

Pre-Scrutiny questions and answers on reports being considered by Cabinet on 8 March 2023

(This forms part of the considerations at Group meetings before a decision is made on which Cabinet reports will be called-in for scrutiny by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee)

4. Treasury Management Strategy 2023/24

(Report author(s): Richard Wilson, Principal Accountant (Capital & Treasury))

Question(s) from Councillor Syson

As usual thank you for a very detailed and informative report. I note in particular the future uncertainty of the MRP which is outside our control.

My question which may perhaps be better directed at Andy Jones and Committee services is:

12.1.2 states "The aim of the capital strategy is to ensure that all elected members on full Council understand the overall long-term policy objectives and the resulting capital strategy requirements, governance procedures and risk appetite. "

My underlining. How is this going to be achieved in future? I am fairly sure it is not true of the present Council.

A comment rather than a question is that In Appendix B 1.1 states "The CIPFA Code requires the responsible officer to ensure that members with responsibility for treasury management receive adequate training in treasury management. This especially applies to members responsible for scrutiny."

I am not sure this has been provided since the change in scrutiny arrangements but expect it will be provided for the new Council early on in their training. In Appendix B 1.2. The Link Training was delivered to Finance and Audit in 2019 as at that date Audit and Standards did not exist - that committee came into being in May 2022.

Response:

Regarding the Capital Strategy and members understanding this, a part of this would be the development of the new Capital Strategy during 2023 would need to involve members in the process alongside the member training.

The broad approach and themes of the priorities for the first year of the Council were considered by Audit & Standards Committee in February and supported by Council last Monday.

Officers are now working on the detail planned behind delivering this. In respect of specific areas my team will be asking these to be led by the respective service area heads and we will be sharing the detail behind what is expected that to them this week.

Question(s) from Councillor Kohler:

I note that Appendix C, Annex 3 - Approved Countries for Investments lists both Abu Dhabi (UAE) and Qatar.

- Can you confirm if WDC currently have any money invested in these countries?
- Are you happy that investments in these countries would fit with the Council's previous statements that it has divested from fossil fuels?
- Are there any other countries on the list that we would have to be careful when investing to make sure we are not inadvertently investing in fossil fuels?

Response:

I can confirm that currently this Council does not have any investments with either country.

However, the Council does not have a formal policy on what it defines as acceptable in terms of an overall Environmental Social and Governance (ESG) criteria, and so has not formally excluded any country on the basis of fossil fuels, as this is part of this wider discussion yet to be had, and which typically can take some time to agree amongst members of a council, with the often disparate views on the various aspects.

Therefore, your third question would need to be considered more widely as part of ESG, as it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to be able to say that about any country with certainty. For instance, as the UK has the North Sea gas fields, would that exclude any investment with a UK financial institution, even if their activity was unrelated to fossil fuels? If that were the case, the Council would have significant problems with the Treasury function. Hence this will need to be considered by the Council once the pre-election period has been concluded.

Question(s) from Councillor Davison:

Appendix C Annex 3. What would happen if the UK's sovereign rating falls below AA- as that is the minimum credit rating that we use?

Response:

I have consulted Link, the Council's treasury advisers, and they recommend that full Council is asked to approve an amendment to my report, to specifically exclude the UK from having a minimum rating applied to it, as that would create significant problems for the Treasury function.

Therefore, I would propose that a form of words below is added above 'Based on lowest available rating' in Appendix C Annex 3, as it does not readily fit elsewhere in the report:

"Significant levels of downgrades to Short and Long-Term credit ratings have not materialised since the crisis in March 2020. In the main, where they did change, any alterations were limited to Outlooks. However, more recently the UK sovereign debt rating has been placed on Negative Outlook by the three major rating agencies in the wake of the Truss/Kwarteng unfunded tax-cuts policy. Although the Sunak/Hunt government has calmed markets, the outcome of the rating agency reviews is unknown at present, but it is possible the UK sovereign debt rating will be downgraded. Accordingly, when setting minimum sovereign debt ratings, this Authority will not set a minimum rating for the UK."

The important section is highlighted.

5. Local Authority Housing Fund Award

(Report author(s): Lisa Barker, Head of Housing)

Question(s) from Councillor Cullinan:

Do you feel 21 homes will meet the need within WDC in these categories?

Response:

The Council has already housed a number of families from Ukraine before being awarded this grant. We do know that the number of Ukraine families living in host households in the district exceeds the number of homes that Government is providing grant for. Whether all of these will come forward and ask for assistance is unknown.

This fund is made to alleviate further impact on existing housing pressures and builds a sustainable stock of affordable housing for the future.

6. Commonwealth Games – Outcomes and Legacy

(Report author(s): Christina Boxer, WDC Commonwealth Games Programme Manager).

Question(s) from Councillor Milton:

I have a couple of questions on the report which I hope you, or someone suitable can help with.

1. Many of the lessons learned are quite specific to running large, multi-sport events in our district and there are clearly things that we would do slightly differently next time. However, the likelihood of another similar event coming down the tracks any time soon is probably quite remote. What I would be more interested in is to understand how our experience of the CWG is informing our wider strategy. For example, are we doing more to try and attract, or take part in large regional events. I am aware that the West Midlands Growth Company has a strategy around attracting Major Sporting Events to the region, are we actively engaging with that? Sorry, long question but I am keen to understand the longer-term economic benefits that we should be tapping in to.

Response:

I will liaise further with Chris, Andrew Jones and Phil Clarke regarding your enquiry re: proactively attracting medium – large sports events to the district as a longer term WDC strategy and also matters regarding West Midlands Growth Company/West Midland Combined Authority as this is also a much wider strategic matter. As highlighted in the report both WDC and WCC are awaiting feedback from WMCA re: B2022 underspend before considering future CWG legacy plans integrated into ongoing WDC strategy and priorities. Discussions have been taking place between Andrew and Jon Cockcroft (Bowls England CEO) re: their future plans. The challenge, as highlighted in the learning outcomes, is managing expectations by sport's governing bodies or sports organising committees on the council's roles and responsibilities re: resources, both human and financial. From mine and WDC's own learning from the B2022 Venue Use Agreement process, it is crucial to ensure any venue dilapidation costs are refundable to WDC for any future venue/parks used, even for smaller medium-large sports events, and this would be something for Events Team and Leisure Services staff to consider moving forward, also linked into potential future plans/uses for the Community Stadium.

Further Response from Chief Executive:

May I add that one possible significant event that we will need to consider is a Bowls Championship in 2027 – this is either for Europe or the World. 2027 may seem a lifetime away but we know that preparation for such an event will

require the 4 years if we are to learn the lessons. However, we need further dialogue from Bowls England before we can put anything to members.

- In terms of the sporting legacy most of the measures seem to be either attitudinal or intentional. Is there a plan to firm these up so that we can see the actual impact that it has had both on participation but also on health, happiness and wellbeing.

Response:

I will double check when the next Active Lives data will become available with my colleague Manoj Sonecha as the last one for Nov 2020 – Nov 2021 (below) was not released until April 2022, together with any other findings via Everyone Active. This, plus further B2022 data in the final report due this summer would firm up data beyond that collected so far by Bowls England. Leisure providers and Active Lives data recovery from the impact of Covid might need to be taken into consideration however when comparing data.

Active Lives Adult Survey (12-month period Mid November 2020 – Mid November 2021 Report)

This is the ninth Active lives report, providing an overview of adult (16+) sport and physical activity levels in England in the 12 months from mid Nov 2020 to mid Nov 2021. Released April 2022.

Local Authority	Inactive	Fairly Active	Active
Coventry	33%	12%	55%
North Warwickshire	27%	12%	62%
Nuneaton & Bedworth	32%	14%	53%
Rugby	27%	11%	62%
Stratford	25%	9%	66%
Solihull	25%	9%	66%
Warwick	19% (previous results for period Nov 2019 – Nov 2020 was 18.7%)	10% (previous results for period Nov 2019 -Nov 2020 was 9.5%)	71% (previous results for period Nov 2019-Nov 2020 was 71.8%)
Coventry, Solihull & Warwickshire Average (sub region)	28%	11%	61%
National Average	27.2%	11.5%	61.4%

Definitions: Inactive: less than 30 minutes a week. Fairly Active: 30-149 minutes a week. Active: at least 150 minutes a week. The Survey counts most sport and physical activity but excludes gardening.

What does this tell us about Warwick District?

Warwick District has the highest 'Active' population across the sub region at 71% which is 10% higher than the sub regional average (61%) and 9.6% higher than the national average (61.4%). There has been no significant change in participation rates in Warwick District over the last 12-month period.

Warwick District has the lowest percentage inactive population in the sub region at 19% which is 9% lower than the sub regional average (28%) and 8.2% lower than the national average (27.2%).

Further response from Commonwealth Games Programme Manager:

- the next gov.uk Active Lives data is due to be released 20th April 2023 and no doubt this might also be referred to in B2022's full report in the summer. This and other Activity/Wellbeing related matters will be led by WDC's Active Communities Officer and I will confirm this in the CWG Project Handover document I am starting to compile re: 'end of project' (31st March 2023).
- there was also the B2022 legacy content detailed in the CWG Cabinet report re: improvements to parks/cycling infrastructure and the BetterPoints sustainable travel initiative that also relates to active lifestyles, with additional ongoing monitoring & evaluation opportunities.
- I will also include within the CWG Project Handover Document which staff/service areas will be leading re: any future medium-large Sport Events plans as this will also become integrated across relevant departments.

Question(s) from Councillor R Dickson:

I have a couple of questions which I can't see any comment on in the report.

1. to what extent was the District's involvement in B2022 deemed a cultural success, as well as a logistical and economic success? The concerns about the CultureFest in Appendix 11 are noted and, given that unlike other major sporting events the Commonwealth Games is positioned as the Friendly Games, to what extent did the District's involvement in B2022 broaden cultural awareness and appreciation of people whose values and worldview may be different to our own? How can this cultural legacy be built upon?

2. has there been any assessment of the extent to which the District's involvement in B2022 has boosted local participation rates in sport and exercise and thus contributed towards healthier lifestyles and an improvement in public health? This does not appear to feature as a legacy factor in Appendix 10? How are the forthcoming increases in fees and charges for the District's leisure facilities consistent with building on the sport and healthy exercise legacy of our involvement with B2022?

Response:

Re: Q1 - **CultureFest** - Johnathan Branson has kindly fed back, which relates to 'Positive Outcome' re: CultureFest on page 17 of the Cabinet Report regarding enhanced strengthening of existing, and building new relationships with our creative community across our four towns and additional feedback below. As confirmed in the Cabinet report timelines and promoting CultureFest was impacted partly by matters controlled by B2022 and challenges created by Covid:

'The aim of Culturefest was to showcase and celebrate the incredible arts and heritage venues, artists, and creatives in the area via a month-long festival, with events and activities taking place across Royal Leamington Spa, Warwick, Kenilworth and Whitnash.

CultureFest presented a broad programme of work across three of the four towns, (available via <http://www.warwickdc.gov.uk/cg2022> link in the Cabinet report) so was deemed a success as it achieved this objective. As there was no budget attached to the programme, CultureFest was reliant on badging-up existing provision and supporting people and organisations to win funds to present new work. Due to the timescales of the festival, there was limited arts provision in both Whitnash and Kenilworth, which was unfortunate but unavoidable given the timelines of the games. The attendance and participation numbers of the programme can also be used as an indicator of the success (also available in the CultureFest section in <http://www.warwickdc.gov.uk/cg2022>).

Economic success re: CultureFest is more challenging to quantify and would need to be picked up in wider cultural economic impact report, additional to the Lawn Bowls/Road Cycling one. Monitoring and reporting on the number of events featured in CultureFest over its longer duration was beyond the scope of the limited resources available to the programme and would require significant financial investment to track.

Similarly, understanding CultureFest's audiences' motivations and barriers to engagement before the games and tracking perceptions and views was beyond the scope of the project. This type of work is possible, but costly as requires the

implementation of a range of research and data capture methodologies; possibly insight even B2022 might also find challenging despite their greater resources.

As an Officer with a remit of growing and strengthening the creative sector in our four towns, I can report that the process of programming and presenting CultureFest has strengthened existing relationships and provided a useful touch point to engage with many people and organisations not on the Arts Section's radar. Furthermore, CultureFest was of huge value in strengthening the Arts Section's currency within our creative community'.

Re: Q2 - I will double check when the next Active Lives data will become available with my colleague Manoj Sonecha as the last one for Nov 2020 – Nov 2021 (see response to Councillor Milton's questions) was not released until April 2022, together with any other findings via Everyone Active. This, plus further B2022 data in the final report due this summer will firm up data beyond that collected so far by Bowls England and our CWG residents survey. Leisure providers and Active Lives data, re: recovery from the impact of Covid might need to be taken into consideration however when comparing pre-Games and post-Games. I will liaise further with Ann Hill re: the matter of increased fees; it is so sad that the current worldwide economic crisis escalated post the Commonwealth Games, impacting costs regarding the leisure industry as a whole across the country. However WDC's wide-ranging parks, open spaces and increased cycling infrastructure and Betterpoints scheme are very positive B2022 legacies highlighted in the report re: recreational health and wellbeing related exercise. I will check with colleagues regarding the specific ongoing monitoring and evaluation of this.

Q2. Physical Activity/Wellbeing - As follow up to initial feedback above, and also confirmed as follow up re: enquiry from Councillor Andrew Milton:

- the next gov.uk Active Lives data is due to be released 20th April 2023 and no doubt this might also be referred to in B2022's full report in the summer. This and other Activity/Wellbeing related matters will be led by WDC's Active Communities Officer and I will confirm this in the CWG Project Handover document I am starting to compile re: 'end of project' (31st March 2023).
- there was also the B2022 legacy content detailed in the CWG Cabinet report re: improvements to parks/cycling infrastructure and the BetterPoints sustainable travel initiative that also relates to active lifestyles, with additional ongoing monitoring & evaluation opportunities.

9. Update to the Council's Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure

(Report author(s): Richard Barr, Audit & Risk Manager.

Question(s) from Councillor Milton:

I note that it says that the changes are minimal. To enable proper scrutiny of these by members would you be able to highlight what these are please.

Response:

Thank you very much for your question.

I am afraid that I did not apply "Track Changes" when making the revisions so am unable to supply you with a version of the report that trails all the changes.

However, I have attached an earlier version so that you can get a flavour of these changes.



Whistleblowing Policy
and Procedure - Feb 1

Essentially the changes were a result of general updating and from consulting with, in particular, HR (principally, the head of HR, Tracy Dolphin) and the Democratic Services Manager & Deputy Monitoring Officer, Graham Leach. I also consulted with the trade union, Unison.

The main changes can be categorised as follows, in no particular order of importance:

- A tidying-up in respect of grammar and a very small number of typos; also making the document more concise by eliminating unnecessary 'padding'.
- Distinguishing between grievances and whistleblowing.
- Making clearer who the policy applied to – employees, agency workers and contractors.
- Differentiating between internal and external reports.
- Setting out the aims and scope of the Policy.
- Updating the name of the whistleblowing charity (from 'Public Concern at Work' to 'Protect') and updating job titles.

Question(s) from Councillor Davison:

I expect this whistle-blowing policy is working well, but how do we know if it is? How often do staff or councillors 'blow the whistle'? What outcomes?

Response:

We have had a whistleblowing policy at WDC for in excess of 20 years. During that time, it has only very rarely been used by employees. (Councillors are required to raise their concerns outside of this procedure – Graham will, I am sure be happy to explain that if required.) I think it would be inappropriate to go into the outcomes, but I can say that approx. twelve years ago I was disappointed with the process, including the outcome, in respect of one particular case. I believe that the culture has changed significantly since that time, though, with much less tolerance of improper/illicit conduct.

It has more been the case that someone has raised their concerns about something and we have responded by interpreting it as a 'whistle-blow' and dealt with it as though the individual invoked the policy. However, that also is rare – I am thinking of just a handful of such cases over those twenty or so years.

For many years the Council used an external company called 'In-Touch' for individuals to, anonymously and confidentially, report concerns to. This was operated by HR. In around ten years of use, not one single concern was lodged. In fact, no one used this service for anything!

Obviously, this all leads to one or several of the following scenarios being the cause:

- Individuals do not have concerns to raise; or
- Individuals do not know how to raise their questions; or
- Individuals have little faith that their concerns will be dealt with properly.

We can never be certain of the cause(s), and I do not believe a survey, or any similar methodology would establish the reasons. My gut feeling is that it is probably more a case of the first one.

Clearly it is imperative for effective governance to have a procedure that individuals can use, can have faith in, and that will lead to proper outcomes. I have no reason to believe that that is currently not the case.

Question(s) from Councillor Cullinan:

In 5.1 we list employees, does this include Councillors? Should they be listed as a separate category?

Response:

I can advise that the procedure does not apply to Councillors. Councillors are required to raise their concerns outside of this procedure. Graham will, I am sure, be happy to explain that if you require.

10. Transforming Leamington – Community Projects Reserve

(Report author(s): Martin O'Neill (Business Manager Projects and Economic Development); Mark Brightburn (Programme Manager)).

Question(s) from Councillor Skinner:

A question from Cllr Quinney please relating to item 10 for Cabinet:

What exactly will the money be spent on and how will new websites work alongside existing ones of the two Councils, District and Town, BID etc? It could be very confusing.

Response:

The £50K fund is intended to be available to enable the Leamington Transformation Board (all three levels of local authority's working together) to do any initial pieces of work that are needed as the Board and the programme of work is established. Initial spend is on establishing a logo and identity together with a web presence independent of all three local authority site's but will link to relevant material in each. Transforming Leamington is being led by the local authorities to start, but it is intended that a wide range of contributions will come via an Advisory Forum from many areas and so the independent nature of it will enable all to feel part of this.

11. Housing Revenue Account Business Plan Review 2023

(Report author(s): Lisa Barker (Head of Housing); Victoria Bamber (Principal Accountant)).

Question(s) from Councillor Milton:

There are a couple of broader but related questions that I have on it:

Does the council have a forecast for future demand for council homes? Recent research by CAB indicated that problems in the private rented sector were causing additional demand on the social housing sector at the same time that supply is falling. How is this factored into our longer-term planning? I can see that we are cognisant of the impact of right to buy but this seems to assume that future demand is static?

I also note that some of the biggest impacts on the HRA come from changes to policy e.g., works associated with our own declaration of a climate emergency and also increased compliance post Grenfell. However, I cannot see such risks noted in the Risk Assessment. Should these be added?

Response:

The South Warwickshire Local Plan is the vehicle for assessing the future requirements for affordable housing which can be provided by both the Council and Registered Providers (Housing Associations). The Council does have an active programme to deliver new homes but is by no means the sole operator in this area. All affordable rented homes are advertised (when available) through Warwick HomeChoice and are therefore available to households registered for housing with the Council.

In relation to the HRA impacts, we consider that the primary risks are from cost increases and inflation. Inflation is an existing risk and at lower levels of the budget, contingency has been factored into each scheme. Any new requirements for compliance or climate change for example would either be the subject of a separate Cabinet report or be factored in the next time that the HRA Business Plan is presented.

Question(s) from Councillor Skinner:

1. Housing Investment Programme (Appendix 4) - Climate Change and Environmental works. This shows a flat forecast across the ten years. Does / Should this not take into consideration any new directions needed to act on the Climate Emergency Action Plan? For example, heat pumps in houses instead of boilers?

Response:

It is accountancy practice to flat forecast over time and is in line with the approach taken for the stock condition survey works. In year there may be fluctuations depending upon the actual works scheduled to take place and this is accounted for within that year's HRA business plan with the costs being reviewed.

2. On the same Appendix / Forecast line, Is this using a baseline of works, for example Solar Panel installation? Is the forecast based on the original survey of potential households for such installations and if so, should there not be a further survey to really push harder for potential households for its installation. The original survey appeared to identify many dwellings that though they requested it, it was denied for various reasons. Through improved adaptation and new technology, should we not be looking to see how many more dwellings can have Panels installed? This could go for other insulation works too, that appeared to not have been accepted in the first instance. It would be interesting to see out of the first Housing survey of dwellings, how many requested PV Panels, but were not accepted for various reasons. There should be further pushes in this ten years (and costed) to try and make more dwellings more climate friendly.

Response:

A base budget has been applied to install solar panels where roofs are being replaced and where this is sensible to do so. The work will evolve over time as roofs within the stock become due to be replaced. It would not be possible for contractors to install solar panels to all Council dwellings in a 12-month period due to both material availability and labour. It would further, prove an expensive approach to this issue.

3. On the Stock Condition works - Major Garage works - I come across regular complaints regarding the condition of garages (leaking, doors not closing etc.). Is there not a major push to ensure garages are made fit for purpose to those paying rental. This forecast line appears to show there is not investment needed.

Response:

A survey was commissioned to assess the works required on each site and to appraise each site for its suitability as a garage site going forward. Within the HIP there is a sum of £24,600 as a base to undertake identified works. There is also £100,000 within the repairs budget for garages. Any complaints should be fed into the housing team.

Question(s) from Councillor Syson:

Question 1.

1.43 says "The Council has now commissioned Penningtons to carry out a new 100% stock condition survey and that is underway, focussing first on those properties which current data suggests may not fully meet the Decent Homes standard so that a current position on compliance can be measured and rectified."

I was a bit surprised to note that not all our properties meet the Decent Homes standard? Approximately how many of our properties fall into this category? Is it blocks of properties or are they pepper potted throughout the stock?

Response:

This principally relates to 150 properties pepper potted across the stock where we currently have incomplete data, often where the previous survey was unable to gain access. We do not believe that this indicates that these properties fail to meet decent homes and the Penningtons survey will initially focus on these. In the event that any that do not meet the Decent Homes standard, these will be addressed in the 2023/24 Housing Investment Programme.

Question 2.

I see from the Housing Investment Programme (HIP) 2022/23 to 2031/32, (Appendix 4 page 1) that there is an entry for Co-dependant Asbestos Removal of £200,000 a year. Please could we have a brief explanation/reminder of what this covers.

Response:

This is the cost of asbestos surveys that are carried out prior to any major works such as kitchen and bathroom and other component replacements. It is a statutory requirement that we provide surveys to our contractor before they commence work. Any asbestos identified that cannot be managed by leaving in place will be removed safely as part of the planned programme of works.

Question 3

Appendix 4/ Page 1 Grant Estimated Housing Investment Programme Resources at:

There is an entry of CWLEP DEM Grant £1,500 under 31/3/24.
My understanding is that CWLEP ceases to exist on 31.3.2023.

Response:

Our apologies, this is grant money from One Public Estate in partnership with DLUHC. Bids are currently in progress.

12. Barford Youth and Community Centre Grant Application

(Report author(s): Chris Elliott (Chief Executive); Jon Dawson (Grant & Loans Manager)).

Question(s) from Councillor Grey:

Having experienced the significant challenges in obtaining £150k to support the partial funding of the Warwick Gates Community Centre expansion via the RUCIS process as was, I am seeking reassurance that this request for £250k has received the same level scrutiny or consideration of priority vs the need for such resources elsewhere in the district, particularly considering the 2500 new residents south of Europa Way for whom I believe there is currently no funded plan for indoor community space?

Due to our limited resources, I would like reassurance that we have a clear WDC Community Centre Strategy for our residents and as a consequence understand where this request fits and why it is considered a priority for funding i.e., the social need, usage.

Response:

We have approached this scheme very much in the same way as we have for other community led schemes. At present we have no community led scheme for Myton Green area though we are seeking to make provision as part of the Stadium and Athletics Facility scheme to ensure there is community space available.

We do not have a community strategy in the way that you suggest – our approach has been very much community led given that we do not have the capacity or resources to run such centre ourselves but will rely on the local community to work up schemes, attract other funding and as WDC we work together to find the way to deliver the scheme – so for Warwick Gates you and I talked and I identified that we could use CIL to help provide match funding – but there has to be a community to lead and run a scheme and that is an issue for new communities and for more deprived communities like Packmores which we do need to address.

Question(s) from Councillor Kohler:

6.3 of the report states that "there will be new tree and hedge planting, to create habitat and to offset carbon use." Are we content that this will meet the criteria of the Ecological Emergency motion that was passed at the October Council meeting, which stated that "Biodiversity Net Gain is maximised in all developments that WDC has a financial interest in"?

2.6.2 of the appendix states that "In the future we will also look to include photovoltaic cells, reducing our running costs significantly and making an additional reduction in carbon of 1372kg per annum." Given that the Council has declared a

Climate Emergency and our Net Zero DPD is in its final stages before adoption, is there an opportunity to enable an array of photovoltaic cells and appropriate battery storage to be brought forward to the initial construction? This would bring forward the CO2 savings and reductions in running costs.

Have we considered increasing the size of the funding request to enable more to be done on either of these aspects (whilst perhaps also asking the organisers to seek appropriate green grants)? Given that both Climate and Ecological Emergency Declarations are supported by all Councillors, I am sure it would find support.

Response:

I am sure we can ask those questions of the community group and as for additional costs we can again ask and see if it is possible to make this more energy self-sufficient – whether the Council wants to offer more money I would suggest we find out first what the additional cost might be.

Follow-up Questions from Councillor Kohler:

I feel there is a difference between the two examples.

For the Biodiversity, since we clearly have a financial interest in the project, we should be asking them to demonstrate that they are maximising the Biodiversity Net Gain as a condition of the existing funding. We should also offer expertise and / or to look at additional funding if it is needed to help them achieve that.

For the photovoltaic panels (and battery storage), it sounds like it is something they have looked at and then discounted, presumably to keep costs down. So encouraging them to think again by offering to help them to pay for it would seem the helpful approach.

But of course, we would need them to follow due process and come up with quotes, etc. before committing additional funds in either case.

Response to Follow-up Questions from Grants & Loans Manager:

We will raise both points with them and then see what we can agree with them. My one reservation is that any further delay will lead to increased costs in any case making the proposal unviable. But let us examine with them.

I think it's fair to say though that further delay will increase costs again which may then prevent the project from going ahead.

Further response:

I've just had a chat with Julie Crawshaw from BYCC; I was already aware that they were looking into making some changes but wasn't sure of the specifics, as it turns out it is the PV cells and battery storage.

Rather than heat pumps, they want to have sufficient PV cells and battery storage from the outset to cover all their energy needs, they've obtained a quote (£21k) and although slightly more expensive than heat pumps, things have moved on since the business plan was completed in November with regards to grant bids and Julie is confident that this will be covered with the bids they're making and our up-to £250,000 grant underwriting, they don't need to ask us for any more money.

They've very recently visited Harbury Village Hall where they have the exact same PV cells and battery storage system that BYCC want, this has confirmed to BYCC that they're making the right decision.

Julie also mentioned that they've had confirmation from the National Lottery that they're through to round 2 which she feels means that they are more-or-less successful with their bid. They're also through to round 2 of the 'Jubilee Hall money'.

So in conclusion it turns out that they are going to do what Cllr Kohler has suggested.

With regards to the biodiversity question; I don't know anything about Biodiversity Net Gain, however, Julie has explained to me that currently there is no planting on site, although there is no firm plan in place at the moment for what plants/hedges/trees they'll be planting, where and how many, whatever is planted is an immediate upgrade to the current position. Julie advised that the Project Manager has a masters degree in Environmental Impact Assessments and Management and will be maximising environmental benefits, this is a priority for them especially as they want the outdoor space to be used by the community groups (Scouts, Cubs etc) for activities.

Questions from Councillor King:

My question concerns item 2.6.2 of the business plan entitled environmental outcomes to meet with the climate emergency concerning the new community centre at Barford.

Have all efforts been made to find funding so that PV cells can be placed from the outset?

From a cost-effective point of view being able to fit these as a part of the construction of the building makes a great deal of sense as opposed to retrofitting them, notwithstanding of course the benefits of having carbon free electricity from the outset.

Response from Grants & Loans Manager:

I've just had a chat with Julie Crawshaw from BYCC; I was already aware that they were looking into making some changes but wasn't sure of the specifics, as it turns out it is the PV cells and battery storage.

Rather than heat pumps, they want to have sufficient PV cells and battery storage from the outset to cover all their energy needs, they've obtained a quote (£21k) and although slightly more expensive than heat pumps, things have moved on since the business plan was completed in November with regards to grant bids and Julie is confident that this will be covered with the bids they're making and our up-to £250,000 grant underwriting, they don't need to ask us for any more money.

They've very recently visited Harbury Village Hall where they have the exact same PV cells and battery storage system that BYCC want, this has confirmed to BYCC that they're making the right decision.

Julie also mentioned that they've had confirmation from the National Lottery that they're through to round 2 which she feels means that they are more-or-less successful with their bid. They're also through to round 2 of the 'Jubilee Hall money'.

So in conclusion it turns out that they are going to do what Cllr King has suggested.

Response from Chief Executive:

Good news I think – I think therefore that we can cover this by way of conditions to the grant.

13. Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge

(Report author(s): Andrew Jones, Deputy Chief Executive & Monitoring Officer).

Question(s) from Councillor Milton:

In 1.11 the report outlines the audience for the review group. Would you be open to a recommendation that adds the Chairs of Scrutiny to that audience? The committees could be helpful in managing through future actions that are identified so it may be advantageous for them to be involved as early as possible.

Response:

I have no issue with that. It will ultimately be for the Leader to determine, and I note you have copied-in Andrew D

14. Abbey Fields Cycle Route Proposals

(Report author(s): Graham Folkes-Skinner, Sustainable Transport Project Officer).

Question(s) from Councillor Skinner:

1. Regarding the preferred route (1), are there any considerations for where the route enters / exits Abbey Fields and whether there is requirement for footpaths to be widened and whether road crossings need to be considered? This is particularly relevant on the Borrowell Lane end where it comes out onto a particularly busy road a few yards away from the current road crossing.
2. Again, on the preferred route, are there considerations needed where there could be a lot of crossing of the path, particularly around the swimming pool entrances and the children's play area next to the tennis courts? I can see the fors/against segregation and shared paths along the route, but these areas will be particularly busy when open and could have safety issues of young children coming onto the path from these areas, without them realising its a cycle path too.

Response:

Thank you for your questions and I will do my best to answer them in the order presented.

1. WCC are working with us and if the recommendations get agreed, they plan to design up improved road junctions at both ends of the preferred route, i.e., Borrowell Lane and Bridge Street. If eventually the route gets formally approved, WCC will finance these two new crossings.
2. You are correct there are potential areas of the preferred route where any potential conflict between different park users will need to be managed. Those mitigations will come out in the design phase if my report gets approved. Advice will be taken from Sustrans on this and also during the 6-week consultation, the views of the different user groups will be sought.

15. Electric Vehicle (EV) Infrastructure in South Warwickshire – The Way Forward

(Report author(s): Graham Folkes-Skinner, Sustainable Transport Project Officer).

Question(s) from Councillor Kohler:

Recommendation 2 includes conducting a review of the Council's sites to assess their potential for EV charging. Would it be appropriate to include the potential for solar canopies and/or EV car clubs as part of the review?

Response:

I will certainly have that in mind when I get to the point of specifying what is needed from the Feasibility Study, if my report gets approval.

16. Community Projects Reserve Proposals (confidential appendix)

(Report author(s): Chris Elliott, Chief Executive).

Question(s) from Councillor Grey:

The report states that the Europa Way Bridge is already on the 'District Councils Project List' and CIL list. Please could you send me a link or inform me where I can find this list. I assume this is a different list to that detailed in Project Funding Summary Item 9 Appendix 10 which we reviewed our last Council Meeting on the 27th of February and does not contain reference to this project or the Project Reserves list?

Please can you also confirm when the 23/24 CIL list will be available to Cllr's. The CIL list is referenced in numerous projects and literature which is currently being presented to our residents. It is therefore essential that Councillors have an up-to-date summary.

I assume the Cycle Path/Myton Road link can also be found on the above referenced District Councils Project List? Whilst I understand the funding proposal is different i.e., the Disposal of Riverside House, for the sake of transparency it is important to see all projects, their status and funding source (proposed and confirmed) in one place.

Response:

It is the CIL List for the longer-term period not for the one year. Essentially this project is in the same position as to the footpath/cycleway last year in that it needs funding to get to the stage where we have certainty of costs etc. I have copied in Phil/Andrew C so they can send it to you.

It is proposed that the CIL list as renewed etc will come to Cllrs in July.

It is still within the CIL list as it is proposed to be funded via CIL and land receipt.

Response:

Further to Chris's answer above, [here is a link](#) to the current CIL Projects List. I would also refer you to the [Cabinet agenda for March 2022](#) when the current CIL Projects list was agreed (see item 7). The report sets out the amount allocated to each project over the next 5 years, as well as the amount allocated specifically in 2022/23.