

**Coventry City Council**  
**Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities held at 1.30 pm on Thursday, 29 September 2022**

Present:

Members: Councillor AS Khan (Chair)  
Councillor P Male (Shadow Cabinet Member)  
Councillor P Akhtar (Deputy Cabinet Member)

Other Members: Councillor G Lloyd (for Minute 15 below)  
Councillor G Ridley (for Minute 16 below)

Employees Present:

Law and Governance G Carter, J Newman (Director), U Patel, C Taylor

Streetscene & Regulatory Services C Hickin, G Hood, M McHugh

### **Public Business**

#### **13. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **14. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 August 2022 were agreed and signed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

#### **15. Petition - Request for the Installation of a Children's Play Area in Moseley Avenue Park**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Streetscene and Regulatory Services that responded to a petition bearing 510 signatures which was submitted to the Council in August 2021. The petition, sponsored by Councillor G Lloyd and the late Councillor S Walsh, Sherbourne Ward Councillors, requested the Council to create a new Children's Play area in Moseley Avenue Park. The petition detail was outlined in the report.

Moseley Avenue Park is located in the northwest of the city and is approximately 13,800 square meters in size and contains a mixture of grassed areas, ornamental trees and an area of old tarmac which was once used for tennis. The site is a small park in a quiet residential area with houses bordering the park on all sides, separated by a narrow road.

According to the Fields in Trust (FIT) criteria in their "Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play" children's playgrounds are separated into three categories and each category has a accessibility standard for playgrounds in terms of their distance from dwellings as per the following:

- Local Area for Play (LAP) or Local Area for Play – a playground aimed at very young children. Distance 100m (less than 5 minutes' walk);
- Locally Equipped Area for Play (LEAP) – a playground aimed at children who can go out and play independently. Distance 400m (5-10 minutes' walk) and
- Neighbourhood equipped Areas for Play (NEAP) – a playground aimed at older children. Distance 1000m (15-20 minutes' walk)

The City Council have adopted the FIT accessibility standard for playgrounds in terms of their distance from dwellings. The relative distances were currently measured from the nearest boundary of the parks to the nearest dwellings rather than from the playgrounds or the park's nearest entrances.

When the provision of LEAP and NEAP playgrounds within Coventry were mapped, it showed that Moseley Avenue Park falls outside the catchment areas of the nearest playgrounds with a particular lack of any NEAP provision.

The cost of creating a new playground had been estimated to be approximately £91,915 for a LEAP and £219,662 for a NEAP. The Council's Park Service were currently unable to commit to creating a new park due to budget pressures. Funding may occasionally be available for the creation of new playgrounds from sources such as Section 106 agreements or through external grants such as those available from the Landfill Communities Fund or WMCA Community Grant scheme, which relevant residents' groups could apply for.

If a new playground was to be proposed for Moseley Avenue Park, any such proposal would need the full support of the residents living near to the park, especially those whose houses are on the other side of the road to the park.

The old tarmac tennis courts within the park were suspected of being built on a clinker sub-base. Clinker was a by-product of industrial processes and consequently, was often contaminated with hazardous chemicals. If the material beneath the tarmac is contaminated, its removal and disposal would be especially expensive.

Councillor G Lloyd attended the meeting and spoke in respect of the petition. He expressed disappointment that a park was supposed to have been built 3 years ago and yet nothing had materialised. He added that the residents' group 'Friends of Moseley Park' had existed for over 3 years and together with the majority of residents surrounding the park, want this and were fully supported by all 3 Ward Councillors and the local MP.

Councillor P Male, Shadow Cabinet Member also expressed his support for the park and suggested that every funding opportunity be explored to enable this to happen and, as and when it does, perhaps it could be dedicated in memory of late Councillor S Walsh.

**RESOLVED that, the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities:**

- 1. Having considered the content of the petition, notes the concerns of the petitioners.**

2. **Notes that there is insufficient funding for a new playground from the existing Park Service budgets however, the Service will consider all available funding opportunities available from any resource which may be used to create a new Locally Equipped Areas for Play (LEAP) or Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAP) at the earliest opportunity.**
3. **Agrees that when opportunity and resources allow, a LEAP and/or NEAP playground should be provided in Moseley Avenue Park which will provide for children resident in the general area concerned.**
4. **Agrees that plans for an alternative play feature for Moseley Avenue Park should be considered in the interim, separate to providing a LEAP or NEAP playground in or near to the park. This will be subject to the necessary funding being identified.**
5. **Instructs officers to undertake a relevant survey to determine what, if any, contaminants exist on site.**
6. **Notes the existence of the residents' group 'Friends of Moseley Avenue Park' and requests officers to work with them to identify potential funding opportunities to fund a LEAP for the park.**

#### **16. Response to Petition Requesting the Introduction of Digital Autopsy Facilities in Coventry**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Law and Governance which responded to a petition requesting the introduction of digital autopsy facilities in Coventry. The paper and online petitions, totalling 980 signatures, were received in early 2022 and were sponsored by Councillor G Ridley. The report outlined the petition detail and the justification for the request.

In response to the petition, the report informed of proposals in respect of how a working group would address the provision of non-invasive postmortem (PM) in Coventry.

The coroner is an independent judicial post holder who is supported by the local authority in terms of support and resources to enable the functions of the coroner to be undertaken.

Once a coroner's statutory duty to investigate a death was triggered, the coroner would have control of the body of the deceased until his coronial functions had come to an end. That control would commence when the coroner was made aware that a body was within that coroner's area. It would be for the coroner to decide whether to commission a first or subsequent postmortem, and this would be a judicial decision and only challengeable by way of a Judicial Review.

These powers are to be exercised with proper regard to the rights and interests involved. H.M. Coroner for Coventry and Warwickshire recognises that postmortem examinations may cause distress to bereaved families and may also delay the release of bodies to bereaved families which in itself can be distressing;

a postmortem should therefore only be directed when the circumstances require it for a proper consideration as to the cause of death.

There is no legal definition of what constitutes a postmortem examination. It can include any of the following: external examination of the body; toxicology tests; test on organ and tissue samples from the body; CT or MRI scanning; and/or full internal; invasive examination of the body.

Legislation makes it clear that a coroner may specify the kind of examination to be made. The Chief Coroner encourages coroners to consider the use of less invasive forms of examination appropriate cases, especially where the bereaved family has a strong objection to invasive examination.

Non-invasive postmortem imaging may not be the appropriate technique to determine the cause of death in all cases. In addition, facilities vary across the country, and where there were no provisions, such as Coventry, the body must be transported out of the area for a non-invasive postmortem to be undertaken.

Many families (particularly those belonging to certain faith groups) request postmortem imaging instead of more invasive autopsy. The benefit of image based examinations is that thorough detailed images of the state of the body, both externally and internally would be permanently recorded for anyone to review in the future.

There are some disadvantages to the use of non-invasive postmortem, in some cases, a non-invasive postmortem result may still require an invasive postmortem which can cause delay and further distress to the family. In addition, there was some concern around limited availability and associated costs.

Councillor Ridley and the petition organiser attended the meeting and spoke in respect of the petition. They welcomed the establishment of a working group to consider future provision, however, they expressed disappointment with the lengthy timescales involved. The petition organiser further commented that there was provision at the hospital in the early hours where the coroners could request the use of the scanners and that the council should consider entering into an agreement with another local authority to provide the service to minimise delays.

The Cabinet Member noted that the working group that had been set up would be considering and exploring all avenues available to expand on the services already available; including those raised by the petitioners. However, it had to be noted that resources and staffing would have to be considered and even if a postmortem was undertaken without delay, pathology would still need to consider the results.

**RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities agrees that a working group develops options around the use of non-invasive postmortems and reports back to the Cabinet Member on its progress within six months.**

17. **An Enhanced Role for the Street Enforcement Team**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Streetscene and Regulatory Services that outlined proposals to have an enhanced role for the Street Enforcement Team to provide a more comprehensive solution in maintaining standards in the city's residential streets and commercial areas. The additional highways powers would supplement the environmental powers which were already utilised by the service.

The Street Enforcement Service currently carries out a wide range of environment enforcement in public area and on private land. They also have enforcement roles in what are largely considered to be 'highways' issues. For example, abandoned vehicles, fly posting, cars for sale on the highway etc. A full list of the service was attached at Appendix 1 of the report.

There were a further range of 'highway' issues evident within the city streets which were also closely related to the work which the Street Enforcement Team currently performed, which presently, did not fall within their remit. In some cases, this could inhibit the work of the team when looking to address general environmental degradation in the streets and areas where the service was largely focused. Furthermore, because the service currently focused largely on environmental issues, our residents perceived that only part of the problem was being addressed.

A list of the additional 'highway' issues that could be addressed by the street enforcement service and supplement the work that they already did were outlined in Appendix 2 of the report. It was suggested that if the street enforcement service, addressed these where necessary, it would provide a more holistic solution and would support the Council's 'One Coventry' approach.

**RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities agrees to role of the Street Enforcement Service being extended to incorporate a collection of highway enforcement powers, which will be used predominantly in those streets which are suffering environmental degradation.**

18. **Outstanding Issues**

There were no outstanding issues.

19. **Any Other Business**

There were no other items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 2.10 pm)