

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Council held at 2.00 pm on Tuesday, 9 July 2024

Present:

Members: Councillor M Mutton (Chair)

Councillor S Agboola	Councillor J Lepoidevin
Councillor N Akhtar	Councillor G Lewis
Councillor P Akhtar	Councillor G Lloyd
Councillor M Ali	Councillor P Male
Councillor R Bailey	Councillor K Maton
Councillor L Bigham	Councillor J McNicholas
Councillor J Birdi	Councillor C Miks
Councillor R Brown	Councillor S Nazir
Councillor K Caan	Councillor J O'Boyle
Councillor B Christopher	Councillor E M Reeves
Councillor G Duggins	Councillor G Ridley
Councillor J Gardiner	Councillor K Sandhu
Councillor S Gray	Councillor T Sawdon
Councillor L Harvard	Councillor B Singh
Councillor P Hetherington	Councillor R Singh
Councillor T Jandu	Councillor R Thay
Councillor A Jobbar	Councillor CE Thomas
Councillor A Kaur	Councillor D Toulson
Councillor L Kelly	Councillor A Tucker
Councillor T Khan	Councillor D Welsh
Councillor R Lakha	
Councillor M Lapsa	

Honorary Alderman

Apologies: Councillor F Abbott, J Blundell, G Hayre, M Heaven,
A Hopkins, J Innes, AS Khan, R Lancaster, B Mosterman and
P Seaman

Public Business

16. Minutes of the Meetings held on 19 March, 16 May and 25 June 2024

The Minutes of the Meetings held on 19 March, 16 May and 25 June 2024 were agreed and signed as true records.

17. Correspondence and Announcements of the Lord Mayor

Councillor T Sawdon

The Lord Mayor referred to Councillor T Sawdon's 50 years of service as an elected Member.

A Motion without Notice was moved by Councillor G Duggins, seconded by Councillor G Ridley and supported by Councillor S Gray that:

“The warmest thanks of the Council are due and are hereby given to Councillor Tim Sawdon in recognition of his 50 years’ of public service as an elected Member of Coventry City Council and for his dedication to duties during that time and that a copy of this resolution, under the Common Seal, be presented to him”.

RESOLVED that the above Motion be unanimously agreed.

18. **Petitions**

RESOLVED that the following petitions be referred to the appropriate Cabinet Member:

- (a) Request for residents parking scheme to stop others parking in Hastings Road by making it residents permit parking only – 62 signatures, presented by Councillor A Kaur.**
- (b) Request for double yellow lines at the junction of Wingrave Close and Jardina Drive – 79 signatures presented by Councillor T Jandu.**

19. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

20. **Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge 2024 - Outcome of Peer Challenge**

Further to Minute 3 of the Cabinet, the City Council considered a report of the Chief Executive which outlined the outcome of the Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge held in Coventry in January 2024.

The LGA Corporate Peer Challenge feedback report was provided as an appendix to the report (Appendix A). The report provided a detailed response on findings, including a number of observations and suggestions within the main section of the report.

In summary, during the course of the Peer Challenge week, the Peer Team found that:

- Coventry is an ambitious place that is on the up, with examples of innovation and a willingness to embrace change, whilst not forgetting its heritage.
- Coventry is a well-run Council, with strong officer and political leadership.
- Employees and elected members are passionate and proud about what they do.
- The Council should take further steps to improve diversity across the organisation at all levels
- There is recognition that tough times are still ahead, but people are up for the challenge

- There is a need to ensure that the transformation programme is adequately resourced to enable delivery at pace
- The Council should use the established performance framework to drive improvement and bring greater prioritisation and visibility to areas that require improvement
- Partners and residents are eager to step up and become more involved at an earlier and more strategic level
- There is a need to review our external and internal communications and engagement strategy

There are some areas where further work is suggested by the Peer Team. These areas are described in the ‘key recommendations’ section of the LGA’s feedback report.

Following the Peer Challenge in January, the Council has reflected on the Peer Team’s findings in order to determine its response to the recommendations that have been made. The Council response was provided as a further appendix to the report (Appendix B). The report indicated that the Council are embracing the opportunity to reflect on the feedback and were committed to making improvements where it can through organisational ownership.

Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee considered the report on 10 June 2024 and resolved to add Major Cultural Events, Recruitment and Retention and CCC Transformation Programme onto their work programme for consideration during 2024/25.

RESOLVED that, the Council having considered the contents of the report and the Council response document, supports the work to deliver the actions outlined in Appendix B in response to Recommendations made by the Peer Team.

21. **Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee Annual Report 2023-24**

Further to Minute 5 of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee, the City Council received a briefing note of the Director of Law and Governance, appended to which was the Scrutiny Annual Report 2023/24. The Constitution requires that Scrutiny report annually to inform Council of its work.

RESOLVED that the Council receives and notes the Scrutiny Annual Report.

22. **Annual Report of the Ethics Committee 2023-24**

Further to Minute 4 of the Ethics Committee, the City Council considered a report of the Director of Law and Governance which set out the work of the Committee over the last Municipal Year. In particular, the report detailed:

- Update on the Online Safety Bill (now enacted Online Safety Act 2023)
- The Committee’s review of the Local Code of Corporate Governance
- Civility in Public Life, Intimidation in Public and Digital Citizenship
- Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Report

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. The Committee has also received an update on Members training during 2023/24 and supported the continuing delivery of the Members Training and Development Strategy, including actions for 2024/25.

RESOLVED that the City Council notes the Annual Report of the Ethics Committee for 2023/24.

23. **Revenue and Capital Outturn 2023/24**

Further to Minute 8 of the Cabinet, the City Council considered a report of the Director of Finance and Resources which outlined the final revenue and capital outturn position for 2023/24 and reviewed treasury management activity and 2023/24 Prudential Indicators reported under the Prudential Code for Capital Finance. Appendices to the report provided a detailed breakdown of Directorate Revenue Variations, Capital Programme Changes and Analysis of Rescheduling, and Prudential Indicators.

The overall financial position included the following headline items:

- An overspend of £1.8m, balanced by a contribution from unearmarked reserves.
- Capital Programme expenditure of £115.3m
- A reduction in the level of available Council revenue reserves from £128m to £118m

Further detail within the overall position included:

- An overspend of £4.9m in Adults' Social Care reflecting an increased number of high-cost complex cases.
- An overspend of £4.7m within Streetscene and Regulatory Services representing a reduction in income generation in several areas such as planning applications, car parking in parks and bereavement services as well and pressures within urban forestry due to remedial works on trees. A significant proportion of this pressure was within Waste & Fleet services relating to implementation of HSE recommendations, costs of increased tonnages and increased gate fees, and deficits on planned income in both Commercial Waste and Passenger Transport.
- An overspend of £2.8m within Childrens' Services reflecting high placement costs and staffing pressures in Help & Protection (Area Teams) due to high levels of cases which required additional workers and agency staff.
- An overspend of £2.5m on Housing & Homelessness due to an increase in people seeking support and being placed in temporary accommodation (TA), combined with an increase in TA fees.
- An underspend of £1.8m in Education & Skills due to management of vacancies within Customer Services, alongside other efficiencies and the utilisation of grant income and earmarked reserves.
- An overspend of £1.4m on Business, Investment & Culture represented underachievement of sponsorship income and reduced grant from ERDF as

well as holding costs for the City Centre Cultural Gateway due to slipped project implementation timescales.

- An overspend of £1.4m on Transport & Highways relates to increased costs in highways maintenance to address highways defects, as well as continuing high costs of energy for street lighting.
- The service had experienced pressures in highways maintenance due to the cost of addressing highways defects and income pressures resulting from sickness and recruitment challenges. In addition, the continuing high cost of energy had resulted in pressures in street lighting. These pressures had been partially offset by a recovery in car park income.
- A net underspend of £12.4m within central budgets, included higher dividend income from Council owned companies, interest income from loans, higher than budgeted investment income, and distribution of Business rates Levy Account Surplus.

The underlying revenue position had improved by £6.7m since Quarter 3 when an overspend of £8.5m was forecast. The majority of the improved position related to increased one-off income 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. £1.8m of this had been used to balance the position at the end of 2023/24. Although the Covid crisis was no longer a significant threat to the Councils service delivery and financial position, the cost-of-living crisis and high levels of inflation had had tangible impacts on demand for both Childrens, Adults and Housing services. The complexity of need, support required and sufficiency of the external market to provide for this had directly impacted the Councils financial outturn reported up to 31st March 2024 and would be an ongoing financial challenge in 2024/25.

RESOLVED that the City Council:

- 1. Approves the reserve contribution of £1.8m for the purposes described in section 5.1 of the report.**
- 2. Approves the resource switch of £5.9m of capital projects funded by revenue to capital receipts, to create the Financial Risk Contingency within Reserves, referenced in Section 2.2.3 of the report.**

24. Statement of Assurance (Director of Children's Services)

The City Council considered a report of the Director of Law which informed Council of the arrangements being put in place following the departure of the statutory Director of Children's Services (DCS) and provided a Statement of Assurance as to how the statutory responsibility of the Director of Children's Services under Section 18 of the Children Act 2004 would continue to be met.

The DCS is appointed for the purposes of discharging the education and children's social services functions of the local authority. The functions for which they are

responsible are set out in section 18(2) of the Children Act 2004. This included (but was not limited to) responsibility for children and young people receiving education or children’s social care services in their area and all children looked after by the local authority or in custody (regardless of where they are placed).

RESOLVED that Council:

- 1. Notes the report and Statement of Assurance.**
- 2. Delegates authority to the Director of Law and Governance to amend the Council’s Constitution to reflect the changes outlined.**

25. Annual Report from the Leader to the Council on Key Decisions made under Special Urgency Provisions 2023/2024

The City Council noted a report of the Leader which reported on Key Decisions made in the previous year where the Special Urgency provisions were used. This applied where it was not practicable to give notice at least 5 clear days in advance of a Key Decision being made.

The Leader reported that there were no such cases during the 2023/2024 Municipal Year.

26. Acceptance of Grant Funding - Household Support Fund

The City Council noted a report of the Chief Executive which informed Council of a decision undertaken by the Chief Executive and the Director of Finance and Resources (Section 151 Officer) in accordance with the Financial Procedure Rules as set out in the Constitution and following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities, the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources and the Leader of the Council to accept and allocate a grant of £3,224,222.30 from the Department for Work and Pensions (“DWP”) pursuant to the grant scheme known as the Household Support Fund (HSF). Due to the timescales involved, this decision was being reported to Council retrospectively.

27. Question Time

Councillors Hetherton, McNicholas and Sandhu 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:

	Questions asked by	Question put to	Subject matter
1	Councillor Ridley	Councillor Hetherton	Uptake of brown lidded bins
2	Councillor Ridley	Councillor P Akhtar	Anti-social behaviour at Godiva festival
3	Councillor Thomas	Councillor Caan	Launch of the vaccine superheroes for all schools, including the

			special education needs schools
4	Councillor Male	Councillor Welsh	Implications for Coventry with the reintroduction of compulsory housing targets and building on greenbelt land
5	Councillor Male	Councillor P Akhtar	Explanation of failure to renew current Public Space Protection Order and residents' concerns about e-bikes and alcohol drinking in the city centre
7	Councillor Thomas	Councillor P Akhtar	Public Space Protection Order

28. **Statements**

The Leader, Councillor G Duggins, made a Statement in respect of a number of matters including the outcome of the General Election, prospective candidates and elected MPs, Becky Gittins, work of the election team, Mayor of Combined Authority, Police and Crime Commissioner, Armed Forces Day, 80th Anniversary of D Day, 25th Anniversary of Godiva Festival, Motofest, New Director of Childrens Services, Kirston Nelson, average speed cameras and partnership working with the Police and Coventry City Football Team

Councillor G Ridley, Leader of the Conservative Group, responded to the Statement.

Councillor S Gray, Leader of the Green Group, responded to the Statement.

The Leader made a short reply.

29. **Debates - Proposed Increases in Bus Fares**

The following debate was moved by Councillor P Male and seconded by Councillor J Lepoidevin:

“This Council calls upon WMCA to review its proposed increase to bus fares that will significantly impact upon low income, working families.”

The following amendment was moved by Councillor J O’Boyle, seconded by Councillor P Akhtar and carried:

After the words “to review its” delete the words “proposed increase to” and insert “its relationship with” then after the word “ bus” delete the rest of the Motion and insert “operators with a view to franchising which will see the Combined Authority set fares, routes and frequency in line with customer need and demand thus supporting the region, Coventry and the travelling public.”

The amended Motion now to read:

“This Council calls upon the WMCA to review its relationship with bus operators with a view to franchising which will see the Combined Authority set fares, routes and frequency in line with customer need and demand, thus supporting the region, Coventry and the travelling public.”

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

(Meeting closed at 4.35 pm)