

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Council held at 2.00 pm on Tuesday, 13 October 2015

Present:

Members:

Councillor M Hammon (Chair)

Councillor F Abbott

Councillor N Akhtar

Councillor P Akhtar

Councillor M Ali

Councillor A Andrews

Councillor M Auluck

Councillor R Auluck

Councillor R Bailey

Councillor S Bains

Councillor L Bigham

Councillor J Birdi

Councillor J Blundell

Councillor R Brown

Councillor K Caan

Councillor J Clifford

Councillor G Crookes

Councillor G Duggins

Councillor D Galliers

Councillor D Gannon

Councillor L Harvard

Councillor J Innes

Councillor D Kershaw

Councillor A Khan

Councillor R Lakha

Councillor R Lancaster

Councillor M Lapsa

Councillor A Lucas

Councillor P Male

Councillor K Maton

Councillor J McNicholas

Councillor K Mulhall

Councillor J Mutton

Councillor M Mutton

Councillor H Noonan

Councillor E Ruane

Councillor T Sawdon

Councillor P Seaman

Councillor B Singh

Councillor D Skinner

Councillor H Sweet

Councillor K Taylor

Councillor R Thay

Councillor S Thomas

Councillor S Walsh

Councillor D Welsh

Honorary Alderman

Apologies: Councillor D Chater, A Gingell, J Lepoidevin, C Miks,
J O'Boyle and P Townshend

Public Business

67. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 8 September 2015

The minutes of the Council Meeting held on 8 September, 2015 were signed as a true record

68. Coventry Good Citizen Award

On behalf of the City Council, the Lord Mayor presented John Tierney with the Good Citizen Award. His citation read:-

“John was involved with Foleshill Community Centre for over 50 years. He joined the centre as a boy to be with his friends and to enjoy the many activities which took place there. He then became an active volunteer eventually taking on the role of Centre Manager.

John's contribution as Centre Manager in making the centre a popular and convivial meeting and learning place for the local community was invaluable. He has truly embraced the community spirit by providing a centre to learn, take part in an activity or meet with friends. He has welcomed the people from the local community and helped them to thrive both socially and educationally.

This Good Citizen Award is in recognition of John's long and distinguished service to the Foleshill community.”

69. Presentation of Illuminated Address

The Lord Mayor presented Councillor Hazel Noonan, Lord Mayor for 2014/15, with her Illuminated Address.

70. Local Democracy Week 2015

The Lord Mayor indicated that it was Local Democracy Week and outlined a series of events that the City Council were hosting aimed at encouraging democratic engagement, especially amongst younger people.

Councillors were encouraged to attend the events.

71. Death of Former Councillors

The Lord Mayor referred to the recent deaths of former Councillors Val Stone and Roy Barker, who represented Longford and Cheylesmore Ward respectively.

Members paid tribute to the work undertaken by both Val and Roy and extended the Council's sincere condolences to their families.

72. Correspondence

The Lord Mayor reported that he had received the following correspondence:-

- (1) A letter from Buckingham Palace expressing the Queen's thanks for the City's congratulations on the occasion Her Majesty becoming the longest-reigning Monarch of the UK on 9 September, 2015.
- (2) A letter of thanks from Mr Ratan N Tata on his admittance as an Honorary Freeman of the City of Coventry.

73. Petitions

RESOLVED that the following petitions be referred to the appropriate City Council bodies:-

- (a) **Objection to planning application for the erection of buildings on site 28, 54-56 and 58-74 London Road – 17 signatures, presented by Councillor N Akhtar**
- (b) **Objection to planning application for the change of use of Allesley Scout Hut, Washbrook Lane – 54 signatures, presented by Councillor Birdi**

74. Declarations of Interest

Councillor McNicholas declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in the matter the subject of Minute 76 below relating to "Devolution and Economic Growth – Scheme for Setting Up a West Midlands Combined Authority"

Councillor McNicholas left the meeting for consideration of this item.

75. Motions Without Notice

In accordance with the Constitution, the following Motions without notice were moved by Councillor Gannon, seconded by Councillor Lancaster and carried:-

- (a) To combine the debates for item 7 (Devolution and Economic Growth – Scheme for Setting up a West Midlands Combined Authority) and item 13.1 (Debate to be moved by Councillor Blundell).
- (b) To suspend the time limits to enable Councillors Lucas and Blundell to have one untimed speech and to enable Councillors Maton and Sawdon to speak for 5 minutes in seconding .

76. Devolution and Economic Growth - Scheme for Setting Up a West Midlands Combined Authority

Further to Minute 75 above, the debate on this item was combined with the debate in relation to "Combined Authorities" which was set out on the Council agenda and which was proposed by Councillor Blundell and seconded by Councillor Sawdon.

The Council considered a report of the Chief Executive, which set out proposals for the Council in relation to the proposed West Midlands Combined Authority.

A combined authority is a statutory body that would facilitate the collaboration and joint working between local authorities to improve economic development, regeneration and transport in a functional economic area. It is a public body in its own right. On 28 May 2015 Coventry City Council's Cabinet agreed in principle to create a combined authority with a preferred option of councils from Coventry and Warwickshire (and Hinckley and Bosworth) with councils from the Greater Birmingham and Solihull and the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership areas.

Coventry City Council and the other six West Midlands Metropolitan District Councils had undertaken a governance review on current sub-regional working arrangements which concluded that the creation of a combined authority would improve economic development, regeneration and transport in the metropolitan area, and a geography that includes other councils from the wider Local Enterprise Partnership areas of Coventry and Warwickshire and Greater Birmingham and Solihull could bring even greater economic benefits.

The seven West Midlands metropolitan district councils undertook a joint engagement exercise on proposals for a combined authority in the West Midlands over the summer. As a result of this some district councils from the surrounding area have opted to join the proposed combined authority as non-constituent members. Coventry City Council undertook its own engagement and consultation programme in the city in addition to the West Midlands exercise.

The Government continued its devolution agenda and asked areas to come forward with proposals for a devolution deal with Government for inclusion in the Comprehensive Spending Review in November 2015. Some 38 areas, including the West Midlands, had done so. The decision to set up a combined authority would be subject to specific legislative tests about the benefits such an authority would bring and would be separate to any decision on a devolution deal.

The report indicated that the next stage in the process for setting up a combined authority would be for the local authorities concerned to agree to submit proposals in a Scheme to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, which would inform the provisions of any Order creating a combined authority. A draft Scheme for a West Midlands Combined Authority had been prepared for submission to the Secretary of State that set out the proposed membership of the West Midlands Combined Authority and how it would work, and was attached as appendix 5 to the report.

A revised Scheme to that considered at the meeting of Cabinet on 13 October was circulated at the meeting and the Leader reported that the revision related to a change to the wording on transport to better reflect the legislation. It was noted that the Scheme may be subject to one further amendment should Lichfield District Council decide to become a non-constituent member.

The appendices to the report submitted also included details in relation to the West Midlands Authorities' Statutory Governance Review; a statement of intent for a West Midlands Combined Authority; a summary of the City Council's

engagement and consultation on the proposals for a Combined Local Authority; a report of the Coventry Citizens' Panel.

As a combined authority must hold the statutory transport function for the area, only local authorities that have the statutory function for transport can be constituent members. This meant the area to be covered by the proposed combined authority will be the West Midlands metropolitan area: Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton, reflecting the current transport arrangements. This would build on and reflect the current West Midlands Joint Committee arrangements that had been in place for almost thirty years. It was proposed that the three Local Enterprise Partnerships would be non-constituent members of the combined authority: Black Country LEP, Coventry and Warwickshire LEP and Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP. Coventry and Warwickshire LEP took a unanimous decision to join the West Midlands Combined Authority as a non-constituent member at its Board meeting on 5 October 2015.

The three county councils of Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire had decided not to join the combined authority although each of them could look to join at a future date, as long as they did not become constituent members of another combined authority. Cannock Chase District Council, Nuneaton and Bedworth, Redditch, Tamworth and Telford and Wrekin Borough Council's had agreed to become non-constituent members of the proposed West Midlands Combined Authority. A decision was also expected from Lichfield following their Council meeting scheduled for 13th October 2015.

Coventry Council could opt not to join a combined authority as it was not compulsory and the Secretary of State could not make decisions for the Council. However, there were clear benefits of working with other authorities on issues at a sub-regional level which the Council would forgo. It would also mean that a devolution deal with Government, although not impossible, would be less likely. It was therefore recommended that, after considering the information available, including the documentation appended to the report, Coventry City Council should join the proposed West Midlands Combined Authority.

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

“That the following paragraphs of the debate set out as item 13.1 on the agenda be moved as an amendment to replace the recommendations detailed in report 7 (Devolution and Economic Growth – scheme for setting up a West Midlands Combined Authority):-

That Council:

1. Engages with Warwickshire County Council in recommencing the discussions we had previously and work up the business case for a Coventry & Warwickshire Combined Authority, and;
2. Releases the 'secret document' to elected members and to the general public so that the full implications of the West Midlands Combined Authority can be understood;

3. Brings forward, within 10 working days, a detailed report showing what progress has been made on matters as said above.”

RESOLVED that Council agree:

1. That Coventry City Council should join the proposed West Midlands Combined Authority after considering the information available including the West Midlands statutory governance review and Statement of Intent for the Combined Authority (appendices 1 and 2) and the results of the local engagement and consultation process (appendices 3 and 4)
2. That Coventry City Council should approve the Scheme for a West Midlands Combined Authority for submission to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.
3. That any devolution deal would be subject to a separate and detailed decision by Cabinet and Full Council which would include an analysis of the benefits and risks and the value of the deal to the city of Coventry along with any proposed changes in governance including whether or not to have an elected metro mayor.
4. That any devolution deal for the seven West Midlands metropolitan councils must require a unanimous decision by all the councils concerned.
5. To undertake continued engagement across the city on the development of a combined authority and devolution.
6. To continue to take a full part in the Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership.
7. To take a full part in and develop the Coventry and Warwickshire sub-regional local authority arrangements jointly with the other councils.
8. That the Executive Director of Resources be given delegated authority in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources to make decisions on the Council’s behalf to withdraw from the existing Coventry and Warwickshire Business Rates Pool and agree the terms for entering a new wider West Midlands business rates pool where appropriate.

NOTES:

- 1) In accordance with the Constitution, a recorded vote was required. The Councillors voting for and against the Recommendations were as follows:-

For	Against	Abstain
Councillor Abbott	Councillor Andrews	
Councillor N Akhtar	Councillor Bailey	
Councillor Ali	Councillor Birdi	

Councillor M Auluck
Councillor Dr R Auluck
Councillor Bains
Councillor Bigham
Councillor Brown
Councillor K Caan
Councillor Clifford
Councillor Duggins
Councillor Galliers
Councillor Gannon
Councillor Harvard
Councillor Innes
Councillor Kershaw
Councillor A Khan
Councillor Lakha
Councillor Lancaster
Councillor Lucas
Councillor Maton
Councillor Mulhall
Councillor J Mutton
Councillor M Mutton
Councillor Ruane
Councillor Seaman
Councillor Singh
Councillor Sweet
Councillor Thay
Councillor Thomas
Councillor Walsh
Councillor Welsh

Councillor Blundell
Councillor Crookes
Councillor Lapsa
Councillor Male
Councillor Noonan
Councillor Sawdon
Councillor Skinner
Councillor Taylor
Lord Mayor

Result: 32 for
12 against
0 abstentions

- 2) Having declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, Councillor McNicholas left the meeting for consideration of this item.

77. **Polling District and Polling Place Review**

The Council considered a report of the Chief Executive which detailed amendments to the polling district and polling place review scheme which were approved by Council on 14 January and 9 December, 2014. The amendments are required due to some of the locations no longer being available and in response to complaints received at the Elections in 2015. The Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities Advisory Panel – Electoral Arrangements and Ward Councillors have been consulted on the proposed amendments and the consultation document was published on the Council's website as required by legislation.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) **That the City Council approves the revised polling district and polling place scheme as detailed in the report submitted.**

- (2) That if any further polling place becomes unavailable prior to the election, authority be delegated the Chief Executive, following consultation with the Leader and the Deputy Leader and the appropriate Ward members to agree temporary amendments to the scheme for the 2016 elections.

78. **Appointments of the City Council - Tile Hill Wood School and Language College and Lyng Hall School Governing Bodies**

The Council considered a report of the Executive Director of Resources that sought approval to appoint City Council representatives to the Governing Bodies of Tile Hill Wood School and Language College and Lyng Hall School.

RESOLVED that the City Council:-

- (1) **Appoints Councillor K Maton to the Tile Hill Wood School and Language College Governing Body**
- (2) **Delegates authority to appoint to the Lyng Hall School Governing Body to the Executive Director of Resources, in consultation with Cabinet Member for Education**

NOTE: It was moved by Councillor Bailey, seconded by Councillor Crookes and lost that Councillor P Male to appointed to the Tile Hill Wood School and Language College Governing Body

79. **Question Time**

Councillor Townshend had provided written answers to the questions set out in the Questions Booklet.

The following Members indicated answered oral questions as et out below put to them or agreed to send a written response, together with supplementary questions on the same matters:-

	Question Asked By	Question Put To	Subject Matter
1	Councillor Sawdon	Councillor Maton	Number of houses in Coventry bought by London Boroughs
2	Councillor Crookes	Councillor Lucas (on behalf of Councillor Townshend)	Use of locum solicitors, including financial costs
3	Councillor Bailey	Councillor A Khan	Extending the opening of St Mary's Guildhall to all year round
4	Councillor Blundell	Councillor Abbott	Outcome of Ward Forum

			Review
5	Councillor Taylor	Councillor Gannon	Telephone response times – Coventry Contact Centre
6	Councillor Male	Councillor Gannon	Implications of proposed cuts to grants on the City of Culture Bid
7	Councillor Birdi	Councillor Kershaw	Appointment to Free School Governing Bodies
8	Councillor Sawdon	Councillor Lucas	Nuclear Free Zone in Coventry

80. **Statement**

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Councillor Ruane, made a statement in respect of the “Children’s Services Improvement Plan”

Councillor Noonan responded to the Statement

81. **Debate - Registering to Vote**

Councillor Thomas moved the following debate, which was seconded by Councillor Lancaster:-

“Council resolves:

To take every possible step to ensure that as many local residents as possible are registered to vote including, but not limited to, the following:

- Fully analysing the last annual household canvass and comparing the results on a ward by ward basis to the previous year’s canvass.
- Maintaining a database of electors who have confirmed their electoral registration details via the “No Change” method, and using this database to ensure people who have been previously registered but haven’t been re-registered are contacted.
- Using all available council-held databases to ensure that as many electors as possible are data-matched for electoral registration purposes.
- Using all available methods of communication to explain the transition to IER to local residents.
- Prompting local residents with electoral registration reminders at other points of contact with the council, such as when residents apply for Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit and other council services.
- Liaising with local private sector landlords to ensure electoral registration information is included in tenancy packs and other communications they have with their tenants.

- Having council officers attend citizenship ceremonies and local schools and colleges to encourage newly eligible electors to register to vote at the earliest opportunity.”

The following amendment was moved by Councillor Crookes, seconded by Councillor Bailey and lost:-

“That the debate be amended by the addition of the following paragraph at the end:-

“While notwithstanding the above, before going ahead to ensure that the measures proposed are fully costed and affordable, while noting that registering to vote is an individual responsibility”

RESOLVED that the Motion as set out above be unanimously adopted.

Note: The Debate as set out as item 13.1 on the agenda was dealt with as part of Minute 76 above.

(Meeting closed at 5.10 pm)