

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Council held at 2.00 pm on Tuesday, 18 July 2023

Present:

Members: Councillor J Birdi (Chair)

Councillor S Agboola	Councillor R Lancaster
Councillor N Akhtar	Councillor M Lapsa
Councillor P Akhtar	Councillor J Lepoidevin
Councillor M Ali	Councillor G Lloyd
Councillor R Bailey	Councillor P Male
Councillor L Bigham	Councillor A Masih
Councillor J Blundell	Councillor J McNicholas
Councillor R Brown	Councillor C Miks
Councillor K Caan	Councillor B Mosterman
Councillor G Duggins	Councillor M Mutton
Councillor J Gardiner	Councillor S Nazir
Councillor B Gittins	Councillor J O'Boyle
Councillor S Gray	Councillor E M Reeves
Councillor L Harvard	Councillor G Ridley
Councillor G Hayre	Councillor K Sandhu
Councillor M Heaven	Councillor T Sawdon
Councillor P Hetherton	Councillor P Seaman
Councillor A Hopkins	Councillor R Simpson
Councillor J Innes	Councillor B Singh
Councillor T Jandu	Councillor R Singh
Councillor A Jobbar	Councillor R Thay
Councillor A Kaur	Councillor CE Thomas
Councillor S Keough	Councillor A Tucker
Councillor T Khan	Councillor D Welsh
Councillor AS Khan	
Councillor R Lakha	

Honorary Aldermen: J Clifford, H Fitzpatrick

Apologies: Councillors F Abbott, K Maton and E Ruane
Honorary Alderman M Hammon

Public Business

29. Minutes of the Meeting held on 20 June 2023

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2023 were agreed as a true record.

30. Exclusion of the Press and Public

RESOLVED that the City Council 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 43 (Residential Children's Homes Strategy 2023-26) on the grounds that the report involves the likely disclosure of information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Act, as it contains information relating to the financial affairs of a particular person (including

the authority holding that information) and in all circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

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

1. Bishop of Coventry, The Right Reverend Dr Christopher Cocksworth

The Lord Mayor announced that the Right Reverend Dr Christopher Cocksworth, Bishop of Coventry, having served in Coventry since 2008, would be leaving to take up the position of Dean of Windsor in November 2023.

As Dean of Windsor, he would become spiritual head of the King's Free Chapel of St George at Windsor Castle, one of the King's residencies.

Members paid tribute to the work undertaken by Bishop Cocksworth during his time in Coventry and wished him every success in his new appointment.

2. International Children's Games

The Lord Mayor congratulated Team Coventry who had participated in the International Children's Games in Daegu, South Korea in the previous week. The event took place in a different international city each year and more than 70 global cities participated. Team Coventry won a total of 6 medals this year. A reception for the team would take place later in the year.

3. 2023 Para Athletics World Championships

The Lord Mayor also congratulated Kare Adenegan, a Coventry Godiva Harrier athlete who won a silver medal in the Para Athletics World Championships which took place in Paris between 8 and 17 July 2023.

32. **Petitions**

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

- (a) **Objecting to proposals for a solar farm adjacent to Lentons Lane, Coventry – 111 signatures, presented by Councillor L Bigham.**
- (b) **Request for a pedestrian crossing on Brownhill Green Road between Coundon Green and Waste Lane – 84 signatures, presented by Councillor T Jandu.**
- (c) **Request the installation of speed monitoring strips on Charter Avenue to obtain evidence of speeding traffic – 40 signatures, presented by Councillor A Masih.**
- (d) **Objection to a proposed 20-bed and breakfast accommodation to be built above Wyken Working Mens Club – 21 signatures, presented by Councillor A Hopkins.**
- (e) **Request for negotiations to take place with partner authorities and relevant stakeholders to resolve matters relating to persistent flooding from the Upper Brookstray – 140 signatures, presented by Councillor G Ridley.**

- (f) Request to reverse the traffic and road layout changes implemented on Far Gosford Street, January 2023, as they have had a damaging effect on businesses – 59 signatures, presented by Councillor J O’Boyle.**

33. Declarations of Interest

Councillor E Reeves declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in the matter referred to in Minute 40 below (Debate: Backing British Farmers). She withdrew from the meeting during consideration of the item.

34. Annual Report of Ethics Committee 2022-23

Further to Minute 3 of the Ethics Committee, the City Council considered a report of the Chief Legal Officer which set out the work of the Committee over the last Municipal Year. In particular, the report set out:

- The Committee’s review of the Complaints Protocol
- Online Safety Bill Update
- The Government’s March 2022 Response to the Committee on Standards in Public Life Report of 2019
- Officer Member Protocol Review
- Civility in public life, intimidation in public life and digital citizenship
- Committee on Standards in Public Life Report entitled ‘Leading in Practice’

The report also detailed other regular work of the Committee over the last year including receiving regular reports on ethical standards cases across the country; maintaining a watching brief on work being undertaken by the Committee on Standards in Public Life; and locally on supporting Members in dealing with challenges associated with public service, particularly in relation to intimidation and abuse.

RESOLVED that the City Council notes the Annual Report of the Ethics Committee for 2022/23.

35. Revenue and Capital Outturn 2022/23

Further to Minute 13 of the Cabinet, the City Council 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 31st March 2023 and will be an ongoing financial challenge in 2023/24.

RESOLVED that the City Council approves the reserve contribution of £6.7m for the purposes described in Section 5.1 of the report.

36. **Residential Children's Homes Strategy 2023-2026**

Further to Minute 14 of the Cabinet, the City Council 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.

Cabinet had resolved to:

- 1 Approve the Residential Children's Homes Review and Strategy 2023-2026 appended at Appendix 1 of the report.
- 2 Delegate 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 Delegate 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.

A corresponding private report detailing confidential financial matters was also submitted for consideration (Minute 43 below refers).

RESOLVED that the City 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 as set out in 1-3 of the Cabinet Recommendations 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 submitted.

37. Local Government Boundary Review - Response to Consultation on Warding Patterns

The City Council considered a report of the Chief Legal Officer which sought Council's views on whether or not to submit a response to the consultation on warding patterns.

The Local Government Boundary Commission had commenced an electoral review of Coventry. The review would look at whether the boundaries of wards within the local authority needed to be altered to ensure fairer representation at local government elections.

Coventry City Council met the Commission's criteria for electoral inequality with 6 of 18 wards (33%) having a variance over 10%. In addition, the last electoral review of Coventry City Council was completed in 2003, meeting the Commission's duty, set out in law, to review every authority from 'time to time'. The Commission has interpreted this to be about 12 – 14 years.

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) commenced its review of Coventry City Council in October 2022. On 21 March 2023 the Council approved the submission to the LGBCE to recommend that the number of Councillors remained at 54, which they had confirmed they are minded to approve.

Following this, the LGBCE had launched a consultation on the warding patterns for the City based on an average ward size of 13,848 electors per ward and an average of 4,616 per Councillor.

Any proposal submitted to the LGBCE needs to meet their three criteria for submitting warding patterns:

- Proposed wards should leave each Councillor representing roughly the same number of electors.
- Proposed wards should – as far as possible – reflect community interests and identities, and boundaries should be identifiable.
- Proposed wards should promote effective and convenient local government.

Appendix 1 of the report contained an option on warding patterns for the City for submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission's in response to their consultation.

Council was requested to approve one of the following options:

1. That Council does not make a submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, or
2. That Council approves Appendix 1 of the report as the Council's submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England as the City Council's submission on the consultation on warding patterns for Coventry, or
3. That Council considers and approves any other proposed warding pattern submissions as the Council's submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England as the City Council's response to the consultation on warding patterns.

In moving the report, the Leader, Councillor G Duggins proposed that the City Council approve Option 2 above. This was seconded by Councillor A S Khan.

The following amendment was moved by Councillor S Gray, seconded by Councillor E Reeves and lost:

"That, in the event either Recommendations 2 and 3 as detailed in the report are proposed to be adopted, those Recommendations be amended as follows:-

Add the words "together with a full list of Councillors who voted for and against this option and their party affiliation":-

- a) In Recommendation 2 of the report between "Appendix 1 of the report" and "as the Council's submission" and;
- b) In Recommendation 3 of the report between "warding pattern submissions" and "as the Council's submission"

So that the amended Recommendations read as follows:

1. That Council does not make a submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, or

2. That Council approves Appendix 1 of the report, together with a full list of Councillors who voted for and against this option and their party affiliation, as the Council's submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England as the City Council's submission on the consultation on warding patterns for Coventry, or
3. That Council considers and approves any other proposed warding pattern submissions, together with a full list of Councillors who voted for and against this option and their party affiliation, as the Council's submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England as the City Council's response to the consultation on warding patterns.

Note: In accordance with the Constitution, a recorded vote in relation to the proposed amendment was taken.

The Councillors voting for, against and abstaining in relation to the proposed amendment were as follows:

<u>For</u>	<u>Against</u>	<u>Abstain</u>
Councillors:	Councillors:	Councillors:
E Reeves	S Agboola	R Lancaster
S Gray	N Akhtar	M Lapsa
	P Akhtar	J Lepoidevin
	M Ali	G Lloyd
	R Bailey	P Male
	L Bigham	A Masih
	J Blundell	J McNicholas
	R Brown	C Miks
	K Caan	B Mosterman
	G Duggins	M Mutton
	J Gardiner	S Nazir
	B Gittins	J O'Boyle
	L Harvard	G Ridley
	G Hayre	K Sandhu
	M Heaven	T Sawdon
	P Hetherton	P Seaman
	A Hopkins	R Simpson
	J Innes	B Singh
	T Jandu	R Singh
	A Jobbar	R Thay
	A Kaur	CE Thomas
	S Keough	A Tucker
	A Khan	D Welsh
	T Khan	Lord Mayor
	R Lakha	
Total: 2	Total: 49	Total: 0

Result: Lost
For: 2
Against: 49

Abstentions: 0

RESOLVED that the City Council approves Option 2 as set out in the report, and that Appendix 1 of the report be the Council's submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England as the City Council's submission on the consultation for warding patterns for Coventry.

Note: In accordance with the Constitution, a recorded vote in relation to the Recommendation was taken.

The Councillors voting for, against and abstaining in relation to the Recommendation were as follows:

<u>For</u>		<u>Against</u>	<u>Abstain</u>
Councillors:	Councillors:	Councillors:	
S Agboola	A Khan	R Bailey	
N Akhtar	T Khan	J Blundell	
P Akhtar	R Lakha	J Gardiner	
M Ali	R Lancaster	S Gray	
L Bigham	G Lloyd	M Heaven	
R Brown	J McNicholas	S Keough	
K Caan	C Miks	M Lapsa	
G Duggins	M Mutton	J Lepoidevin	
B Gittins	S Nazir	P Male	
L Harvard	J O'Boyle	A Masih	
G Hayre	K Sandhu	B Mosterman	
P Hetherton	P Seaman	E Reeves	
A Hopkins	B Singh	G Ridley	
J Innes	R Singh	T Sawdon	
A Jobbar	R Thay	R Simpson	
A Kaur	CE Thomas	Lord Mayor	
	A Tucker		
	D Welsh		
	Total: 34	Total: 16	Total: 0

Result: Carried

For: 34

Against: 16

Abstain: 0

38. **Question Time**

Councillor R Brown provided written answers to the questions set out in the Questions Booklet, together with oral responses to supplementary questions asked at the meeting.

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 J McNicholas	Birmingham Airport – impact of strike action on the service
2	Councillor J Lepoidevin	Councillor P Seaman	Recent visit of the Right Honourable Andrea Leadsom MP to see the work of the City's Family Hubs
3	Councillor J Gardiner	Councillor P Hetherton	Timescale for completion of works in the vicinity of the Council House
4	Councillor A Tucker	Councillor K Caan	Holiday food parcels for Coventry children
5	Councillor P Male	Councillor P Hetherton	Recycling rates
6	Councillor P Male	Councillor AS Khan	Provision for traveller sites
7	Councillor P Male	Councillor J O'Boyle	Contract with UKBIC
8	Councillor A Tucker	Councillor AS Khan	Proposed closure of ticket offices at train stations.

39. **Statements (if any)**

There were no Statements.

40. **Debate - Backing British Farmers**

The following debate was moved by Councillor R Simpson and seconded by Councillor S Keough:

"This Council backs British farmers and will encourage its partners in the city to source locally grown produce."

The following amendment was moved by Councillor A Tucker, seconded by Councillor M Mutton and carried:

Delete the full stop at the end of the sentence and insert the following words:

"and condemns the Government's abject failure to support the sector since 2016"

The amended Motion now to read:-

"This Council backs British farmers and will encourage its partners in the city to source locally grown produce and condemns the Government's abject failure to support the sector since 2016"

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

Note: Further to Minute 33 above, Councillor E Reeves left the meeting for consideration of this item

41. **Debate - Government's Lack of Vision, Ambition and Urgency for a Rapid Move to Net Zero**

The following debate was moved by Councillor J O'Boyle and seconded by Councillor A Tucker:

"This Council condemns the Government's lack of vision, ambition and urgency to secure the future of the planet and the future of UK PLC with a rapid move to net zero. This government is adding cost and creating delay by slowing progress on projects like Coventry Very Light Rail and is failing to legislate for and regulate new transport options including e-bikes and e-scooters.

As well as the country playing its part in securing the planet's future, the transition to green will support economic success, create jobs and help create fairer opportunities for all, so we call on the government to address the situation without delay".

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

42. **Debate - Water Quality and Impact of Regular Wastewater Discharge**

The following debate was moved by Councillor S Gray and seconded by Councillor E Reeves:

Coventry City Council notes:

- Residents are deeply concerned about water quality and the impact of regular wastewater discharge, which includes untreated sewage, into our local rivers and the impact on wildlife and human health.
- The UK has the dirtiest rivers in Europe. Here in Coventry the River Sowe has been found to have huge increases in antibiotic-resistant bacteria immediately downstream of the Finham treatment works. Releasing sewage into rivers is no longer an emergency-only situation occurring as a result of severe storms, but an everyday occurrence even in 'normal' rainfall, and that we are in a situation of cumulative overload on the sewage and wastewater system.
- Whilst there are long term commitments, there are no plans in place which will address the immediate unacceptable situation either locally by Severn Trent or by national government Both the local Coventry and national planning policy requires a robust approach to both water quality and pollution and we need to consider the cumulative impact. Yet planning consultation documents show that it has not been the practice of council planners to ask Water Companies to report on cumulative impact (i.e. whether or not development may lead to any potential increase in 'emergency' discharge into rivers.)
- There have been a number of recent incidents where heavy rain has caused flooding and burst sewage drains in Coventry.

Coventry City Council resolves to:

- 1) Recognise our obligation to protect Coventry's rivers, including from the cumulative impacts of pollution, and ensure that this is properly reflected in the forthcoming revision of the local plan.
- 2) Recognise that there is clear evidence of deterioration of water quality due to cumulative impact of multiple sewage discharge events or 'sewage overload'.
- 3) Ensure that an evidence base is compiled that assesses the cumulative impact of sewage discharge and the capacity of drainage and sewage infrastructure so that this is factored into the upcoming revision of the local plan, including the overall level of future development.
- 4) Seek to better understand the cumulative impact of wastewater discharge including untreated sewage on our local rivers, wildlife and the health of our residents
- 5) Continue to take a lead on addressing this issue, working constructively with other agencies.
- 6) Ask the chair of the relevant scrutiny committee to invite the Chief Executive of Severn Trent plus senior representatives from the Environment Agency and Natural England/Natural Resources Wales to attend a meeting to answer questions on the current levels of sewage discharge and the provision of drainage and sewage capacity.
- 7) Ask Severn Trent, from this date onwards, in its planning consultation responses for major development, to clarify whether it has the information available to assess the impact on the number or duration of sewage discharges into local rivers and the capacity of the sewage and drainage infrastructure, and if it does have this information to share it (noting that this can only be requested not required).
- 8) Request that planning officers, from now onwards, include in all reports relating to major development a specific section on the impact on watercourses, drainage, and sewage infrastructure, including the potential for the development to affect sewage outflow into watercourses (i.e. cumulative impact), or to flag if this information is not fully available, so that this information (or the lack of it) is clearly and transparently set out.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 10 (d) of the Constitution, a Motion without Notice was moved by Councillor M Mutton and seconded by Councillor G Lloyd to refer the above Motion to the appropriate Cabinet Member meeting.

RESOLVED that the Motion as set out above be referred to the appropriate Cabinet Member meeting.

Private Business

43. Residential Children's Homes Strategy 2023-2026

Further to Minute 36 above, the City Council considered a private report of the 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 the City Council approves 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 as set out in 1-3 of the Cabinet Recommendations as well as the objectives set out in the Residential Children's Homes Review and Strategy 2023-2026 which was appended to the report submitted.

(Meeting closed at 5.45 pm)