

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet held at 2.00 pm on Tuesday, 13 July 2021

Present:

Members: Councillor G Duggins (Chair)
Councillor AS Khan (Deputy Chair)
Councillor K Caan
Councillor J O'Boyle
Councillor D Welsh
Councillor P Seaman
Councillor M Mutton
Councillor R Brown
Councillor K Sandhu

Non-Voting Deputy
Cabinet Members:

Councillor P Akhtar
Councillor B Gittins
Councillor G Hayre
Councillor G Lloyd

Non-Voting Opposition
Members:

Councillor G Ridley
Councillor P Male

Other Non-Voting
Members:

Councillor N Akhtar
Councillor L Bigham
Councillor J Clifford
Councillor R Lakha
Councillor C Miks
Councillor R Singh
Councillor C Thomas

Employees (by Service):

Chief Executive	M Reeves (Chief Executive)
Deputy Chief Executive	N Hart (Communications)
Finance	B Hastie (Director of Finance)
Law and Governance	J Newman (Director of Law and Governance), S Bennett, M Salmon
Streetscene and Regulatory Services	D Butler
Apologies:	Councillor P Hetherton Councillor J Innes

Public Business

7. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

8. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 15th June 2021 were agreed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

9. Revenue and Capital Outturn 2020/21

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Finance, that would also be considered by the Audit and Procurement Committee on 26th July 2021 and by Council on 7th September 2021, that outlined the final revenue and capital outturn position for 2020/21 and reviewed treasury management activity and 2020/21 Prudential Indicators reported under the Prudential Code for Capital Finance. Appendices to the report provided: a detailed breakdown of Directorate Revenue Variations; Capital Programme Changes and Analysis of Rescheduling; and Prudential Indicators.

The 2020/21 financial year had been one like no other, with organisational and financial impacts exceeding anything experienced previously during peacetime. Some of these impacts were unseen in consideration of the Council's outturn position – for instance Business Rates reliefs provided and business grants paid out through the year – but their scale had been staggering, nonetheless. The purpose of this report was not to catalogue the changes to society and Council services through the year, although where these had had a financial effect on the Council this would be outlined.

The overall financial position included the following headline items:

- A balanced revenue position after a recommended £9.2m was set aside in reserves to enable the city's recovery from Covid, invested in the Council's key priorities and strengthening the Council's financial sustainability.
- Capital Programme expenditure of £194.2m which represented the second largest programme in the modern era.
- An increase in the level of available Council revenue reserves from £90m to £123m including Covid funding and the net underspend contribution.

Further detail included:

- A net underspend of £8.5m within central budgets after adjusting for the impact of Covid resulting overwhelmingly from one-off circumstances and the application of resources to fund previously approved decisions.
- A revenue underspend of £3.4m within Housing and Homelessness due in large part to the number of households living in temporary accommodation being lower than anticipated.

- Identified income loss and expenditure related to COVID-19 of £31m funded in-part by in-year Government emergency funding and sales fees and charges compensation grants provided for this purpose.
- A shortfall in this in-year Covid funding of £2.2m.

The underlying revenue position had improved by £8.7m since Quarter 3 when an underspend of £0.5m was forecast. In particular the overall underspend (before outturn reserve contributions) and the improved position related to improvements within Contingency and Central budgets which were set out in the report. In overall terms the favourable outturn position shown must be put in the context of the Covid-19 crisis. The position was an indication of the prudent management of the Council's financial position but there were reasons to be cautious about the financial future of local government. These were explored more fully in the financial implications section of the report but could be seen in the uncertain future for local government finance nationally, the externalised and more volatile nature of some of the Council's financial relationships and the continued and potential legacy impacts of Covid. On this basis it was entirely appropriate for the Council to maintain a robust financial position and to retain control of its own financial destiny as far as it was able. This was important not just as an internal Council matter but connected directly to the Council's capacity to improve services for residents and invest in the city and its communities.

As indicated above the financial impact of Covid on the Outturn position had been estimated at £31m. This was not a definitive figure because in many cases the Covid impact was difficult to disentangle from other trends – for instance, how much of the large reduction in car parking income might have happened without the Covid pandemic. What was known was that Government funding provided through 2020/21 had covered a very significant proportion of the cost although this did not take account of the loss in Business Rates and Council Tax income calculated to have been suffered.

Further financial loss due to Covid had continued into the early months of 2021/22 at a much-reduced rate compared with 2020/21 although it remained difficult to provide a reliable estimate of this. The Council had been able to carry forward into 2021/22 £7.55m of Covid resources set aside as part of the 2019/20 outturn position and had been allocated £11m out of the Government's emergency Covid funding for 2021/22. Other specific Covid grants had also been announced whilst a further opportunity was likely to be available to claim compensation for lost income in the first quarter of the year. On this basis there was a strong possibility that the Council would be able to manage the large majority of the financial Covid impact from Government resources over the medium term. Given that the Covid impact would extend into 2022/23 and that a tight funding settlement was anticipated from Government next year it was important that the Council continued to maintain a strong financial position to protect itself in what could be a very challenging financial environment. The recommended proposals put forward by the Director of Finance - the Council's Section 151 officer - were explained in section 5.1 of the report.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet:

- 1) Approves the final revenue outturn position including reserve contributions of £9.2m available from the year-end revenue bottom line for the purposes described in Section 5.1 of the report.**
- 2) Approves the final capital expenditure and resourcing position in section 2.3 and Appendix 2 of the report, incorporating expenditure of £194.2m against a final budget of £226.9m; £32.5m expenditure rescheduled into 2021/22 and a net overspend £0.2m.**
- 3) Approves the outturn Prudential Indicators position in section 2.4.4 and Appendix 3 of the report.**
- 4) Recommends that Council gives approval of reserve contributions of £9.2m available from the year-end revenue bottom line for the purposes described in Section 5.1 of the report.**

10. Local Development Scheme

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Streetscene and Regulatory Services that sought approval of the updated Local Development Scheme 2021, which had last been published in 2015. The Local Development Scheme 2021 was attached as an Appendix to the report.

The report had also been considered by the Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4) at their meeting on 8th July 2021 (their minute 04/21 referred) and a briefing note of their recommendation to Cabinet was circulated.

The Local Development Scheme (LDS) was a project plan that set out which Local Plan documents were to be prepared, and the timetable for the preparation and completion of these, so that local communities and interested parties could keep track of progress. It was a legal requirement that a local planning authority was prepared, kept up to date and made publicly available. The LDS would therefore be published on the Council's website.

The documents covered by the LDS included the Local Plan which set the development strategy and policies for the Coventry City Council area and a number of Supplementary Planning Documents which expanded upon the Local Plan policies.

The Local Plan for Coventry was adopted December 2017. Paragraph 33 of the National Planning Policy Framework and Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 required that policies in local plans should be reviewed to assess whether they needed updating at least once every five years. Members gave consideration to whether the Local Plan should be reviewed earlier than this date and was determined at Council on 8th December 2020 (their minute 58/21 referred) that the triggers had not been met, and that the review should take place in December 2022. This LDS would therefore run until December 2022 in line with the timescale for review of the policies above.

For clarity, although not a legal requirement, the LDS also included a timetable for a suite of Supplementary Planning Documents which expanded upon Local Plan policy. The topics for these were: Open Space, Affordable Housing, Energy, Tall Buildings, Residential design, and Biodiversity. In addition, the LDS set out information and guidance on Neighbourhood Plans, local plan monitoring and data standards.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet approves:

- 1) The recommendation of the Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4) to note that the Board supports the Local Development Scheme.**
- 2) The Local Development Scheme attached as Appendix 1 to the report and confirms that it can be brought into effect at the earliest opportunity.**

11. Adoption of Statement of Community Involvement

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Streetscene and Regulatory Services that sought approval to adopt the revised Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), attached as an Appendix to the report.

The Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4) considered the consultation draft at their meeting on 18th March 2021 (their minute 28/20 referred). A Briefing Note of their recommendation to Cabinet that they note that the Board supported the Statement of Community Involvement in principle, was attached as a further Appendix to the report.

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (Section 18) required Local Planning Authorities to produce a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) which explained how they will engage communities and other interested parties in producing their Local Plan and determining planning applications.

The current SCI was adopted in 2012 and required updating to ensure that it reflected current planning practice and guidance and provided resilience to enable consultation and engagement to adapt to exceptional and unforeseen circumstances such as, although not exclusively, those highlighted by the current Covid-19 pandemic.

The planning process had to comply with a variety of legal procedures in terms of public consultation and engagement. The SCI set out how the Council would address these and how the public could expect to be engaged and kept informed. It also set out local standards for consultation and engagement. This applied to both Planning Policy, setting out how the process would be undertaken when preparing new or revised policy documents, and to Development Management in relation to the planning applications process.

A new SCI had been produced and whilst there was no legal requirement to consult on it, it was considered good practice to do so. Public consultation was undertaken for a period of six weeks from 15th February to 29th March 2021. The responses had been analysed and the SCI amended accordingly. A further

Appendix to the report contained the schedule of summarised comments received and the officers' responses to each, including any changes made to the SCI as a result.

The new SCI would be published on the Council's website.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet adopts the Statement of Community Involvement attached as an Appendix to the report.

12. **Outstanding Issues**

There were no outstanding issues.

13. **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 2.15 pm)