



Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources

Time and Date

10.00 am on Monday, 5th February, 2024

Place

Diamond Rooms 1 and 2 - Council House, Coventry

Public Business

1. **Apologies**
2. **Declarations of Interest**
3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**
 - (a) To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 7th March 2023 (Pages 3 - 6)
 - (b) Matters Arising
4. **Petitions Relating to the Budget Setting Proposals 2024/25** (Pages 7 - 14)
Report of the Chief Legal Officer
 1. A petition relating to 'Memorial Park Free Parking' bearing 3307 signatures has been submitted. The petition is being supported by Councillor J Blundell, a Wainbody Ward Councillor, who has been invited to the meeting for this item, along with the Lead Petitioner.
 2. A petition relating to 'Save our Buses' bearing 538 signatures has been submitted. The Petition Organiser has been invited to the meeting for this item.
 3. A petition relating to 'Removal of Funding Subsidy to Faith School Bus Routes' bearing 250 signatures has been submitted. The Petition Organiser has been invited to the meeting for this item.
5. **Any other items of public business which the Cabinet Member decides to take as matters of urgency because of the special circumstances involved.**

Private Business

Nil

Julie Newman, Chief Legal Officer, Council House, Coventry

Friday, 26 January 2024

Note: The person to contact about the agenda and documents for this meeting is Caroline Taylor/Michelle Salmon, Governance Services, Tel: 024 7697 8701 / 024 7697 2643

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Membership:

Councillor R Brown (Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance & Resources)

By Invitation:

Councillor P Male (Shadow Cabinet Member)

Councillor G Ridley (Shadow Cabinet Member)

Councillor AS Khan (Cabinet Member for Policing & Equalities)

Councillor K Sandhu (Cabinet Member for Education & Skills)

Councillor J Blundell (For Item 4 - Petition – Memorial Park Free Parking)

Public Access

Any member of the public who would like to attend the meeting in person is encouraged to contact the officer below in advance of the meeting regarding arrangements for public attendance. A guide to attending public meeting can be found here: <https://www.coventry.gov.uk/publicAttendanceMeetings>

Caroline Taylor / Michelle Salmon

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Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources
held at 11.00 am on Tuesday, 7 March 2023

Present: Councillor R Brown, (Cabinet Member)
Councillor T Sawdon (Shadow Cabinet Member)

Other Members: Councillor K Sandhu, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

Employees (by Service Area):

Interim Chief Executive: B Hastie

Finance: R Sugars

Law and Governance: S Bennett

Public Business

5. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosable interests.

6. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4 October, 2022 were agreed and signed as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

7. Support for Pupils and Staff from Earlsdon Primary and Finham Park 2 Secondary Schools to attend the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Partner Schools 70th Anniversary International Peace Conference

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources considered a report of the Interim Chief Executive (Section 151 Officer) which sought approval to providing funding of £10,000 from the Policy Contingency Fund to support 10 pupils (5 from Earlsdon Primary School and 5 from Finham Park 2 Secondary School) and supporting staff members to attend the UNESCO Partner Schools 70th Anniversary International Peace Conference to be held in Japan in September 2023.

The report indicated that the origins of the UNESCO Associated Schools Network (ASPnet) go back to November 1953 when UNESCO launched a project called the Scheme of Co-ordinated Experimental Activities in Education for Living in a World Community, with the participation of 33 secondary schools in 16 Member States. ASPnet was rooted in the mission to promote education for international understanding, co-operation, and peace, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) as well as interlinked with the 1974 Recommendation (concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace

and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms) as a model in the field of international education.

Today, the project has developed into the largest network of UNESCO, connecting more than 12,000 educational institutions from all levels of education in 182 countries. ASPnet continues to drive innovation and transformative learning experiences towards Global Citizenship Education, Education for Sustainable Development and intercultural and heritage learning at schools worldwide.

To celebrate the 70th anniversary of ASPnet in 2023, and to best illustrate its history as an incubator of promoting a culture of peace and sustainable development through education and taking into consideration the many challenges that we are facing today, the theme for the ASPnet 70th anniversary event is proposed to be “Fostering a Culture of Peace and Sustainability through Transformative Education”.

The Deputy Headteacher at Earlsdon Primary School has demonstrated a strong commitment to peace education and sits on the Lord Mayor’s Committee for Peace and Reconciliation. She has also had many years of building Japanese education in Coventry and led on many local initiatives including a pupil Japan conference for over 25 schools; the Flame of Friendship (40 schools) which mirrored the torch relay in Japan before the Tokyo Olympic Games; the creation and installation of the Japanese Peace Garden in the War Memorial Park; and a visit to Japan for primary school pupils from five Coventry schools in 2019.

Earlsdon Primary School is one of the leading schools in the city for peace initiatives. It was the first school in the city to be awarded the Lord Mayor’s Peace Award and it has national School of Sanctuary Status. Additionally, the school has recently been awarded the full British Council International School Award for work to link pupils around the world. The Director of UNESCO partner schools in the UK has approached the Deputy Headteacher of Earlsdon Primary school (who has worked with UNESCO on school programmes since 2018) to invite five pupils from Earlsdon Primary School to represent UK schools at the Peace Conference in Japan. Through discussion, it is also proposed to take five additional pupils from Finham Park 2 Secondary School to enable a representation from both the primary and secondary phases. Finham Park 2 work closely with Earlsdon Primary School on a number of international projects. UNESCO, who are currently considering an application from Coventry for all our schools to join ASPnet.

Between now and the conference, the Deputy Headteacher will be working on options that can increase wider school participation in the event. This includes an offer from Oxford University to lead ceramics workshops for up to 600 pupils, provide opportunities for pupils and families to visit their kilns situated in Oxford University's 1,000 acre ecological research estate and offer free bespoke packages for participating Coventry schools to take part in workshops at Oxford colleges.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources approves funding of £10,000 from the 2022/23 Policy Contingency budget to support pupil and teacher attendance at the UNESCO Partner Schools 70th Anniversary International Peace Conference to be held in Japan in September 2023.

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

There were no other items of urgent public business.

(Meeting closed at 11.10am)

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Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources

5th February 2024

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources – Councillor R Brown

Director approving submission of the report:

Chief Legal Officer

Ward(s) affected:

Citywide

Title: Petitions Relating to the Budget Setting Proposals 2024/25

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive summary:

On 12th December 2023, Cabinet approved the Pre-Budget Report for 2024/25 which outlined, for consultation, a set of new revenue budget proposals for 2024/25 to 2026/27 which represented changes to the Council's existing Budget. The proposals are subject to an eight week consultation period which ends on 7th February 2024. The outcome of the consultation process will be included in the final Budget Setting Report for 2024/25, which will be considered by the Cabinet and Council at their meetings on 20th February 2024.

Petitions have been received in relation to the proposals and this report outlines those petitions. In line with the Council's Petition Scheme, the petition organisers/sponsor have been invited to attend the meeting to outline their concerns to the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources is recommended to:

- 1) Note the petitions received and consider any comments and issues raised at the meeting.
- 2) Agree that the petitions and the issues raised be considered as part of the consultation process for the Budget Setting proposals for 2024/25.

List of Appendices included:

None

Background papers:

None

Other useful documents

Pre-Budget Report for 2024/25 – Cabinet, 12th December 2023

Has it or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

The outcome of the consultation on the Budget Setting for 2024/25 will be considered by Cabinet and Council on 24th February 2024

Will this report go to Council?

As above

Report title: Petitions Relating to the Budget Setting Proposals 2024/25

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 The Council is required to set a balanced budget and this legal duty is balanced with continuing to deliver the key services to residents and businesses in the City.
- 1.2 The Pre-Budget report forecast a £9m shortfall and indicated that this had been brought on by rising demand, underfunding and the tough economic climate, not just in Coventry but across the whole sector. As a result of these pressures, a number of cost-cutting proposals were put forward for residents, colleagues and businesses to comment on. The proposals are subject to an eight week consultation period which ends on 7 February, 2024.
- 1.3 The first petition currently bears 3307 signatures and relates to the proposal to remove the current 3 hours free parking at the War Memorial Park and standardise parking charges with those at Coombe Country Park, as follows:

Up to 1 hour - £1
1-2 hours - £3
2-4 hours £3.50
Day ticket £5

The petition reads:

“We the undersigned petition the Council to ensure that Car Parking at Coventry’s War Memorial Park remains free of charge for the first three hours.”

The justification for the petition reads:

“A lot of people travel to the park to enjoy playing games, running, dog walking and visiting the café etc. It is also, as the name indicates, a lasting memorial to Coventry servicemen who were killed in the two world and subsequent wars. By introducing parking charges for the first three hours this will decrease the number of visitors to the park and encourage people to park their vehicles in neighbouring roads adding to traffic congestion etc.”

- 1.4 Two petitions have been received in relation to the proposal to remove funding that subsidises the provision of non-statutory school transport which affects 5 dedicated school routes to Bishop Ullathorne Secondary school and an extension to a public transport route serving Blue Coat Secondary school, affecting approximately 400 pupils (less than 2% of the secondary school cohort). The City Council provided funding to subsidise these routes following a commercial provider going into liquidation during the pandemic in 2020. The City Council will continue to provide bus passes for children entitled to statutory support for home to school transport to enable them to utilise the public transport network.

1.4.1 The first petition relating to this issue bears 538 signatures and reads:

“We the undersigned petition the Council to not make its planned cuts to the existing bus services provided to our children at Bishop Ullathorne Catholic School. The current funding subsidising the school buses is essential and we require the buses below not to be removed from service. • The Number 50 Bus • The Number 60 Bus (expanded capacity to be removed) • The Number 48 Bus • The Number 40 Bus • The Number 49 Bus”

The justification for the petition reads:

“The current transport system to put it politely is inadequate. The loss of services suggested by the council will be adding pressure to the current transport system. Children are having to wait an hour sometimes to catch the number 9 bus without the proposed cuts to the provisions.

Children from the neighbouring school Finham Park Secondary school also rely on the number 9 bus and I have been told by parents that some children arrive home around 5.30pm due to the buses being full.

The proposed cuts to the school buses listed above would add an additional 300 children to the public bus services, causing chaos and delaying children further from reaching their homes safely.

These disturbances will cause an imbalance to the children’s school life/ home life. Loss of hours will eventually affect their education, limiting their time to study. These bus provisions provided by the council are essential to safeguarding our children. Travelling home late at night, with the anxiety of not knowing how and when they will get home will not benefit our children but hinder their growth.

We as parents ask the council not to make any cuts to the existing services. We hope you make the right decision.”

1.4.2 The second petition relating to this issues bears 250 signatures and reads:

“We the undersigned petition the Council to continue to provide subsidy to ensure pupils get to schools (especially when they are faith schools) in a safe, consistent manner.”

The justification for the petition reads:

“There are limited faith schools across the city and it is not possible for pupils to access safe reliable transport to attend such schools. If schools buses are not available, omissions will increase with an additional 350+ students sourcing different modes of transport. Local residents will be affected by the increase in cars with limited parking already. Children deserve a safe mode of transport to school especially when trying to access a faith school. There are crime concerns regarding going via the city centre. Access roads are currently 50/60MPH (A45/Kenilworth Road), huge concerns with increased number of children crossing

here. Public buses currently run at full to over capacity. If the school bus is late this does not affect their attendance. Bishop Ullathorne is a faith school and to remove transport does feel discriminative. Consideration of SEND/autistic/ADHD/mental health conditions and the impact the removal of school buses will have on them, needs to be considered.

Increased truancy and decline in punctuality.

Children's education and safety are the main areas to address. The removal of a reliable, safe bus route exposing vulnerable children could lead to safeguarding issues and also impact on children's education. Who will be accountable for his?"

- 1.5 Any additional signatures received to the petitions after the publication of this report will be reported orally at the meeting.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 A Budget Setting report is scheduled to be considered by Cabinet and Full Council on 20th February 2024 and the petitions and the issues raised in these petitions and the wider consultation will be taken into account as part of this decision-making. This is the recommended option.
- 2.2 The other option will be to "do nothing" which is not recommended.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

The proposals relating to the Budget Setting report 2024/25 have been the subject of an extensive 8-week consultation period that ends on 7th February 2024. The outcome of the consultation will be included in the final Budget Setting report 2024/25 to be considered by Cabinet and Council on 20th February 2024.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

The Cabinet Member is considering the petitions during the consultation period in order that the issues raised can be fed into the consultation process and considered alongside other responses when Cabinet and Council make their final recommendations on the Council's budget. Any decisions relating to the Budget Setting report will be implemented in the 2024/25 financial year.

5. Comments from Chief Operating Officer (Section 151 Officer) and Chief Legal Officer

5.1. Financial Implications

There are no implications specific to the recommendations in this report. The cost savings identified in the pre-budget report in relation to both of these items are as follows:

War Memorial Park – Parking Charges	£150k
Ceasing of Bus Services	£128k (rising to £220k in a full year)

5.2. Legal Implications

The petitions are being considered in line with the Council's Petition Scheme.

The proposals in the final Budget setting report are required to meet the Council's statutory obligations in relation to setting a balanced 2024/25 budget. This includes the duty to report to the Council on the robustness of the estimates provided and the adequacy of the financial reserves in place. Section 31A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 refer.

6. Other implications

6.1. How will this contribute to the One Coventry Plan?

<https://www.coventry.gov.uk/strategies-plans-policies/one-coventry-plan>

Not applicable to this report. The implications of the final recommendations will be contained in the Budget Setting Report 2024-25.

6.2 How is risk being managed?

Not applicable to this report. The implications of the final recommendations will be contained in the Budget Setting Report 2024-25.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

Not applicable to this report. The implications of the final recommendations will be contained in the Budget Setting Report 2024-25.

6.4 Equalities / EIA?

EIAs for all of the proposals contained in the Pre-Budget Report for 2024/25 were undertaken and attached as appendices to that report.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) climate change and the environment?

Not applicable to this report. The implications of the final recommendations will be contained in the Budget Setting Report 2024-25.

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

Not applicable to this report. The implications of the final recommendations will be contained in the Budget Setting Report 2024-25.

Report author:

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Enquiries should be directed to the above person

Contributor/approver name	Title	Service Area	Date doc sent out	Date response received or approved
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Adrian West	Head of Governance	Law and Governance	19/01/24	19/01/24
Oluremi Aremu	Head of Legal and Procurement	Law and Governance	19/01/24	24/01/24
Names of approvers for submission: (officers and members)				
Phil Helm	Head of Corporate Finance	Finance	23/01/24	23/01/24
Julie Newman	Chief Legal Officer	-	19/01/24	23/01/24
Councillor R Brown	Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources	-	24/01/24	26/01/24

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