

# WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL

Draft minutes of the meeting of Warwick District Council held at Shire Hall, Warwick, on Wednesday 15 November 2023, at 7.00pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillor Syson (Chairman); Councillors Aizlewood, Armstrong, Barton, Billiald, Boad, Browne, Chilvers, Collins, Cron, Davison, Day, K Dickson, R Dickson, Dray, B Gifford, C Gifford, Gorman, Hales, D Harrison, J Harrison, Hunt, Kang, Kennedy, King, Kohler, Luckhurst, Margrave, Matecki, Milton, Noonan, Payne, Phillips, Roberts, Rosu, Russell, Sinnott, Sullivan, Tangri, Williams, Wightman and Yellapragada.

## 46. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Falp and Redford.

## 47. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made.

## 48. **Minutes**

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 26 September 2023 were not presented for consideration.

## 49. **Communications & Announcements**

The Chairman commended the Council's CCTV team who played a vital role tackling crime and disorder within the District by providing vital observation, information and assistance to Warwickshire Police, but more importantly, providing reassurance to the wider community.

The Chairman informed the Council that there would be no business to consider under Item 5 - Petitions or Item 6 - Notices of Motion. However, there were three public speakers in respect of the Cabinet report of 2 November 2023.

## 50. **Leader and Portfolio Holders' Statements**

The Portfolio Holder for Arts & Economy, Councillor Billiald, informed Council that:

1. the grade two listed former place of worship, known as The Fold, launched on 12 October 2023. This was a District Council scheme funded by the Government's Future High Street Fund and delivered by Complex Development Projects (CDP);
2. the procurement process to secure the main contractor for the Town Hall Creative Hub refurbishments was underway, with tenders being assessed by the Procurement team as part of a two-stage process. The contractor selection was expected to be completed by Friday 24 November, with financial negotiation taking place throughout December and early January 2024. Work on site was expected to start at the end January or early February 2024;
3. the festive lights switch on events were due to take place over the next few weeks in the four Towns across the District. Royal Leamington Spa had already welcomed a large crowd to switch on the Diwali lights. Warwick was

due to celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Victorian Evening on 23 November 2023;

4. there were new outdoor events this autumn, which included Ganesh Visarjan procession and a Community Safety team event;
5. the free to visit Autumn/Winter Exhibition, 'Lost Leamington: A Picture of the Past', was open at the Art Gallery & Museum and would be open until 14 January 2024; and
6. the Pump Rooms shop would close on Sunday 19 November. The Chairman of the Council would be joining the Portfolio Holder in meeting with artists displaying works in the shop to thank them for their contribution.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing & Assets, Councillor Wightman, informed the Council that:

1. on 9 October 2023, the Council gave formal notification of introduction of an additional licensing scheme for homes in multiple occupation (HMOs), which would come into effect on 18 January 2024. The District-wide scheme required houses, converted flats, or purpose-built flats, including student accommodation, occupied by three or more persons, living as two or more households, to legally obtain an HMO licence to continue to operate. Ahead of 18 January 2024, the Private Sector Housing team would be contacting those affected, including landlords and letting and managing agents, advising them to ensure they had all the necessary documents and safety certificates in place to submit their license application. It was expected that around 700 HMOs would require licensing under the new scheme. Many of these properties had never had a formal inspection by the Council and this provided the opportunity to ensure they adhered to a high standard of safety and repair, greatly benefitting tenants and members of the wider community. Landlords, who had already informed WDC that their property fell under the new additional licensing regulations, would be issued with an application pack in readiness for when the new scheme came into effect;
2. the Council-led housing development at The Paddocks, Cubbington, was due to be finished in March 2024. The 17 unit site was of mixed tenure, aiming for net-zero carbon, timber framed builds, air source heat pumps, and PV panels to name a few of the environmentally friendly items that had been included;
3. works continued at the joint venture site with Countryside Partnerships, with further new-build homes due in summer 2024;
4. over the last couple of months, the Council had welcomed its first new tenants to the net-zero homes at Glasshouse Lane;
5. the Council had commissioned an independent review with the help of an external specialist to help it understand what, if any, additional improvement work might be required on our asset and building compliance, in the shape of the new regulatory environment. The review was thorough and highlighted areas where the Council needed to make improvements to deliver the growing regulatory standards required of the Council, as a social housing landlord. The Council had responded to this review by taking prompt and direct action to address the areas highlighted. An action plan had been approved by Cabinet and sent to the social housing regulator.
6. the Council worked with Royal & Sun Alliance to provide cover for tenants and leaseholders when property was stolen or damaged. The insurance protected the contents in the home and was available to both tenants and leaseholders. This was payable on a flexible basis, including weekly payments. This insurance could now also be applied for online.

The Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services, Councillor Roberts, informed Council that:

1. the Newbold Comyn bridge, situated over the river Leam, had been closed in August due to safety concerns. The Bridge was a key piece of infrastructure and had formed part of national cycle route 41. The initial plan was to repair the bridge as quickly as possible, however, further inspections ruled this out. Officers worked with Pick Everard, bridge specialists, as well as other stakeholders, including the Environment Agency (EA). The EA made it clear that works over the river would require a permit from them and had highlighted that this section of the river had protected fish. This meant there were constraints for certain works from 1 October to 15 June each year. These constraints would apply to any installation over this section of the river, including a temporary bridge. Following this investigation work, officers had produced a report to come to Cabinet in December, recommending a new bridge, 3.5m wide, which was wider than the current bridge, to improve access to current users. The estimated delivery date of late summer 2024; and
2. Idverde had undertaken a litter pick along 18km of the A46, over 10 nights. This dangerous and unpleasant work collected 15.5 tons of rubbish.

The Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities and Leisure, Councillor Sinnott, informed Council that:

1. Leamington Town Centre had the busiest and most diverse nighttime economy in Warwickshire. The town centre was a hotspot for violence against women and girls, and for anti-social behaviour. The Council was taking positive action to address this by setting up a safe space at South Lodge, Jephson Gardens. The pilot ran from November 2023 to April 2024 and would take place every Friday night from 10pm-4am. Serious violence funding would enable appointment of a safe space co-ordinator, who would be responsible for operational management of the space; and
2. over the next month or two, six community wardens would be introduced to provide highly visible uniformed presence, acting as Council ambassadors, and engaging with the public. When fully operational, the team would be working evenings, including weekends, up to 10pm, to compliment safe space.

The Portfolio Holder for Transformation, Councillor J Harrison, informed Council that the first phase of teams moving to Saltisford in Warwick had been completed. The programme was on track for 80% of workforce to be moved from Riverside House to Saltisford before the new year. The moves were dependent on third party broadband work, scheduled to be completed by end of this month. The remaining teams had been scheduled to move into the new year due to operational reasons e.g. moving of specialist equipment or in the case of the Pump Rooms, the planned building works.

The Leader and Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership, Councillor Davison, informed Council that:

1. following the last Council meeting, he had written to the Prime Minister, on 5 October 2023, to express concern and frustration at his recent announcement to move back dates for banning sale of new petrol and diesel cars, loosen the phase out of gas boilers, and reduce obligations on landlords to insulate properties. The Motion, passed by Council in September 2023, also asked for the Council to seek LGA support. There

had been a few positive replies from the LGA and, via the Climate Emergency UK, there had been a lot of interest, but no strong commitments. Therefore because there was no ground swell of opinion, the Council would not campaign for major action from the LGA; and

2. under the delegated authority the Chief Executive had, after Consultation with Mark Lee, the independent Chair of Leamington Transformation Board and Group Leaders, the Terms of Reference for Leamington Transformation Board were amended, from stating membership as including "all WDC political Group Leaders", to "a nominated representative from each political group, excluding the party of the Leader of Council". This would provide added flexibility, allowing all groups to change their representative if they wished.

## 51. **Questions to the Leader of the Council & Portfolio Holders**

Councillor Boad asked the Leader if it was correct that Public Advice agencies had an expectation they would be moving into the Pump Rooms.

In response, Councillor Davison, the Leader of the Council, and Councillor J Harrison, Portfolio Holder for Transformation, advised that they were not aware of this and agreed to investigate and report back to all Councillors.

*(The response to this via email is appended to the Minutes.)*

Councillor Boad asked the Portfolio Holder for Place if he could provide clarification that the current use of the Pump Rooms was planning Class F and the proposed use for the District Council was Planning Class E therefore when would the Council be making a planning application for the change of use.

In response, Councillor King explained that the advice received was that the amendments did not constitute a change of use, and in response to a supplementary, he question agreed to arrange for a response to be sent to all Councillors on this.

Councillor B Gifford asked the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood for an update on Covent Garden and Linen Street car parks.

In response, Councillor Roberts explained that proposals for Covent Garden had been developed to lead to a planning application, followed by procurement for demolition of the car park. In addition, a feasibility study in what should happen to the site had largely been completed and a final draft was awaited. This would then be considered by Members and partners on how, or if, it went forward. In respect of Linen Street car park a feasibility study into the redevelopment was underway, looking at the site's potential use as residential development.

In response to a supplementary question from Councillor B Gifford, Councillor Roberts explained a report on Covent Garden car park was scheduled on the Forward Plan for March 2024.

Councillor R Dickson asked the Portfolio Holder for Resources if he could inform Council of the total cost of the District, Town and Parish Council elections, and whether the costs had yet to be recovered from Town and Parish Councils.

In response, Councillor Chilvers explained that officers were working on finances, including recharges for Parish Councils, with an aim to get invoices sent out by the end of 2023. Councillor Chilvers committed to providing the total cost once it was available.

Councillor R Dickson asked the Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities and Leisure if he would thank members of the Environmental Health team for their recent work to try to resolve the ongoing problems of drain smells in Rouncil Lane, Kenilworth.

In response, Councillor Sinnott agreed to pass on the thanks of the Council to the officers involved in trying to resolve this and thanked Councillor Dickson for bringing this to his attention.

Councillor Phillips asked the Portfolio Holder for Transformation if they could update Council on the latest costs for changes to the Pump Rooms, and how this amount compared to what Cabinet had approved in August 2023. He also wanted to know which services would no longer be in the Pump Rooms and which WDC services would be moving into the Pump Rooms.

In response, Councillor J Harrison reminded Council that the report to Cabinet in July 2023 stated the costs would be between £380k and £410k and explained that the total spend was projected to be £362,460. The only service no longer in the Pump Rooms would be the shop within its current form, but a smaller shop service would remain. The services moving in would be the Customer Service Team with support from other teams (but they would not be based there), with any specialist queries to be dealt with remotely or via in person appointments at the Pump Rooms.

In response to a supplementary question from Councillor Phillips, Councillor Harrison explained she was not aware of any proposal for CAB to move into the Pump Rooms.

Councillor Matecki asked the Portfolio Holder for Resources if he could say who was contacted at WCC to discuss car parking charges, which as stated at the budget review Group, "Did not come to fruition".

In response, Councillor Chilvers explained they were officer-lad discussions and in response to a supplementary question, accepted the offer for the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood to talk with the WCC Portfolio Holder about this.

Councillor Matecki asked the Leader if he could clarify his statement at the recent public engagement about Abbey Fields Pools where he said "It's ultimately the tax payer of Warwick District. This will have to be paid by all of us".

In response, the Leader accepted that he lived in Stratford-on-Avon District and apologised for this error. In response to a supplementary question from Councillor Matecki, the Leader amplified the explaining he could have answered the question differently at the time including "that you may want to speak to the S151 Officer to go through how the budget is arrived at, as there are lots of different sources of income", but he had considered that would be a little bit complex for the public session.

Councillor Russell asked the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood in light of the need to close the bridge over river Avon, in Newbold Comyn, if anything was being done to check other similar assets to ensure they were being looked at and repaired, so they would not just fall apart before being replaced. He also wanted to know what else the Council had that it should be looking at to ensure it would not go this far.

In response, Councillor Roberts explained that the bridge was part of an inspection programme and following the previous inspection, money had been set aside for the bridge to be fixed this year (£50k). On inspection this year, in advance of the

works, it was discovered the bridge was not fit for purpose, and that continued into deeper inspections which ruled out any repair work.

## 52. **Cabinet Report**

The Chairman informed Council that the items to be considered were:

- from 2 November 2023, the Abbey Fields Swimming Pool, Fees & Charges 24/25 and Corporate Strategy 2023/2030; and
- from the 15 November 2023, Asset Compliance Committee & Resources and Participation in the West Midlands Investment Zone.

The Chairman explained that due to the significance of the items, and to enable clarity for all parties, she would be taking the items individually.

### *(a) Corporate Strategy 2023/2030*

It was proposed by Councillor Davison and seconded by Councillor Wightman that the recommendations from the Cabinet be approved.

Councillors Day, Boad, Armstrong, Kennedy and Matecki spoke on this item.

#### **Resolved** that

- (1) the Corporate Strategy, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved; and
- (2) authority be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, to review the strategy for grammatical or spelling errors and update it prior to its final publication.

### *(b) Fees & Charges 24/25*

The recommendations of the Cabinet on 2 November, as updated by the addendum circulated ahead of the meeting, were proposed by Councillor Chilvers and Seconded by Councillor King.

Councillors Boad and Kohler spoke on this item.

#### **Resolved** that

- (1) the Fees and Charges proposals set out in Appendix A to the report, be approved, subject to the revisions within the addendum, and should operate from 2 January 2024 unless stated otherwise;
- (2) changes proposed by Everyone Active to the core products and prices from January 2024 which are within the 2023 June RPI as per contract and agreed with the Sports and Leisure Manager, be approved; and
- (3) authority be delegated to the Head of Neighbourhood and Assets in conjunction with Portfolio Holder, to

increase fees for Media services at Oakley Wood after 1 April 2024.

(c) *Abbey Fields Swimming Pool*

Members of the public George Martin, Judy Brook and Rod Jones addressed the Council on this matter.

The recommendation from Cabinet of 2 November 2023 was proposed by Councillor Davison and seconded by Councillor King.

It was proposed by Councillor Hales and seconded by Councillor Aizlewood to suspend Council Procedure Rule 13(5), to allow Councillors to speak more than once during the debate on this item.

Councillors Chilvers, B Gifford, Williams, Boad and Matecki spoke on this proposal.

**Resolved** that Council Procedure Rule 13(5) be suspended, to allow Councillors to speak more than once during the debate on this item.

Councillors Davison, King, Williams, Matecki, Philips, Aizlewood, Armstrong, Barton, Chilvers, R Dickson, Day, Milton, Boad, Cron, Hales, K Dickson, Kohler, Payne and Billiald spoke on this item.

Councillor Davison, as proposer and Councillor King, as seconder, accepted an amendment to their proposal to establish a cross-party working party to provide oversight to the expenditure on the contract as the development would progress.

**Resolved** that

- (1) the decisions of the Cabinet to proceed with the Abbey Fields Swimming pool project be funded by external borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB), with the revenue cost of the borrowing to be factored into the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS); and
- (2) a cross-party working party be established to provide oversight to the expenditure on the contract as the development progresses.

Prior to the vote being taken, it was proposed by Councillor Boad and duly seconded by two Councillors that a recorded vote be taken. The voting by Councillors was recorded as follows:

For: Councillors Armstrong, Billiald, Boad, Browne, Chilvers, Collins, Davison, Day, K Dickson, R Dickson, Dray, B Gifford, C Gifford, Gorman, D Harrison, J Harrison, Hunt, Kang, Kennedy, King, Kohler, Luckhurst, Margrave, Matecki, Milton, Payne, Roberts, Rosu, Russell, Sinnott, Sullivan, Syson, Tangri, Wightman and Yellapragada

Against: Aizlewood, Barton, Cron, Hales, Noonan, Phillips, Williams.

There were no abstentions from voting.

53. **Council Procedure Rule 36 – Length of meetings**

It was proposed by the Chairman, under Council Procedure Rule 36, that the meeting should continue past 9.30pm to enable the completion of the business as set out on the agenda. This was duly seconded and

**Resolved** that the meeting continues past 9.30pm to enable the business to be completed.

The Chairman then adjourned the meeting for a ten-minute comfort break at 9.35pm.

(Councillor Noonan left the meeting.)

#### 54. **Cabinet Report**

The Chairman resumed the meeting with the report from Cabinet of 15 November 2023, Asset Compliance Committee & Resources and Participation in the West Midlands Investment Zone.

##### (a) *West Midlands Investment Zone*

The recommendations from Cabinet were proposed by Councillor Davison and second by Councillor King.

Councillors Kohler, King and Davison spoke on this item.

**Resolved** that an application for membership of the WMCA as a Non-Constituent member be made in the light of the recent enactment of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA).

##### (b) *Asset Compliance Committee & Resources*

The recommendations from Cabinet were proposed by Councillor Wightman and second by Councillor King.

Councillors B Gifford, P Kohler, Barton, Davison, J Harrison spoke on this item.

During the debate, Councillor Wightman and Councillor King accepted an amendment so that the membership of the proposed Committee was two Councillors from each group with either the Chair or Vice-Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee attending as an observer.

**Resolved** that

- (1) the establishment of an Assets Compliance Committee with the remit as set out at Appendix 2 to the report, subject to the revisions to membership as set out above, be approved; and
- (2) the revision to the Constitution to include the role of Vice-Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee, be approved.



## 55. **Planning Committee Report**

The report of the Planning Committee of 8 November 2023 was proposed by Councillor Boad and seconded by Councillor Tangri.

Councillor Williams spoke on this item.

**Resolved** that the Planning Committee report of 8 November 2023, be approved.

## 56. **Appointments to Committee & Outside Bodies**

It was proposed by Councillor Davison, seconded by Councillor Wightman and

**Resolved** that

- (1) the appointment of Councillors Davison, Kennedy and King to the Joint Cabinet Committee for the South Warwickshire Local Plan, be approved and
- (2) Councillor Browne be appointed as the second Children & Safeguarding Champion.

It was proposed by Councillor Chilvers, seconded by Councillor Hales and

**Resolved** that Councillors Falp, B Gifford, Hales, D Garrison and J Harrison be appointed as Procurement Champions.

It was proposed by the Chairman, duly seconded and

**Resolved** that Councillors Barton, Boad, K Dickson, Dray, Falp, Gorman, Hales, Hunt and Phillips be appointed to the Asset Compliance Committee.

## 57. **Common Seal**

It was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Councillor J Harrison, and

**Resolved** that the Common Seal of Warwick District Council be affixed to such documents as it may be required for implementing decisions of the Council arrived at this day.

(The meeting ended at 10.40pm)

CHAIRMAN  
10 January 2024

**From:** Jessica Harrison  
**Sent:** Friday, November 17, 2023 10:23 AM  
**To:** Councillors  
**Cc:** Committee  
**Subject:** Full Council 15 November - Portfolio Holder Question

Dear All,

To answer the question, Cllr Boad raised at Wednesday's full council in regard to advice agencies moving into the Pump Rooms.

Officers have informed me a charity had emailed in last month expressing interest and officers have said they'd be happy to meet to discuss the idea. No more than that: so, there is no plan and clearly the focus currently is on setting up our Customer Facing Services in Pump Rooms from Monday as I stated at Council.

Kind Regards

Jessica Harrison  
Clarendon Ward  
Portfolio Holder for Transformation