

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee held at 10.00 am on
Wednesday, 9 November 2022

Present:

Members: Councillor N Akhtar (Chair)

Councillor M Ali
Councillor L Bigham
Councillor J Innes
Councillor P Male
Councillor C Miks (Deputy Chair)
Councillor G Ridley

Other Members: Councillor G Duggins, Cabinet Member for Policing and Leadership
Councillor R Brown, Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources
Councillor D Welsh, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities

Employees (by Service area)

Communications N Hart

Education and Skills K Nelson (Chief Partnership Officer)

Finance B Hastie (Chief Operating Officer (Section 151 Officer)

Law and Governance S Bennett, G Holmes

Transformation and Change M Greenwood, M McGinty

Others present: A Cuskin, Coventry Building Society
J Richards, UHCW
T Rees, Food Network
C Wrightman, Grapevine

Apologies: Councillors R Auluck and R Singh

Public Business

28. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

29. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 October, 2022, were agreed and signed as a true record.

Further to Minute 24/22, the Committee noted that the issue of training on Arms-length Companies will be considered at the Members Training and Development Advisory Panel next week.

30. **One Coventry Response to Supporting Our Communities With the Cost of Living Crisis**

The Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee considered a Briefing Note, together with a detailed presentation at the meeting, that provided an outline of the potential impact of the Cost of Living Crisis on Coventry's communities and the cross-organisational One Coventry response to this.

The Cabinet Member for Policy and Leadership, Councillor G Duggins, the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities, Councillor D Welsh and the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources, Councillor R Brown, attended the meeting and outlined their concerns in relation to the Cost of Living Crisis and the impact on residents and businesses in the City.

The Committee welcomed a number of representatives from partner organisations who attended the meeting and contributed to the discussion.

The presentation covered:-

- Key messages:-
 - The Cost of Living Crisis is a national issue
 - Ability for the Council to respond is limited
 - A significant range of support is already in place with solid foundations created through the work done with partners and communities
 - The actions taken to deliver the One Coventry Plan priorities will create longer term positive change for people who live, work or study in the City
- The One Coventry approach to tackling inequalities and responding to the Cost of Living Crisis:-
 - The need to work differently in order to respond to current and future needs of communities
 - The Council's partnership work means that the Council is in a strong position to support residents through the Cost of Living Crisis
 - The Council will continue to work creatively with collective resources, in collaboration with residents, communities and partners to:-
 - Make the biggest possible positive impact and;
 - Enable the Council to deliver the One Coventry Plan priority to improve outcomes and tackle inequalities in communities
- Details of current research, including a breakdown of the rising cost of living and examples of the challenges being faced, including fuel poverty and the impact on this on communities across the City

- Current and potential impacts on residents, workforce and the organisation including:-
 - Increase in debt issues
 - Likely increase in demand for public grant support
 - Foster carers struggling with costs (particularly fuel) may impact recruitment and retention
 - Increased demand on Children's Services
 - Health issues including cold-related hydration and nutrition issues and increase in people with mental health challenges. More people into health system and then care
 - Likely increase in domestic violence, crime, and anti-social behaviour
 - Increased demand for business support services
 - Increased support for culture and sports organisations struggling to meet costs and demands; voluntary and community sector organisations experiencing increase operating costs and few donations

- Support available:-
 - Current Council support
 - Support commissioned or provided in partnership
 - External support

- Details of the Cost of Living Forum held on 3 October, 2022, attended by 35 organisations including:-
 - Focused discussions on areas for action:-
 - Equipping people to provide immediate help or action
 - Maximising income
 - Integrated/holistic approach
 - Food distribution/procurement and other food support
 - Shared community and warm spaces
 - Pledges from organisation to action and opportunities for collaboration identified
 - Outputs shared with attending organisations

- Summary and next steps
 - Communications campaign launched and will continue over coming months
 - Integrated partnership approach is the strongest position to the Crisis
 - Effective targeting of resources will be critical to ensure those who are most in need are supported as far as possible
 - Continue to test new approaches, learn from other local authorities, build on good practice and ensure that residents and community voices are at the heart of all that is done

The Committee, made comments, outlined their concerns, asked questions and sought assurances on a number of issues including:-

- No new financial support for the crisis
- Consideration of this issue as part of the PPR process and budget setting for 2022/23
- Where to signpost residents experiencing difficulties, particularly in relation to fuel poverty and crisis grant support available

- The establishment of a single point of access for people in difficulty
- Exploring every funding stream possible and supporting organisations to access those funding streams
- Integrated service delivery
- Ensuring the delivery of leisure and cultural offers during the crisis to improve the quality of life for residents
- Building on the success of community work undertaken during the Covid pandemic
- The importance of the use of appropriate language to ensure that people don't feel stigmatised or labelled
- Information available locally and nationally to assist people shop and cook more healthily and economically
- Signposting people to ensure they get the best advice in relation to benefits
- The use of buildings to provide people with both a warm and stimulating environment
- The accessibility of the information available to people who don't have access to on line information
- The on-going communications campaigns being undertaken with partners with a view to ensuring information is available to all communities in the City via a plethora of methods and using Ward Councillors to help reach all residents in the City
- Linking in with work being undertaken by the LGA in this regard
- Concerns in relation to energy companies switching people onto prepayment meters without asking them. Officers indicated that they would look into this matter
- The need to empower people
- Support being provided for victims of domestic abuse

The Committee expressed their sincere concerns in relation to the Cost of Living Crisis and thanked all those attending for their contributions to the meeting and for their commitment in supporting the residents of Coventry during this difficult time.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee:-

- 1) Notes, welcomes and supports the One Coventry approach being taken to support Coventry's residents and communities with the Cost of Living Crisis**
- 2) Commit to playing an active role in raising awareness of the Cost of Living support available to residents and communities**
- 3) Request that work be undertaken with partners into producing a helpful "postcard" type document containing useful information to assist with the Cost of Living Crisis, to be distributed widely within the City, including health setting and libraries**

31. **Community Trigger Process**

The Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee considered a Briefing Note, together with a presentation at the meeting, which outlined the Community Trigger process, which was introduced as part of the Anti-social, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

The process is designed to act as a review mechanism if people feel that their complaints regarding crime or anti-social behaviour has been ignored or dealt with in an unsatisfactory manner by members of the community safety partnership within the City. This process is administered by the local authority on behalf of the Police and Crime Board (PCB)

Currently the process involves representatives from the key agencies, usually the Council, Police and Housing Associations. In a recent review of a case in Coventry, the Local Government Ombudsman determined that the voice of the victim needed greater prominence and that an advocate or independent representative is required.

It is proposed that a member of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee becomes that independent voice/advocate for the victim and the revised Community Trigger process flowchart, detailing that role, was appended to the report. The Committee noted that the Member appointed for each review would not be a Ward Councillor for the Ward in which the victim lives and that training would be provided to enable Members to undertake this role.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee:-

- 1) Notes the contents of the Briefing Note**
- 2) Agrees that the Chair of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee (or their nominee) be a part of the Community Trigger process, as detailed in the flowchart appended to the Briefing Note**
- 3) Requests that the training to be provided be offered to all Scrutiny Members.**

32. Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee Work Programme and Outstanding Issues 2022 - 2023

The Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee considered their Work Programme and Outstanding Issues for the current Municipal Year.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee note the Work Programme and Outstanding issues.

33. Any Other Items of Urgent Public Business

There were no other items of urgent public business.

(Meeting closed at 12.10 pm)