

**Coventry City Council**  
**Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet held at 2.00 pm on Tuesday, 11 July 2023**

Present:

Cabinet Members: Councillor G Duggins (Chair)  
Councillor R Brown  
Councillor K Caan  
Councillor J O'Boyle  
Councillor K Sandhu  
Councillor P Seaman  
Councillor P Hetherton

Non-Voting Deputy  
Cabinet Members: Councillor S Agboola  
Councillor P Akhtar  
Councillor G Hayre  
Councillor A Jobbar  
Councillor G Lloyd

Non-Voting Opposition  
Members: Councillor S Gray  
Councillor P Male  
Councillor R Simpson

Other Non-Voting  
Members: Councillor N Akhtar  
Councillor R Lakha  
Councillor C E Thomas

Employees (by Service):

Chief Executive J Nugent

Business, Investment and  
Culture S Weir

Children's Services N Macdonald (Interim Director), A Whitrick

Finance B Hastie (Chief Operating Officer (Section 151 Officer) ,  
P Jennings, T Pinks

Law and Governance J Newman (Chief Legal Officer), S Bennett

Streetscene and  
Regulatory Services R Back, C Styles

Transportation and  
Highways C Knight (Director of Transportation and Highways),

Apologies:

Councillor L Bigham  
Councillor AS Khan  
Councillor D Welsh  
Councillors L Harvard, C Miks, S Nazir, Ridley

## **Public Business**

### **7. Declarations of Interest**

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

### **8. Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2023 were agreed and signed as a true record.

Further to Minute 3/23 relating to “Renewal of City Centre Public Spaces Protection Order”, Cllr N Akhtar provided an update of enforcement activity carried out in the Burges.

### **9. Exclusion of Press and Public**

**RESOLVED that the Cabinet 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 17 below headed ‘Residential Children’s Homes Strategy’ on the grounds that the report involves the likely disclosure of information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, as it contains information relating the identity, financial business affairs of an organisation and the amount of expenditure proposed to be incurred by the Council under a particular contract for the supply of goods or services, and in all circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.**

### **10. Palmer Lane Regeneration 2023 Update**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Transportation and Highways in respect of further funding in order to deliver the overall Palmer Lane scheme. The report indicated that this increase in cost is a consequence of high inflation over the last 12 months and increases in labour and material costs during 2022/2023. The report therefore also sought approval for an additional ask of £318k to be funded from corporate reserves.

Since 2019 the Council had transformed the city centre through a £44m programme of investment in the public realm. The impact of this work had been significant, attracting developers to invest in the city and creating a legacy for residents and those living and working in the city.

Palmer Lane is a proposed regeneration scheme that includes de-culverting the river Sherbourne and hard and soft landscaping around the area to create a new city centre place for dwell time and supporting the establishment of a new business in the Illingworth building.

The scheme was first approved by Cabinet as part of the Public Realm Phase 5 report in March 2018, as a complement to the Public Realm 5 (PR5) works taking place in the city centre and to develop designs for the proposal. During 2021 there was an additional need identified for a further £950k to fund the overall regeneration of Palmer Lane as well as approve the external funding contributions towards the project. This was given approval in a Cabinet Member report in July 2021.

The Palmer Lane project had continued to detailed design level throughout the year of 2021 and 2022 to a point where final designs are in place and legal land agreements are concluded.

Following early contractor engagement with a framework construction company the project will need further funding in order to deliver the overall Palmer Lane scheme. This increase in cost is a consequence of high inflation over the last 12 months and increases in labour and material costs that we have seen during 2022/2023. This report therefore also seeks approval for an additional ask of £318k to be funded from corporate reserves.

The report also detailed a grant acceptance from Historic Coventry Trust (HCT) of £534k which took place in March 2023. This was an increase of £155k from the previous approved HCT contribution of £379k. Due to the urgency required to accept the grant funding, this was accepted under delegated powers in accordance with the provisions of the Council Constitution.

**RESOLVED that Cabinet:**

- (1) Approves the additional funding of £318k for the delivery of the Palmer Lane project taking the total budget for the delivery of the scheme to £2.4m. The additional funding will be added to the 5-year capital programme.**
- (2) Notes the grant acceptance of £534k received from Historic Coventry Trust in March 2023 under delegated authority contained in paragraph 2.3.2 (c) of Part 3F (Financial Procedure Rules) of the Council Constitution.**
- (3) Notes the delegated authority provided to the Director of Transportation and Highways following consultation (by way of the Cabinet Member report dated 15<sup>th</sup> July 2021) to conclude negotiations and enter into legal agreements with the various landowners for parcels of land to be acquired or leased by the Council and/or for licences to be entered into to enable works to be carried out and for agreements to be entered into and/or for leases to be granted by the Council to third parties over land in the Council's ownership in order for the scheme to be viable and to Authorise any variations related to such legal agreements.**

- (4) Notes the continued exercise of the delegated authority provided (by way of the Cabinet Member report dated 15<sup>th</sup> July 2021) to commence the procurement in order to appoint a works contractor through an approved procurement framework.**
- (5) Notes the delegated authority provided (by way of the Cabinet Member report dated 15<sup>th</sup> July 2021) to the Director of Transportation and Highways, following consultation with the Chief Legal Officer, to approve grant expenditure to any such external body, third party or person as is deemed necessary for the delivery of the Palmer Lane project up to an individual maximum sum of £250,000.**

**11. Reorganisation of the Coventry and Warwickshire Growth Hub**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Business, Investment and Culture which sought approval of the reorganisation of Coventry and Warwickshire Growth Hub (CWGH) and Coventry City Council's role as Joint Shareholder and participant on the new CWGH Board. Warwickshire County Council would be taking a similar report and recommendations to their Cabinet meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2023.

The CWGH was established in 2014 using City Deal funding provided by Government. It was one of the first Growth Hubs to be formed in England, before every Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) area was subsequently given funding to establish a Growth Hub as a central co-ordination point for publicly funded business support to try and simplify businesses' understanding of which business support products were appropriate to their individual needs. It has been nationally recognised as a leading Growth Hub in the UK.

Given the strategic importance of the CWGH in delivering business support in Coventry & Warwickshire, its success to date and its collaboration with all the Coventry & Warwickshire Local Authorities, it had been agreed by the CWLEP board to transition residual funds from the closure of CWLEP to the CWGH, enabling the Growth Hub to continue as a stand-alone entity as a going concern.

Under this arrangement, and building on legal advice, it was proposed that Coventry City Council (CCC) and Warwickshire County Council (WCC) become the joint shareholders of the new company to also ensure the democratic accountability required. It was proposed that CWGH was governed by a Board consisting of both public and private sector representatives, with CCC having a representative on the Board.

CCC has also made provision in its budgets to continue to support the CWGH at the current level of £130,560 under the current Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). Subject to formal approvals, WCC was planning to fund CWGH to the same level this financial year and committed to continuing to provide funding for this purpose, with CWGH's remaining funding being derived from other Local Authority sources, external funding, and commercial income.

The report requested Cabinet to approve the reorganisation of CWGH and Coventry City Council's role as Joint Shareholder and participant on the new CWGH Board.

**RESOLVED that Cabinet:**

- 1) Approves the use of its powers under Section 12 of Local Government Act 2003 and Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to become a shareholder in the Growth Hub. This is subject to the transfer of CWLEP residual funds of circa £0.9m to the Growth Hub.**
- 2) Delegates authority to the Head of Economic Development, following consultation with the Chief Operating Officer (Section 151 Officer) and Chief Legal Officer and the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change, to enter into the relevant legal agreements as well as any associated documents deemed necessary to complete the transaction.**
- 3) Approves the implementation of the governance structure and utilise the existing Shareholder Committee terms of reference as per the constitution.**
- 4) Delegates authority to the Head of Economic Development, following consultation with the Chief Operating Officer (Section 151 Officer) and Chief Legal Officer and the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change to approve the issue by CWGH of one share to WCC on the same terms as CCC to become joint shareholders.**
- 5) Delegates Authority to appoint CCC's representative for the new CWGH Board on behalf of the Coventry City Council to the Chief Operating (Section 151 Officer) and Chief Legal Officer following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change.**

**12. Local Plan Regulation 18 - Issues and Options Consultation**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Streetscene and Regulatory Services in respect of the Local Plan Review Issues and Options Consultation.

On 6 December 2022 Council resolved to adopt a new Local Development Scheme (LDS) and to undertake a full Local Plan review Approval to progress to the initial public consultation stage of the review process is now sought, this being the 'regulation 18' consultation phase, known as 'issues and options'.

The Planning Policy team alongside relevant City Council teams have assessed the existing Local Plan policies, exploring these policies through 'topic papers' to be made available at public consultation stage, each assessment is summarised within the Issues and Option Consultation Document, which is now proposed for public consultation. The Issues and Options consultation document is contained in the appendices to this report, alongside the equalities impact assessment and environmental assessment / sustainability appraisal. The Issues and options consultation seeks views across the full range of local plan policies, within these matters the authority consults upon the methodology employed to establish local housing need, suggesting that the local housing need may be established with reference to the HEDNA, without the prescribed 35% urban uplift applied.

Following the initial consultation phase, work will then commence upon the drafting of proposed revisions to planning policy, informed by the findings of the regulation 18 consultation process. Authority is therefore sought to progress to this consultation phase to continue to progress the directed Local Plan review process.

A robust evidence base will be required to support the Local Plan review to ensure that the result is a robust planning policy framework that will shape future development of the city and deliver on the priorities of the One Coventry Plan. A further report will be brought to Cabinet setting out the financial request to develop the evidence base.

**RESOLVED that Cabinet:**

- (1) Approves the Local Plan Review Issues and Options (Regulation 18) Consultation document and associated Strategic Environmental Assessment /Sustainability Appraisal and Equalities / Health Impact Assessment for an 8-week consultation period to begin at the earliest opportunity.**
- (2) Delegates authority to the Director of Streetscene and Regulatory Services, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities, to make any non-substantive changes to the documents prior to consultation.**

**13. Revenue and Capital Outturn 2022/23**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Chief Operating Officer (Section 151 Officer) which outlined the final revenue and capital outturn position for 2022/23 and reviews treasury management activity and 2022/23 Prudential Indicators reported under the Prudential Code for Capital Finance.

The overall financial position included the following headline items:

- An overspend of £6.7m, balanced by a contribution from legacy COVID reserves.
- Capital Programme expenditure of £146.9m
- A reduction in the level of available Council revenue reserves from £140m to £123m

Further detail included:

- An overspend of £9.4m within Streetscene and Regulatory Services includes the combined impact of the refuse drivers' strike, strike mitigation costs and the loss of commercial refuse service income as a result of the strike.
- An overspend of £4.1m within Childrens' Services reflecting high placement costs and social worker recruitment and retention pressures.
- An overspend of £2.7m in Adults' Social Care reflecting an increased number of high-cost complex cases.
- An overspend of £2.7m on Business & Investment Culture which represents significant energy inflationary pressure, as well as running costs and business rates for the Collection Centre in advance of construction start dates.

- A net underspend of £13.5m within central budgets including lower superannuation costs, interest income from loans and higher than budgeted investment income, and a surplus from the Coventry and Warwickshire Business Rates Pool.

The underlying revenue position has improved by £1.8m since Quarter 3 when an overspend of £8.5m was forecast. In particular the improved position relates to improvements within Contingency and Central budgets which were set out in the report.

The prudent management of the Councils financial position throughout the Covid crisis enabled the Council to retain some resources to manage any legacy issues. £6.7m of this has been used to balance the position at the end of 2022/23. Although the Covid crisis is no longer a significant threat to the Councils service delivery and financial position, the cost-of-living crisis and growing levels of inflation have had tangible impacts on demand for both Childrens and Adults services. The complexity of need, support required and sufficiency of the external market to provide for this has directly impacted the Councils financial outturn reported up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 and will be an ongoing financial challenge in 2023/24.

**RESOLVED that Cabinet:**

- 1) Approves the final balanced revenue outturn position after a contribution of £6.7m from reserves.
- 2) Approves the final capital expenditure and resourcing position (section 2.3 and Appendix 2 of the report), incorporating expenditure of £146.9m against a final budget of £160.9m; £14m expenditure rescheduled into 2023/24.
- 3) Approves the outturn Prudential Indicators position in section 2.4.4 and Appendix 3 of the report.
- 4) Recommends that Council approves the reserve contribution of £6.7m for the purposes described in Section 5.1 of the report.

**14. Children's Residential Children's Home Strategy**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Interim Director of Childrens Services which sought approval for the Residential Children's Homes Review and Strategy 2023-2026.

The report indicated that the Council wished to establish additional Children's homes to meet the needs of more children in need of residential care within the city. This would help improve outcomes for looked after children whilst also reducing the Council's reliance on the expensive external residential market, creating overall financial savings for the Council.

A sufficiency needs analysis was a requirement of section 22G of the Children Act 1989 and statutory guidance was issued in 2010. A recent analysis in Coventry had identified the need for additional provision of residential care for children within Coventry.

Coventry City Council currently operates four Children's homes for up to 16 looked after children and commissions an additional 12 placements with private providers within the city. A further two homes have already been approved by Cabinet and were in the process of being purchased/ built. The 'short stay same day' children's home was due to open in November 2023 and our first purpose-built home for looked after children with a disability is due to open in June 2024.

Working across Children's Services, finding the right placement at the right time, despite being part of a regional framework can be a significant challenge due to current market pressures. Therefore, the City Council were often reliant on spot contract providers who may inflate costs of the placement due to the urgency to meet a child's immediate needs or due to the complexity of the child's trauma responsive presenting behaviours.

The proposal and 3-year Residential Strategy was to:

Purchase and refurbish two further privately owned residential properties to create two homes for up to 4 looked after children in each, with trauma related emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Build a further home for looked after children with a disability, as referenced within the approved Cabinet report from January 2022

Consider a new build, modernised and purpose built residential short breaks home, to replace Broad Park House, with the current property being sold on Logan Road following completion.

Embed the workforce Strategy for Children's Residential Services, with capacity to develop the existing and future work force to expand the children's home portfolio, run by the Council, improve outcomes for children and financial savings, based on the current residential market.

The success of the Strategy would result in a decrease in future placement expenditure of c£1m per annum.

A corresponding private report detailing confidential financial matters was also submitted for consideration (Minute 17 below refers).

**RESOLVED that the Cabinet:**

- 1. Approves the Residential Children's Homes Review and Strategy 2023-2026 appended at Appendix 1 of the report.**



2. **Delegates authority to the Director of Children's Services following consultation with the Chief Operating Officer (Section 151 officer) and the Chief Legal Officer to undertake the necessary due diligence (including the power to enter into any necessary legal agreement) required to facilitate the following:**
  - a. **Purchase land and build an additional children's home for the purpose of accommodating four looked after children with a disability**
  - b. **Purchase land and re-build an existing short breaks children's home (Broad Park House) for the purpose of accommodating children with disabilities and additional needs**
  - c. **Purchase and renovate two properties to open two additional children's homes for the purpose of accommodating looked after children whose needs are best met within this type of provision**
3. **Delegates authority to the Director of Children's Services, following consultation with Chief Operating Officer and Chief Legal Officer, to (where required) commence all necessary procurement for works or services necessary to bring into effect the recommendations set out in 1 and 2 above.**
4. **Recommends that Council approve capital expenditure of up to the sum stated in the private element of this report to be met from prudential borrowing which shall be utilised solely for the delivery of the recommendations set out in 1-3 above as well as the objectives set out in the Residential Children's Homes Review and Strategy 2023-2026 which is appended to the report.**

15. **Outstanding Issues**

There were no outstanding issues.

16. **Any Other Items of Urgent Public Business**

There were no other items of urgent public business.

**Private Business**

17. **Children's Residential Children's Home Strategy**

Further to Minute 14 above, the Cabinet considered a private report of Interim Director of Children's Services which set out the commercially confidential matters relating to the Residential Children's Homes Review and Strategy 2023-2026.

**RESOLVED that Cabinet:**

1. **Approves the Residential Children's Homes Review and Strategy 2023-2026 appended at Appendix 1 of this report.**

2. **Delegates authority to the Director of Children's Services following consultation with the Chief Operating Officer (section 151 officer) and the Chief Legal Officer to undertake the necessary due diligence (including the power to enter into any necessary legal agreement) required to facilitate the following:**
  - a) **Purchase land and build an additional children's home for the purpose of accommodating four looked after children with a disability**
  - b) **Purchase land and re-build an existing short breaks children's home (Broad Park House) for the purpose of accommodating children with disabilities and additional needs**
  - c) **Purchase and renovate two properties to open two additional children's homes for the purpose of accommodating looked after children whose needs are best met within this type of provision**
3. **Delegates authority to the Director of Children's Services following consultation with Chief Operating officer and Chief Legal Officer to (where required) commence all necessary procurement for works or services necessary to bring into effect the recommendations set out in 1 and 2 above.**
4. **Recommends that Council approve capital expenditure of up to the sum identified in the report to be met from prudential borrowing which shall be utilised solely for the delivery of the recommendations set out in 1-3 above as well as the objectives set out in the Residential Children's Homes Review and Strategy 2023-2026 which is appended to this report.**

**18. Any Other Items of Urgent Private Business**

There were no other items of urgent private business.

(Meeting closed at 2.30pm)