



Cabinet Member (Policy and Leadership)

Time and Date

1.00 pm on Thursday, 19th February, 2015

Place

Committee Room 2 - Council House

Public Business

1. **Apologies**
2. **Declarations of Interest**
3. **Minutes**
 - a) To agree the minutes from the meeting held on 4th December, 2014
 - b) Matters Arising
4. **Response to Petition to Stop Coventry being merged into Super area of Birmingham**

Report of the Chief Executive
5. **Outstanding Issues**

There are no outstanding issues
6. **Any Other Items of Public Business**

Any other items of public business which the Cabinet Member decides to take as matters of urgency because of the special circumstances involved.

Private Business

Nil

Chris West, Executive Director, Resources, Council House Coventry

Wednesday, 11 February 2015

Note: The person to contact about the agenda and documents for this meeting is Michelle Rose

Membership: Councillors J Blundell (Shadow Cabinet Member) and A Lucas (Cabinet Member)

Please note: a hearing loop is available in the committee rooms

If you require a British Sign Language interpreter for this meeting
OR if you would like this information in another format or
language please contact us.

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Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member (Policy and Leadership) held at 2.00
pm on Thursday, 4 December 2014

Members Present:

Councillor A Lucas (Cabinet Member)
Councillor J Blundell (Shadow Cabinet Member)

Employees (by Directorate):

S Brake, People Directorate
F Collingham, Chief Executive's Directorate
M Rose, Resources Directorate
J Venn, Chief Executive's Directorate

Public Business

7. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no disclosable pecuniary interest.

8. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 5th September 2014 were agreed and signed as a true record.

9. **Response to petition calling for the Palestinian Flag to be flown at the Council House**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Chief Executive which provided a response to a petition requesting that the Palestinian flag be flown from the Council House to demonstrate solidarity with the Palestinian population.

An e-petition bearing 17 signatures was received demanding that, as a city of peace and reconciliation, given the high number of Palestinian civilian casualties in Gaza including a large number of children, the Palestinian flag is flown from the Council House to demonstrate solidarity with the Palestinian population. The Petition Organiser was invited to the meeting but did not attend.

The Council had long held strong views about the need for peace and reconciliation in the Middle East; an end to the suffering of the people of Gaza; and the resolution of the conflict between Israel and Palestine. This summer, in response to conflict in Gaza, a letter to the national press on 8 August 2014 was sent by the Leader of the Council, the Deputy Leader of the Council; the Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor and other senior councillors; the Lord Bishop of Coventry and the Chair of the Coventry Muslim Forum urging the United Nations and the British Government to play an urgent part in bringing about a ceasefire and seeking a permanent solution to the conflict.

Coventry was rightly proud of its worldwide reputation as a city of peace and reconciliation, born from the devastation of its Cathedral in the Second World War. Since then the highly skilled and expert staff at Coventry Cathedral had led the city's work in the field of peace and reconciliation and this leadership continued under the guidance of Bishop Christopher, with the Council ensuring it supported the Cathedral's work on behalf of the city.

The report indicated that the Council followed the protocols for flying flags outside the Council House, as laid down by the Flags Institute and the Flags and Heraldry Committee in their publication "Flying Flags in the United Kingdom". The Cabinet Member noted that during the winter months no flags were flown on the front of Council House building, other than the Union Flag on the main Council House flag pole which was flown at all times, subject to specific variations during certain occasions such as funerals, international visitors and independence days, as appropriate.

It was recommended that this guidance continued to be followed, which would ensure a consistent and clear approach to the flying of flags.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member (Policy and Leadership):-

- 1. Reaffirms the Council's concern about the suffering of Palestinian people, as expressed in the open letter signed by leading councillors, the Lord Bishop of Coventry, the Right Rev Dr Christopher Cocksworth and the Chair of the Coventry Muslim Forum, Dr Abdullah Shehu and issued on 8 August 2014.**
- 2. Continues to support the internationally respected work of Coventry Cathedral in seeking to end conflicts across the world, including Palestine and Israel.**
- 3. Confirms that the Council should continue to follow national protocol and local guidance for the flying of flags outside the Council House, which means that the Palestinian flag will not be flown outside the Council House specifically as a mark of solidarity.**

10. Appointment of Special Advisor on Child Protection Issues to the Leader of the Council

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Executive Director, People, which set out proposals for the extension of the appointment of Mr Donald Hamilton (retired Designated Family Judge) as the Special Advisor on Child Protection to the Leader of the Council.

On the 10th October 2013 an Extraordinary Meeting of Council was held to consider the Serious Case Review Report into the death of Daniel Pelka. Daniel Pelka (a Coventry child) was murdered in March 2012 by his mother and her partner; Daniel has sustained a long history of abuse leading up to his death. A Multi- Agency Serious Case Review was commissioned to investigate and analyse the circumstances into Daniels abuse and death.

The Serious Case Review made 15 recommendations to local partners, covering domestic abuse, referral and assessment processes, training of staff, practise in schools and health as well as the requirement to disseminate messages to the Children's workforce.

In addition to the resolutions made by Council at the Extraordinary Council meeting, the Leader advised the Council that she had appointed His Honour Judge Hamilton (Retired) to be her Special Advisor on Child Protection Issues, with immediate effect. Mr Donald Hamilton, as a retired Designated Family Judge, has a wealth of experience and knowledge around Child Protection and was ideally placed to offer the Leader an independent and experienced consultative role in this challenging area. Mr Donald Hamilton has the authority and experience to command the respect both internally within the City Council and externally with a range of partner organisations such as the West Midlands Police, Health Services and other agencies.

It was proposed that, as the improvement plan for Children's Social Care in Coventry continued its implementation, the Leader of the Council's oversight of the increased measures being introduced to protect those children in Coventry who are at risk of harm or suffering harm would be enhanced by the continued support of Mr Donald Hamilton as her Special Advisor on Child Protection.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member (Policy and Leadership):

- 1. Endorses the extension of the appointment of Mr Donald Hamilton as the Special Advisor on Child Protection to the Leader of the Council until 31st December 2015.**
- 2. Recommend to the Corporate Parenting Board (Cabinet Advisory Panel) the invitation of Mr Donald Hamilton, in his role of Special Advisor on Child Protection to the Leader, to attend the Corporate Parenting Board, and other meetings of relevant council bodies where permitted.**

11. Outstanding Issues

There were no outstanding issues

12. Any Other Items of Public Business

There were no other items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 2.15 pm)

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19 February 2015

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Policy and Leadership – Councillor Mrs Lucas OBE

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Chief Executive

Ward(s) affected:

All

Title:

Response to petition to stop Coventry being merged into Super area of Birmingham

Is this a key decision?

no

Executive Summary:

This report sets out the recommended response to a petition with 161 signatures which says:
“Stop our Council Leader being able to agree to let Coventry join the Super area of Birmingham without a public referendum.”

The Leader of the Council does not have the authority to agree to Coventry becoming part of any wider local government grouping. In addition the setting up a Combined Authority or Economic Prosperity Board of any geography is governed by national legislation which requires that a specified process must be undertaken before such a body is established and cannot be done by an individual local authority leader. This process includes public consultation but not a public referendum.

Recommendations:

For the Leader of the Council to:

- instruct officers to write to the petition organiser to inform the petitioners that the Leader of the Council does not have the authority to act as set out in their petition and to provide them with information about the legislation that governs the setting up of Combined Authorities and Economic Prosperity Boards

List of Appendices included:

None

Background Papers:

None

Other useful documents:

Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/20/contents>

Consultation on proposals to amend legislation on Combined Authorities and Economic Prosperity Boards

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposals-to-amend-legislation-relating-to-combined-authorities-and-economic-prosperity-boards>

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report title: Response to petition to stop Coventry being merged into Super Birmingham area

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 For a number of years there have been discussions and national policy change on the most appropriate level of geography and governance at a sub-national level to promote economic growth and prosperity. This sub-national economic policy also seeks to rebalance the national economy by delivering more economic growth to local businesses and local people in regions and sub-regions outside London and the South-East.
- 1.2 It is also recognised that real functional economic geographies often operate across individual local authority boundaries so some strategic issues such as infrastructure (including transport), business support, and skills may be best addressed collaboratively across a wider sub-regional area.
- 1.3 Like many local authorities, Coventry City Council continues to argue that to promote better local economic growth, decision making about local economic development, including the allocation of funding, should be taken at a local rather than at a national Government level.
- 1.4 The last two years has seen the creation of five Combined Authorities – these bring together a number of local authorities to work together formally as a joint body to deal with strategic economic issues including the provision of public transport. In the last few months a number of other areas have declared their interest in setting up a local Combined Authority: this includes Birmingham and the four local authorities in the Black Country who have declared their shared intention to set up a Combined Authority for the West Midlands to covering their respective areas.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 A petition with 161 signatures has been submitted to Coventry City Council which says: *“Stop our Council Leader being able to agree to let Coventry join the Super area of Birmingham without a public referendum.”*
- 2.2 The petition appears to be based on the mistaken assumption that the Leader of the Council has the authority to *“agree to let Coventry join a Super area of Birmingham”*. This is not the case. Under the Council’s constitution, any proposal for Coventry City Council to become part of any formal grouping of local authorities such as a joint committee is not within the authority of the Leader of the Council.
- 2.3 In addition there are specific requirements under legislation that have to be met before any Combined Authority or Economic Prosperity Board can created under the parts of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. These are formal bodies and each one can only be set up individually by specific Order by the Secretary of State.
- 2.4 Before such a body is created legislation requires that each area must undertake a governance review and formal consultation undertaken locally on any proposals. After this has taken place locally, proposals for a new Combined Authority or Economic Prosperity Board must be submitted to the Secretary of State to consider. The Secretary of State then undertakes another formal round of consultation before putting the proposals before Parliament for statutory approval.
- 2.5 There are currently no formal proposals being put forward by Coventry City Council. Any proposals for the area covered by the City Council would be subject to formal approval by the Council and to the statutory process set out paragraphs 2.3 and 2.4.

2.6 It is therefore recommended that the Leader instructs officers to inform the lead petitioner that the Leader of the Council does not have the authority to act as set out in their position and to provide them with information about the statutory process that is required to create a Combined Authority.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

3.1 n/a

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

4.1 The relevant information would be provided to the lead petitioner directly after a recommendation is made.

5. Comments from Executive Director, Resources

5.1 Financial implications
None

5.2 Legal implications
The information to be provided to the petitioners will be taken from the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. The Government is currently consulting on proposed changes to this legislation but these proposals do not change the relevant parts of the legislation.

6. Other implications
None

6.1 **How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / Local Area Agreement (or Coventry Sustainable Community Strategy)?**

n/a

6.2 **How is risk being managed?**

This report sets out the current requirements under legislation and there are no risks to be managed as a result of the recommendations of this report.

6.3 **What is the impact on the organisation?**

There is no additional impact on the organisation.

6.4 **Equalities / EIA**

None

6.5 **Implications for (or impact on) the environment**

None

6.6 **Implications for partner organisations?**

None – this report sets out the current legal position that applies to the Council and its partners.

Report author(s): Jenni Venn

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Directorate: Chief Executives

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Enquiries should be directed to the above person.

Contributor/approver name	Title	Directorate or organisation	Date doc sent out	Date response received or approved
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Names of approvers for submission: (officers and members)				
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Legal: Carol Bradford	Carol Bradford	Resources	28/1/15	9/02/15
Director: Martin Reeves	Chief Executive			6/2/15
Members: Councillor Lucas	Cabinet Member	Policy and Governance	5/2/15	6/2/15

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