

# Minutes of the Meeting of Warwickshire County Council held on 7 February 2012

Present:

Councillor Phillip Morris-Jones (Chair)

Councillors John Appleton, Martyn Ashford, Peter Barnes, Penny Bould, Peter Butlin, Les Caborn, Jeff Clarke, Alan Cockburn, Ron Cockings, Jose Compton, Chris Davis, Michael Doody, Alan Farnell, Jim Foster, Peter Fowler, Carol Fox, Mike Gittus, Eithne Goode, Colin Hayfield, Robin Hazelton, Bob Hicks, Richard Hobbs, Clare Hopkinson, Julie Jackson, David Johnston, Bernard Kirton, Joan Lea, Barry Lobbett, Barry Longden, Tilly May, Frank McCarney, Brian Moss, Tim Naylor, Mike Perry, Clive Rickhards, Carolyn Robbins, Kate Rolfe, Jerry Roodhouse, John Ross, Chris Saint, Izzi Seccombe, Martin Shaw, Dave Shilton, Bob Stevens, Ray Sweet B.E.M., June Tandy, Heather Timms, Sid Tooth, John Vereker C.B.E., D.L., Helen Walton, Claire Watson, John Whitehouse, Chris Williams, Sonja Wilson and David Wright.

## 1. General

### (1) Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Peter Balaam, Sarah Boad, Richard Chattaway, Richard Dodd and Martin Heatley.

### (2) Members' Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

#### Item 2 (Strategic Delivery Framework) and Item 3 (Budget 2012/13)

Councillor Colin Hayfield declared a personal interest as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Warwickshire.

Councillor Penny Bould declared personal interests as a recipient of Direct Payment via Warwickshire County Council as a disabled person; in view of her being a Governor of Kingsbury Primary School and a member of the Council of Disabled People, and as a member of the GMB and NUJ trade unions.

### (3) Minutes

#### Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2011 be approved as a correct record.

### (4) Chair's Announcements

#### (i) New Year's Honours List

The Chair, on behalf of the Council, congratulated Marion Davis, former Strategic Director on her receipt of a CBE for services to Children and Young People.

The Chair also congratulated Julie Brown, former deputy clerk to the Lieutenancy of Warwickshire on her receipt of the Royal Victorian Order for services to the Lieutenancy.

(ii) Chairman's Civic Service

The Chair reminded Members of the Civic Service being held on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March at St. Mary's Church, Warwick

(iii) Petition

Services for Deaf Children in Schools

The Chair welcomed Emma Guest, the petition organiser, and David Heap, the Regional Director of the National Deaf Children's Society.

The Petition was requesting that the Council reverse the decision to charge schools for some services for children and young people with a hearing impairment.

Emma Guest outlined the change in policy with services for deaf children becoming a traded service with schools, and charging for services for some children. In raising this issue, she highlighted the following points:

- There are 230 deaf children in Warwickshire, who currently received a good level of support via weekly visits to schools.
- There had been no consultation with the parents of these children over the changes to the service.
- Schools had not been given any additional resources to finance these services
- Although those with an educational statement or higher level needs would continue to access the service for free, there are still 100 children with lower-level needs who are being disadvantaged.

Councillor Heather Timms, Portfolio Holder for Child Safeguarding, Early Intervention and Schools spoke in response to the petition. Cllr Timms thanked the petitioners for their petition and statement, and was pleased that the Head of Service had sent an apology to the petition organiser regarding her particular case which had been incorrectly assessed.

Councillor Timms confirmed that there had been a decision to move to a traded service for children with low level need, and that schools would be charged for this service. Those children with a statement or with higher level needs would continue to receive support with no charge to them or their schools. The impact of the changes with regard to those assessed as having a lower level of need will be monitored.

(iv) Apology from Councillor Barry Lobbett

Following a recent decision by the Council's Audit and Standards Hearing Sub-Committee, Councillor Barry Lobbett made the following statement to the Council:

"I wish to apologise, most sincerely, for my carelessness in submitting claims for expenses for NBBC work and for electioneering, to Warwickshire County Council, when they should have been directed to the appropriate bodies.

I am aware of the potential damage this may have caused to public confidence in the office of councillor and the reputation of the Authority and trust that this apology, for misdirected claims which were entirely MY fault, will reassure the public of the integrity both of County and of members."

**2. Strategic Delivery Framework and Corporate Business Plan 2012-13**

Councillor Alan Farnell, the Leader of the Council, presented the proposed Strategic Delivery Framework and Corporate Business Plan for 2012-13. Councillor Bob Stevens seconded the proposal to adopt the plan.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, spoke in opposition to the documents, stating that they were the ambitions of the controlling group, and the Liberal Democrat Group would not support them.

Councillor June Tandy, Leader of the Labour Group spoke in opposition to the documents, stating that there was little recognition of the deprivation in the north of the County, and an over exaggeration of the pockets of deprivation in the south of the County.

During the debate, Members sought assurance that the proposed targets will prove sufficiently challenging and that the proposed fundamental review of priorities would not lead to further changes in targets as this would make scrutiny of performance difficult.

Councillor Alan Farnell stated that there would be a fundamental review, with the aim to produce a clear, concise document and gave his assurance that there would not be significant changes to targets.

The proposal to approve the documents as set out on the agenda was put to the vote and agreed as follows:

**Resolved**

That Council agrees the County Council's Strategic Delivery Framework and Corporate Business Plan for 2012-13.

**3.0 2012/13 Budget**

The County Council considered a report that set out the latest information received from Government and the Budget proposals recommended by Cabinet on 26 January 2012. It was noted that the Localism Act now required the Council to approve an annual pay policy statement and this was included in the Budget proposals.

Councillor Alan Farnell, Leader of the Council, proposed the Council's budget for 2012/13. In doing so, he thanked John Betts and Virginia Rennie for their assistance in drawing up the proposals, the Conservative Group for their support and Members of the Cabinet for their hard work on this year's budget.

In moving the proposals, Councillor Farnell highlighted that the proposals provided long term solutions as opposed to short term fixes, and would provide sustainable savings for the Council.

Councillor Farnell highlighted the following areas included in the budget proposals:

- £1.6m for Children's safeguarding
- £2.8m for Demand pressures in Adult Social Care
- £0.1 m for enhanced CRB checks
- £0.2 for Youth Justice Secure and Remand Custody
- £0.6m in communications and training for the Fire Service
- £1m in casualty reduction schemes
- £1.5m for rolling replacement of street lighting columns
- £2m provision for Fire and Rescue fire control.

Councillor Farnell confirmed that that there should be no rise in the Council Tax in 2012/13, as the Council would be accepting the council tax freeze grant from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)

Councillor David Wright, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Governance and IT seconded the proposals.

- A Councillor Jerry Roodhouse, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, moved an amendment to the proposals, as included at **Appendix A** to these minutes

Councillor Roodhouse also thanked John Betts and Virginia Rennie for their assistance.

Councillor Roodhouse stated that his amendment provided more money for localities and community safety, increased funding for public health, and the introduction of "Support your Community" funds of £10,000 per Elected Member.

The amendment also set out a reduction in the number of Cabinet and Spokesperson positions, with a projected saving of £51,000.

This amendment was seconded by Councillor John Whitehouse.

- B Councillor June Tandy, Leader of the Labour Group moved an amendment to the Conservative Group proposals as set out at **Appendix B** to these minutes. Councillor Tandy thanked John Betts and Virginia Rennie for their assistance in drawing up their amendment to the budget.

Councillor Tandy highlighted the depth of the cuts being made to local government, pointing out that there were few options available to Members when looking at budgets. Councillor Tandy stated that the amendment would divert the £500,000 identified for reserves to establish a jobs fund for the County. The amendment also set out proposals to save £200,000 by reducing the size of the Cabinet, removing special responsibility allowances from Area Committee Chairs and spokespersons from the controlling group, and reducing all other allowances by 20%.

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Tim Naylor.

*The Council adjourned at 12.50pm and reconvened at 2.15pm*

## **VOTE**

Following a full debate a vote was taken on each budget proposal as follows:

Liberal Democrat Group Proposals at Appendix A.

9 voted for, more voted against - LOST.

Labour Group Proposals at Appendix B.

10 voted for, more against. - LOST.

Conservative Group Proposals

36 vote for, fewer voted against -CARRIED.

## **Resolved**

That the County Council Budget for 2012/13 be as set out at Appendix C to these minutes.

## **4. Appointments to Committees**

Councillor Alan Farnell, Leader of the Council proposed a re-allocation of seats to political groups, following the resignation of Councillor Sonja Wilson from the Conservative Group in January 2012, and in accordance with the legal requirements for political balance on committees. Councillor Bob Stevens seconded the proposal.

Councillor Farnell proposed that Councillor Peter Fowler replace Councillor Sonja Wilson on the Children & Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee (so retaining an allocation of 6 Conservative Group places on this Committee) and that Councillor Sonja Wilson replace Councillor Peter Fowler on the Overview and Scrutiny Board (so decreasing the Conservative Group

allocation on the Board to 6 and increasing the allocation to Independent Members from 1 to 2)

## Resolved

(1) That the allocation to places to councillors on committees be as follows

Committees	Con	LD	Lab	Ind.	Total
Audit and Standards Committee	4	1	1		6
Regulatory Committee	8	2	2		12
Staff and Pensions Committee	4	1	1		6
Overview and Scrutiny Board	6	2	2	2	12
Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee	6	2	2		10
Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee	6	2	2		10
Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee	6	2	2		10
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>66</b>

(2) That Councillor Sonja Wilson be appointed to the Overview and Scrutiny Board and Councillor Peter Fowler be appointed to the Children & Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee with immediate effect.

## 5. Statement to Council – Councillor Bob Stevens

Councillor Bob Stevens, Deputy Leader of the Council made the following statement on behalf of the Audit and Standards Committee:

“At its meeting of 12<sup>th</sup> December 2011 the Hearing Sub-committee of the Audit and Standards Committee took action in regard to Councillor Barry Lobbett.

This is the second incidence of expenses irregularity which we have considered during the term of this Council.

- Incidents of this nature bring the Authority and its Councillors into disrepute
- We believe it to be quite possible that there are still Councillors unaware of what may be legitimately claimed as an expense of their office
- We would urge Leaders to pay proper attention to safeguarding the Authority and its Councillors from further complaint of this nature
- The Council should pay more attention to making clear what may be legitimately claimed by its Councillors.
- We are asking the Monitoring Officer to organise a training session on members expenses at the Council’s earliest convenience.”

## 6. Any other items of urgent business

The Chair of the Council reminded Members that there would be a public interest debate on the topic of “Health in Warwickshire” on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2012 in the Council Chamber, Shire Hall.

The Council rose at 3.00p.m.

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Chair