

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Council held at 2.00 pm on Tuesday, 8 December 2020

Present:

Members: Councillor A Lucas (Chair)

Councillor F Abbott	Councillor R Lancaster
Councillor P Akhtar	Councillor M Lapsa
Councillor M Ali	Councillor J Lepoidevin
Councillor A Andrews	Councillor G Lloyd
Councillor R Bailey	Councillor P Male
Councillor L Bigham	Councillor K Maton
Councillor J Birdi	Councillor T Mayer
Councillor J Blundell	Councillor J McNicholas
Councillor R Brown	Councillor C Miks
Councillor K Caan	Councillor M Mutton
Councillor J Clifford	Councillor J O'Boyle
Councillor G Duggins	Councillor G Ridley
Councillor B Gittins	Councillor E Ruane
Councillor L Harvard	Councillor K Sandhu
Councillor G Hayre	Councillor T Sawdon
Councillor M Heaven	Councillor P Seaman
Councillor P Hetherton	Councillor R Singh
Councillor J Innes	Councillor D Skinner
Councillor T Jandu	Councillor R Thay
Councillor B Kaur	Councillor C Thomas
Councillor L Kelly	Councillor S Walsh
Councillor AS Khan	Councillor D Welsh
Councillor R Lakha	Councillor G Williams

Apologies: Councillor N Akhtar, R Ali, R Auluck and J Mutton

Public Business

51. Minutes of the Meeting held on 20 October 2020

The minutes of the Meeting held on 20 October 2020 were agreed as a true record.

52. Exclusion of the Press and Public

RESOLVED that the City Council agrees to exclude the press and public under Sections 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 relating to the private report in Minute 69 below headed 'Surrender of lease on premises in Upper Precinct, Coventry' on the grounds that the report involves the likely disclosure of information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Act, as it contained 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.

53. **Correspondence and Announcements of the Lord Mayor**

(a) COVID-19 Vaccine

On the historic occasion of the first COVID-19 vaccinations in the world being delivered at University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire, the Lord Mayor commended the hospital and sent best wishes to the first recipients of the vaccine.

The Lord Mayor also referred to the Lateral Flow Testing programme which was soon to be delivered in the City and reminded all to continue to follow health guidelines.

(b) Lord Mayor's Charities

The Lord Mayor referred to the charities and organisations she was supporting in her year of office.

The charities and organisations helped victims of domestic abuse. The Lord Mayor and a number of Members had been involved in this work for many years and the need to help these organisations was vitally important as figures had increased significantly during this year.

Usual fundraising activities had not been able to take place. However, there would still be opportunities for people to donate and to help support their amazing work.

54. **Petitions**

RESOLVED that the following petitions be referred to the appropriate City Council bodies/relevant organisations:

- (a) Request the installation of a Zebra Crossing on Baginton Road – 252 signatures, presented by Councillor K Sandhu.**
- (b) Request installation of a plaque to commemorate the famous abolitionist and escaped slave, Frederick Douglass who visited Coventry and gave a speech at St Mary's Guildhall – 154 signatures, presented by Councillor R Lakha.**
- (c) Request the Council support residents by lobbying Coventry Building Society to reconsider their decision to close our local Holbrooks branch – 51 signatures, presented by Councillor R Lancaster.**
- (d) Objection to the proposed planning application FUL/2020/1991 – the Petrol Station, 384 Stoney Stanton Road – 94 signatures, presented by Councillor B Kaur.**
- (e) Obtain and adapt the IKEA building in the City Centre to rehome the recently closed sports centre – 87 signatures, presented by Councillor M Heaven.**

55. **Declarations of Interest**

The Monitoring Officer reported that that all Members had a disclosable pecuniary interest in the matter referred to at Minute 61 (Review of Members' Allowances Scheme) but that it was appropriate to grant a dispensation. The dispensation would apply consideration of the debate and would expire on 9th December 2020.

56. Audit and Procurement Committee Annual Report 2019-20

Further to Minute 22 of the Audit and Procurement Committee, the City Council considered their Annual Report that provided an overview of its activity during 2019-2020. The Committee was a key component of the Council's governance framework, supporting good governance and strong public financial management.

The report included an introduction by the Chair, Councillor Lakha. During the previous municipal year, the Committee had met on six occasions and considered a range routine reports based on clearly defined expectations of services/ functions such as internal/external audit and financial management, along with ad-hoc reports which focused on either a specific concern or developments which impacted directly on the Committee.

RESOLVED that the City Council notes the Audit and Procurement Committee Annual Report 2019-2020.

57. Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme - CCC Public Building Energy Efficiency Retrofit

Further to Minute 48 of the Cabinet, the City Council considered a report of the Director of Property Services and Development which sought approval for acceptance of PSDS grant funding of c£6m to support the delivery of energy efficiency retrofit measures on public buildings owned and operated by Coventry City Council.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) had launched the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS). The Grant Scheme would allocate £1bn of grant funding to encourage green investment aligning with the Government's Net Zero and clean growth goals. The Grant Scheme was available for up to 100% of costs for capital energy efficiency and heat decarbonisation projects within public sector non-domestic buildings. The funding was available until 11th January 2021 with delivery of projects required by no later than 30th September 2021.

Within the project pipeline there were wo major procurements proposed, one for Low Carbon Heating solutions and one for Battery Storage solutions. Both of these contracts would potentially be greater than £1m in value. The remaining projects can be delivered using existing internal services or term contractors.

The report provided details of the projects proposed.

RESOLVED that the City Council:

- 1) Approves the proposal for the Council to act as Accountable Body and, if the Council's grant bid is successful, the acceptance of the**

PSDS grant funding offer from Salix Finance Ltd to support delivery of the Project.

- 2) Delegates authority to the Director of Finance and the Director of Project Services and Development following consultation with Director of Law and Governance to finalise the terms and conditions of the PSDS grant and any other legal agreements required to facilitate delivery of the Project, and incorporate the awarded grant within the approved Capital Programme as necessary.**

58. Review of Local Plan

Further to Minute 49 of the Cabinet, the City Council The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Streetscene and Regulatory Services which indicated that Policy DS1 of the Local Plan commits the Council to review certain triggers before March 2021 which, if met, would lead to a review of the current Local Plan. The report reviewed these triggers and recommended that there is no requirement to commence a Plan Review in March 2021.

The report indicated that The Local Plan was adopted in December 2017 and included, within policy DS1, the following provision;

“3. The Council will undertake a comprehensive review of national policy, the regional context, updates to the evidence base and monitoring data before 31st March 2021 to assess whether a full or partial review of the Plan is required. In the event that a review is required, work on that review will commence immediately.”

The full text of the policy and its explanatory notes was included in Appendix 1 to the report.

With the conclusion of the most recent housing and employment monitoring, it was considered an appropriate juncture to review the triggers set out in DS1 to determine whether a review of the Plan is appropriate.

The report indicated that with regard to National Policy, since the adoption of the Local Plan in 2017 the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has undergone revision, the most recent version of which is dated February 2019. By itself this is insufficient to trigger a review, and analysis was undertaken regarding the extent of the changes to the NPPF and the subsequent impact on the adopted Plan. Whilst the NPPF revisions provide updated provisions and guidance, there are no material changes that result in the current Plan being rendered unsound; it is therefore not considered appropriate to commence a review on this basis.

Since Plan adoption the government has introduced a Standard Methodology which Councils are obliged to use when calculating housing requirements, replacing the method that was used in the Local Plan. This Methodology takes the official government population projections produced by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) and applies a multiplier to them based on average affordability in the City. Details of this were set out in the report.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities had considered two petitions which requested an urgent review of the Local Plan at his meeting on 27 November 2020. At the Cabinet Meeting, the Cabinet Member reported on issues raised at that meeting and referred the following additional Recommendation for Cabinet:

That Cabinet recommend that Council commit to commence a Local Plan Review prior to the end of 2022 in the event that the Government's Standard Methodology for Assessing Local Housing Need indicates a housing need lower than that currently provided for within the adopted Coventry City Local Plan (i.e. 1230 dwellings per year).

The Cabinet noted that the Cabinet Member had requested a meeting with the Secretary of State for Housing at the earliest opportunity to discuss this matter.

RESOLVED that the City Council:

- 1) Notes the assessment of the Plan Review triggers**
- 2) Approves that there is no requirement to commence a Plan Review in March 2021 as a result of the triggers set out in Policy DS1 of the Local Plan**
- 3) Commits to commence a Local Plan Review prior to the end of 2022 in the event that the Government's Standard Methodology for Assessing Local Housing Need indicates a housing need lower than that currently provided for within the adopted Coventry City Local Plan (i.e. 1230 dwellings per year).**

Note: In accordance with the Constitution, a vote taken by name was taken in respect of this matter.

The Councillors voting for and against the Recommendations were as follows:

For	Against	Abstain
Councillors:	Councillors:	
F Abbott	A Andrews	
P Akhtar	R Bailey	
M Ali	J Birdi	
L Bigham	J Blundell	
R Brown	M Heaven	
K Caan	T Jandu	
J Clifford	M Lapsa	
G Duggins	J Lepoidevin	
B Gittins	P Male	
L Harvard	T Mayer	
J Hayre	G Ridley	
P Hetherton	T Sawdon	
J Innes	D Skinner	
B Kaur	G Williams	
L Kelly		
AS Khan		

R Lakha
R Lancaster
G Lloyd
J McNicholas
K Maton
C Miks
M Mutton
J O'Boyle
E Ruane
K Sandhu
P Seaman
R Singh
R Thay
C Thomas
S Walsh
D Welsh
Lord Mayor

Result: Carried
For: 33
Against: 14
Abstentions: 0

59. **Surrender of Lease on Premises in Upper Precinct, Coventry**

Further to Minute 51 of the Cabinet, the City Council considered a report of the Director of Property Services and Development which sought approval to accept the surrender of an existing 75-year lease for the Ernest Jones premises in the Upper Precinct, Coventry. The surrender of the lease will allow the Council to implement Phase Two of the Public Realm Scheme in the Upper Precinct through the demolition of the current premises and the completion of the scheme.

A corresponding private report was also submitted to the meeting setting out the commercially confidential matters of the proposals. (Minute 69 below refers.)

The Council would be paying a surrender premium to the proprietors of the Ernest Jones premises, writing off a sum of rental arrears (as highlighted in the private version of this report) and will be forgoing rental income of £137,000 per for the rest of the lease term. The report sought approval for the funding to enable the surrender to occur, approval to write off the relevant rental arrears and the adjustment to the Council's income target resulting from the surrender.

By agreeing the surrender of the lease, the Council will be able to move seamlessly from the first phase of the Retail Quarter scheme to Phase Two, minimising disruption and reducing the overall delivery programme. The City Centre will benefit from improved accessibility and flow for residents and visitors in the spaces between Broadgate and the Upper Precinct. The removal of the Ernest Jones building will enhance sight lines and enable greater footfall and visual appeal for businesses either side of Upper Precinct and Broadgate. The installation of the new water features and fountains in Upper Precinct will further

enhance these views, reinforcing the world class city centre placemaking approach.

RESOLVED that the City Council:

- 1) Approves expenditure of the sum as highlighted in the private version of the report, from reserve balances to fund the premium required to be paid for the surrender of the lease.**
- 2) Notes the loss of rental income incurred in the delivery of this proposal that will form part of the forthcoming budget setting report.**

(Note: Cllr G Williams voted against the recommendations)

60. Recommendation of Ethics Committee Following Code of Conduct Hearing

The City Council considered a report of the Director of Law and Governance in respect of a recommendation of the Ethics Committee.

On 8 October 2020 the Ethics Committee held a hearing into a complaint that Cllr Glenn Williams (the "Subject Member") had breached the Code of Conduct for Elected and Co-opted Members. It related to identical complaints made by eight individuals about Cllr Williams alleging that he is a "known racist, xenophobe, misogynist and homophobe" and giving a number of examples of tweets that he had made which they felt supported their complaint. The Complainants felt that the Councillor had breached several paragraphs of the Code of Conduct and were concerned that his beliefs, as expressed in social media and in council meetings, make it inappropriate for him to be an elected member.

The complaint was investigated and the Investigating Officer concluded that two of the comments complained of amount to a failure to treat people with respect.

The Committee decided that the Subject Member had breached the Code of Conduct. A copy of the Decision Notice issued on behalf of the Committee was attached at Appendix 1 of the report. The Committee decided to report its findings to full Council with a recommendation that it censures Cllr Williams.

RESOLVED that the City Council:

- 1) Notes the findings of the Ethics Committee**
- 2) Censures Cllr Williams in respect of the breaches of the Code of Conduct**
- 3) Agrees that a formal letter of censure be sent from the Leader of the Council to Cllr Williams**

(Note: Councillor G Williams voted against this recommendation)

61. Review of Members' Allowances Scheme

The City Council considered a report of the Director of Law and Governance in respect of a review of Members' Allowances Scheme.

Local Authority officer pay, including annual increases in pay levels, was determined by the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services. All local authorities are required to have a scheme which makes provision for a range of allowances and expenses to elected Members. Since its introduction, Coventry's scheme has included provision for Member allowances to rise automatically in line with any pay increases that are made to local government employees on a specific spinal point on the NJC scale. Where a local authority scheme provides for increasing allowances by an index, this can operate for maximum period of four years and a further review is required before any further index can be applied. Whilst each authority approves its own scheme, legislation requires that each authority appoints an Independent Remuneration Panel to make recommendations on its scheme. An Independent Remuneration Panel has met to consider the application of an index to Coventry's scheme and has recommended that the existing provision linking for indexing be continued. When approving changes to its scheme, the Council must have regard to the Panel's recommendations although it is not bound by them.

The following amendment was moved by Councillor T Sawdon, seconded by Councillor D Skinner, and lost:

That Council approves an alternative proposal that the recommendation of the panel is amended by the addition of the following words at the end of their recommendation:

The index should not apply for 2020/2021 and is therefore frozen for 2020/2021 in line with current national Government Policy.

RESOLVED that the City Council

1) Approves the following recommendation made by the Panel:

- **That the Basic, Special Responsibility, co-optee and civic allowances continue to be increased each year by any percentage increase in pay agreed for local government employees, (pegged to spinal column point 43 of the NJC scheme); this indexing to be effective from 1 April 2020 and expire on 31 March 2024.**

2) Delegates authority to the Director of Law and Governance to amend the Scheme of Members' Allowances according to the decisions taken by Council for inclusion in the Council's Constitution.

Note: In accordance with the Constitution, a recorded vote by name was taken in respect of this matter.

The Councillors voting for and against **the amendment** as detailed above (in italics) were as follows:

For

Against

Abstain

Councillors:
A Andrews
R Bailey
J Birdi
J Blundell
M Heaven
T Jandu
M Lapsa
J Lepoidevin
P Male
T Mayer
G Ridley
T Sawdon
D Skinner
G Williams

Councillors:
F Abbott
P Akhtar
M Ali
L Bigham
R Brown
K Caan
J Clifford
G Duggins
B Gittins
L Harvard
J Hayre
P Hetherton
J Innes
L Kelly
AS Khan
R Lakha
R Lancaster
G Lloyd
J McNicholas
K Maton
C Miks
M Mutton
J O'Boyle
E Ruane
K Sandhu
P Seaman
R Singh
R Thay
C Thomas
S Walsh
D Welsh
Lord Mayor

Result: Lost
For: 14
Against: 32
Abstentions: 0

The Councillors voting for and against **the Recommendations** were as follows:

For
Councillors:
F Abbott
P Akhtar
M Ali
L Bigham
R Brown
K Caan
J Clifford
G Duggins

Against
Councillors:
A Andrews
R Bailey
J Birdi
J Blundell
M Heaven
T Jandu
M Lapsa
J Lepoidevin

Abstain

B Gittins	P Male
L Harvard	T Mayer
J Hayre	G Ridley
P Hetherton	T Sawdon
J Innes	D Skinner
L Kelly	G Williams
AS Khan	
R Lakha	
R Lancaster	
G Lloyd	
J McNicholas	
K Maton	
C Miks	
M Mutton	
J O'Boyle	
E Ruane	
K Sandhu	
P Seaman	
R Singh	
R Thay	
C Thomas	
S Walsh	
D Welsh	

Result: Carried
For: 32
Against: 14
Abstentions: 0

62. **Adoption of Definitions of Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia**

The City Council considered a report of the Director of Law and Governance in respect of a motion adopted at the meeting of Council on 12 July 2016.

The report stated that Antisemitism, alongside Islamophobia, racism and other forms of discrimination remain a national challenge. Coventry was known throughout the world as the City of Peace and Reconciliation. It was a diverse city which was proud of its long record of welcoming migrants and refugees to the city and its many local organisations work tirelessly to ensure that everyone who lives here feels welcome, respected and able to live in dignity. Every year the City Council hosted a commemoration in the city centre to mark Holocaust Memorial Day where Holocaust survivors are invited to tell their stories. Coventry was chosen to host the UK national Holocaust Memorial Day event in 2009.

On 12th July 2016 the following Motion was adopted at the Council meeting:

“We are proud to live in a diverse and tolerant society. Racism, xenophobia and hate crimes have no place in our Country. Coventry City Council condemns racism, xenophobia and hate crimes unequivocally. We will not allow hate to become acceptable in our City. Coventry City Council will work with other agencies to fight and prevent racism and xenophobia.”

The report provided the City Council with an opportunity to further cement this commitment by adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's Working Definition of Antisemitism and the All-Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslim's working definition of Islamophobia.

RESOLVED that the City Council approves the adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's Working Definition of Antisemitism and the All-Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslim's working definition of Islamophobia as detailed in this report.

63. UK City of Peace and Reconciliation

The City Council considered a report of the Director of Law and Governance which requested the Council to agree to a proposal to submit a petition the Cabinet Office to seek the formal recognition of Coventry as the UK City of Peace and Reconciliation. This would recognise the important role the City has played in advocating Peace and Reconciliation nationally and internationally and enable the City to be recognised in its Royal Charter as such.

Coventry had a rich and varied history dating back to 1043, and the time of Earl Leofric and Lady Godiva. Coventry was first recognised as a City in 1345. The City's history included many important national events, but much of the City's identity today was formed in events which occurred in the twentieth century.

The City was bombed by enemy aircraft in November 1940 and we recognised the horror of war and its human impact in the preservation of the ruins of St Michael's Cathedral Church alongside the new Cathedral. The events of 1940 had had a lasting impact through the many changes which have occurred in the City over the intervening time and Coventry justifiably now regards itself as an International City of Peace and Reconciliation. The purpose of the petition would be for Coventry's history and actions in the promotion of Peace to be formally recognised in the City's charter.

RESOLVED that the City Council:

- 1) Endorses the proposal for Coventry to be designated as the UK City of Peace and Reconciliation**
- 2) Authorises the Lord Mayor, in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council and Chief Executive, to submit an appropriately worded Petition to the Cabinet Office in support of this proposal.**

64. Appointment to Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The City Council considered a report of the Director of Law and Governance which sought to appoint Councillor M Ali to the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee in place of the late Councillor H Sweet.

RESOLVED that the City Council approves the appointment of Councillor M Ali to the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee in place of the late Councillor H Sweet.

65. Question Time

Councillors G Duggins, P Hetheron, K Maton, D Welsh and P Akhtar provided written answers to the questions set out in the Questions Booklet together with oral responses 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	Questions asked by	Question put to	Subject matter
1	Councillor R Lancaster	Councillor J Clifford	Heath and Wellbeing Scrutiny Board (5)
2	Councillor T Sawdon	Councillor P Hetheron	Car parking in City Council car parks in December*
3	Councillor G Williams	Councillor D Welsh	Wheel washers at development sites*
4	Councillor G Williams	Councillor P Akhtar	COVID security at elections*
5	Councillor G Ridley	Councillor G Duggins	Response to Cllr Mayers question on IHRA

* Members agreed to provide a written response to the question.

66. Statements

1) Statement of the Leader

The Leader, Councillor G Duggins, made a Statement in respect of a number of issues relating to Covid-19.

Councillor G Ridley responded to the Statement.

2) Statement of the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People in respect of the “Children’s Services Improvement Plan.”

Councillor J Lepoidevin responded to the Statement

67. Debate: Cap on Exit Fees

The following Motion was moved by Councillor G Ridley and seconded by Councillor T Sawdon:

“This council welcomes the government's decision to introduce a cap on exit fees paid to staff in local government.”

RESOLVED that the Motion, as set out above, be not adopted.

(Note: A vote on this was taken by name)

68. Debate: Public Sector Worker Pay Freeze

The following Motion was moved by Councillor B Gittins and seconded by Councillor L Kelly:

This Council condemns the Government's stance on a pay freeze on Public Sector Workers pay.

Throughout this pandemic, those employed in the Public Sector have worked tirelessly to keep the Country running.

The teachers, the care workers, the binmen and other Local Authority workers, Civil Servants, to name but a few, must now pay the price for Government spending on the pandemic. This on top of them paying the price for the 10 years of the Government Austerity Programme.

This Council calls upon the Government to reverse their decision on Public Sector pay, and give Public Sector Workers a fair, decent and fully funded increase to reflect the contribution they made during this time of crisis.”

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

(Note: A vote on this was taken by name)

PRIVATE BUSINESS

69. Surrender of Lease on Premises in Upper Precinct, Coventry

Further to Minute 59 above, the City Council considered a private report of the Director of Property Services and Development, setting out the commercially confidential matters relating to the surrender of an existing 75-year lease for the Ernest Jones premises in the Upper Precinct, Coventry.

RESOLVED that the City Council:

- 1) Approves expenditure of the sum as highlighted in the report, from reserve balances to fund the premium required to be paid for the surrender of the lease.**
- 2) Notes the loss of rental income incurred in the delivery of this proposal that will form part of the forthcoming budget setting report.**

(Note: Cllr G Williams voted against the recommendations)

(Meeting closed at 7.25 pm)