

# Cabinet

Thursday 6 March 2025

## 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

Monica Fogarty, Chief Executive

#### (2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None

#### (3) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 13 February 2025 were agreed as an accurate record.

#### (4) Public Speaking

Councillor Isobel Seccombe welcomed Mr Richard Dickson (a resident of Kenilworth) to the meeting to speak on agenda item 2 "Council Delivery Plan 2025 to 2027".

Mr Dickson noted that the report sought approval of the schemes and projects that the County Council planned to deliver between 2025 and 2027, set against seven areas of focus. He noted that the Plan stated it was ambitious, and he agreed ambition was vital to any plan in giving hope of creating a better future and without hope there could not be trust. However, trust was based on transparency and he considered there were some projects which he had

considered to be ambitious priorities for the Council but they were not mentioned in the Plan. He gave the example that “in creating a long-term infrastructure strategy across the county and implementing our new capital management framework” there was no mention of completion of the A46 Stoneleigh Junction Bridge. A further example Mr Dickson mentioned was the “performance measures for kilometres of cycle lanes delivered through infrastructure schemes” where he saw no mention of the Kenilworth to Leamington (K2L) cycle route. He asked if these projects would be completed by the end of the Delivery Plan period. In conclusion, he stated that for this not to be only a plan that was signed off and sitting on the shelf, it needed to reference the Stoneleigh Junction Bridge and K2L. Without mention of these two projects, he did not consider the plan had credibility and risked being a Plan that had little hope of creating a better future in Warwickshire and one which he feared communities would not trust anyone to deliver.

Councillor Seccombe noted that the Plan was a high-level delivery plan which did not identify the specific major projects the Council would be delivering (eg new schools or property projects). The detail was included in the departmental plans which sat under this high-level overarching plan. The Cabinet would, however, take on board the comments made.

## **2. Council Delivery Plan 2025 to 2027**

Councillor Yousef Dahmash, Portfolio Holder for Customer and Transformation, explained that the Delivery Plan covered a two year rolling programme of activity that translated the ambitions of the Council Plan 2022-27 into tangible deliverables over the period of the Plan. Having said this, it did not delve into the detail of all the projects as it was intended to be a manageable document for Members, partners and residents to understand what the Council intended to deliver against its priorities. There were some minor changes to the content of the current Plan and three new entries detailed at paragraphs 1.6 (relating to the delivery of the Fire Digital Transformation Programme), 7.8 (relating to the delivery of the new Coventry & Warwickshire Workwell Programme) and 8.6 (relating to the development and agreement of a strategic vision for libraries).

Councillor John Holland noted that the Delivery Plan was normally presented in April and he questioned whether it would be more appropriate for it to be considered post-election so that it reflected what the electorate wanted. He expressed the importance of K2L, as raised by Mr Dickson during the public speaking session, and shared his understanding around difficulties completing the route due to Environment Agency requirements across the River Avon. Councillor Holland also considered that the Delivery Plan lacked reference to devolution and unitarisation plans and the opportunities that were presented to work more efficiently with district and borough councils.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse pointed out that a number of performance measures in the Delivery Plan were blank (eg, 2.1, 5.3, 4.4, 1.2, 1.3) and whilst in some cases he could understand the reasoning for this (eg the redevelopment of Vicarage Street), he was somewhat disappointed by the absence of others (eg around Children’s Services) and he requested clarity on when the measures would be populated.

Councillor Peter Butlin commented that the Delivery Plan was refreshed every year to take account of how the budget would be delivered. He also pointed out that it was a dynamic

document that was reviewed every three months so that it remained aligned with changing priorities (eg due to financial impacts, or changes to government policy). He reiterated comments that the Delivery Plan did not itemise all the capital projects as these were available elsewhere but instead it provided the 'ground rules' for implementation.

Councillor Andy Crump advised the meeting that he had been working with the Chief Officer to develop meaningful performance measures and indicators following the implementation of the new Resourcing to Risk model. These measures would also be considered by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and once agreed, the performance measures in the Delivery Plan would be updated.

In response, Councillor Dahmash shared his view that it was important to set priorities and deliver associated reports ahead of the election in order to be transparent with the electorate - each candidate would be setting out their own priorities in their election material in any event. He suggested that Mr Dickson, the public speaker, write to the relevant Portfolio Holders for further information regarding specific projects. He acknowledged concerns regarding missing performance measures but offered reassurance that this was due to the refresh of the framework. It was not anticipated this would take a lengthy period of time and it may be ready for consideration at the next Cabinet meeting. In conclusion, the document was a live document set against the Council's seven areas of focus and three strategic priorities and as a result it did not contain the minutiae of every scheme and project that was being worked on.

**Resolved:**

That Cabinet approves the Council Delivery Plan attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

**3. Additions to the Education Capital Programme 2024/2025**

Councillor Kam Kaur (Portfolio Holder for Education) opened this item and set out the five schemes proposed as additions to the Education Capital Programme which were detailed in the report: establishment of specialist resourced provisions at Dunnington CofE Primary School and Boughton Leigh Infant School; capital works at Studley St Mary's CofE Academy; Disability Access Capital Works; and safeguarding and security capital works.

**Resolved:**

That Cabinet:

1. Approves the establishment of specialist resourced provision at Dunnington CofE Primary School and approves the addition to the capital programme of £0.110 million, funded from developer contributions, to deliver the prescribed alterations;
2. Approves the establishment of specialist resourced provision at Boughton Leigh Infant School and approves the addition to the capital programme of £0.090 million, funded from the High Needs Provision Capital Allocation, to deliver the prescribed alterations;

3. Approves the addition to the capital programme of £0.071 million to deliver the capital works at Studley St Mary's CofE Academy, funded from the High Needs Provision Capital Allocation;
4. Approves the addition to the capital programme of £0.600 million to the capital programme to deliver Disability Access Capital Works to be funded from the High Needs Provision Capital Allocation;
5. Approves the addition to the capital programme of £0.400 million to the capital programme to deliver safeguarding and security capital works, to be funded from the School Condition Allocation; and
6. In relation to the schemes covered in the report, authorises the Executive Director for Children and Young 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. Provision of Integrated Mental Health Services for Adults**

Councillor Margaret Bell, Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health explained that since 2010 the Council and Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust had collaborated under a Section 75 Agreement to provide integrated mental health and social care services. The existing partnership agreement, which had been effective, was due to expire on 31 March 2025 and approval for its renewal for a period of five years was sought.

In response to question from Councillor Jerry Roodhouse regarding linkages to integrated care services, Councillor Bell advised that this report focussed on responsibilities under the Care Act as opposed to more general mental health provision where there were opportunities to work together and ensure that services linked up.

#### **Resolved:**

That Cabinet:

1. Agrees to a further Partnership Agreement between Warwickshire County Council and Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust for the provision of integrated community mental health and social care services for adults, for a term of 5 years from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2030; and
2. Authorises the Executive Director for Social Care and Health to enter into appropriate agreements on terms and conditions acceptable to the Executive Director for Resources as described in the report.

## **5. Approval to Procure Accounting System**

Councillor Peter Butlin, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property advised Cabinet that the Council's current finance system contract with Unit4 (sometimes known as Agresso) was due to expire on 31 December 2027 and the report sought approval to start a procurement process for a new finance system to ensure service continuity. The procurement needed to start early to allow time for implementation before the current contract ended in order to ensure a smooth transition to a new system. The procurement and contracting process would also need to consider flexibility around Local Government Reorganisation.

Councillor Andy Crump noted the critical importance of a finance system to the Council in performing its duties and ensuring robust financial decision-making.

Councillor Isobel Seccombe welcomed the timeliness of the report and the consideration being given to flexibility to accommodate Local Government Reorganisation.

Councillor Butlin noted that the finance system was vital to the Council with all services and suppliers dependent upon it.

### **Resolved:**

That Cabinet:

1. Authorises the Executive Director of Resources, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, to commence a procurement process for the provision of the Council's financial accounting system; and
2. Authorises the Executive Director for Resources to enter into all relevant contracts and agreements necessary to implement this decision on terms and conditions acceptable to him.

## **6. Procurement of SEND Mediation Provision**

Councillor Kam Kaur, Portfolio Holder for Education, informed Cabinet that the Council was required to provide free independent special education needs and disabilities (SEND) mediation services for families challenging decisions related to Education Health and Care (EHC) needs assessments or special education provision. She advised that the current arrangement with three providers was proposed to be replaced by a single provider through a competitive tender process, with the ambition to commence the new arrangement in September 2025.

Councillor John Holland commented that SEND services were the cause of much concern and questioned what happened if parents considered that the new single provider was not meeting their needs.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse queried the financial implications and the confidence in achieving the savings proposed, bearing in mind the increases in demand that were anticipated.

Councillor Kaur responded that almost all mediations were held online which enabled providers to offer a better value service which would bring down the value of the contract resulting in the

saving. Whilst demand was higher, the new service also anticipated a reduction in the number of mediations through resolving potential disagreements at an earlier stage through a process of discussion aimed at avoiding mediation and appeal. Warwickshire Parent Carer Voice had been fully involved in shaping the proposed service, and would be involved in the evaluation of tender applications, and on-going contract management of the service.

### **Resolved:**

That Cabinet

1. Authorises the Executive Director for Children and Young People to commence a procurement exercise for the provision of SEND Mediation Services; and
2. Authorises the Executive Director for Children and Young People to enter into relevant contracts for the provision of SEND Mediation Services on terms and conditions acceptable to the Executive Director for Resources.

## **7. Unitary Local Government in Warwickshire - Submission of Interim Plan**

Councillor Isobel Seccombe, Leader, introduced this item noting that a dispensation had been agreed on 18 February 2025 to allow Members to engage in the discussion. She noted that there had been numerous meetings since the publication of the English Devolution White Paper, including the meeting of Council on 18 February 2025 and meetings of the District and Borough Councils. The Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution had written to the Leaders of the six Councils in Warwickshire with an invitation to develop a joint submission with proposal(s) for local government reorganisation. The deadline for the initial submission was 21 March 2025 and the government preference was for one submission. Councillor Seccombe emphasised the importance of sharing information between the County and District and Borough Councils to understand the services provided and thereby give credibility to the submissions that would be made in order to ensure the interests of Warwickshire residents were best represented.

Councillor Seccombe asked Cabinet to note a correction to figure 2 in appendix 1 amending 'one off transition costs for a single unitary' to -c18 and 'the annual disaggregation cost for two unitaries' to -c10 leading to a 'difference' of -c10. This had been corrected online.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse asked whether submissions would be submitted separately or together and was advised that the intention was for all submissions to be sent to government under the same cover.

Councillor Margaret Bell noted that all the Warwickshire Councils were working towards making a submission by 21 March. The report recognised that there would be more than one proposal put forward to government, and that there were at least two options to consider. It was clear that Warwickshire County Council's preference was for a single unitary authority. Councillor Bell noted she was also working with colleagues at North Warwickshire District Council regarding their submission which also recognised two options but may result in a different preference emerging. She wanted to make it clear that she was supporting the proposal presented in the report as a County Councillor on the understanding that when her work with the District concluded, that may lead to an alternative submission being made.

**Resolved:**

That Cabinet:

1. Authorises the submission to Government of an Interim Plan for unitary local government for Warwickshire by 21 March 2025 based on the outline set out at Appendix 1 to the report; and
2. Authorises the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to finalise the Interim Plan for submission to Government.

**8. Level 2 Devolution Deal - Transfer of Compulsory Purchase Powers**

Councillor Isobel Seccombe, Leader, reminded Cabinet that the Council had secured a Level 2 Devolution Deal with Government in March 2024 which included the transfer of three sets of functions and funds to the Council. This report focussed on the devolution of Homes England compulsory land assembly/purchase powers to the Council. These functions would provide the Council with additional land assembly and compulsory purchase powers which would support the Council's work on regeneration and strategic planning and enable stronger joint working with Homes England to support housing growth and development of employment land. Whilst the application of the powers would probably be quite rare, they were helpful.

Councillor John Holland remarked on the lack of affordable housing and considered the devolution of this power to be a big opportunity. However, he considered that a clear integrated delivery plan was needed with the planning and housing authorities in the county. He requested that when the Council's Delivery Plan was brought back to Cabinet, that it clearly addressed how the housing problem would be resolved. Councillor Seccombe responded that the report's focus was on compulsory purchase powers which were shared with Homes England and it was important to accept the principle around this before progressing on to wider housing issues.

Councillor Peter Butlin commented that it was important for the government to make houses more affordable and he considered that the devolution of the compulsory purchase powers would support that process, although amicable arrangements would generally be reached with landowners without the need for the use of the powers but they were a helpful tool to fall back on, particularly in terms of being able to consolidate parcels of land.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse expressed the view that it was important that developers understood that the Council had received the enhanced powers in order to speed up regeneration work.

Councillor Andy Crump queried whether the devolved powers would be transferred to any new unitary authority/authorities that were created because of Local Government Reorganisation and received an affirmative response.

**Resolved:**

That Cabinet:

1. Accepts the devolution to the Council from the Government of the Housing and Regeneration functions (including the Homes England Compulsory Purchase powers) pursuant to the Level 2 Devolution Deal which was agreed in March 2024; and
2. Authorises the Chief Executive to agree the draft Regulations relating to the devolution of the Housing and Regeneration functions (including the Homes England Compulsory Purchase powers) with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and to consent to the making of the Regulations on behalf of the Council.

## **9. UKSPF Transition Year 2025-2026**

This report was introduced by Councillor Martin Watson, Portfolio Holder for Economy, who explained that when the County Council had secured the Level 2 Devolution Deal with Government, the deal had included the transfer of the planning and delivery of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) from April 2025. The UKSPF was expected to be worth £11.1 million to Warwickshire in 2024/25; made up of £10.2 million of core UKSPF allocated to the district and borough councils and £0.88 million of Multiply funding for adult numeracy allocated to the County Council. The Fund had three investment priorities: Communities & Place, Supporting Local Business and People & Skills. Under the current round of UKSPF, the County Council had worked with the district and borough Councils to lead the commissioning of a range of business support and employment & skills programmes across the county.

Funding for 2025/26 had been confirmed in the Autumn budget for a further 12 months but it would be at a lower level; MHCLG had confirmed that Warwickshire would receive an allocation of £5.27 million in 2025/26 made up of £0.97 million capital and £4.3 million revenue. This was a 53% reduction compared to 2024/25 and the report sought support for the proposed use of Warwickshire's allocation of UKSPF for 2025/26.

Councillor Andy Crump commented on the reduction in funding compared to the national position and Councillor Watson advised that the level had been reduced due to the successful delivery of programmes in the past.

### **Resolved:**

That Cabinet:

1. Supports the proposed use of Warwickshire's allocation of UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF) for 2025-26 as set out in the report including the allocation of a proportion of the Communities and Place funding to the District and Borough Councils and extensions to the Council's existing UKSPF business support and employment and skills programmes;
2. Authorises the Executive Director for Communities to enter into relevant agreements with the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) on terms and conditions acceptable to the Executive Director for Resources;
3. Approves the addition of a capital grant worth an expected £0.97 million of UKSPF to the Capital Programme;



4. Approves the commencement of commissioning activity including any procurement and/ or competitive calls for projects required to deliver the investment priorities of the UKSPF funding; and
5. Authorises the Executive Director for Communities to allocate the UKSPF funding and such other funding as may be available to deliver the three UKSPF investment priorities and to negotiate, and enter into, all necessary agreements to effect the above recommendations including, but not limited to, Deeds of Collaboration with individual District and Borough Councils and Deeds of Variation with existing service providers on terms and conditions acceptable to the Executive Director for Resources.

## **10. County Highways 'Highway Enforcement Policy'**

Councillor Jan Matecki introduced this report which presented the Highway Enforcement Policy for approval. The Policy sought to provide a standardised approach to encroachments on the highway, eg building materials left on footpaths and overhanging hedges etc, that prevented people from using the roads and footpaths safely. The Policy would ensure that enforcement action was consistent, proportionate and transparent, it would enhance the Council's ability to manage a safe and efficient road network, and would assist in pursuing legal action.

### **Resolved:**

That Cabinet approves the County Highways 'Highway Enforcement Policy', as set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

## **11. Coventry and Warwickshire Economic Strategy**

This report was introduced by Councillor Martin Watson, Portfolio Holder for Economy, who stated that the relationship between Coventry and Warwickshire from an economic perspective had always been strong and it added value to both geographical regions. The strategy was jointly developed by Coventry and Warwickshire officers, following the closure of the Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership. Its focus was to chart a course for significant economic contributions to the government's growth agenda over the next decade as set out in "the Modern Industrial Strategy, and "Get Britain Working." Key commitments include economic growth through productivity improvements, industrial strategy, greater devolution, green prosperity, and aligning skills with sector needs. The Strategy had been shaped through extensive engagement with partners, stakeholders, and representatives from both the private and public sectors.

Councillor Isobel Seccombe welcomed the report.

Councillor Yousef Dahmash noted the challenges outlined in the report including the lack of land for commercial developments. He therefore considered it disappointing that Rugby's new Local Plan, did not include the allocation of some sites which could have addressed the lack of commercial space. Councillor Martin Watson responded that all local authorities were reviewing Local Plans and identifying land for economic growth which could be smaller parcels to support Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) transitions from start-up businesses to micro-business.

## **Resolved:**

That Cabinet

1. Approves and supports the Coventry and Warwickshire Economic Strategy as set out at Appendix 1 to the report, recognising the shared areas of work which are already underway across the two Local Authority areas;
2. Reaffirms the Councils commitment to work in partnership with Coventry City Council to support growth and prosperity across the functional economic geography of Coventry and Warwickshire; and
3. Authorises the Executive Director for Resources to arrange for the publication and promotion of the Strategy.

## **12. Coventry and Warwickshire Health Protection Strategy 2025 - 2030**

Councillor Margaret Bell, Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health explained that the Health Protection Strategy 2025-30 had been jointly developed by Coventry and Warwickshire Local Authority Public Health Teams. The Strategy would be accompanied by a detailed action plan and a local Health Protection Dashboard which would facilitate the ongoing monitoring of key indicators. The Strategy had been informed by extensive consultation with the Health Protection Committee and an online survey for professional stakeholders.

Councillor Bell advised that alongside the key strategic functions of the health protection system, four key strategic priority areas had been identified:

- Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and Blood Borne Viruses,
- Population immunisations,
- Reducing health harms from environmental hazards
- Tuberculosis

In addition, two cross-cutting themes were integrated throughout the plans: health equity and antimicrobial resistance. Therefore, actions associated with the Strategy would involve how to raise awareness of these issues and mitigate the impact.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse welcomed the report and hoped that the delivery plans would demonstrate that each place partnership was signed up to the actions set out. He also recognised that the resources for implementation sat elsewhere (eg with the Integrated Care Board) and expressed interest in whether the responsibilities for driving the Strategy forward would be shared. In response to Councillor Roodhouse's question regarding the approval of the Strategy by Coventry City Council's Cabinet, Councillor Bell advised that they would also be adopting the Strategy but she was not aware of the date of the meeting.

Councillor Seccombe noted the value of subregional working and the importance of working at scale for the issues identified.

**Resolved:**

That Cabinet:

1. Approves the Coventry and Warwickshire Health Protection Strategy 2025 - 2030 as set out in Appendix 1 to the report; and
2. Authorises the Director of Public Health in consultation with Executive Director for Social Care and Health and the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health to develop and implement a detailed action plan to deliver the Strategy.

**13. 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.

**14. Property Disposal**

Councillor Peter Butlin, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property, introduced this item and summarised the exempt report.

**Resolved:**

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

The meeting ended at 3.02pm

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Chair