

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet held at 2.30 pm on Tuesday, 18 February 2020

Present:

Members: Councillor G Duggins (Chair)
Councillor A Khan (Deputy Chair)
Councillor K Caan
Councillor P Hetherton
Councillor J Mutton
Councillor M Mutton
Councillor J O'Boyle
Councillor P Seaman

Deputy Cabinet Members: Councillor P Akhtar
Councillor R Ali
Councillor B Gittins
Councillor G Lloyd
Councillor D Welsh

Other Members: Councillor R Brown
Councillor J Clifford

Non-Voting Opposition Members: Councillor A Andrews
Councillor G Ridley

Employees (by Directorate):

Chief Executive's M Reeves (Chief Executive)

People G Quinton (Deputy Chief Executive (People)),
D Ashmore, J Crawshaw, O Chittem, N Hart,
S Mills, K Nelson, G Smailes, G Tate

Place B Hastie, P Jennings, J Newman, M Salmon

Apologies: Councillor T Khan
Councillor K Maton
Councillor R Lakha
Councillor C Thomas

Public Business

75. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

76. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 7th January 2020 were agreed and signed as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

77. 2019/2020 Third Quarter Financial Monitoring Report (to December 2019)

The Cabinet considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Place), that would also to be considered by the Audit and Procurement Committee at their meeting on 16th March 2020, that advised of the forecast outturn position for revenue and capital expenditure and the Council's treasury management activity as at the end of December 2019.

Cabinet approved the City Council's revenue budget of £231.5m on the 19th February 2019 and a Directorate Capital Programme of £195.4m. The headline revenue forecast for 2019/20 was for a net underspend of £1.9m. At the same point in 2018/19 there was a projected underspend of £1.8m. The headline capital position reports £20.6m of expenditure rescheduled into 2020/21.

The largest areas of budget pressure were within services for Children and Young People and Housing and Homelessness which were projecting overspends of £2.6m and £3.2m respectively. These were offset by a significant underspend within central and contingency budgets.

The Council's capital spending was projected to be £215.9m, a reduction of £2.8m since the quarter 2 forecast, which included major scheme expenditure including investment in the A46 Link Road, Whitley South infrastructure and the National Battery Plant.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet:

- 1) Approves the Council's revenue monitoring position.**
- 2) Approves the revised capital estimated outturn position for the year of £215.9m incorporating: £14m net increase in spending relating to approved/technical changes of and net rescheduling of expenditure into 2020/21 of £16.6m.**

78. Coventry Homefinder Review (Social Housing Allocations Policy)

The Cabinet considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (People) that detailed the Council's review of the social housing Allocations Policy and recommended changes to enable the city to best meet housing need within a backdrop of reduced turnover of Registered Provider (RP) stock. Coventry Homefinder was the Choice Based Letting system by which the majority of social housing in Coventry was allocated. Appendices to the report provided the Draft Coventry Homefinder Policy 2020, the Consultation Statement, the Equality and Consultation Analysis (parts 1 and 2) and the current and proposed banding system.

The Council committed to reviewing the Policy within the City's Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2019-2024. The revised Housing Allocations Policy was a key tool to support the delivery of the Housing and Homelessness Strategy. The

last review of the Coventry Homefinder Policy was undertaken in 2014, with minor amendments in 2018 as a result of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

The Council no longer owned any housing following the large-scale voluntary transfer of all the former Council housing to Whitefriars Housing Group (now Citizen) in September 2000. However, the Local Authority was legally required to have a scheme that allocated social housing, with the aim was that those with the greatest need for housing were prioritised.

The report provided the context and evidence as to why the Allocations Policy needed to be reviewed, looking at how the turnover of social housing had reduced within a backdrop of increasing demand for affordable housing in the City.

The fundamental review undertaken (June 2019 to October 2019) had resulted in a new allocations scheme being developed and consulted upon. The key changes included:

- Changing how people apply for housing.
- Changing who can apply for housing (qualification criteria).
- Changing the Banding System (reasonable preference criteria) including the introduction of a reduced preference band.
- Reducing the number of refused offers allowed under the Policy.
- Changing how adapted properties are advertised and allocated.

A statutory and public consultation survey on the above proposals took place between 11th November 2019 and 3rd January 2020.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet:

- 1) Notes that the Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4) noted, welcomed and were supportive of the proposed changes to the Coventry Homefinder Policy and the consultation being undertaken.**
- 2) Notes the equality and consultation analysis and consultation responses received regarding proposals to change the Coventry Homefinder Policy (Housing Allocations Policy) and the summary report provided at Appendices B and C to the report.**
- 3) Approves a revised Coventry Homefinder Policy, attached as Appendix A to the report, with effect from Autumn 2020.**

79. European Social Fund 2014-2020 - European Structural & Investment Funds (ESIF) - Coventry ESF Second Round Applications

The Cabinet considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (People), that would also be considered by the City Council at their meeting on 25th February 2020, which sought approval for European Structural Investment Fund (ESIF) Programme applications that had been submitted under a new second round of funding. The report provided information on each of the new bids and requested approval for the city Council to act as accountable body guarantor and delivery partner for these funding programmes.

The 2014-2020 ESIF Programme was launched in March 2015 and would now run until 2023 in the UK. A report to the Cabinet on 26 November 2015 (minute 70/15 referred) approved successful projects from the first round of funding under the programme. In that report it was noted that further rounds of funding would be available, and that the Council would seek to apply in those rounds. The Council had a strong track record in securing European funds in recent years and had secured in excess of £65m from the European Structural Funds since 2007.

However, the current EU funded employability support Programmes were due to come to an end following an agreed extension (until 31 March 2020 for the Priority 1.1, 1.2 and 1.4 programmes and 31 December 2020 for the Priority 1.3 programme). The Employment and Skills Service had therefore submitted bids for Phase 2 programmes which would run from 1 April 2020, or on a date to be agreed as soon as Funding Agreements had been issued, until 31 December 2023. Across all the bids the amount of ESF Grant being bid for in the Phase 2 round was £11.38m.

The further Council led applications had been submitted in the new programme under the Active Inclusion (Priority 1.1), Access to Employment (Priority 1.4), Sustainable Integration of Young People (Priority 1.2) themes and under the Youth Employment Initiative (Priority 1.3). The total value of all applications (Grant plus Match Funding from the City Council and delivery partners) was £20.56m with nearly 55% of these costs being made available from the ESIF grants to support those applications.

The Council had already taken a leadership role by bringing partners together from across the Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership area to develop projects and programmes that would lead to improved employment prospects across the City and the sub-region. The Council had an outstanding track record of securing, managing and delivering EU-funded employability support programmes.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet:

1) Notes the success of European Funding through the European Structural Investment Fund (ESIF), in delivering the City's economic aspirations and continues to support the Council bidding for European Funds that are still available via the ESIF programme and which will support the objectives of the Economic Growth and Prosperity Strategy 2018-2022.

2) Recommends that the City Council:

- I. Approves (if successful) the drawdown of the ESF grant funding, totalling up to £11.38m from ESIF to be utilised in delivering the City's priorities as set out in this report.**
- II. Delegates authority to the Deputy Chief Executive (People) in consultation with the Director of Finance and Corporate Services and the City Solicitor to negotiate final terms and approve entry into:**

- (a) the grant funding agreement to secure the ESIF funding with the City Council acting as the Accountable Body for the funding; and**
- (b) back to back funding agreement with such delivery partners as is deemed necessary to deliver the City's priorities as set out in this report.**

80. **Coventry One Strategic Plan and Education Capital Programme**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (People) that sought approval for the programme of work outlined within the proposed Coventry One Strategic Plan for Primary, Secondary Education and Special Educational Needs. Appendices to the report provided the One Strategic Plan 2019-2025, the Letter from Lord Agnew regarding Basic Need funding (Dated: 30/05/2018), the Letter from Lord Agnew regarding Basic Need funding (Dated: 23/09/2019), the School Organisation Regulations, and the alternative Options for Secondary Expansion.

Under Section 14 of the Education Act 1996, Coventry City Council had a statutory duty to ensure sufficient school places and fair, appropriate access to education. It was the Council's role to plan, commission and organise school places in a way that raised standards, managed supply and demand and created a diverse infrastructure.

The Coventry One Strategic Plan, presented to the Cabinet 2nd October 2018 (minute 46/18 referred), set out pupil forecasts for special, primary and secondary pupils across education planning areas in response to rising or falling pupil cohorts across the city. It outlined the strategy proposed by the Local Authority and the Coventry Secondary Headteacher Partnership to meet the additional places required in secondary provision from 2019 – 2024. Work had also been undertaken to look at the Special School provision, primary estate in line with falling birth rates and how these factors would be mitigated.

It was proposed that this strategy would be flexible, able to adapt to shifting mechanisms of parental preference, unforeseen changes in supply and demand of school places, and future birth rates. To do this, the One Strategic Plan would be monitored and updated annually with presentation to the Elected Member with responsibility for the Council's Education Portfolio, and to the Cabinet, alongside a wider process of constant review of School Place Planning. In addition, the procuring of places would take place annually so as to not create an unstable number of school places.

A Memorandum of Understanding had been established to ensure partnership commitment between the Council and secondary schools (and would be rolled out to primary and special schools, subject to approval). These partnerships signified a commitment and co-operation between the Council, governing bodies and school leadership teams to meet the educational needs of children and young people in Coventry, ensure the sustainability of Coventry schools, and to enable the City Council to meet its statutory obligations.

This partnership commitment signified a statement of intent to collaborate and work in partnership to achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young

people in Coventry, ensure the sustainability of Coventry schools, and to enable the City Council to meet its statutory obligations. As part of this process, numerous options had been discussed at both full partnership meetings, and the Secondary Headteacher Executive.

The preferred option presented below had been approved by the partnership as being the best valid option keeping in line with statutory requirements as outlined by the DfE to:

- i. Spend capital funding efficiently
- ii. Safeguard the quality of places in the system
- iii. Manage down spare capacity in the estate where it exists.

Capital allocations to meet projected shortfalls in provision were provided by the Education Skills Funding Agency to all Local Authorities based on the data provided in the annual School Capacity return. Demand for places minus the supply of places was multiplied by a cost per pupil place to inform the final allocation. This return informed the Education Skills Funding Agency of the expected change in pupil numbers over the next few years, the current capacity of schools to meet those numbers and the planned changes to that capacity. There was currently a delay in the allocation to all councils for the capital allocations 2021/2022 likely to be announced later this year. The report therefore focussed upon need up to 2022.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet:

- 1) Authorises the programme of work outlined within the proposed Coventry One Strategic Plan for Primary, Secondary Education and Special Educational Needs, subject to the funding being secured.**
- 2) Agrees to delegate authority to the Deputy Chief Executive (People) to agree the most appropriate procurement route for the works to be delivered and awarded.**

81. Authority for Attendance at Conference

RESOLVED that the Cabinet gives retrospective approval of the Lord Mayor, Councillor L Bigham, and the Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor AS Khan, attendance at the ‘Commemoration Events and International Congress on Cultures of Remembrance in Dresden’ that was held in Dresden, Germany from 12th to 15th February 2020.

82. Outstanding Issues

There were no outstanding issues.

83. Any other items of public business which the Chair decides to take as a matter of urgency because of the special circumstances involved.

There were no other items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 3.00 pm)

