

**Coventry City Council**  
**Minutes of the Meeting of Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3)**  
**held at 2.00 pm on Wednesday, 20 March 2019**

Present:

Members: Councillor J McNicholas (Chair)  
Councillor J Birdi  
Councillor G Crookes  
Councillor R Lancaster  
Councillor C Miks  
Councillor B Singh  
Councillor K Taylor

Other Members (By Invitation): Councillor Brown (Elected Member Digital Champion)  
Councillor J Clifford (Deputy Chair of Scrutiny)  
Councillor J O'Boyle (Cabinet Member for Jobs and Regeneration)

Others Present: H Turner (Managing Director, The Wheelhouse)

Employees (by Directorate):

People D Ashmore, G Griffiths, A Simmonds, P Ward

Place G Holmes, G McKelvie, M Salmon

Apologies: There were no apologies

## **Public Business**

### **36. Declarations of Interest**

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

### **37. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2019 were agreed and signed as a true record.

Further to minute 31/18 headed 'Support to Small Businesses and Start-ups', the Board noted that a Briefing Note was being prepared for the Cabinet Member for Jobs and Regeneration that would highlight the work that had both been undertaken and planned to target under-represented groups and communities to help them access business support in Coventry; this would also include an analysis of individuals assisted and jobs created. A copy of the Briefing Note would be circulated to the Board.

**38. Exclusion of Press and Public**

**RESOLVED** that the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) agrees to exclude the press and public under Sections 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 relating to the private briefing note in Minute 44 below headed 'The Wheelhouse' on the grounds that the briefing note involves the likely disclosure of information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Act, as it contains information relating to the financial affairs of a particular person (including the authority holding that information) and in all circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

**39. ICT and Digital - Coventry as a Gigabit City**

The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) received a presentation by the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) on the progress being made on Coventry's ambition of becoming a Gigabit City and to provide an opportunity for the Board to have an input into its direction and focus. The Cabinet Member for Jobs and Regeneration attended the meeting for consideration of this matter.

The presentation covered:

- a) Current position and work in progress – Digital connectivity in Coventry:
  - i) City Fibre: Fibre to the Home Programme
  - ii) OpenReach: Fibre First Programme
  - iii) What does having a Gigabit Internet connection mean?
- b) What is a Smart City and what might this mean for Coventry:
  - The journey to delivering sustainable quality of life using technology and data
  - Every city had a different population demographic and is therefore hard to compare as 'smart cities'.
  - Coventry was the ideal size for a 'living lab' to be a platform for innovation by local partners.
  - There were two Key Themes: E-Government – Online, Interactive ways of engaging with the council/public (i.e. gamification, channel shift etc.); and Digital Place – Open Data, Connectivity, Digital Twinning
- c) Where are we with 5G and what might this mean for Coventry:
  - 5G would be the fastest network ever seen, with potential speeds reaching 10Gb/s.
  - The networks would have much lower latency, meaning there wouldn't be any delay between asking a device to do something and it happening.
  - Reliability was also set to improve through a greater number of connection points in a smaller area, allowing for increased capacity.
  - These characteristics made 5G the perfect platform for time sensitive connections like healthcare and autonomous vehicles – cases where the network had to be totally trusted not to fail.
  - 5G Urban Connected Communities - The project was being led by WMCA, the business case has been submitted and awaiting funding release and three hubs would be located across the West Midlands: Birmingham –

citizen wellbeing; Black Country - industry and construction; and Coventry – smart mobility.

- ICT and Digital would align with the Coventry Digital Strategy and link in with other digital projects such as IOT, Wi-Fi and the full fibre programme.
- The Authority would have influence on the 5G applications deployed in the city as part of the project structure.
- The UCC deployment would complement plans to install 5G capability as part of the Midlands Future Mobility (Connected Autonomous Vehicles) project. This would cover a route from the University of Warwick around the ring road and through to the A45.

The Board were informed that there were some concerns regarding exposure to 5G frequencies. Public Health England (PHE) publishes comprehensive reviews of the scientific evidence relevant to radio wave exposures. The most recent PHE-backed conclusion was that "although a substantial amount of research had been conducted in this area, there was no convincing evidence that radio wave exposures below guideline levels cause health effects in either adults or children.

The Board questioned officers and discussed the following issues:

- The arrangements for highway works in connection with the installation of infrastructure – co-ordination of works with infrastructure providers through the Council's Highways Section, to maximise efficiency and minimise costs. Much infrastructure has already been laid. Re-instatement standards monitored.
- The effectiveness of good Commercial relationships and the importance of the provider's maintenance of the service and delivery of customer service standards.
- Ground-breaking step for the City in digital progress – creating a quality of life for residents, the potential to retain the graduate talent from the City's two Universities, and for current and future businesses.
- Local Plan requirements for fast fibre installation in respect of new housing developments.
- Coventry University – CovFreeWiFi in the campus area
- Citi-Wise app – include culture and leisure activities and events
- Security and data protection relating to the automatic collection of data through the use of apps
- Digital upskilling for residents – provision of events following the success of digital skills week held in Kiel
- Cost associated with the initial rollout of the 5G service – concerns around resident inclusivity.
- Consideration of health implications in respect of 5G – keep up to date with local and regional health authorities

The Board thanked the officers for the detailed presentation and welcomed and supported the direction and focus of Coventry's digital progress. They requested that they be provided with clarification on the requirements of the Local Plan for fast fibre installation in respect of new housing developments. The Board also requested that officers kept up to date with local and regional public health authorities on the health implications of 5G and that the issue of Smart Cities be referred to the regional Scrutiny Board. Members decided that further regular reports on progress be submitted to the Board that included updates on

achievements against objectives, highway reinstatements, relationships with providers, security and data protection, health issues and links with leisure facilities and events.

**RESOLVED that the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3):**

- 1) Notes the briefing note and presentation, with no further recommendations.**
- 2) Requests that further regular report on progress be submitted to the Board to include updates on achievements against objectives, highway reinstatements, relationships with providers, security and data protection, health issues and links with leisure facilities and events.**

#### **40. The Wheelhouse - Update**

The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) received a briefing note of the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) on the current activity in relation to the growth of The Wheelhouse, based within the Council House, Coventry and sought the support and guidance of the Board for the ongoing growth and development of the facility. The Cabinet Member for Jobs and Regeneration attended the meeting for consideration of this matter.

At their meeting on 15th May 2018 the Scrutiny Board was informed that The Wheelhouse had opened at the Council House as a means of generating an income from otherwise underutilised space within the Council (minute 49/18 referred).

The Wheelhouse (Coventry) opened in late April 2018, within the former Communications Team offices converted to offer:

- Dedicated desk spaces
- Co-working desk spaces
- Relaxed working spaces
- Meeting room spaces

Members of the Board had requested an update on progress over the past six months' of operation including details of financial information required to be kept private in accordance with Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. In this regard a corresponding private briefing note was also submitted to the meeting setting out the commercially confidential matters of the proposal. (Minute 44 below refers.)

The Board questioned officers and discussed the following issues:

- Mobile phone signals and internet connection – The Wheelhouse received good connection to the services
- Temporary workers – The facility provided for temporary workers in addition to longer term contracts with small and medium businesses
- Consideration of other buildings eg. libraries, community centres, as potential future work spaces
- Success of the facility – data on success collected through financial measurement and feedback/evaluation forms

- Current usage – usage had increased and was continuing to grow particularly following the installation of a host at the facility

**RESOLVED that the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) continues to support the growth of The Wheelhouse in the Council House, Coventry.**

**41. Outstanding Issues**

There were no outstanding issues.

**42. Work Programme 2018/2019**

The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) considered the Work Programme for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2018/2019, the visits proposed and matters for consideration at future meetings of the Board.

**RESOLVED that the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) notes the Board's Work Programme for 2018/2019.**

**43. Any other items of public business which the Chair decides to take as matters of urgency because of the special circumstances involved**

There were no other items of public business.

**44. The Wheelhouse - Update**

Further to Minute 40 above, the Cabinet considered a private briefing note and presentation of the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) setting out the commercially confidential matters relating to on the current activity in relation to the growth of The Wheelhouse within the Council House, Coventry. The Cabinet Member for Jobs and Regeneration attended the meeting for consideration of this matter.

**RESOLVED that the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3):**

- 1) Continues to support the growth of The Wheelhouse in the Council House, Coventry.**
- 2) Requests that a further report on progress be submitted to the Board in six months-time.**

**45. Any other items of private business which the Chair decides to take as matters of urgency because of the special circumstances involved**

There were no other items of private business.

(Meeting closed at 4.20 pm)