

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COVENTRY

6 July 2010

PRESENT

Lord Mayor (Councillor Kelsey)

Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Mulhall)

Councillor Abbott	Councillor Mrs Lepoidevin
Councillor Andrews	Councillor Maton
Councillor Auluck	Councillor McNicholas
Councillor Bailey	Councillor Mulhall
Councillor Bains	Councillor J. Mutton
Councillor Mrs. Bigham	Councillor Mrs. M. Mutton
Councillor Blundell	Councillor Nellist
Councillor Charley	Councillor Noonan
Councillor Cliffe	Councillor O'Boyle
Councillor Clifford	Councillor Ridley
Councillor Mrs. Dixon	Councillor Ruane
Councillor Duggins	Councillor Sawdon
Councillor Foster	Councillor Sehmi
Councillor Gazey	Councillor Singh
Councillor Hammon	Councillor Skipper
Councillor Harvard	Councillor Smith
Councillor Mrs. Johnson	Councillor Mrs Sweet
Councillor Kelly	Councillor Taylor
Councillor A Khan	Councillor Townshend
Councillor Lakha	Councillor Walsh
Councillor Lancaster	Councillor Welsh
Councillor Lee	

Apologies: Councillor Asif
Councillor Chater
Councillor Crookes
Councillor Field
Councillor Harrison
Councillor Lapsa
Councillor Mrs Lucas
Councillor Skinner

Public Business

32. Coventry Good Citizen Award

On behalf of the Council, the Lord Mayor and his Honour Judge Hodson, the Honorary Recorder, presented to His Honour, Richard Cole, the Coventry Good Citizen Award. His citation read:

"His Honour Richard Cole was the Resident Judge at the Crown Court in Coventry from 1992 until his retirement in 2007. He was appointed the Honorary Recorder of the City of Coventry in 1999, reinstating an important and historic link between the civic

authority and the judiciary. Over the years in this office, he became an integral part of the City Council, loved and respected by all Council Members for his enthusiasm, impartiality, engagement and, above all, his commitment to the City and its people. Whether it was in his role as the Resident Judge in court or in the less formal addresses he gave to community groups and residents associations, he always upheld the reputation of the City. In 1995 he became a prominent member of a committee to raise funds for the BioMedical Research Institute at Warwick University. The committee was responsible for raising over £6 million enabling new laboratories to be built upon the Warwick University site.

At the conclusion of the fundraising in 2004, Richard Cole was appointed Chairman of Coventry and Warwick Medical Research Fund which continues to raise money to enable doctors and scientists of the highest calibre to work together on research projects with a direct bearing on standards of healthcare not only regionally but also nationally.

In his retirement Richard Cole gives of his time to causes which cross the Warwickshire and Coventry boundary; for example, Independent Advocacy, a charitable organisation that promotes and supports representation for people disadvantaged by disability, illness or social or economic circumstances, of which he is President.

In his role as Honorary Recorder he assisted in the setting up of the Good Citizen Award. It is only fitting that he too should be described as a Good Citizen of the City of Coventry."

33. Petitions

RESOLVED that the following petitions be referred to the appropriate City Council body or external organisation:

- (a) Access to entries at the back of houses 2 to 14 Hipswell Highway – 14 signatures presented by Councillor Mrs Dixon.**
- (b) Objection to Planning Application at 58 Cornelius Street, Coventry – 18 signatures presented by Councillor Singh Sehmi.**
- (c) Request to remedy the dilapidated conditions at 197-199 Melbourne Road – 65 signatures, presented by Councillor Bailey.**
- (d) Requesting the cancellation of the contract for a replacement incinerator at Whitley – 18 signatures, presented by Councillor Nellist.**
- (e) End the Siege of Gaza – 284 signatures, presented by Councillor Nellist.**

34. Declarations of Interest

The following Members declared interests in the matters referred to in the minutes indicated. The relevant minutes, and recorded decisions, also record where appropriate, the actions that the Members decided to take at the meeting indicated, having regard to the National Code of Local Government Conduct and the City Council's Constitution:

Interests in Recommendations:

**Prejudicial
Member**

Minute Number

Councillor Gazey
Councillor Hammon

36 (Coventry Core Strategy)
36 (Coventry Core Strategy)

(Councillors Gazey and Hammon left the meeting for consideration of this item)

35. New Duty to Respond to Petitions

Further to Minute 2/10 of the Standards Committee, the City Council considered a report of the Director of Customer and Workforce Services and the Director of Finance and Legal Services which set out the new process for dealing with petitions as a result of a new statutory duty which all Councils were required to implement.

The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act (2009) included a new duty on Councils to respond to all petitions submitted. The aim of this new duty was to strengthen local accountability in public services and placed local authorities on the front line of ensuring that local people connected with their decision makers. The Local Authorities (Petitions) (England) Order 2010 was made on 22nd March 2010 and statutory guidance was issued on 30 March 2010. The duty required Councils to establish a petition scheme to handle paper-based petitions from 15th June 2010. The Scheme must be approved by Council prior to it coming into force. Planning and licensing matters and matters relating to an individual or entity where there was a right to hold a review or a right of appeal under any other legal requirement, were exempt under the new requirements of the legislation, but were still provided for in the Council's Scheme, as provision already existed in the Council's rules under the current scheme. From 15th December 2010, the Council must also have an e-petitions facility in place, and the new Scheme provided for this.

Guidance specified that the petition scheme should include the following information:

- a) how we deal with petitions and decide if they are valid
- b) a list of steps to be taken in relation to responding to a petition
- c) notification of steps taken to be given to the petition organiser
- d) provide for a review of the action taken by the Council and
- e) provide a facility for e-petitions (by 15 December 2010 at the latest)

The Council's current petition scheme allowed a petition to be brought by a Councillor if it contained 5 or more signatures. Within the new scheme, a petition could be submitted by a Councillor *or* a member of the public – the requirement for it to have 5 or more signatures remained.

The Council was expected to determine a threshold number of signatures on a petition which would trigger a debate at a full Council meeting. The guidance states that this was to be set locally but should be no more than 5% of the population (which was 15,525 for Coventry). It was therefore recommended that the threshold should be 15,000. The Council could change this threshold number at any point in the future and if no petitions are received within a year, the Council could reduce the threshold.

The action which a Council must take to deal with a petition depended on which of the following categories it fitted into:

- a) it met the threshold of enough signatures to trigger a Council debate
- b) it had fewer than the threshold number of signatures; or
- c) it holds a named officer to account and met the required threshold for this or
- d) it was a petition on a planning , licensing or regulatory matter in which case it would be dealt with by the relevant Committee under the Committee's rules.

In respect of (c) above, local people had the right to petition for a named senior officer to attend a public meeting of the Council's overview and scrutiny committee and answer questions about their work. For Coventry this would include the following officers:

- Chief Executive
- Corporate Directors
- Monitoring Officer.

The Council needed to set a threshold for the number of signatures on a petition which would trigger an officer being asked to attend a meeting of one of the Scrutiny Boards. There was no specific guidance on this figure. It was therefore proposed that the Council set a threshold of 10,000 signatures on petitions to hold an officer to account.

A Briefing note which gave further information on the Standards Committee's discussions was appended to the report. The City Council noted that Standards Committee had, in general, supported the proposed process for responding to petitions but agreed that the figures in the report of 15,000 signatures to trigger a Council debate and 10,000 signatures to trigger an officer attending and overview and scrutiny committee were too high based on previous petitions submitted to the Council and recommended that Council consider reducing the figure to be more in line with the size/population of a ward.

The following amendment was moved by Councillor Williams, seconded by Councillor Foster and lost:

"Recommendation (1) - at the end of the Recommendation add "at 5000"

Recommendation (2) – at the end of the Recommendation add "at 300"

So that the recommendations now read:

- (1) Approve the threshold for petitions which trigger a council debate at 5000
- (2) Approve the threshold for petitions which trigger an officer attending an overview and scrutiny committee at 300."

Note: In respect of the above, a recorded vote was required in accordance with paragraph 4.1.71 of the City Council's Constitution. The Councillors voting for and against the amendment were as follows:

<u>For</u>	<u>Against</u>	<u>Abstain</u>
Andews	Abbott	
Bailey	Auluck	
Blundell	Bains	
Charley	Mrs Bigham	

Cliffe
Mrs Dixon
Foster
Gazey
Hammon
Lee
Lepoidevin
Nellist
Ridley
Smith
Taylor
Williams
Lord Mayor

Clifford
Duggins
Harvard
Kelly
A Khan
Lakha
Lancaster
Maton
McNicholas
Mulhall
J Mutton
M Mutton
O'Boyle
Ruane
Sehmi
Singh
Skipper
Mrs Sweet
Townshend
Walsh
Welsh

Result: 17 for
25 against
0 abstentions

RESOLVED that the City Council:

- (a) Approve the threshold for petitions which trigger a Council debate at 15,000 signatures.**
- (b) Approve the threshold for petitions which trigger an officer attending an Overview and Scrutiny Committee at 10,000 signatures.**
- (c) Approve the petition scheme detailed in Appendix 1 of the report, to take immediate effect and to replace the existing section 4.9 of the Council's Constitution.**
- (d) Approve the remaining changes required in the Constitution to the terms of reference for the Scrutiny Boards and Council procedure rules as detailed in Appendix 2 of the report.**

36. Coventry Core Strategy

The City Council considered a report of the Director of Services and Development which brought to Members' attention the report by the Planning Inspectorate following the independent examination of the Coventry Core Strategy and asked members to identify an appropriate course of action following the letter from the Secretary of State for Communities & Local Government saying that the Regional Spatial Strategies were to be abolished.

Core Strategies had been introduced as part of the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act. They were intended to enhance the strategic role of local

authorities, and set the vision for policies and spatial change. The spatial strategy was based on the principles of sustainability using land effectively and efficiently. This meant not wasting land (for example, by allowing it to become derelict), providing easy movement and ensuring that employment, education and leisure opportunities were within easy reach of everyone. Core Strategies were intended to be developed within the framework established by the Regional Strategy (RS). If they did not reflect this strategic framework they would not have been considered 'sound' by an Inspector and would not be able to form part of the statutory Development Plan for an area. The announcement of the abolition of RS's, without currently any guidance to advise how the future statutory process would operate meant that there was now significant uncertainty about how matters would progress.

Coventry's Core Strategy has been under preparation since Autumn 2005. There had been extensive consultation, in excess of the statutory requirements, ongoing since that time. Early engagement took place with a number of local stakeholders including Coventry Partnership (LSP), the Coventry Community Empowerment Network and other well-established networks and forums including; Coventry By Design and the Residents Liaison Group. This helped to identify issues for the Core Strategy.

In 17 March 2009, the City Council approved the Core Strategy Proposed Submission Document. This was published for pre-submission representations from 19 March 2009 until 7 May 2009. The Secretary of State appointed an independent Inspector to conduct an examination to determine whether the Core Strategy was sound and legally compliant. The examination was held during November 2009, which culminated in the Council being sent the Inspector's Report on 27th May 2010. The report was binding, as were all Inspectors' Reports under the current planning regime. It stated that subject to amendment in accordance with the recommendations made, Coventry's Core Strategy was sound. The recommendations consisted of minor editorial changes and addition/deletion of specific site allocations, particularly in relation to proposed residential development. Details of the recommendations were highlighted in bold at the end of each section of the Inspector's report, which was available in full on the Council's web site.

The Core Strategy was approved by the City Council for submission to the Secretary of State following a lengthy debate at Council, during which concern was expressed by a number of Members as to the appropriate amount of development the City Council should be planning for. In particular the necessity to develop Green Belt and Greenfield sites was questioned.

With the pending abolition of the RS, the report stated that it would be prudent to consider whether, in the light of the proposal contained in the Secretary of State's letter, that levels of development should be determined locally, these issues should be revisited

The report indicated there were some existing Greenfield sites that had previous approvals for development e.g. as part of the Canley Regeneration Area and school rebuilding schemes and as part of the statutory Coventry Development Plan 2001. There were also some small pockets of degraded land, which whilst not currently developed could play a more positive role in improving and contributing to the quality of the local environment if suitable development were to go ahead

During the course of the examination, the Inspector considered proposals for a number of individual sites. These were either proposed for development by the City Council or by others. Those put forward by others were referred to as 'omission sites'. Site specific details were included in the report submitted.

The following amendment was moved by Councillor Ridley, seconded by Councillor Sawdon and lost:

"that, at paragraph 2 of the report, the following recommendation be added:

3. Council further resolves that the review outlined in Paragraph 5.4 will not include green belt/green field sites being sold for housing development and that the results of the review will be presented to Full Council."

RESOLVED that the City Council:

- (a) **Suspend further work on the Coventry Core Strategy, pending the publication of further legislation and/or further advice from the Government regarding arrangements following the proposed abolition of the Regional Strategy.**
- (b) **Instruct Officers to explore the options available for putting in place a Core Strategy that reflected the wishes of the Council for future development and report back to the Council at a future meeting.**

37. Question Time

The appropriate Members provided a written response to all the questions set out in the Questions Booklet, together with an oral response to supplementary questions put to them at the meeting.

The following Members answered oral questions put to them by other Members as set out below, together with supplementary questions on the same matters:

No	Question Asked By	Question Put To	Subject Matter
1	Councillor Sawdon	Councillor Bains (as lead member of the West Midlands Police Authority)	Dispersal Orders in the City Centre
2	Councillor Williams	Councillor A Khan	Butts Theatre
3	Councillor Lee	Councillor A Khan	Cost of Screen in Millennium Place
4.	Councillor O'Boyle	Councillor Kelly	BSF
5.	Councillor Townshend	Councillor Mutton	Budget deficit

38. Statement by the Leader of the Council – Impact of job losses on the Coventry Economy

Councillor Mutton addressed the City Council on the impact of job losses on the Coventry economy. The Statement provided members with an update on the ongoing work being undertaken in light of the recent job losses in the City following the impending closure of QCDA and Becta as part of Government cuts. He reported that he had met with

the Public and Commercial Services Union in order to offer assistance to their members and had written to Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Education. Councillor Mutton also made reference to the Government's announced series of spending cuts and tax increases which would be confirmed in the forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review and which would further impact on all public services.

Councillor Taylor responded to the statement and, in accordance with paragraph 4.1.84 of the City Council's Constitution, it was moved and seconded that paragraph 4.1.39 be suspended to allow Councillor Nellist to also respond to the Statement.

39. Debate – Emergency Budget Statement

Councillor Duggins moved the following motion which was seconded by Councillor Mutton:

"This Council condemns the recent emergency budget statement made by Chancellor George Osborne as an ideological attack on public services as well as the previous announcement by the Coalition that called for £1.16 billion of in year cuts demanded of local Government – with its emphasis on Area Based Grant cuts.

This Council is concerned about the adverse impact that these measures will have on local services, local jobs, general economic recovery and the wellbeing of the people of Coventry."

RESOLVED that the Motion as set out above be adopted.

40. Debate – Pool Meadow Bus Station

Councillor Ridley moved the following motion which was seconded by Councillor Taylor:

"This Council fully supports the retention of Pool Meadow Bus Station in its current location"

The following amendment was moved by Councillor Mrs Bigham and seconded by Councillor Lakha:

"After the word "location" add: "and will work with other agencies to address antisocial behaviour there"

This amendment was carried giving rise to the following substantive motion:

"This Council fully supports the retention of Pool Meadow Bus Station in its current location and will work with other agencies to address antisocial behaviour there"

RESOLVED that the substantive motion as set out above be adopted.

(Meeting closed: 7.00 pm)