclusion of accessible town and village health centres as part of future regeneration projects across the county by September 2021".

In proposing the motion Councillor Keith Kondakor stated that the Transforming Nuneaton initiative should have included early provision for a town centre health facility. Council was informed that there are currently very long delays for blood tests in Nuneaton. It is possible to secure a test in Polesworth within 24 hours, but it is not easy to travel to Polesworth. The situation with an absence of health centres in towns is repeated elsewhere. A health centre can assist in increasing foot fall in town centres producing a good return for relatively little outlay.

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers seconded the motion and reserved his right to speak.

Amendment

Councillor Les Caborn moved the following amendment.

"This council recognises the massive contribution health centres have played during the Covid pandemic. However, some areas are currently underserved with difficulty in finding suitable locations for blood tests, blood donations, vaccinations and other services. New health centres can reduce health inequalities as well as providing employment and footfall to our town centres.

Therefore, this council:

1. Will seek with partners to shape future requirements for Health Facilities across the County and work with providers to deliver the same.
2. Requests the Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review and make recommendations about the provision of Health Centres within Warwickshire.
3. Asks the Clinical Commissioning Group to share with the Council its work on the provision of health facilities across the County".

In presenting the amendment Councillor Les Caborn stated that this was not in opposition to the motion moved by Councillor Keith Kondakor; rather it aimed to be more realistic. He agreed that the situation in towns other than Nuneaton should be reviewed but added that there is a need to be realistic in our ambitions. A review would very resource intensive and it would be necessary to understand what the CCGs intentions were and what they felt could be achieved.

Councillor Clare Golby seconded the amendment and reserved the right to speak.

Debate

Councillor Dave Parsons expressed his support for the Green Group motion as did Councillor Helen Adkins.

Councillor Caroline Phillips supported the Green Group motion adding that with its high population density Nuneaton is well suited to have a health centre.

Councillor Bill Gifford supported the amendment stating that it served to enhance the original motion. He had hoped that it would be taken as a friendly amendment a view shared by Councillor Jeff Clarke.

Councillor Izzi Seccombe assured council that the purpose of the amendment was to be of assistance. She considered that health professionals had not provided adequate input into the Local Plans as they were evolving. It is not possible to instruct health commissioners and providers to take a particular action. It is important to work with them and provide the evidence they need to make their own decisions.

Councillor Clare Golby who seconded the amendment, reminded council that there is a plan to develop a health centre in the middle of Nuneaton. She stated that blood testing at the George Eliot Hospital in Nuneaton has been impacted on by the Pandemic. The amendment makes the motion more relevant to the whole county and the council's partners.

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers, who seconded the original motion, recognising that there is a proposal for a health centre in Nuneaton considered that now is the time for the council to take a lead to move matters forwards. He was satisfied with points 2 and 3 in the amendment but consider the council should recognise its responsibility to mover matters on.

Councillor Les Caborn who proposed the amendment noted that the council is already putting funds into the Nuneaton project. The George Eliot Hospital is expanding and performing well. The council has no control over its health partners. It has to work with them. Pharmacies are looking to assist with blood tests and efforts are being made to ensure that health partners have more input into Local Plan development in the future. Building a health centre can take up to six years he concluded.

Councillor Keith Kondakor who proposed the original motion expressed his concern over the deletion of reference to a health centre in Nuneaton. It takes too long to build health centres and in the meantime, there is a shortage of rooms for blood tests etc.

Vote

A vote was held on the Conservative Group amendment.

Votes for the amendment 35

Votes against the amendment 9

Abstentions 1

The Conservative amendment thus became the substantive motion that was duly voted on.

Votes for the substantive motion 42

Votes against the substantive motion 4

Abstentions 5

Resolved:

This council recognises the massive contribution health centres have played during the Covid pandemic. However, some areas are currently underserved with difficulty in finding suitable locations for blood tests, blood donations, vaccinations and other services. New health centres can reduce health inequalities as well as providing employment and footfall to our town centres.

Therefore, this council:

1. Will seek with partners to shape future requirements for Health Facilities across the County and work with providers to deliver the same.
2. Requests the Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review and make recommendations about the provision of Health Centres within Warwickshire.
3. Asks the Clinical Commissioning Group to share with the Council its work on the provision of health facilities across the County.

7. Member Question Time (Standing Order 7)

A series of questions were asked by members.

1) Question to Councillor Butlin from Councillor Kondakor – Warwickshire Property and Development Company

The Warwickshire Property development company business case assumes a strong and consistent rise in house prices that is well above the general rate of inflation for every single year. That business case will have been done a considerable time ago before we had any significant impact of the multiple waves of Covid and the massive reduction in trade with the EU.

Will this council undertake a full remodelling of the business case using realistic estimates this summer once these impacts can properly be assessed but before major commitments are made to the Warwickshire Property Development Company, yes or no?

Answer

Councillor Butlin stated, "Whilst I hear the point Cllr Kondakor makes, no, we do not intend to undertake any remodelling of the business case at this time. The business case has had the benefit of input from external professional advisors and has also been the subject of sensitivity analysis. Any further remodelling would significantly delay getting the company up and running and operational at a time that we now need to press forward with recovery. There is also a risk that any remodelling exercise we undertake now could itself be out of date within a relatively short space of time.

Instead, there will be an annual review and update of the business plan and in our role as shareholder we will be expecting the company to closely review and monitor key house price information and wider economic conditions as they bring forward individual sites for development. In addition, for each individual site, a detailed scheme development plan will be brought forward to Cabinet for consideration which will enable costs, pricing and market conditions to be considered at the right time - before any building work starts on site but not too far in advance. This is critical given the business plan covers a period of more than 20 years.

The Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy has taken a prudent view on the possible numbers it included from the business case and has also established a specific reserve to manage any short-term volatility in returns.

These are very uncertain times, and the Council has rightly put in place a robust way to both test and regularly monitor the business case and its delivery, to cover both uncertain and more normal times which we expect to see over the lifetime of the property company. We are committed to taking action which supports Warwickshire's economy by utilising our surplus land and supporting and working with business in creating jobs and homes for our residents. We will work with our public sector partners, utilise our collaboration pilot with Homes England and work with the private sector. We are confident that this will support the economic recovery and have already put in place robust and timely review arrangements to ensure delivery by the company.

In response Councillor Kondakor asked by what percentage house prices would have to fall before a review would be triggered?

Councillor Butlin assured council that house building is very buoyant. The market is strong. However, before any development commences the state of the market will be re-assessed.

2) Question to Councillor Crump from Councillor Falp – Safeguarding of Women

Page 15

County Council

16.03.21

Councillor Falp asked that in response to the death of Sarah Everard in London, what is the council doing to safeguard women.

Answer

Councillor Crump stated that he had been shocked at the death of Sarah Everard. The matter was set to be discussed at the Community Safety Partnership Board. The council supports a number of bodies including the Violence Against Women and Girls Board. This has a sub- group that looks at emerging trends in matters such as domestic violence and women's refuges. Councillor Crump added that in a recent community safety survey 89% of respondents had stated that they were not concerned of being attacked by a stranger.

3) Question to Councillor Clarke from Councillor Chilvers – A46 Link Road Scheme

Do you agree with me that given COVID, the huge expense, the Climate Emergency and the motion raising serious concerns recently passed by Warwick District Council that all further work on the A46 Link Road scheme should be stopped whilst a full re-evaluation of the initial assumptions made is conducted?

Answer

Councillor Clarke responded that he does not agree with Councillor Chilvers. A recent survey on the project had attracted over 500 responses. Various comments had been made and these were being analysed. Once the results have been collated, so further consideration will be given to the scheme.

In response to a supplementary question from Councillor Chilvers Councillor Clarke agreed that the project is exciting and will open up new opportunities for service delivery on the area.

4) Question to Councillor Clarke from Councillor Chilvers – Leamington Town Centre

Warwick District Council have recently been awarded £10m of the £15m applied for from the future High Streets Fund for Leamington Town Centre. Part of the initial bid was connecting walking and cycling routes that would considerably improve access to the Town Centre and improve air quality. Would the portfolio holder be concerned if these vital elements were lost because the full amount of funding wasn't received?

Answer

Councillor Clarke responded stating that he was pleased that Warwick District Council had received £10m adding that funding will be subject to future review. The allocation is lower than the original bid, but the district council is amending its plans accordingly. There is a lot of money being invested in cycle routes with an objective of creating an east to west route across the town centre.

Councillor Chilvers asked for details of the scaling back of the scheme. Councillor Clarke stated that he will provide this information when he receives it.

5) Question to Councillor Clarke from Councillor Phillips – Part Night Streetlighting

Councillor Phillips asked whether, following the murder of Sarah Everard, a review will be undertaken into part night street lighting.

Answer

Councillor Clarke responded stated that of the 50k streetlights in Warwickshire 35% remain on all night and 65% operate on a part night basis. Since part night lighting was introduced energy bills have been reduced by 57%. The situation is constantly monitored. Lights are left on all night at certain road junctions or where there are considered to be other hazards. There has been no increase in crime reported since the introduction of the scheme and there are no plans to undertake a review of the arrangements.

In response Councillor Phillips suggested that a review is required and asked that one be undertaken by the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

6) Question to Councillor Caborn from Councillor Jenns – Covid-19 Vaccination

Councillor Jenns commented on the success of the Covid-19 vaccination programme in Warwickshire and asked that a letter be sent from the council thanking those involved.

Answer

Councillor Caborn agreed to this adding that he would also write to Nadhim Zahawi MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for COVID-19 Vaccine Deployment to thank him. The letter will be signed by the Leader.

7) Councillor Cargill to Councillor Crump – Stratford Fire Station

Councillor Cargill noted that comments in social media have suggested that there are plans to close Stratford Fire Station. He asked if this is the case.

Answer

Councillor Crump, having paid tribute to the crew at Henley in Arden Fire Station which is now operating on a 24/7 basis stated that there are no plans to close Stratford Fire Station.

8) Councillor Seb Gran to Councillor Seccombe – Regeneration of Bedworth

Councillor Gran requested renewed commitment from the Leader of the Council to the regeneration of Bedworth.

Answer

Councillor Seccombe stated that she is happy to support any plans for the regeneration of the town. Transforming Bedworth is gaining traction, but a plan needs to be developed on which any funding bids can be based.

9) Councillor Golby to Councillor Seccombe – West Midlands Combined Authority

Councillor Golby asked the Leader whether she could provide any information on reports of increasing pressure for the council to become full members of the West Midlands Combined Authority.

Answer

Councillor Seccombe explained that as a non-constituent member of the Combined Authority the council pays £25K per annum. Were it to be a full member it would be required to pay £650k. By joining the Combined Authority the council would need to relinquish control over transport and highways budgets as well as that for adult learning. For these reasons there is no desire at this stage to become full members of the Combined Authority.

10) Councillor Fradgley to Councillor Clarke – Rail Services at Kenilworth Station

Councillor Fradgley asked what efforts are being made to secure the resumption of services to and from Kenilworth station.

Answer

Councillor Clarke stated that discussions have been held with West Midlands Railways over the matter. The rail operating company has explained that the Covid-19 pandemic has had an impact on staff. There is only a small cohort of staff with the knowledge that enables them to operate trains into Kenilworth. However, many staff have been absent owing to sickness or the need to shield. It is hoped that as the situation eases so the company will be able to reintroduce services.

Any future issues around punctuality will be a matter for the DfT and the Franchise Regulator.

Councillor Seccombe stressed that the council, having worked hard to see the station in Kenilworth rebuilt, will now push hard to get services reinstated.

11) Councillor Kondakor to Councillor Clarke – Nuneaton Station

Councillor Kondakor noted that whilst there are road schemes proposed for Nuneaton, he would prefer to see a new entrance installed at Nuneaton station. In addition, he would like to see Chiltern Railways operate services from Nuneaton to Leamington via Kenilworth.

Answer

Councillor Clarke stated that the council has no control over developments at Nuneaton station. Nevertheless, the council is working with the rail operators in an attempt to get a new entrance installed.

Regarding the transfer of services to Chiltern Railways, this is not something the council can have any direct influence over. It can only respond to consultations when franchises are set to be renewed.

12) Councillor Rolfe to Councillor Seccombe

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Councillor Rolfe asked whether the widespread deployment of LEDs in streetlights that can be easily controlled would enable discussions between communities and the council over which can be left on overnight.

Answer

Councillor Seccombe observed that the murder of Sarah Everard had prompted a series of comments at the council meeting. Personal safety is paramount, but a sense of proportion should be maintained. Streetlighting was not a factor in the death of Sarah Everard. Her death was a very rare incident with men four times more likely to be attacked on the street than women. If streetlights are to be left on all night, this will carry a financial cost that will be required to be met from budgets for other services. People should feel safe on their street and efforts should be made to ensure that.

8. Any Other items of Urgent Business

There were no other items of business.

The meeting rose at 3.19 pm

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Chair

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'R. Rolfe', is written on the page.