

WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held remotely on Wednesday 14 April 2021, at 6.00pm which was broadcast live via the Council's YouTube Channel.

PRESENT: Councillor Ashford (Chairman); Councillors Bartlett, Boad, Cooke, Davison, A Dearing, J Dearing, K Dickson, Evans, Falp, B Gifford, C Gifford, Grainger, Grey, Hales, Heath, Illingworth, Jacques, Kennedy, Kohler, Leigh-Hunt, Luckhurst, Mangat, Margrave, Matecki, Milton, Morris, Murphy, Nicholls, Noone, Norris, Redford, Rhead, Roberts, Russell, Skinner, Syson, Tangri and Wright.

80. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Cullinan, Day, R Dickson and Tracey.

81. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

82. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 24 February 2021 were proposed, duly seconded taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

83. Communications and Announcements

The Chairman thanked Councillor Redford for Chairing the last meeting of the Council in February, when he was unwell, and thanked those Councillors and officers who sent him personal best wishes at that time.

The Chairman informed Council that the evening of 12 April 2021 saw the start of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan. He explained that Ramadan involved a month of fasting, worship and community celebration and wished all Muslims Ramadan Mubarak.

The Chairman informed Council that the 13 April was Vaisakhi and wished the Sikh community in Warwickshire and across the world a happy and prosperous Vaisakhi. He explained that Vaisakhi celebrated the creation of the Khalsa Panth and reminded us of Sikh values of equality, unity, community, selfless service and social justice.

The Chairman reminded Council that Monday saw the welcome re-opening of non-essential retail; outdoor pubs, cafes, restaurants and personal care premises such as hairdressers, nail salons and public buildings, including libraries and community centres. The Chairman reminded everyone to follow the latest Government guidance on Covid safety when supporting local businesses.

The Chairman recorded the thanks of Council to Jerry Weber who had resigned as a Councillor since the last meeting.

The Chairman informed Council that there was no business for the Council to consider under item 5, Petitions or 6, Notices of Motion.

84. **Leader's & Portfolio Holders' Statements**

The Portfolio Holder for Development, Councillor Cooke, informed Council that:

1. Three meetings had taken place of the Joint Local Plan Advisory Group which had five members each from Stratford District Council and Warwick District Council. The Chair was taken at alternative meetings by each authority and the Warwick District Council Chair was Councillor Boad. The Advisory Group was not a decision-making body and it did not fulfil a scrutiny function. It would make recommendations to the Joint Cabinet/Executive Committee which consisted of three Councillors from Warwick and Stratford-on-Avon District Councils. The Joint/ Executive/Cabinet had met on the Wednesday afternoon when it agreed the Scoping document which had previously been supported by the Advisory Group and was reviewed at Overview and Scrutiny Committee the previous week. The decision also allowed that two lead officers in consultation with the Portfolio Holders from each authority be authorised to make any formal editorial amendments to the Scoping Document prior to Consultation; and
2. Warwick District Council had submitted the Council's highly detailed response to the Key Themes of the Warwickshire County Council (WCC) Local Transport Plan Consultation. The four themes covered the Environment, the Economy, Place and Wellbeing. Following the Key Themes consultation WCC would now embark on a more detailed engagement with stakeholders and particularly the District Council.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment & Neighbourhood, Councillor Rhead, informed Council that he had received and understood the concerns that fly tipping was increasing. During the pandemic there had been more people out and about getting daily exercise; the unfortunate result of this was a large increase in the litter left behind. This was a nationwide issue as was the increase in fly tipping.

Warwick District Council introduced a litter campaign 'Don't be a Tosser' in 2020 to remind residents that leaving litter was unacceptable and they had a responsibility to dispose of their waste properly by using an on-street litter bin or taking the rubbish home.

Warwick District Council spent over 1.5 million pounds sterling a year keeping the streets of the District clean and it appreciated the efforts of all the community spirited people and groups that enhanced the Council's operations by clearing the excess litter.

The Great British Spring Clean, organised by Keep Britain Tidy would be held between 28 May – 13 June 2021. The Council could loan litter picking equipment and collect the waste to help residents who wished to be involved.

There had been an increase in the number of fly tips reported during the last three years. The largest increase occurred in March with 254 incidents compared to 118 last year. Notable increases were:

- construction waste, which increased from 7 to 19 incidents
- commercial waste which increased from 2 to 9 incidents; and
- household waste which increased from 36 to 83 incidents.

These increases were similar to nationwide numbers, and this was discussed at the County Waste Partnership Board to see how Councils could work together.

Enforcement of fly tipping was very expensive and difficult to prove. The costs of obtaining a conviction often outweighed the money received from a successful prosecution. Proving a chain of evidence was not a simple process and often failed in court.

Enforcement work prior to Covid was undertaken in partnership with Rugby Borough Council because of the lack of knowledge in Contract Services but was suspended due to Covid.

Following the recent increases and the ethos of working together with Stratford-on-Avon District Council this was now being revisited with a view to partnership working with Stratford-on-Avon starting in May with a similar process between the councils and support/training. This would use a combination of prevention and enforcement with various campaigns about preventing both fly tipping and litter generally, encouraging people to dispose of their litter sensibly.

A trial scheme of fly-tipping had started in Sydenham of using CCTV to gather evidence for enforcement action. If this was successful this could be used across other areas.

In respect of littering, regardless of the number of bins and how frequently they were emptied, people still dropped litter and bins filled instantly. The emptying of bins was expensive and the Council did not have unlimited resources.

Some cuts were made in the new street cleansing contract such as removal of barrowmen and one less crew for fly tipping removal as the Council had to reduce the contract costs because of its financial situation. But ultimately it was about people behaving responsibly, as was fly tipping.

Current issues existed with litter being left on/by many WDC bins that were already full – again a national issue. All WDC campaigns asked people to take their rubbish home. Quite often it was because bins had been filled with 'household waste or fly tipping' first.

The Ranger Team was trained and able to issue Fixed Penalty Notices for littering as part of their patrols in town centres and WDC parks and open spaces. The possibility of a fine would be publicised and it was hoped this would act as a deterrent.

One area of concern was Christ Church Gardens at the top of Parade. This had seen an increase in footfall due to the temporary bus stops. Potentially the Council would look to install temporary bins too; WCC were contacted to help with funding, but had not responded to-date.

Idverde was working with Contract Services to review efficiencies in locations/frequencies of visits to empty litter bins. Additional bin installations and visits would cost money that had not been built into the contract costs.

Idverde continued to clear fly tips as quickly as it could and the Council was not receiving complaints about fly tips not being cleared quickly enough.

The Council was working on deployment of a new CRM system (Arcus) which would allow customers to report fly tips more efficiently; the system would integrate directly with Idverde.

A litter strategy (including fly tipping and waste minimisation) was being produced jointly with Stratford-on-Avon District Council, with the emphasis on prevention. This included a communications plan and things such as tackling fly tipping and overflowing bins/litter. More Don't be a Tosser posters were being put up across parks, these were generally well received, in addition to other communication activities, including sharing with residents the cost to households for this service and the cost of additional bins etc.

This litter strategy would work in conjunction with a new Waste Education Strategy that the Council would be developing in partnership with Stratford. This was in preparation for the changes to the Joint Waste Contract and the huge changes this would bring to household collections.

In response to a question from Councillor Boad, regarding the potential for additional collections from town centre bins, Councillor Rhead explained this would be set out in more detail in the email to be circulated to all Councillors.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance & Business, Councillor Hales informed Council that:

- The Council had received confirmation from MHCLG of the £10.1 million Future High Street Fund for Royal Leamington Spa.
- A further Welcome Back Fund to assist with the reopening of the High Street following the Government Roadmap had been established. This would be added to any of the Reopening the High Streets Safely Fund from 2020 and could be used up until March 2022. The Council had started dialogue with the BID and Chambers of Commerce to start this work and the team would be supporting all four of the town centres as much as possible during the reopening phase.
- Officers were working closely with event organisers as a large number of enquiries were being received in anticipation that the Council's events calendar would return this year – all dependent upon the levels of infection and subject to COVID safety processes being in place.
- The Council was in the early stages of working with Stratford on a joint Local Industrial and Economic Strategy in tandem with the work progressing on the joint South Warwickshire Plan.
- As part of the Sales, Fees and Charges, recovery from the Government for the first eight months of 2020/21, the Council had claimed £2.5m towards the lost income streams. The last four months were yet to be claimed.
- All Council contractors had been supported to get through COVID and 100% of them had been retained to-date.
- The Internal Audit Team had completed the Internal Audit Plan for 2020/21 within the year (by 31 March). Whilst this could be the norm at Warwick, it was the exception compared to other authorities.
- The Council had paid out £3.4m to around 1600 businesses on the ARG scheme and in terms of the Part F scheme, which was specific for taxi drivers and was only opened on Friday lunchtime. 192 applications had been received of which 30 of these had been paid so far.
- In terms of restart grants, the Council had paid out over £5m to around 600 business.
- At the Lillington Health Hub project meeting held the previous day, it was confirmed that the Treharrock land was purchased and the development site fencing had been erected.

In response to a question from Councillor Wright, Councillor Hales explained that communications and engagement was the key to the future high street fund and these plans would be shared with Councillors as soon as possible.

The Portfolio Holder for Health and Community Protection, Councillor Falp explained that:

- As lockdown restrictions were eased and with increasing social contact, it was more important than ever to protect our friends and relatives and our colleagues and ensure that people were not spreading the virus without knowing.
- The latest Government guidance advised that the best way to do this was for everyone to get into the habit of testing for Covid-19 twice a week, irrespective of whether people had been vaccinated or not or were working from home. It was very important that people working in offices, shops or regularly mixing with the wider community regularly tested for Covid-19.
- One in three people with Covid-19 did not experience any symptoms and could be spreading the virus unwittingly.
- Alongside the rollout of the vaccine, regular testing was going to be an essential part of the easing of restrictions as it would help quickly suppress the spread of variants.
- Through new testing technology, positive cases of variants of concern were being detected faster than ever before.
- More people getting a test would increase the NHS ability to identify and control variants.
- Council staff that were back in an office environment or working with members of the public etc, for everyone's safety would be expected to follow the Government's testing guidance and get tested twice a week (every three to four days).

Councillor Falp encouraged fellow Councillors to get tested also and to encourage others as part of Members' community leadership role. She reminded them there were a number of options for testing which made it really easy to organise.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Culture, Councillor Matecki, informed Council that:

- The 12 April saw the reopening of the Box Office, shop and the library at the Royal Pump Rooms, with the café providing a takeaway and outdoor service. The Art Gallery and Museum were scheduled to reopen after 17 May in line with COVID guidance, and the Royal Spa Centre was looking forward to reopening its doors in the summer with a programme of shows that were already proving popular in terms of ticket sales. The teams at the Arts venues were working hard to ensure all staff were suitably trained and all procedures were in place to ensure that these venues opened in a safe and effective way.
- On the previous Friday, he had visited some of the Council's leisure centres to see how Everyone Active was preparing for Monday's reopening. He was very impressed with the level of professionalism that had been put into the operation of the centres in order to allow customers to return to a safe and enjoyable environment. Signage and hand sanitizer was in place, gyms had been restructured to ensure social distancing for those using equipment, and one way systems had been put in place for swimmers to access the pools. There was a staff training session taking place at Newbold Comyn to ensure that all the lifeguards had up to date qualifications, and the centres were looking very clean and tidy thanks to the efforts of the Everyone Active teams.
- It was encouraging to learn the numbers of bookings that had been taken for the first week of opening, in particular at Newbold Comyn and St Nicholas Park centres where customers could enjoy the modern, spacious facilities that were completed a few years ago.

- Everyone Active had a clear message that customers could not wait to get back to using the centres, return to their activity routines, and enjoy family time in the centres. Now more than ever it was vital that modern facilities, operated in a professional manner, providing opportunities for as many people as possible to lead active lives. This Council had a long record of investment in its leisure facilities, and with the planning applications now submitted for the Kenilworth sites, it was ready to start the next phase that would bring more modern, quality facilities to the district.
- In Housing, the walk-in homeless shelter, William Wallsgrove House (WWH) had been closed. There were only a few people staying there, who had been rehoused in alternative accommodation. Following the very successful campaign at the start of the pandemic to find accommodation for all the homeless in the area, officers were reviewing how to best meet the needs of the homeless in the future, which would include the future use of WWH.
- From the start of April, the rules on the Right to Buy (RTB) receipts had changed. Some of the main changes had been the time allowed to spend the receipts, which had risen from three to five years, and the amount of those receipts that could be used to acquire new homes had also risen from 30% to 40%. The amount of RTB receipts that could be used to purchase existing homes would be capped at 50% in 2022/3, reducing by 10% annually to 30% from 2024/5.

In response to a question and supplementary question from Councillor Boad, Councillor Matecki explained that homeless people being housed across the district would be provided with direct support from officers and charities in their new homes. In response to specific problems of the suitability of the accommodation, he asked that these should be provided to the Portfolio Holder for investigation.

The Deputy Leader, provided a statement to Council on behalf of the Leader who had given his apologies for the meeting. He encouraged Councillors to work together and reminded them of the sustained pressures officers were under to reopen leisure facilities, support town centres, issuing grants, collection of recycling and refuse (which was well above usual volumes), dealing with significant increases in the number of both planning applications, leading new local plan, country parks, regeneration projects (like the creative quarter), the Race and Equality Task and Finish Group and the climate change response. Members needed to recognise this and that with good cooperation even during election time, the Council would achieve a lot more.

85. **Questions to the Leader of the Council & Portfolio Holders**

Councillor Boad asked the Portfolio Holder for Culture & Housing if he could provide an update as to when the three dead trees on the Crown Way Shopping Centre would be removed?

In response Councillor Matecki asked for Councillor Boad to email the details of the case to him so he could investigate.

Councillor Norris asked the Portfolio Holder for Environment & Neighbourhood if he could confirm when the project list for the Climate Change Emergency Action Plan would be brought to members?

In response Councillor Rhead explained the action plan was being produced and when the available would be shared.

Councillor Redford asked the Portfolio Holder for Environment & Neighbourhood if he could provide assurance that when there was evidence of fly tipping that prosecutions would follow?

In response Councillor Rhead said that where there was evidence prosecutions would be taken forward.

Councillor Heath asked the Portfolio Holder for Environment & Neighbourhood if the problem with the overflowing litter bins in Parade was down to the Council deleting the barrowmen who ensured the bins were empty?

Councillor Rhead, explained that the new contract was not the cause of the problem. There was however a problem which did not appear to be there six months ago and as a result he had asked officers to monitor this.

Councillor Dickson asked the Portfolio Holder for Environment & Neighbourhood if the Council could help promote reusable coffee cups as this was a large proportion of waste that could be avoided?

In response Councillor Rhead agreed and explained it was a matter of education because this country was not very good in terms of litter compared to other European neighbours.

86. **Executive Reports**

Councillor Hales proposed and Councillor Matecki seconded the recommendation within the minute the Executive meeting held on 18 March 2021.

Resolved that the recommendations of the Executive of 18 March 2021, be approved.

87. **Employment Committee**

Councillor Margrave proposed and it was duly seconded by Councillor Hales, the recommendations of the Executive as set out in Minute 79 of 11 February 2021.

Resolved that the recommendation of the Executive of 11 February 2021 as set out in Minute 79, subject to the revisions within the addendum, be approved and adopted.

88. **Amendments to the Membership of Committees**

It was proposed by Councillor Nicholls, seconded by Councillor Cooke and

Resolved to

- (1) to appoint Councillor Cullinan to Planning Committee in place of the Labour vacancy on the Committee; and
- (2) to appoint Councillor Ashford as a substitute for both Members/Trades Unions Joint Consultation & Safety Panel and Employment Committee.

89. **Public and Press**

It was proposed by the Chairman, duly seconded by Councillor Hales and

Resolved that under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 that the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items by reason of the likely disclosure of exempt information within paragraphs 1,2 and 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

90. **Confidential Executive Report of 13 April 2021**

The recommendations as laid out, subject to an amendment that would be detailed in the Confidential minutes of the meeting, were proposed and duly seconded

Councillors Hales, J Dearing, Rhead, Davison and Matecki spoke on this item.

Resolved that the recommendations of the Executive on 13 April 2021 be approved.

(Following the decision being taken, Councillor Illingworth asked a Point of Order as to when the information within the reports could become public due to the significant investment the Council was making. In response the Democratic Services Manager & Deputy Monitoring Officer explained that officers would brief Councillors at the appropriate time as to what could then be shared in the public.)

91. **Minutes**

The Confidential minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 24 February 2021 were proposed, duly seconded taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

92. **Common Seal**

It was proposed by Councillor Ashford, seconded by Councillor Hales 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 7.30pm)

CHAIRMAN

5 May 2021