

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Council held at 2.00 pm on Tuesday, 17 January 2023

Present:

Members: Councillor K Maton (Chair)

Councillor S Agboola	Councillor R Lakha
Councillor N Akhtar	Councillor M Lapsa
Councillor M Ali	Councillor J Lepoidevin
Councillor R Auluck	Councillor G Lloyd
Councillor R Bailey	Councillor P Male
Councillor L Bigham	Councillor A Masih
Councillor J Birdi	Councillor J McNicholas
Councillor J Blundell	Councillor C Miks
Councillor R Brown	Councillor B Mosterman
Councillor K Caan	Councillor M Mutton
Councillor J Clifford	Councillor S Nazir
Councillor G Duggins	Councillor J O'Boyle
Councillor J Gardiner	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 Simpson
Councillor A Hopkins	Councillor B Singh
Councillor J Innes	Councillor R Singh
Councillor T Jandu	Councillor R Thay
Councillor A Jobbar	Councillor CE Thomas
Councillor S Keough	Councillor A Tucker
Councillor T Khan	Councillor D Welsh
Councillor AS Khan	

Honorary Alderman H Fitzpatrick, M Hammon, T Skipper and K Taylor

Apologies: Councillor F Abbott, P Akhtar and S Gray
Honorary Alderman D Skinner

Public Business

92. Minutes of the Meeting held on 6 December 2022

The minutes of the Meeting held on 6 December 2022 were agreed and signed as a true record.

Note: A recorded vote was taken, in accordance with the Constitution, in respect of the approval of the Minutes.

The Councillors voting for and against the approval of the Minutes were as follows:

<u>For</u>	<u>Against</u>	<u>Abstain</u>
Councillor S Agboola	Councillor R Bailey	
Councillor N Akhtar	Councillor J Birdi	
Councillor M Ali	Councillor J Blundell	
Councillor R Auluck	Councillor J Gardiner	
Councillor L Bigham	Councillor M Heaven	
Councillor R Brown	Councillor T Jandu	
Councillor K Caan	Councillor S Keough	
Councillor J Clifford	Councillor M Lapsa	
Councillor G Duggins	Councillor J Lepoidevin	
Councillor B Gittins	Councillor P Male	
Councillor L Harvard	Councillor A Masih	
Councillor G Hayre	Councillor B Mosterman	
Councillor P Hetherton	Councillor G Ridley	
Councillor A Hopkins	Councillor T Sawdon	
Councillor J Innes	Councillor R Simpson	
Councillor A Jobbar		
Councillor AS Khan		
Councillor T Khan		
Councillor R Lakha		
Councillor G Lloyd		
Councillor J McNicholas		
Councillor C Miks		
Councillor M Mutton		
Councillor S Nazir		
Councillor J O'Boyle		
Councillor E Ruane		
Councillor K Sandhu		
Councillor P Seaman		
Councillor B Singh		
Councillor R Singh		
Councillor R Thay		
Councillor CE Thomas		
Councillor A Tucker		
Councillor D Welsh		
Lord Mayor		

Result:
For: 35
Against: 15
Abstentions: 0

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

(a) New Year Honours

The Lord Mayor referred to awards made to the following citizens associated with Coventry in the recent New Year's Honours List:

OBE to Professor Adam Boddison for Services to Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs

OBE to Diane Patricia Hill for services to the administration of justice

MBE to Paul Nee for services to Further Education

MBE to Bhavena Patel for services to Further Education

BEM to Robert Johnson for services to physics

CBE to Professor Robert Alan Dover for services to Automotive Industry

MBE to Jessica Jane Leyland-Barrett Hudson for Services to the community in Coventry

In addition, John Crabtree, the Lord Lieutenant of the West Midlands had received a Knighthood for his work as Chairman of the Organising Committee of the 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games.

The Lord Mayor, on behalf of the City Council, had sent a letter of congratulations all of the recipients.

(b) Death of Terry Hall

The Lord Mayor referred to the recent death of Terry Hall in December. As a lead singer of The Specials, Terry was an influential figure in the music industry when the group rose to fame in the late 1970s. His music encapsulated the very essence of life, and he was a leading light for many in the fight for equality and justice. He will be deeply missed.

Members paid tribute to Terry and the Lord Mayor, on behalf of the City extended his sympathy and best wishes to Terry's family and friends.

(c) Death of former Councillor Tom Smith

The Lord Mayor referred to the recent death of former Councillor Tom Smith. Tom served as a Councillor in Binley and Willenhall alongside John Mutton and Phil Holifield for one term of office between 1987-1991 before taking up a teaching position in Ilford.

Members paid tribute to Tom and the Lord Mayor, on behalf of the City Council, had sent a letter of condolence to Tom's family.

(d) Death of David Duckham

The Lord Mayor referred to the recent death of Coventry Rugby legend David Duckham. David played rugby for Coventry, England and the British and Irish Lions. He was also part of the Barbarians team.

Regarded as arguably the 'greatest' ever Coventry player, David was widely respected by players around the world.

Members paid tribute to David and noted that the Lord Mayor would be writing to David's family to express the City Council's condolences.

94. **Motion without Notice - Vote of Thanks to Martin Reeves**

The Lord Mayor indicated that the Chief Executive, Martin Reeves was attending his last meeting of the City Council before leaving to take up his appointment as Chief Executive of Oxfordshire County Council.

In accordance with the Constitution, the Leader, Councillor G Duggins, moved the following Motion without Notice, that was seconded by Councillor G Ridley:-

"That the warmest thanks of the Council are due and are hereby given to Martin Reeves, Chief Executive for his hard work and dedication to the City Council and that a copy of this resolution, under the common seal, be presented to him"

Councillors Duggins and Ridley paid tribute to the work undertaken by Martin over the last 14 years and conveyed their best wishes to him for the future.

RESOLVED that the above Motion be unanimously adopted.

95. **Petitions**

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

(a) **Petition requesting the Council to install double yellow lines at the junction of Cromwell Lane, Penruddock Drive to the junction at Hidcote House entrance – 23 signatures presented by Councillor M Lapsa**

(b) **Petition requesting the Council to improve the safety for pedestrians at the Holyhead Road/Moseley Avenue/Four Pounds Avenue four-way junction by installing additional crossings on Holyhead Road and Moseley Avenue – 127 signatures presented by Councillor R Simpson**

96. **Declarations of Interest**

The Monitoring Officer reported that a dispensation had been granted to all Members of the Council under Part 2M, paragraph 6.8.4. of the Constitution, in respect of the matter referred to in Minute 97 (Council Tax Premiums for Empty Properties and Second Homes).

There were no other declarations of interest.

97. **Council Tax Premiums for Empty Properties and Second Homes**

Further to Minute 66 of the Cabinet, the City Council considered a report of the Chief Operating Officer (Section 151 Officer), which set out a proposal in respect of council tax premiums for empty properties and second homes.

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill (the Bill) proposed to allow billing authorities to charge a 100% long term empty premium on unfurnished empty properties after the property had been empty for 12 months rather than the current period of 24 months.

The Bill also proposed to give billing authorities the power to apply a 100% council tax premium for furnished empty properties (second homes, including second homes which are occupied but the occupiers main home is somewhere else).

The policy objective of these measures was to improve the supply of housing or for owners of second homes to make a greater contribution to council tax receipts.

If the Bill was enacted, reducing the timescale for long term empty property premiums from 24 months to 12 months could generate up to £0.9 million per annum in additional council tax. This figure would likely reduce over time as the policy intention began to influence the behaviour of owners of empty properties.

The change from 24 months to 12 months for long term empty premiums may be applied from 1 April 2024 and it was recommended that Council approve this measure.

The implementation of a premium for second homes could generate £3.6 million. The implementation of this type of premium was more complex in terms of the potential implications for housing policy and the impact on different stakeholders. It was not recommended that the Council proceed with this measure from April 2024 and instead review this option in the coming 12 months.

RESOLVED that, the City Council approves the implementation of a provision within the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill to:

- (a) Apply a 100% premium for properties that have been empty and unfurnished for 12 months or longer – this charge would be implemented from 1 April 2024 and applied to any property that had been empty for 12 months at that point and going forward.**
- (b) Agree to review the option of implementing a 100% premium on second homes following the Enactment of the legislation and receive a further report detailing any recommendations proposed to come into effect from April 2025.**

98. **Public Realm 'Phase 6'**

Further to Minute 68 of the Cabinet, the City Council considered a report of the Director of Transportation and Highways which set out proposals for the Public Realm Phase 6 programme.

In March 2018, Council gave approval to proceed with an ambitious Coventry City Centre Public Realm Phase 5 programme. The Public Realm 5 project was undertaken from October 2019 and completed in time for UK City of Culture 2021, additionally it was delivered in unprecedented times throughout the Covid 19

pandemic in which the importance of the city's public spaces was thrust to the forefront of everyone's minds.

In order to continue to build on the legacy which the public realm 5 project had left, the project team had identified areas for further enhancement which were not part of the original project scope but would further improve the city centre areas.

A review of the works delivered had identified a public realm 6 programme of works that would focus on improving security and lighting and refreshing some of the areas surrounding Broadgate, The Precinct, Priory Place and the Cathedral. The schemes would deliver high quality improvements to strategic areas of the city and also enhance the setting of the key events venues and visitor attractions.

The key projects to be completed were:

- Retail Quarter Phase 2 – this would focus on upgrading some of the structures and facades around Broadgate, the Precinct, Market Way and Barracks Way tunnel
- Public Realm Refresh – there are some areas like Priory Place which have damaged water features and areas around the cathedral which need lighting upgrades
- City Centre security which forms the largest part of the budget. This included applying security measures to the area around the Cathedral, the University to create a safe events space and the Wave.

The Public Realm Phase 6 programme would be delivered in a co-ordinated way with businesses, Coventry BID and council partners to ensure any disruption is kept to a minimum.

RESOLVED that the City Council approves the addition of £1.8m of corporate resources to the 5 year capital programme to deliver the Public Realm Phase 6 programme, funded from capital receipts.

99. **Appointment of Proper Officers and Appointments Panel**

Further to Minute 83 of the Cabinet, the City Council considered a report of the Chief People Officer which sought approval to the implementation of interim Chief Executive Proper Officer and to make provision for electoral arrangements following the resignation of the Chief Executive.

The report proposed the establishment of an Appointments Panel in respect of recruitment to the post of Chief Executive to be filled following the resignation of the current Chief Executive.

RESOLVED that the City Council:

- (i) **With effect from 1 February 2023, appoints Barry Hastie (Chief Operating Officer, S151 Officer) and Kirston Nelson (Chief Partnership Officer) as joint Acting Chief Executives for the Council until such time as a new Chief Executive has been recruited and is in post.**

- (ii) Designates Barry Hastie (Chief Operating Officer) as Head of Paid Service under s.4 Local Government and Housing Act 1989.**
- (iii) With effect from 1 February 2023, appoints Julie Newman (Chief Legal Officer) as the City Council's Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer.**
- (iv) Delegates authority to the Chief Legal Officer to make appropriate changes to the Council's Constitution to reflect the above recommendations.**
- (v) Approves the establishment of the Appointments Panel for the appointment of the Chief Executive as detailed in Section 1.6 of the report.**

100. Polling District and Polling Place Review

The City Council considered a report of the Chief Executive which detailed proposed amendments to the polling district and polling place scheme which was previously approved by Council in January 2020. The Electoral Arrangements Advisory Panel and Ward Members had been consulted and a consultation exercise carried out as required by legislation.

Section 18C(5) of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) places a duty on all UK local authorities to review their polling districts and polling places every five years or as required. The Council conducted its last full review in 2019.

There were a number of current pressures and factors that influenced how we could review the arrangement of polling districts and polling places. These included:

- The Elections Act 2022 increased the accessibility requirements for electors with visible and non-visible disabilities and the requirement for a privacy area in all stations.
- There was continued concern at the accessibility of some locations, particularly portacabins
- There was a requirement for the Returning Officer to demonstrate that they had accessed the accessibility of polling stations, identified and provided equipment to support voters with accessibility needs
- Work undertaken with schools to ensure they felt able to stay open whilst hosting a polling station, meant that some rooms were not always easily accessible from outside and could only be accessed via convoluted routes, leading to complaints about this and also access to school car parks.
- The cost of each portacabin once sited and ramped was approximately triple the average cost of a permanent building. If we continue to use them, they would have to be larger units to meet accessibility requirements which would increase costs even further.
- Unavailability of previous locations – some existing locations were no longer available for use as polling stations; hence changes were required as part of the review for those areas.

Appendices to the report detailed the proposed changes, together with the Acting Returning Officer's recommendations regarding polling stations.

RESOLVED that the City Council:

- 1. Approves the revised polling district and polling place scheme, as detailed in the report.**
- 2. Delegates authority to the Chief Legal Officer to make minor amendments to the Polling District and Polling Place scheme as necessary, following consultation with the Leader, Deputy Leader and appropriate Ward Members.**

101. Question Time

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 P Male	Councillor G Duggins	Combined Authority support for further education sector and apprenticeships (particularly in relation to City College)
2	Councillor R Simpson	Councillor P Hetherton	Failure of contractors to notify of road closures in Spon End
3	Councillor M Lapsa	Councillor D Welsh	Approval of major planning applications (1000 plus beds) by officers under delegated authority
4	Councillor B Mosterman	Councillor P Hetherton	Information on the progress of scheme to plant a tree for every resident, subsequent monitoring and support, types of trees as some species harmful to animals and whether any consultation with residents on types of species to be planted
5	Councillor J Blundell	Councillor P Hetherton	Lack of communication in relation to tree planting

6	Councillor R Lakha	Councillor M Mutton	NHS crisis and adult social care
7	Councillor P Male	Councillor P Hetherton	State of roads in Lower and Upper Eastern Green Lanes
8	Councillor P Seaman	Councillor K Sandhu	Current situation at City College

102. **Statements**

There were no Statements.

103. **Debate - War in Ukraine**

The following Motion was moved by Councillor P Male and seconded by Councillor M Lapsa:

“As we approach the first anniversary of the conflict, this Council reaffirms its support for the people of Ukraine”.

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

104. **Debate - Voter Photo ID**

The following Motion was moved by Councillor AS Khan and seconded by Councillor G Lloyd:

“The Elections Act 2022 was passed by Parliament in April 2022, requiring voters in Great Britain to show photo ID before being issued with a ballot paper at UK elections and local elections in England.

This Council believes that the requirement of the Act for voters to show photo ID before being issued with a ballot paper is unnecessary; it addresses a problem that doesn't exist.

This Council is committed to encouraging greater participation in elections and believes that the requirement for electors to show photo identification when voting will be a deterrent to voters who don't possess valid photo ID.

This Council urges the Government not to implement this policy or, at the very least, postpone the necessity of voter ID at polling stations until a prolonged National Information Campaign can be implemented.

There has been very little publicity around this issue, and we believe that many voters will be turned away at the polls for not having the necessary documentation and will therefore be disenfranchised”.

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

(Meeting closed at 4.55 pm)