



Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1)

Time and Date

10.00 am on Wednesday, 12th February, 2025

Place

Diamond Rooms 1 and 2 - Council House

Public Business

1. **Apologies and Substitutions**
2. **Declarations of Interest**
3. **Minutes** (Pages 3 - 8)
 - (a) To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 8th January 2025
 - (b) Matters Arising
4. **Commercial Investments and Income Generation** (Pages 9 - 28)

Briefing Note of the Director of Finance and Resources.
5. **Procurement Process** (Pages 29 - 42)

Briefing note of the Director of Finance and Resources.
6. **Recruitment and Retention** (Pages 43 - 54)

Briefing Note of the Director of Finance and Resources.
7. **Work Programme and Outstanding Issues** (Pages 55 - 58)

Report of the Scrutiny Co-ordinator
8. **Any other items of Public Business**

Any other items of public business which the Chair decides to take as matters of urgency because of the special circumstances involved

Private Business

Nil

Julie Newman, Director of Law and Governance, Council House, Coventry

Tuesday, 4 February 2025

Note: The person to contact about the agenda and documents for this meeting is Carolyn Sinclair carolyn.sinclair@coventry.gov.uk

Membership: Councillors J Blundell, R Brown (By Invitation), P Hetheron (By Invitation), J Innes, A Jobbar (Chair), R Lakha, G Lewis, P Male, J McNicholas, D Toulson and A Tucker

By Invitation: Councillors R Brown and P Hetheron

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>

Carolyn Sinclair
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Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1) held
at 10.00 am on Wednesday, 8 January 2025

Present:

Members: Councillor A Jobbar (Chair)
 Councillor J Blundell
 Councillor R Lakha
 Councillor G Lewis
 Councillor P Male
 Councillor J McNicholas
 Councillor D Toulson

Employees
(by Service area):

Finance and Resources B Hastie (Director of Finance and Resources), P Helm,
 T Pinks

Law and Governance E Jones, M Salmon

Apologies: Councillor R Brown - Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance
 and Resources (invited)
 Councillor J Innes
 Councillor A Tucker

Public Business

25. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

26. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 8th November 2024 were agreed and signed as a true record.

Further to minute 22/24 headed 'Agency Staff and Staff Sickness – Task and Finish Group', the Board noted that the first meeting of the Task and Finish Group was held on 17th December 2024 and the next meeting would be held on 3rd February 2025.

27. Consultation on Spending, Saving and Council Tax Proposals for 2025/26

The Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1) received a briefing note of the Director of Finance and Resources that provided the Board with information about the City Council's public consultation on revenue spending and savings proposals for 2025/26 and future financial years together with the approach in relation to Council Tax and the Adult Social Care precept, to enable them to make any comments as part of the consultation process.

At the meeting of Cabinet on 10th December 2024 (their minute 44/24 referred), approval was given for a seven-week public consultation period on revenue spending and savings proposals for 2025/26 and future financial years together with the approach in relation to Council Tax and the Adult Social Care precept. The consultation would close on 28th January 2025.

The report considered by Cabinet, together with Appendices, were attached as an appendix to the briefing note and provided: Appendix 1 - the Pre-Budget Proposals and Financial Position; Appendix 2 - the Council Tax Support Scheme; Appendix 3 – the Cumulative Equality Impact Assessment; and Appendix 4 - the Equality Impact Assessment on Council Tax Support 25-26.

The Consultation process was supported by further information on the Council's website.

In considering the briefing note, the Board questioned officers, received responses and discussed matters as summarised below:

- Provisional settlement awarded which would change the gap in the Council's finances. The detail of the award was currently being worked through and the final situation not yet known.
- The inclusion of Care Leavers, who had protected characteristics, in the Budget Proposals Equality Impact Assessment
- The inclusion of Voluntary Organisations and the Community Sector, in the Council Tax Support Equality Impact Assessment.
- Settlements were a 2-stage process - provisional figure from Government in December who then entered a consultation process, following which it moves to stage 2. The figures were very unlikely to change between the 2 stages.
- Currently everyone had to pay at least 20 per cent Council Tax, the proposal would mean that the maximum Council Tax Support for working age households could be reduced from 80 per cent to 75 per cent.
- Council Tax Support was means tested to assess the level of discount to be applied dependant on circumstances.
- Consideration be given to those in the £0-£15 category, who appear to be disproportionately affected by the proposed Council Tax Support relief.
- Consideration be given to the division of categories into those with and those without children, to take into consideration the additional costs of living for those with dependants.
- Consideration to be given to how the public were made aware of the support that was available to them in respect of discretionary payment relief.
- Details of the criteria set for the categories of protected characteristics.
- Council Tax collection rate assumption made, and amount expected from a particular cohort adjusted.
- The scheme for people of pension age was administered by local authorities but under a national legislative framework with no local discretion.
- Without the provision of a banded Council Tax Scheme (broad income bands), an individual's Council Tax could change at any time, as frequently as monthly.

- Any savings proposals would be implemented from 1st April 2025.
- There were 22 proposals of which 7 were listed as impact unknown. The impact of these would be considered on a case-by-case basis until the outcome of the proposal was determined.
- Planning process for implementation of some proposals – e.g. reduction of senior officer posts could take 6-12 months to implement, in order to ensure due process was followed.
- The Council Tax Support Scheme was a set claims process - applications would need to be made requesting a reduction, with evidence of eligibility. Those in receipt of certain benefits would automatically qualify.
- Impact of the proposals – report to be submitted to the Board in 12-months' time to enable them to review the outcomes and impacts of the implementation of the proposals.

The Board requested that the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources be requested to give consideration to how the public were made aware of the support that was available to them in respect of discretionary payment relief. The also requested that, following the consultation and subsequent implementation of the Spending, Saving and Council Tax Proposals, a report on the outcomes and impacts of implementation be submitted to the Board in 12 months' time.

The Board further requested that the issue of Care Leavers, who had protected characteristics, be referred to the Equalities Team requesting consideration of the inclusion of this category in the Budget Proposals Equality Impact Assessment.

And that the following matters be referred to the Head of Revenue and Benefits in respect of the proposed changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme:

- 1) Consideration be given to those in the £0-£15 category, who appear to be disproportionately affected by the proposed payment increase.
- 2) Consideration be given to the division of categories into those with and those without children, to take into consideration the additional cost of living for those with dependants.
- 3) Members of the Board be provided with information on the criteria for the categories of protected characteristics.
- 4) Consideration be given to the inclusion of Voluntary Organisations and the Community Sector, in the Council Tax Support Equality Impact Assessment.

RESOLVED that the Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1):

- 1) **Recommends that the Cabinet Member be requested to give consideration to how the public are made aware of the support that is available to them in respect of discretionary payment relief.**
- 2) **Following the consultation and subsequent implementation of the Spending, Saving and Council Tax Proposals, requests that a report on the outcomes and impacts of implementation be submitted to the Board in 12 months' time.**

28. **(Draft) Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 - 2027/28**

The Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1) received a briefing note of the Director of Finance and Resources that sought the Board's views on the content of the (Draft) Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2025-2028, attached as an Appendix to the briefing note.

At the meeting of Cabinet on 10th December 2024 (their minute 44/24 referred), approval was given for a seven-week public consultation period on revenue spending and savings proposals for 2025/26 (Pre-Budget Report 25/26) and future financial years together with the approach in relation to Council Tax and the Adult Social Care precept.

Following the consultation and details on the final settlement for Local Government, officers would consult Members the outcome of which would result in final Budget and Council Tax Setting Reports and associated recommendations being considered by Cabinet and Council on 25th February 2025. An updated Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) would be attached to the final Budget Report which would set out the position for the current year, and also a medium-term three-year planning view of the Councils Finances.

The MTFS performed a number of functions, setting out initially the policy assumptions and financial management framework that underpinned the wider Strategy. The Strategy described the Council's operating environment from a cost and resources perspective and set out to explain the framework for how the Council would balance its short to medium-term budget positions.

As with the last couple of years, it had not been possible to consider this 2025 – 2028 MTFS for longer than a single year with any degree of confidence, due to the last couple of Local Government settlements only considering the following year and had not been able to provide multi-year certainty. Additionally, the cost environment for all Local Authority Services, but particularly Social Care Services, had been very volatile, reflecting the inflationary environment and the resulting market conditions.

These resourcing and costing uncertainties restricted the Council from being able to produce a medium-term view with any degree of confidence however, the new Government had indicated that they intended to both fundamentally review the funding regime, and seek to provide multiyear funding settlements, details of which will be received in the new year. These changes would need to be reflected in future versions of the Council MTFS.

The Draft Strategy was an early draft of the document that would be appended to the final Budget Report, subject to further information that may come to light as part of the provisional and final settlements for Local Government and the local impact for Coventry City Council.

In considering the briefing note, the Board questioned officers, received responses and discussed matters as summarised below:

- The settlement for Local Government for year one had already been underwritten, with subsequent awards data driven.
- Assumptions had been made and set out in Pre-Budget Report in respect of savings that would help to close the financial gap.

- The Authority had to understand the settlement and work through the detail, this would include consideration of the costs of schemes and the assessment of liabilities.
- The settlement together with the budget proposals would together assist in closing the financial gap. Budget cuts still needed to be considered and implemented.
- The Government had pledged multi-year settlements, and a consultation was currently underway on this.
- Flexibility on the spending of the additional settlement once all costs were met and there was still a surplus – Adult Social Care funding was prescriptive, Childrens Prevention was a new element which was unclear at this stage. Need to make an assessment for final budget.
- Need to work with voluntary organisations as effectively as possible, however the Council needs to reassess any subsidy or support provided from time to time and can mean that cuts to those provisions were proposed.
- Each voluntary organisation was considered on a case-by-case basis as services needed to be cost effective. The costs of running, providing a service, and meeting its obligations to customers, needed to be balanced and covered by the organisation and its users without subsidies from the Taxpayer/cost to the Council.
- Prices of voluntary organisations services would need to be reviewed with statutory obligations managed appropriately.
- The Council used to apply a flat line across the board regarding fees and charges for discretionary services, but now need to apply a rule that each service could increase their charges as they needed. The Council couldn't make a loss in those service areas, so need to get the fees and charges right to cover everything without impacting on the Authority's budget.

RESOLVED that the Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1) agrees with the direction of travel in respect of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 – 2027/28.

29. Work Programme 2024/25

The Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1) received a report of the Scrutiny Co-ordinator that detailed issues on the Work Programme for meetings of the Board for 2024/25.

RESOLVED that the Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1):

- 1) Notes the issues on the Board's Work Programme for 2024/25.**
- 2) Agrees that an additional item be added to the Programme 'Spending, Saving and Council Tax proposals – Report to Review the Outcomes and Impacts Following 12-months of Implementation'.**

30. Any other items of Public Business

There were no other items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 11.45 am)



Coventry City Council

Briefing note

To: Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board 1

Date: 12th February 2025

Subject: Commercial Investments and Income Generation

1 Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 This Briefing Note sets out the Council's approach to making commercial investment decisions, the statutory framework that the Council needs to work within and how decisions are made, including the policy basis. The note outlines the content of the Council's Commercial Investment Strategy including details about the overall commercial portfolio and performance.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1) is recommended to:
1. Note the contents of the Briefing Note, presentation and Appendix 1

3 Background and Information

Policy and Regulatory Background

- 3.1 The One Coventry Plan provides the broad policy basis for the Council's service delivery including its approach to investment activity. The Plan's three delivery priorities are: increasing the economic prosperity of the city and region; improving outcomes and tackling inequalities within our communities and; tackling the causes and consequences of climate change. Fundamental to this note is that one of the two enabling priorities identified within the Plan is the continued financial sustainability of the Council.
- 3.2 Like many local authorities across the country the Council's medium term financial position forecasts revenue funding gaps. The 2024/25 Budget Report (February 2024) identified gaps of £14m and £15m for 2025/26 and 2026/27 whilst the most recent monitoring report to Cabinet (December 2024) highlighted further budgetary pressure which indicates a worsening position both for the Council and the wider sector.
- 3.3 Reduced real term funding and the ongoing need to balance budgets has, for many years, led councils to adopt commercial approaches to improve their financial positions, and maintain service quality as far as possible. This activity can take many forms including the following, listed notionally in the order of perceived risk:
- charging for local services to citizens and service users,
 - providing and charging for traded services as an extension to in-house provision,
 - acting as a landlord for a commercial property portfolio,

- providing loan finance to local organisations,
- establishing/acquiring external companies to complement the delivery of strategic objectives and,
- commercialisation through more speculative capital investment outside of municipal boundaries or on a disproportionately large scale to deliver financial returns.

The Council undertakes all these activities to a greater or lesser degree with the exception of the final one. Charges to local citizens and service users and for traded services is not covered in detail in this report but a list of income categories in relation to these activities is summarised at Appendix 1.

- 3.4 Recent years have witnessed increased activity nationally of a more speculative nature (most related to the final bullet above) and a small but not insignificant number of financial failures as a result. Councils such as Thurrock, Slough and Woking amongst others have suffered very large financial losses which have led to the issuing of a s114 Notice.
- 3.5 A s114 Notice is an indication that expenditure of an authority will exceed resources for the year, & means that no new expenditure is permitted, except for that to fund statutory services. The current financial climate within which Local Authorities operate means that the risk from normal operations is heightened, such that resilience to shocks is reduced.
- 3.6 There was already a significant regulatory and advisory framework around council financial activity in areas such as borrowing (the Prudential Code), treasury management and investments, Minimum Revenue Provision, the Public Works Loans Board (PWLB) and capital strategies. In response to the sector failures referred to above, the Government increased intervention and regulation further aimed at reducing the risk of future such occurrences. This has led to the introduction of commercial investment strategies, revisions to the Prudential Code (requiring proportionality), and changes to rules for borrowing from the PWLB (preventing investing primarily for yield).

The Council's Approach

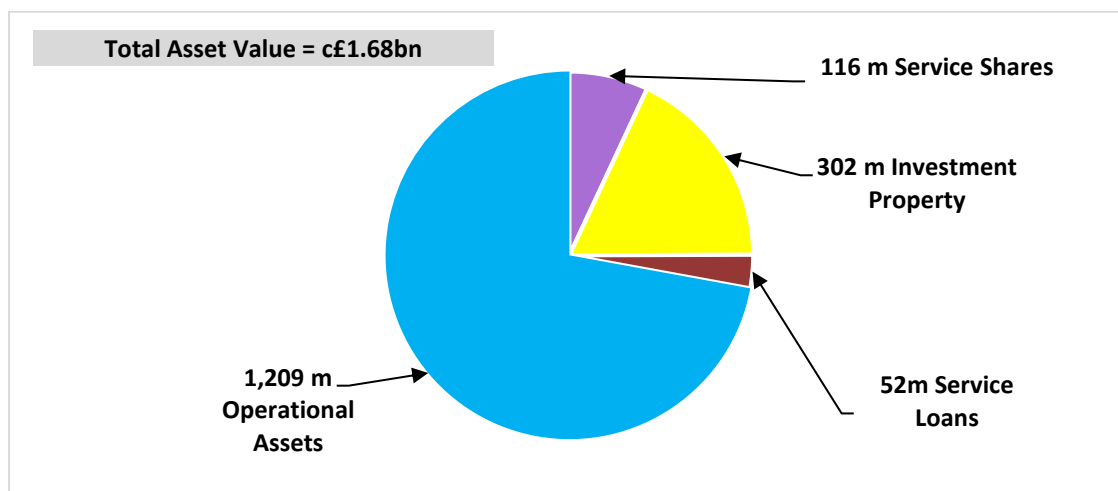
- 3.7 Whilst it is difficult to definitively benchmark it is likely that the Council is broadly 'within the pack' regarding income it generates from charging for discretionary and traded services. These are activities that occur mostly as a result of 'business as usual' activity.
- 3.8 Coventry holds a relatively large commercial property portfolio compared with other councils, and the Council has been active in terms of providing external loan finance over a number of years and has a variety of company shareholdings compared with similar authorities. It is these types of activity that have a higher risk profile and have prompted the interest of regulators in recent years.
- 3.9 Like other councils, the Council's approach has been informed by the need for it to generate new income streams to help offset reduced government resources over many years to support its budgetary position and protect public services. However, at a local level, each commercial intervention made by the Council has also had strong policy and/or service justification. These activities have a direct impact on the Council's balance sheet and are therefore measured periodically. This measurement is helpful in establishing whether the activity is proportionate in comparison to the Council's overall asset base and the scale of overall risk of each activity type. This is explored in the following section.

The Council's Commercial Activity

- 3.10 The following chart shows the latest estimate of the key categories of long-term assets on the Council's balance sheet. The vast majority (72%) of is held in the form of operational

assets, essentially land, buildings and infrastructure owned by the Council from which services are delivered. 18% is represented by investment property which generates a commercial rent and whose valuation is essentially driven by that rent. The remaining 10% is held in the form of long-term loans to third parties and shares in external companies.

Figure 1: Long-Term Assets at 31 March 2024



3.11 Three of the categories above also represent a source of revenue income to the Council on an ongoing basis. The latest financial returns for 2023/24 are shown in the table below and represent an overall 5.7% rate of return on asset values as at March 2024.

Table 1: Income received Per Investment Category

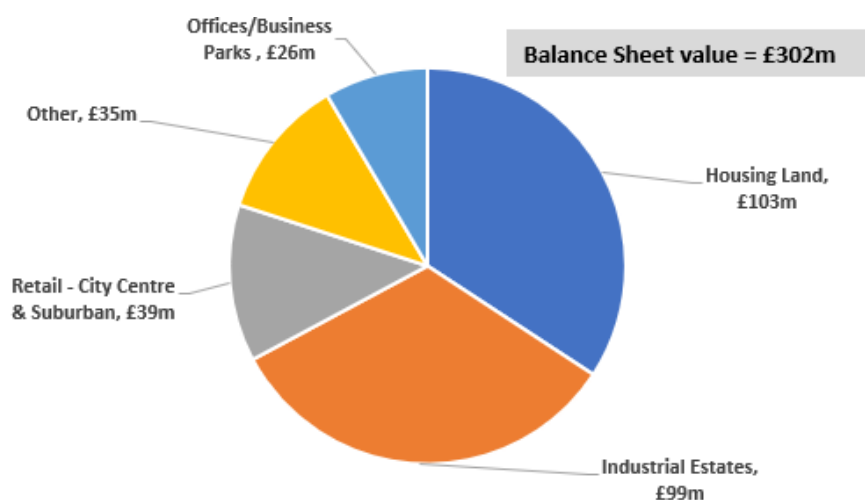
Investment Category	2021/22 Income £000	2022/23 Income £000	2023/4 Income £000
Service Loans (interest received)	(1,637)	(1,554)	(1,665)
Service Shares (Dividends)	(9,650)	(8,200)	(12,372)
Investment Property (Rental income net of voids & service charges)	(11,509)	(13,768)	(12,597)
Total Commercial Income	(22,796)	(23,522)	(26,634)
Return on Investment	4.9%	4.7%	5.7%

3.12 It is important to recognise some of the risks that are involved in owning these types of assets. One set of risks can be categorised as capital value (or price) risks. An organisation to which the council has provided a loan might not pay the Council the full amount owed, or the value of an investment, be they shares or property, could fall in certain circumstances. This was witnessed during the Covid pandemic but can apply equally during other periods of financial downturn or in relation to specific circumstances such as the individual trading performance of a company in which shares are held.

3.13 A further set of risks can be categorised as income risk, whereby assets may return less income in the form of interest, dividends or rent. If any of these assets have been purchased by borrowing, then additional risk might arise as the Council would need to continue to repay borrowing despite reduced income received. For an organisation like the Council, there can be reputational risk due to their position in the public eye and the fact that transactions involve public money. The bar set for publicly funded organisations is often much higher than for private organisations in this respect.

3.14 The following sections look at some of the asset categories in more detail.

Figure 2: Investment Property at 31 March 2024



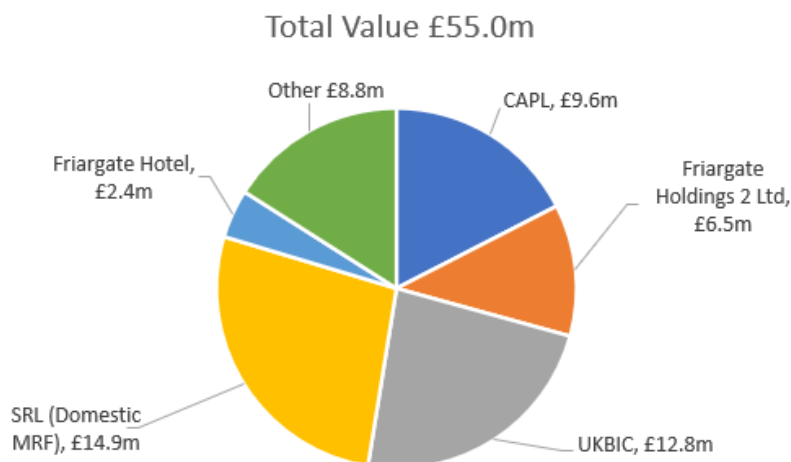
3.15 The Council's investment property represents the largest share of its commercial assets (£302m in Fig. 1 above). The values are subject to revaluation each year. The balance sheet value and the £12.6m revenue income stream achieved in 2023/24 identify it as the single largest area of risk for the Council's commercial assets.

3.16 There are however good reasons why this is not regarded as a significant financial risk. Most assets have been owned for many years and purchased by means other than borrowing, such that the Council is not required to meet loan repayment costs. The overall value of investments, whilst substantial, is not disproportionate to the size of the Council's balance sheet and reflects ownership over many years rather than the result of extraordinary recent intervention. Additionally, assets are spread across a range of classes, the largest representing a third of the overall value. This means that a financial shock which had a disproportionate impact on a particular class might have a limited impact elsewhere within the portfolio. In addition, over the medium to long-term, historical patterns show that property is a reliable investment with a strong likelihood of values increasing.

Service Loans

3.17 Table 2 overleaf sets out approved loans, the large majority of these over the past c10 years.

Table 2: External Loans (Resources Invested or Committed) 2023/24



Major Loans	Actual 31/03/2024 £m	Commitments £m	Total £m
Coombe	7.7	1.9	9.6
Friargate	6.5	0.0	6.5
UKBIC	12.4	0.4	12.8
CWRT	2.8	0.0	2.8
MRF - Domestic	14.4	0.5	14.9
Friargate Hotel	2.4	0.0	2.4
Other	6.0	0.0	6.0
Total	52.2	2.8	55.0

3.18 These loans are constructed to deliver commercial returns, & the Council is bound by Subsidy Control regulations requiring loans to have market interest rates. Whilst the Council is currently receiving income (interest) of £1.7m in 23/24, this is low compared to the Council's budget and is not considered a primary motivation for making such loans. Instead, it is of paramount importance that loans are aligned to the Council's existing policy priorities and delivery of service objectives and any decision by the Council to approve such loans is driven by this as the primary motivation.

3.19 These loans are of course at risk of default and potentially write off. Decisions to make loans and relevant interest rates, are subject to consideration of risks and mitigations (e.g. security) in place. The overall level of loans is significant, however individual loans are low relative to the overall size of the Council. The more significant ones are also backed by physical assets or indemnities which are used as security against the risk of default.

Company Shares

3.20 The Council's shares in table 3 below are valued at c£116m as at 31st March 2024, reflecting fair market value, based on company financial activity & performance.

Component parts of Coventry Municipal Holdings Ltd Group have been disaggregated for the purpose of this note.

Table 3: Company Shareholding Values

Shares	Resource Invested £m	Balance Sheet Value £m
Birmingham Airport Holdings Ltd	11.7	36.7
The Coventry and Solihull Waste Disposal Company Ltd	0.0	68.0
Tom White Waste Ltd	14.9	6.6
Coventry Municipal Holdings Ltd	0.0	0.1
Coventry Regeneration Ltd	0.0	0.0
Coventry Technical Resources Ltd	0.0	2.8
Coombe Abbey Park Ltd	9.1	0.1
Friargate Joint Venture Project Limited	10.5	2.2
UK Battery Industrialisation Centre Ltd*	0.0	0.0
Sherbourne Recycling Ltd	0.2	0.0
Total	46.3	116.5

*Excludes UKBIC £5.1m which represents a technical classification of investment rather than cash

- 3.21 The table also shows the initial amount invested by the Council. The difference between this and the Balance Sheet Value is the result of regular market revaluations undertaken which can increase or decrease the assessed value of individual companies and is not linked to the initial acquisition price.
- 3.22 All the 23/24 dividend income shown in Table 1 is from CSWDC. Dividends have been received previously from Tom White Waste Ltd, CAPL and Birmingham Airport, all of which were affected significantly by the covid pandemic, & more recently the high inflation and cost of living crisis affecting the economy. From a purely financial perspective, the diversity of shareholdings, and indeed the wider commercial portfolio is designed to protect the Council from a concentration of dividends or income from one source, although the degree of financial shock from Covid was clearly not one that could have been easily anticipated. Expectations are that some of the other companies will return to profitability in the near future starting with Birmingham Airport and SRL in the first instance.
- 3.23 It is important to note that the Council's acquisition or establishment of each company is aligned to its policy and service objectives. Between them CSWDC, TWW, & SRL provide strong synergies with the Council's waste collection, management and recycling responsibilities, protect the Council from some of the volatility in waste markets, provide the opportunity to rationalise some of the costs of waste management and enable the production of a local source of green energy from waste. CAPL provides strong synergies with the existing country park facilities at Coombe and protect existing rental income streams. The Friargate JV Project enables the Council to manage a long-term regeneration plan within the Friargate District.

3.24 Notwithstanding that some of these companies have lost value compared with the resources initially invested, the Council's shareholdings should be viewed as long-term assets. The Council would only seek to dispose of such assets and realise their value if this was seen to be advantageous from both a financial and policy perspective. In this sense the current balance sheet valuations are not deemed to be a significant factor in terms of the Council's day-to-day financial position.

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Appendix 1: 2024/25 Fees and Charges

Analysis	2024/25 Budget £m
Fees - Social Care	(22.4)
Fees - Housing	(6.2)
Fees - Bereavement Services	(5.4)
Fees - Corporate Services	(5.0)
Fees - Car Parks	(4.6)
Fees - Parking Enforcement	(4.0)
Fees - Waste	(3.8)
Misc. Sales income	(3.0)
Fees - Planning	(2.7)
Fees - Transportation & Highways	(2.7)
Fees - Licensing	(2.4)
Fees - Facilities & Property Services	(1.7)
Godiva Festival Income	(1.2)
Fees - Leisure Activities	(1.0)
Fees - Register Office	(1.0)
Fees - Planning & Regulatory Services	(0.8)
Outdoor Education Centre income (non-schools)	(0.7)
Commercialisation - Sponsorship Activities	(0.6)
Fees - Fleet Services	(0.5)
Fees - Training	(0.4)
Fees - Pest Control	(0.4)
Procurement Rebates	(0.4)
Fees - Other External	(0.3)
Outdoor Education Service – In City Offer	(0.3)
Fees - Land Search	(0.3)
Fees - Adult Education	(0.3)
Fees - Streetpride & Parks	(0.2)
Fees - Legal	(0.2)
Fees - HR/Employment	(0.2)
Fees - Libraries, Advice, Health & Information Services	(0.1)
Fees - Environmental Services	(0.1)
Fees - Post	(0.1)
Fees - Education	(0.1)
Salary Deductions	(0.1)
Fees - Libraries	(0.0)
Total	(73.2)



Capital Strategy Background - Investments



Background

- Councils have historically sought to protect financial position (and services), or make strategic interventions through ‘commercial’ investment
- Investment in the sector has seen some successes but also some high profile failures
- Regulatory change – Government intervention and regulation change aimed at preventing future instances of investing for yield
- CCC MTFS position - 25/26 (& ongoing) budget gaps will put a strain on Council Resources & Reserves
- Capital position – finite resources, flexibility through prudential borrowing for business case-based investment.
- One Coventry Plan – green and financial sustainability plus economic prosperity



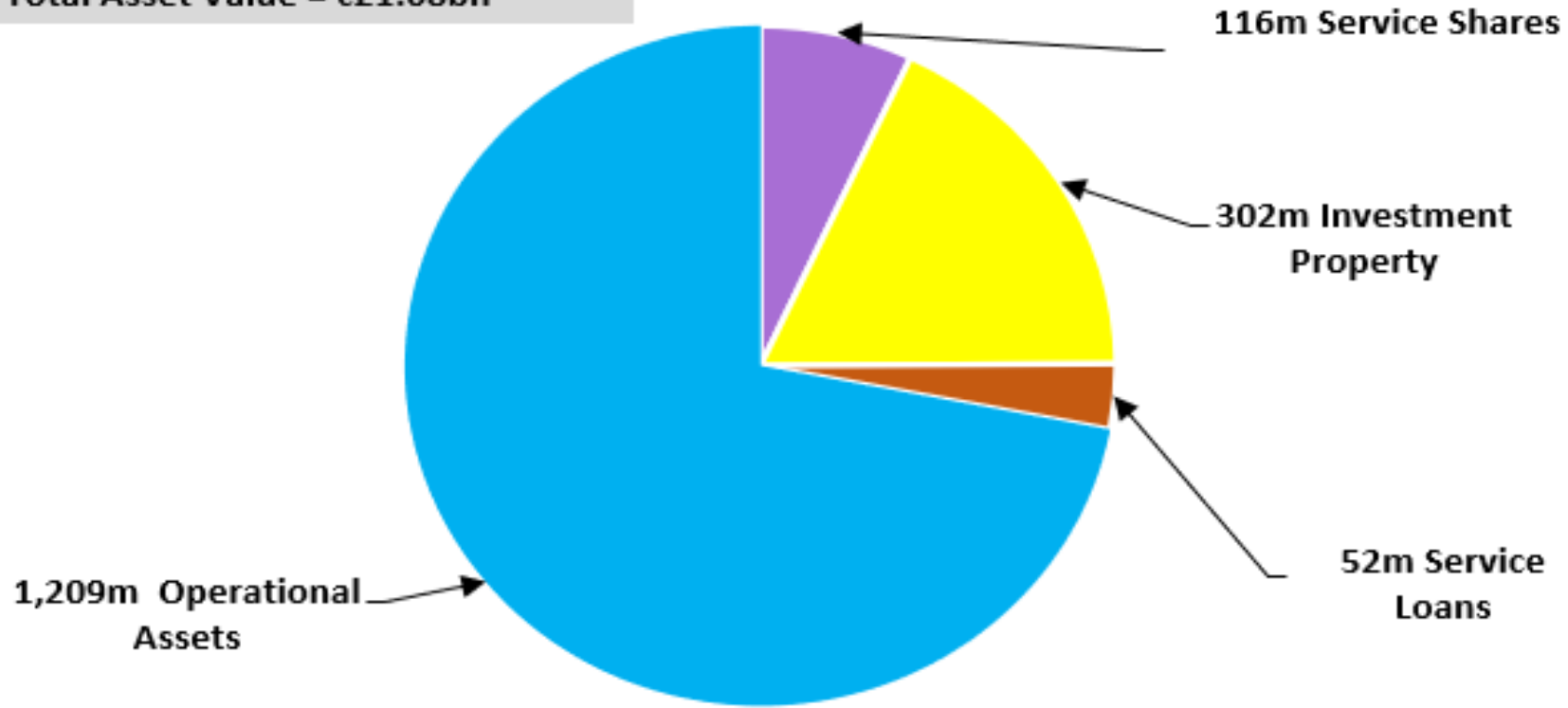
CCC Investment Portfolio

- Comprises :
 - Loans
 - Shares
 - Investment property
- Objective – includes strong service or strategic dimension e.g. local, regeneration or economic benefits
- Accounting – difference between value and resource invested/financed
- Vast majority of CCC total assets are operational (72%)

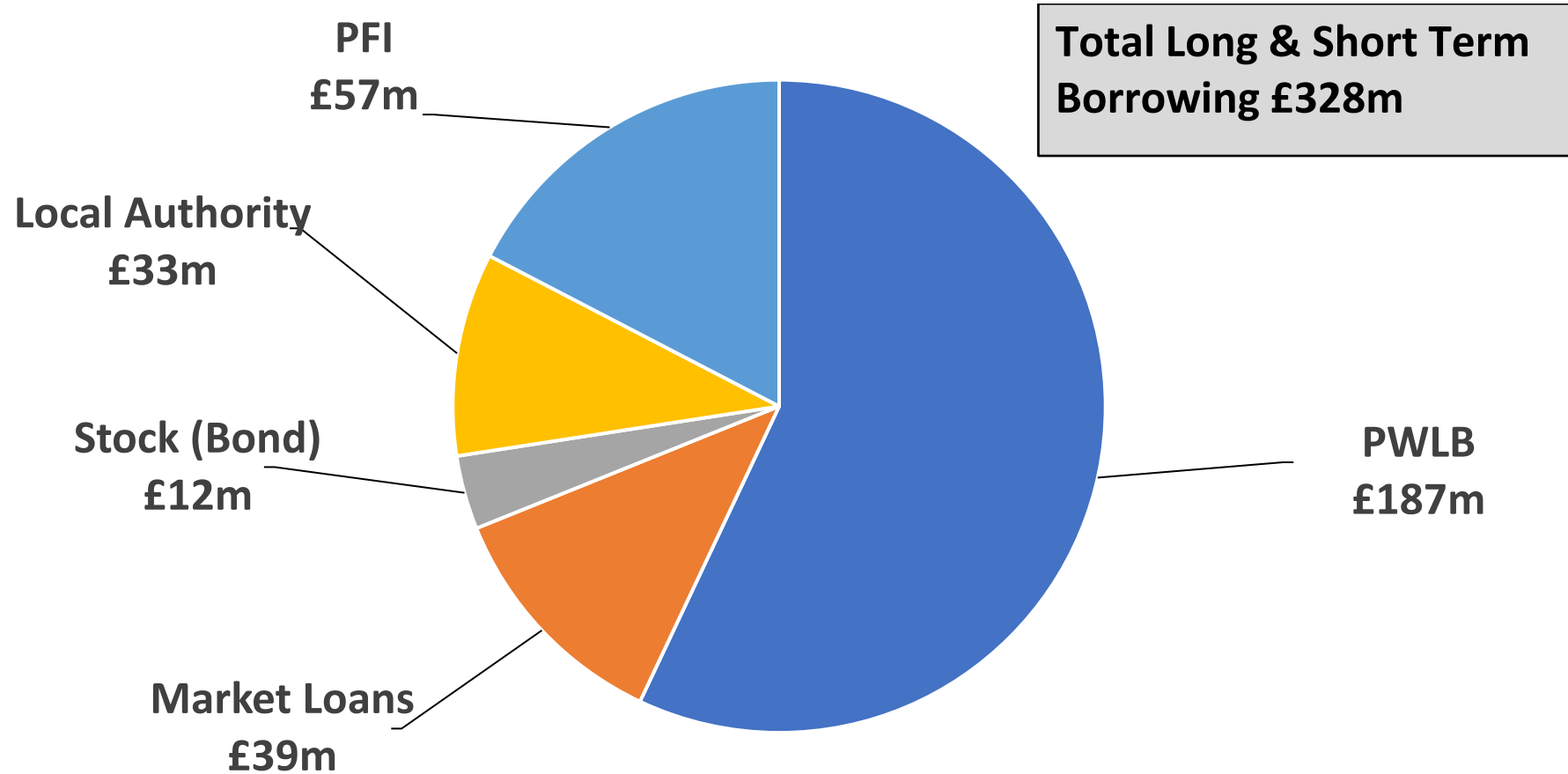


CCC Total Assets at 31 March 2024

Total Asset Value = c£1.68bn



CCC Liabilities at 31 March 2024



CCC Liabilities at 31 March 2024

- Actual borrowing is significantly lower than underlying 'need' to borrow (Capital Financing Requirement or CFR)
- Strong cash balances enable us to use instead of external loan
- There is likely a medium term borrowing need
- LA debt survey in 2024 showed Coventry at 217th (of 381) and well below the national avg per capita (£673 vs £1,187)
- For comparison, high profile LA's are in some cases 10x -12x these levels



CCC Return on Investments

- Over the last 3 years the following returns on investments have been achieved:

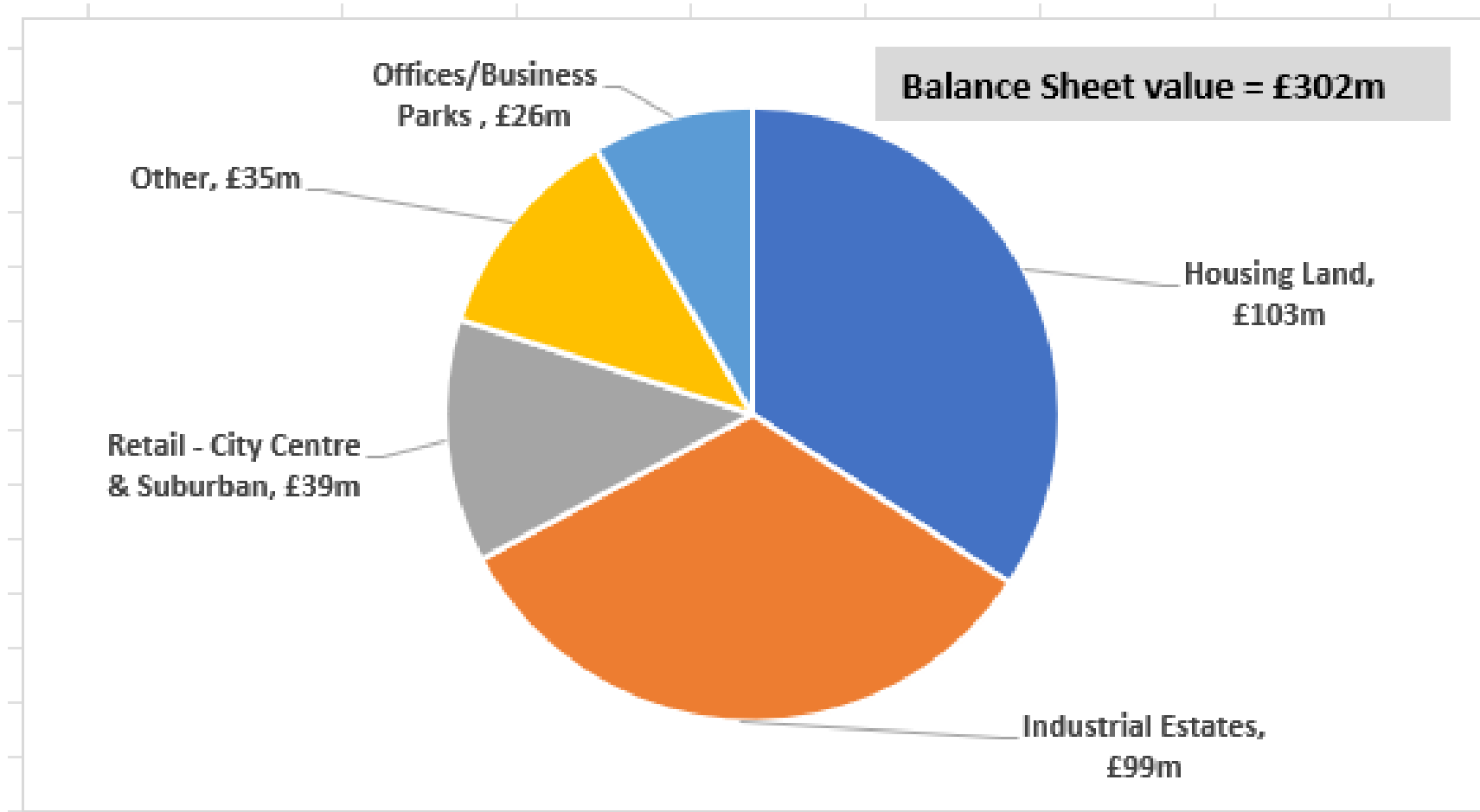
Investment Category	2021/22 Return on Investment %	2022/23 Return on Investment %	2023/24 Return on Investment %
Service Loans (i)	4.6%	3.0%	3.4%
Service Shares (ii)	9.0%	6.6%	10.6%
Investment Property (iii)	3.6%	4.3%	4.2%
Total Commercial Assets	4.9%	4.7%	5.7%

(i) Interest received and accrued

(ii) Dividends

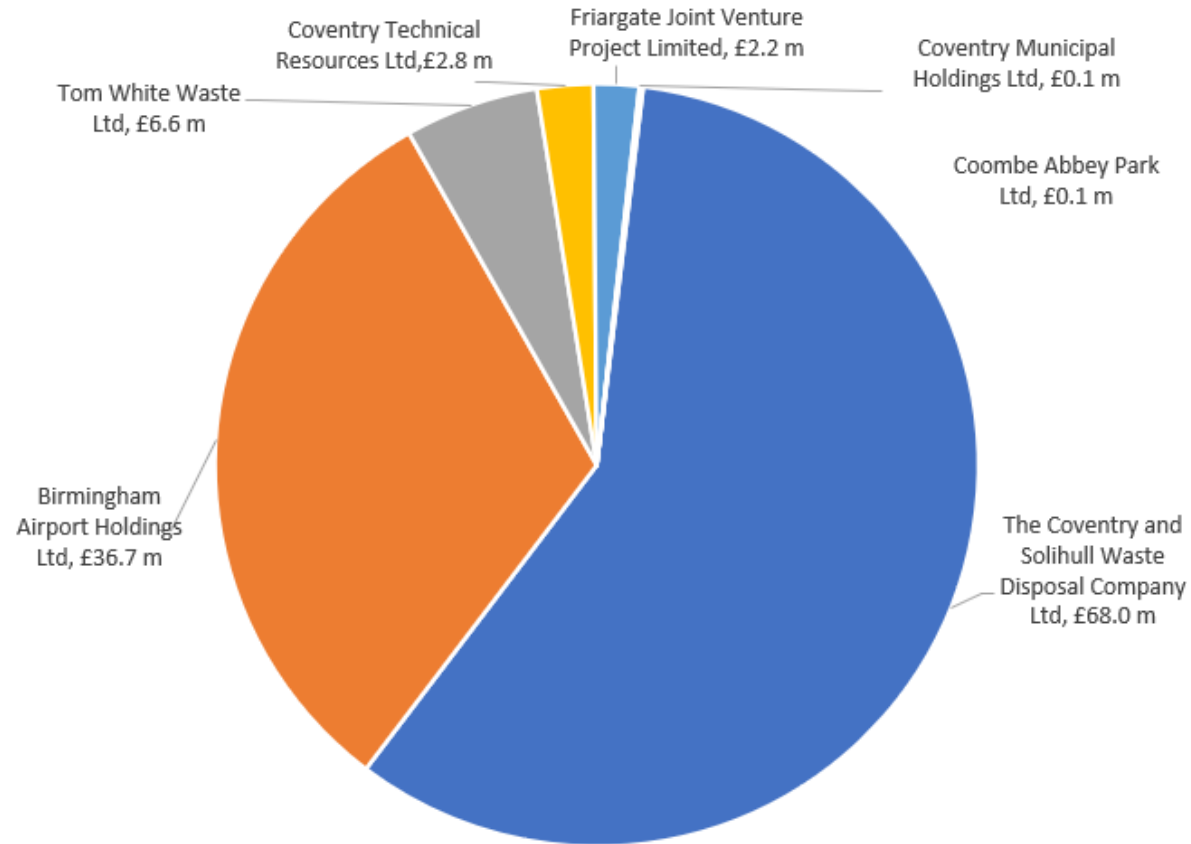
(iii) Rental income net of service charge, voids & other direct costs

CCC Investment Property

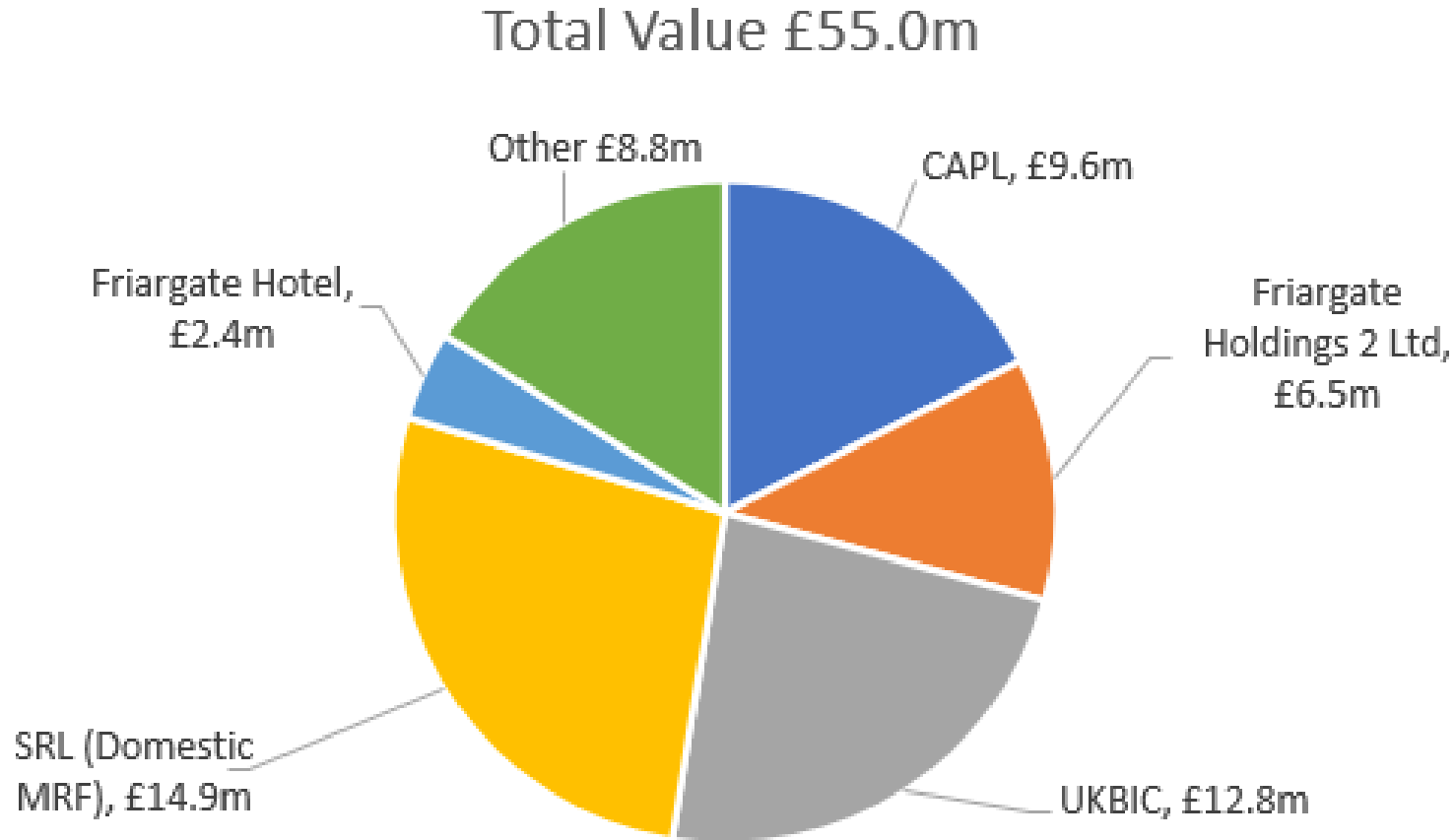


CCC Service Shares

Balance Sheet Value (£116m):



CCC Service Loans & Commitments



Regulatory Framework

- Wider framework – existing guidance with strong risk focus including Prudential Code; Investment Guidance; Minimum Revenue Provision; PWLB; Treasury Management; Capital strategies
- Government and CIPFA had concerns re investment risk - Debt funding (Coventry well below National average per capita); Losses and capitalisation
- Response: PWLB rule changes; Prudential Code changes;
- Revised Prudential Code - Risks should be **proportionate**; **must not borrow to invest**. Investments classed as treasury; service and commercial (for yield)
- PWLB Rules - No access if the authority plans to invest **primarily for yield** but can invest for service objective
- Commercial Investment Strategy - part of budget setting report since 2018; sets out the Council's approach to risk, liquidity and proportionality; sets limits for loans & shares



Commercial Investment Risk

- Capital value/Price Risk:
- Revenue/Income Risk:
- Other risks e.g. reputational
- Income Risk includes:
 - share dividend income from small number of shareholdings
 - service loan interest (but security exists for larger loans)
 - property income (but importantly is diversified across sectors & all local)
- Total Capital Risk of over c£100m
- Diversification – some concentration in waste area through shares, loans, potential guarantees





Coventry City Council

Briefing note

To: Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1) Date: 12 February 2025

Subject: Procurement Process

1. Purpose of the Note

1.1. To set out:

- The processes for undertaking procurement activity conducted by the Council;
- The corporate controls in place to secure value for money in procurement activities; and
- Provide information on the forthcoming Procurement Act 2023 and changes being implemented in order to ensure continued compliance with the new legislation.

2. Recommendations

2.1. Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1) are recommended to:

1. Note the procurement processes that the Council is subject to in line with public sector procurement legislation and internal Contract Procedure Rules as outlined in Paragraph 3.
2. Note the corporate approach utilised by the Council to deliver value for money and quality assurance through commissioning and procurement.
3. Note the forthcoming changes with the introduction of the Procurement Act 2023 as outlined in Paragraph 4 and appended presentation.
4. Identify any further recommendations for the Cabinet Member (Strategic Finance and Resources)

3. Procurement Process

- 3.1. Scrutiny Board 1 ("SB1") has requested further understanding on the procurement processes that the Council is subject to and updates regarding the Procurement Act 2023 including changes to the Contract Procedure Rules ("CPRs"). This briefing note sets out the regulatory frameworks governing public sector procurement and the due diligence processes involved.
- 3.2. The CPRs forms part of the Council's Constitution and are, in effect, the framework that governs the Council for making and entering into contracts on behalf of the Council. The CPRs sets clear rules for the procurement of goods, services and works and to ensure a system of openness, fairness, transparency and accountability.

3.3. The Council is also subject to multiple Regulations in relation to procurement activity, namely:

- i. The Public Contracts Regulations 2015
- ii. The Concession Contracts Regulations 2016
- iii. The Utilities Contracts Regulations 2016,
- iv. The Health Care Services (Provider Selection Regime) Regulations 2023
- v. The Procurement Act 2023 (due to come in to force 24 February 2025)

3.4. Procurement Procedures

The Regulations set out the various procedures to be followed when undertaking procurement activity that is deemed ‘above threshold’¹. The CPRs outline the minimum requirements for procurement activity ‘below threshold’, but can be summarised as follows:

Value	Approval to Procure	Min. Process	Min. Time Period*
<£10,000	Budget Holder	Use of corporate contract or demonstrable VfM	N/A
£10,000 - 24,999	Director approval or delegated authority to budget holder	Seek minimum 5 verbal quotes (must be confirmed in writing. E-procurement platform optional.	Minimum 5 working days
£25,000 - 99,000	Director approval or delegated authority to budget holder	Competitive quotes, seeking minimum of 5x (inc 3x local where possible). Must use e-procurement platform	Minimum 10 working days
£100,000 - threshold	Procurement Panel £100,000-£1m Procurement Board £1m+	Competitive tenders, seeking minimum of 5x (inc 3x local where possible). Must use e-procurement platform	Minimum 15 working days
Above threshold	Procurement Panel £100,000-£1m Procurement Board £1m+	Competitive tenders in compliance with Regulations	In compliance with time periods set out in Regulations

* The various Regulations set out the minimum time periods to be followed for ‘above threshold’ activity. Following Procurement Services inaugural Equality, Diversity and Inclusion survey issued to suppliers within Coventry, Procurement Services acted on

¹ £179k + VAT for supplies and services, £552k + VAT for services deemed Light Touch, £4.47m + VAT for works. Note, the Provider Selection Regime does not have thresholds, so all activity must follow those Regulations.

feedback provided and sought inclusive procurement changes to set out minimum timescales for 'below threshold' opportunities.

3.5. Corporate Procurement & Commissioning Processes

3.5.1 The main objective of the Council when undertaking procurement activity is to achieve Value for Money which is defined as "a utility derived from every purchase, or every sum of money spent. It is based not only on the minimum price (economy) but also the maximum efficiency and effectiveness of the purchase". In essence, the concept for Value for Money is understood as not paying more for a good or service than its quality or availability justify.

3.5.2 It should be noted that Value for Money does offer challenges particularly in the public sector due to the fact that defining and measuring Value for Money is fraught with various challenges such as:

- The public good – not always being easy to value a public good, because money (cost) is not the only measure.
- Multiple stakeholders with different expectations could complicate the measurement of Value for Money.

3.5.3 Despite the challenges stated above, the concept adopted by the Council when seeking to achieve Value for Money in competitive procurement activities centres on awarding the contract to the supplier whose submissions represent "Most Economically Advantageous Tender" when evaluated against the criteria set when the opportunity is made available by the Council.

3.5.4 When service areas are selecting the most appropriate procurement route to secure value for money, they are encouraged, in consultation with the Head of Legal and Procurement Services, to adhere to the principle of ensuring that all practical options for contract packages and methods of procurement should be analysed and evaluated, with the object of selecting the option that most effectively ensures value for money is achieved. The preferred option must provide full, fair, transparent and open competition and be identified as the most advantageous tender. To this end, the PROC paper submitted to either Procurement Panel and/or Board currently contain questions that demonstrate:

- whether the procurement is required in order to facilitate the discharge of an essential or discretionary function (together with justifications); and
- what options have been considered to facilitate how the service might be provided at lower cost.

3.5.5 It is recognised that competition is an underlying principle of public procurement, as well as being widely acknowledged to be a key enabler of value for money. It helps the Council to secure the goods and services it requires at the right price and quality and is seen as the best way of demonstrating probity in the award of public contracts. Increasing competition for public contracts can improve value for money

by allowing suppliers to demonstrate how they can improve quality, reduce costs and increase the scope for innovation.

3.6. Due Diligence

- 3.7. When undertaking any open market procurement exercise, the Council seeks to ensure that the bidders/tenderers are of sufficient technical and financial competency to undertake the requirement of the contract. This includes, but is not limited to:

Technical Capacity

In addition to qualitative evaluation criteria seeking to understand how suppliers will perform elements of the contract being tendered for, the Council as standard seeks examples of prior experience of delivering contracts of a similar size and nature to the one being tendered for. Said examples are to include contact references for validation of the information provided.

Financial Capacity

The Council will initially access a commercial risk report from CreditSafe and review this alongside the Tenderer's annual turnover. Following this assessment, the Council will determine whether it needs to undertake any further form of financial assessment.

If the Council deem a further form of assessment is required, the Council will consider the commercial aspects of the contract, e.g., length and value of the contract, payment profile/terms, ongoing commitments, maintenance/warranty requirements. The Council may also review additional financial data such as audited accounts, P&L accounts, turnover statements. Where appropriate, these documents are reviewed by colleagues in Finance. The Council may ask for additional security provisions to be provided by the Tenderer to the Council such as Parent Company Guarantees, Performance Bonds or retention sums etc. (in the form required by the Council following engagement with Legal Services), before making a judgement on the commercial risk.

The Council (whose decision is final) will then determine if the Tenderer has passed or failed the financial assessment, based on our judgement of the information

4. Procurement Act 2023 ("PA2023")

4.1. Background

- 4.1.1. The PA2023 is a new set of rules which govern the procurement of goods, services and/or works in the public sector. Announced as forthcoming legislation following the UK's exit from the European Union, the new act was laid before Parliament in May 2022 and obtained Royal Assent in October 2023. The new Act and supplementary Procurement Regulations 2024 was due to come in to force on 28 October 2024, however has been delayed until 24 February 2025.
- 4.1.2. The PA2023 replaces the existing procurement rules (Public Contracts Regulations 2015 as amended), though transitional arrangements confirm that any contracts entered in to, or tenders commenced prior to, the go live date of 28

October 2024 will be subject to the requirements of the current legislation until their expiry, meaning relevant authorities will be managing contracts under two sets of legislation for a number of years.

- 4.1.3. The PA2023 amalgamates the different tender procedures, reducing the number of procedures from 6 to 3 (Direct Award, Open Procedure and Competitive Flexible Procedure). The Competitive Flexible Procedure is described in the Act as a competitive tendering procedure “which is such procedure as the contracting authority considers appropriate for the purpose of awarding the public contract”.
- 4.1.4. The PA2023 seeks to provide greater transparency through the procurement and contract management lifecycle. As such, the legislation is greatly increasing the number of notices (5 under PCR2015 to 14 under PA2023) that relevant authorities will need to publish throughout the procurement process and term of the contract. Procurement Services have been working with our e-tendering platform provider to ensure readiness of the new notices ahead of 28 October 2024. With the increased level of transparency, it has been proposed in the changes outlined at 3.7 to provide clarity in the CPRs as to the requirements of the notice regime.
- 4.1.5. In response to the new Regulations, Procurement Services proposed amendments to the CPRs that were approved by Council in October, with delegated authority to Director or Law & Governance to bring in to force the changes as and when the PA2023 “goes live” (still anticipated to be 24 February 2025).
- 4.1.6. The changes to the CPRs can be summarised as follows:
- **Updated terminology with respect to the legislation and notice portals** (reflected throughout part 3G)
 - **Reference of the requirement to consider the priorities of the National Procurement Policy Statement (NPPS)** (reflected in additions/amendments to clauses 4, 7, 13 in addition to existing clauses regarding social value and value for money).
 - **Expansion on clause 15 in relation to Specifications** to align to the requirements of the Procurement Act 2023.
 - **Amendment to Contract Procedures (clause 16)** to reflect the new procedure types under the Procurement Act 2023.
 - **Inclusion of the requirement to publish all contracts in excess of £5,000** in accordance with the Local Government Transparency Code (expanding on the legislative requirement of £25,000). (reflected in clause 3, 12.2 and 16.4).
 - **Inclusion of notice publication requirements** reflected throughout the document to ensure officers are aware of the requirements, as well as the inclusion of Appendix 4 providing information and exclusions with regards to the new notice regime.
 - **Change to process where authorising officers do not believe it possible to invite the minimum number of tenders/quotes as stipulated by the CPRs** enforcing that the tender/quote be published to the open market to satisfy the requirements of the CPRs.

- **Expansion of the contract management provisions** at clause 27 in relation to the requirements under the Procurement Act 2023.
- **Updated job titles** in relation to the Director for Finance and Resources reflected throughout the document.

4.1.7. In addition to the above, Procurement Services are currently drafting refreshes of the Council's Procurement Strategy and Contract Management Framework, ensuring alignment with the PA2023 requirements.

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Procurement Act 2023

Changes to public sector procurement legislation



Background

- The Procurement Act 2023 is a new set of rules which govern the procurement of goods, services and/or works in the public sector (other than Health Care services covered by the Provider Selection Regime).
- The new Act and supplementary Procurement Regulations 2024 were set to come in to force on 28 October 2024 but have been delayed to 24 February 2025.



Transition

- Contracts entered in to, or advertised as a tender prior to, 24 February 2025 will be administered by the current legislation (Public Contracts Regulations 2015) and will not be subject to the requirements of the Act.
- For the next 14 years (min.), the Council will be administering contracts under multiple sets of public sector procurement legislation (including PCR2015, CCR2016, PSR, PA2023).



Changes

- 4 competitive processes amalgamated into 2 – Open Procedure and Competitive Flexible Procedure, giving Authorities flexibility in designing competitions “to drive innovation and VfM”.
- MEAT to MAT
- Changes to timescales
- Establishment of ‘Open’ Frameworks
- Introduction of Dynamic Markets (no longer Dynamic Purchasing System) – significantly impacts Local Authorities.



Changes continued...

- Significantly increased transparency notice regime.
- Introduction of debarment list and expanded supplier exclusion grounds.
- Pipeline publication.
- National Procurement Policy Statement and duty to consider the priorities in procurement activity.
- Duty to consider barriers to entry for below threshold procurement exercises.



Transparency, transparency, transparency

- New notice regime expands current requirement of 5 notice types (Contract Notice, Contract Award Notice etc) to 14, covering multiple stages of procurement and contract management.
- Increased payments compliance notice requirements, also requiring Finance Director sign off.
- Requirement to publish copy of contract, KPIs and KPI performance for contracts valued over £5m.



Governance and document requirements

- Changes to Contract Procedure Rules (Council Oct. 24)
- Updated PROC suite
 - Updated tender suite
- Updated associated documents (letters, templates, guidance)
 - Updated T&Cs to embed implied terms
 - Roll out of below-threshold templates
 - Ongoing KPI monitoring of contracts
 - Establishment of expanded procurement pipeline
 - Contract Management Framework refresh
 - Procurement Strategy refresh



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Coventry City Council

Briefing note

To: Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board

Date: 12th February 2025

Subject: Recruitment and Retention

1. Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of current employment levels with a focus on diversity, particularly in relation to the three protected characteristic groups that are under-represented, namely minority ethnic, disability and LBGQT. The report details the current workforce analytics in relation to starters and leavers plus apprenticeships. There is further information on the support provided to these groups and wider benefits that available to employees.
- 1.2 This report enables members to have oversight of this area of work and details of the related metrics.

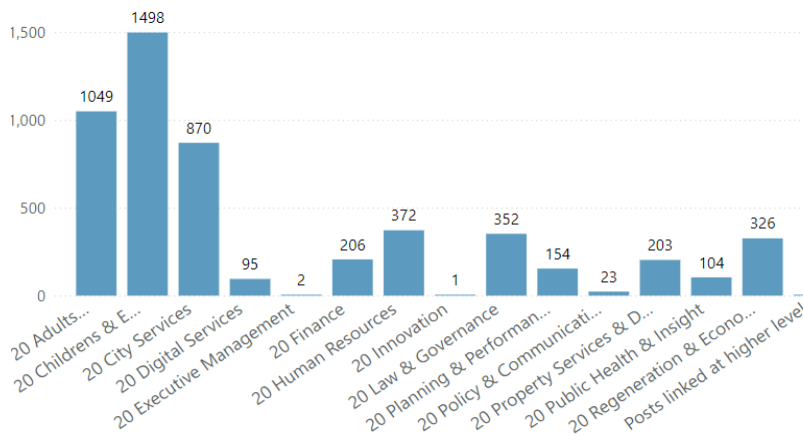
2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1) is recommended to:
 1. Note the contents of the report and related analytics.
 2. Acknowledge the work being carried out in these areas and the ongoing organisational aim to have a sustained and growing representative workforce.
 3. Identify any recommendations for the Cabinet Member (Strategic Finance and Resources) to implement in the areas the report covers.

3 Information/Background

- 3.1 Current employee numbers are 5210, which equates to 4210fte, with turnover at 14.38%. For comparison in June 2024, turnover was 13.91%, this increase is not unsurprising in the current climate.
- 3.2 This is also demonstrated in the graphs below which show the change in recruitment patterns over the last year, partly due to the introduction of the recruitment panel in September 2023, a number of organisational change programmes and greater consideration being given to filling posts in the light of the financial pressures.
- 3.3 Both graphs were accurate as of the 28th of January 2025.

Employees at Selected Date by Hierarchy



28/01/2025

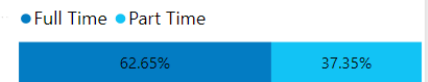
Leavers in 12 Months to Selected Date: 743
Starters in 12 Months to Selected Date: 845

743 845

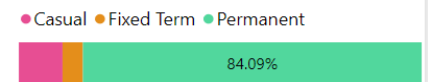
14.38%

Turnover at Selected Date

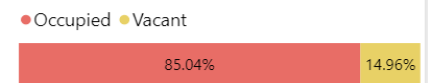
Employees by Type



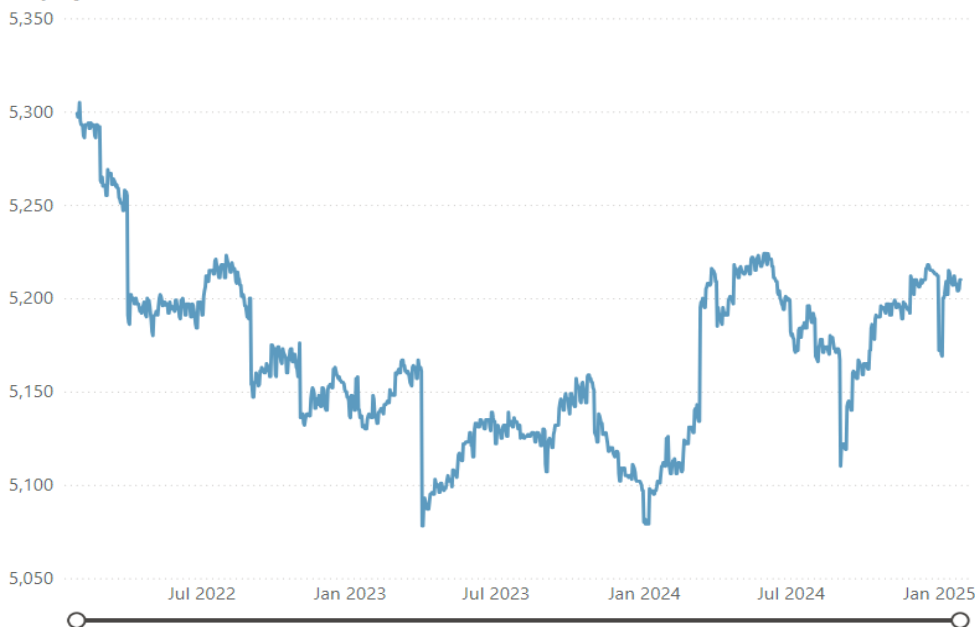
Contracts by Type



Posts by Status

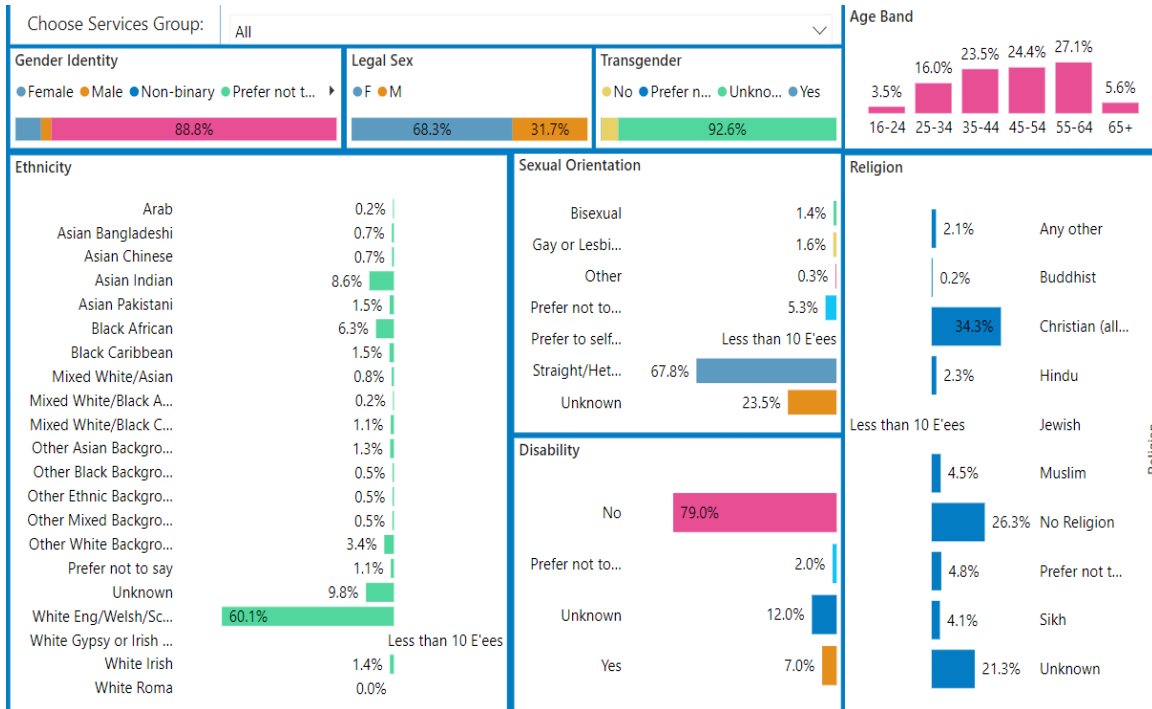


Employees over Time

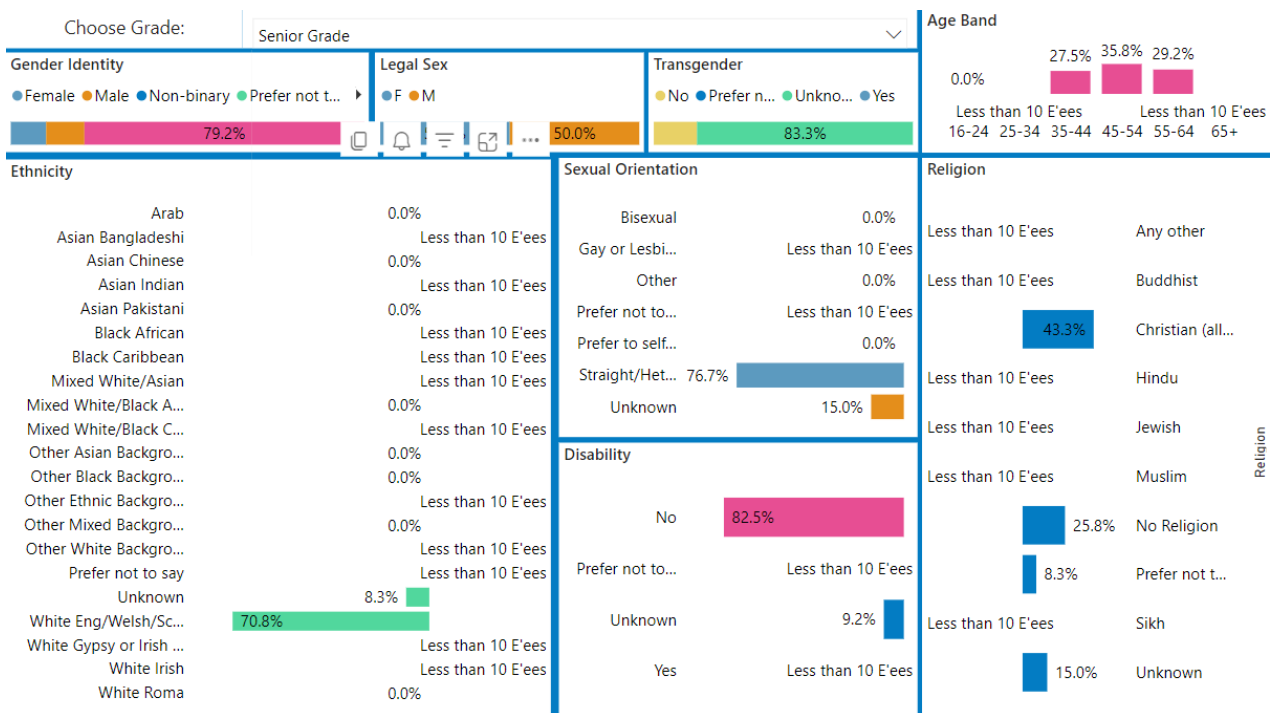


4 Inclusion Data

- 4.1 In relation to the protected characteristics of the workforce, the data below provides the overall breakdown within the Council.
- 4.2 This information in 2020 identified that there were 3 groups of employees who were under-represented at leadership level across our workforce; employees with a disability and who are neuro diverse, employees from visible minority ethnic backgrounds and employees who identify as LGBT+.
- 4.3 Overall Workforce by Ethnicity (the' long' version of employee ethnicity is appendix 1)



Senior Managers by Ethnicity



4.4 As a result, the inclusion focus has been on three specific areas to increase number employed. Support in the workplace, recruiting and retaining is a priority.

4.5 Also in 2020, anonymised recruitment was introduced with the introduction of the new recruitment system. The system does not provide recruiting managers with any personal details until shortlisting is completed and candidates are selected for interview. This process operates for all appointments including Chief Officer level.

- 4.6 Recruiting for Workforce Diversity Training has also been in place for some time, and this is supported by the Inclusive Recruitment Toolkit, which is available on the intranet.
- 4.7 The recruitment webpages have also been revised and updated, plus a review of advertising took place to ensure they were best placed and value for money. A new job description format is also in the process of being introduced, to remove bias in terms and language to ensure inclusivity. The format is being standardised so they will be consistent in approach and look.
- 4.8 Work has also taken place to ensure better and greater access for candidates with a disability, which enables other methods of application besides completing an application form, such as video.
- 4.9 It should also be noted that there are still a number of employees who have not provided their protected characteristics data. These figures are significant in number in several areas, for example disability declaration has 12% of employees not making a declaration, 9.8% for ethnicity and 23.59% for sexual orientation. A number of campaigns have been undertaken to increase these numbers with some improvement, but it remains an area of concern.
- 4.10 There are further plans in the upcoming Diversity and Inclusion Strategy to improve this, including a % target for headway.

5 Inclusive Recruitment Panel Initiative

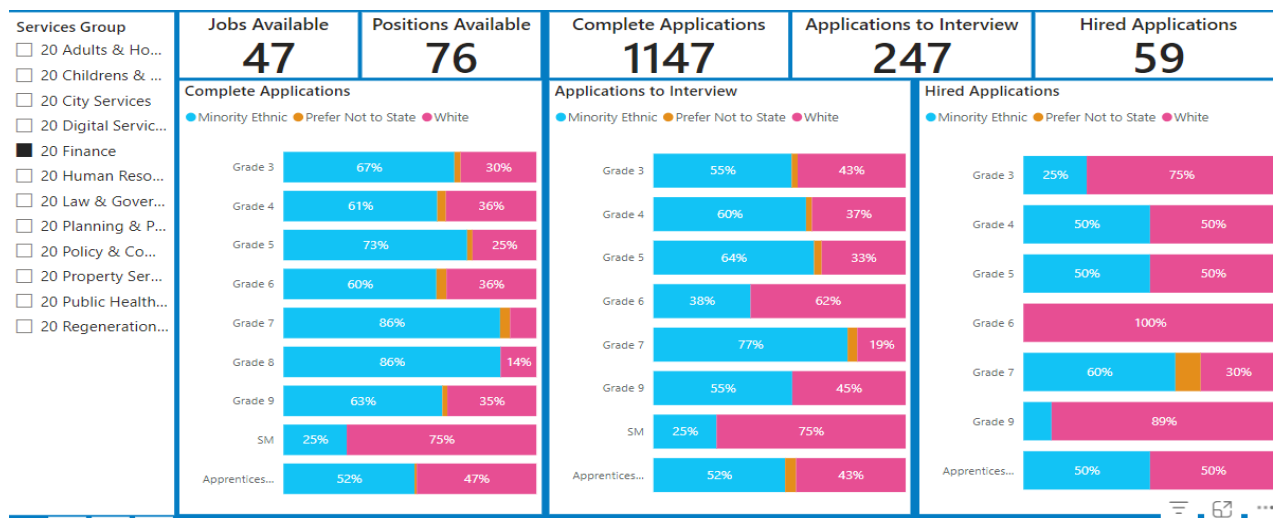
- 5.1 The introduction of anonymised recruitment did result in a significant shift in the number of applications received from each of the under-represented groups of employees, plus the percentage of those candidates shortlisted has increased through the application of our anonymised process.
- 5.2 However, there was a noticeable gap between those shortlisted and those being appointed which could possibly have implications for the way in which the Council delivers its services to our diverse residents.
- 5.3 As a result of our ambitions to be more creative and innovative we took the positive steps of offering a development opportunity to employees from those three under-represented groups, so that they could play an active and important role in changing the representation of our workforce. The inclusive recruitment panel initiative involves employees with the three protected characteristics receiving training so that they are able to support with the writing of interview questions, clear on shortlisting criteria and could play an action role on all interview panels for posts which are Grade 8 and above, which is where under-representation is the most evident. Following the expression of interest being sent out to all staff in March 2024, 61 staff have come forward to be trained resulting in 30 employees sitting in the Council pool.
- 5.4 The Council's appointment data in relation to the three cohorts of employees who are under-represented has fluctuated over the past 9 months, however our recent data for the end of Quarter 2 (July-Sept) shows that the number of new starters from minority ethnic backgrounds has increased from 29.96% to 41.52% at the end of the Quarter 3 (Oct-Dec 2024) which is when the inclusive interview panel initiative has been active.
- 5.5 A survey was recently sent out to those individuals who had applied for a job at the Council and were asked whether they thought the Council's commitment to

becoming a more diverse and inclusive organisation was visible. One respondent said “Yes, there was someone who looked like me on the interview panel.”

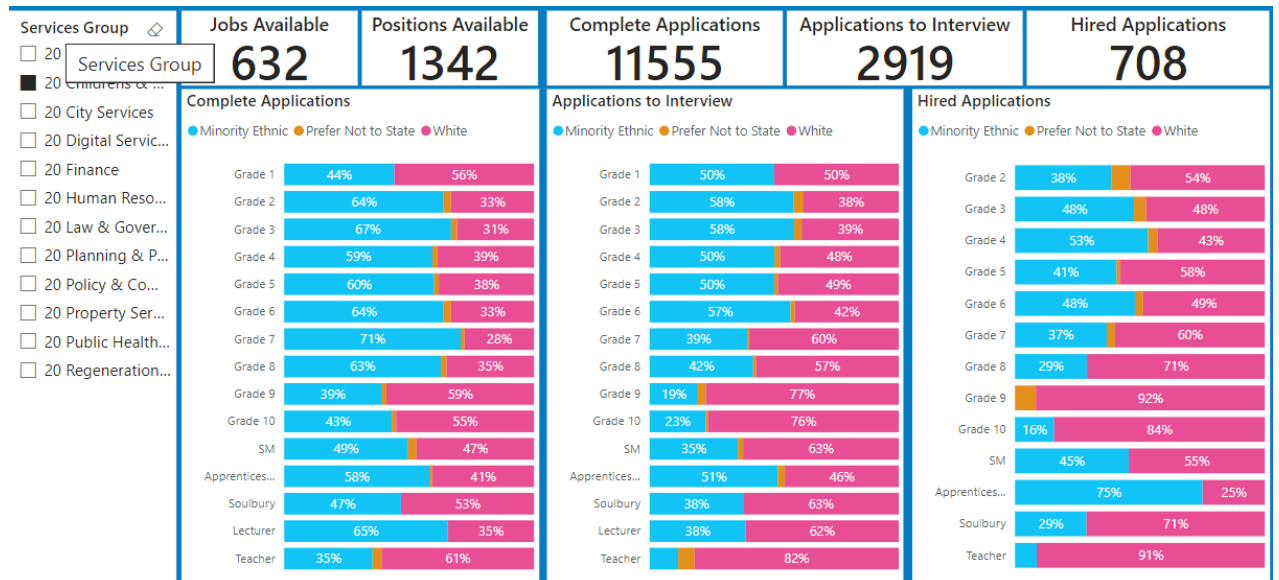
5.6 It is planned to extend the scheme further. There are also plans to work in partnership with the job shop in some focussed areas to encourage applicants from these areas to apply for roles with the Council.

5.7 The People analytics continues to develop and improve with recruitment data now being available relating to the three focussed protected characteristics.

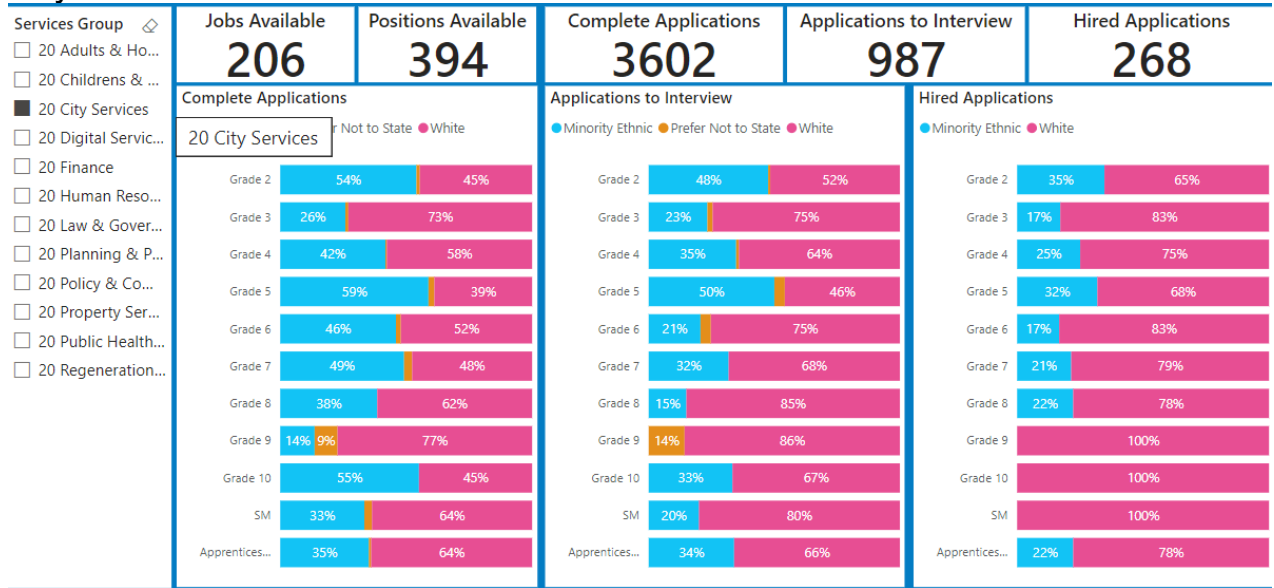
The example below is data for the recruitment undertaken in Finance by numbers of jobs, applicants, shortlisting and interview by ethnicity.



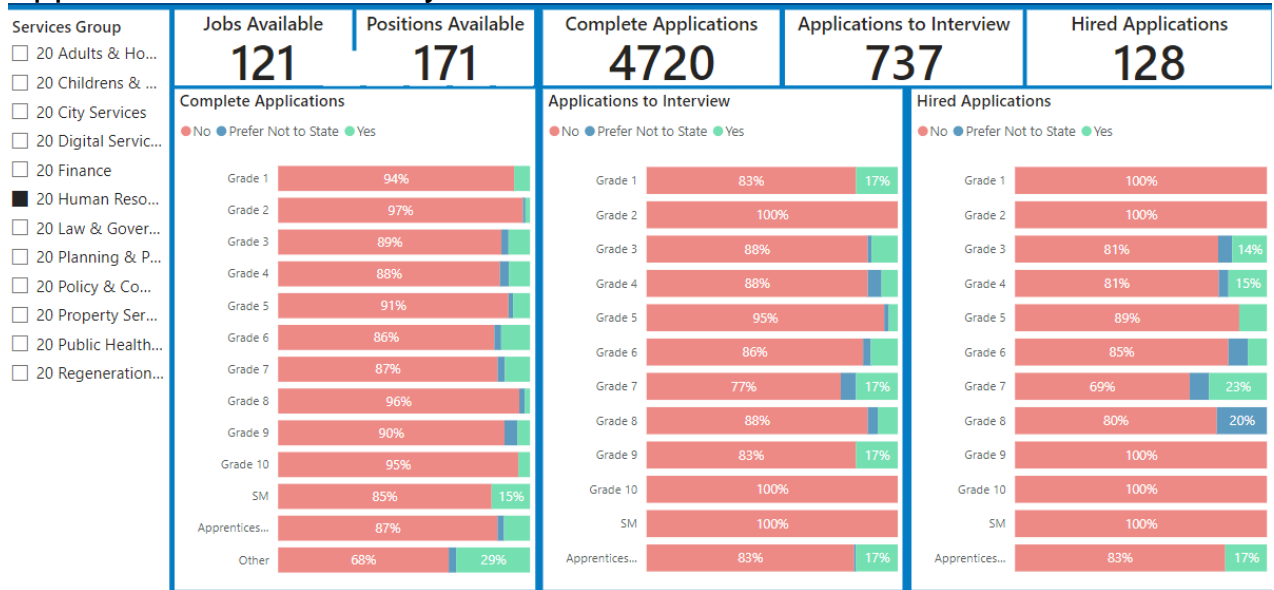
Childrens Services



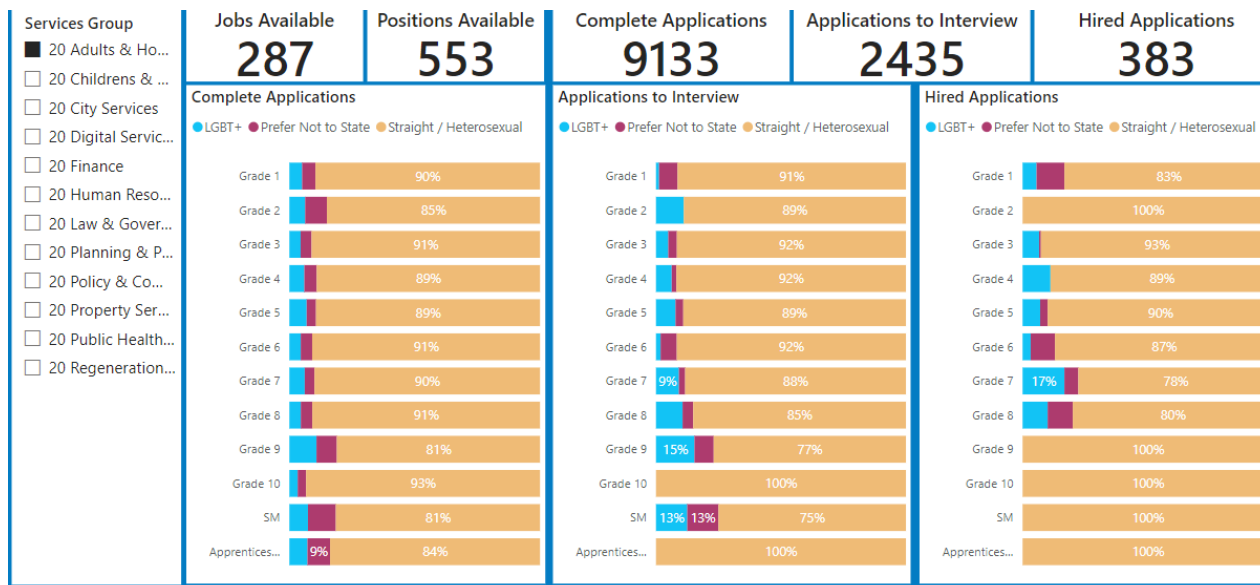
City Services



Applicants with a disability for HR/Custom Services roles



Applicants LBGQT+ Law and Governance



This data means better and greater transparency and enables services to really review and consider what actions they can take to improve outcomes.

6 Disability Support

- 6.1 Following the completion of the Calibre positive action program, for employees with a disability, the Council commissioned “Making Lemonade” to deliver Disability Inclusion training. Research consistently shows the two priorities for disabled people and people with long-term health conditions in the workplace are getting the adjustments they need and having a disability confident line manager.
- 6.2 As part of our responsibilities as a Disability Confident Leader organisation, we want Council managers to feel confident to have effective and appropriate conversations about disability and reasonable adjustments. This encourages employees to feel included, respected, and comfortable being themselves at work, which enables them to meet their full potential.
- 6.3 Prior to attending training, delegates receive an information pack that summarises why disability inclusion is important and includes video guides on reasonable adjustments and managing the Council’s Personal Adjustment Passport and Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan. To date, 169 colleagues have attended the training, equivalent to 19.5% of Council managers. Training will continue to be offered throughout 2025 with seventy-five places available between February and April 2025.
- 6.4 The Occupational Health, Safety & Wellbeing team offer additional support via an online seminar on reasonable adjustments. A recording is available on the intranet and two more webinars are planned for 2025. They also offer neurodiversity training for managers. The course provides an overview of neurodiversity, its impact on individuals and workplaces and how to implement reasonable adjustments that enhance inclusivity and performance.

6.5 An aim within the new Workforce D&I Strategy for 2025-2028 is to centralise the reasonable adjustments budget and monitor the number and type of adjustments in place. This will streamline the process for employees trying to obtain adjustments but will also help make the most of Council resources and identify opportunities for cost saves.

7 Young People

7.1 The Apprenticeship and Early Careers Team actively seeks to engage with a variety of under-represented groups to promote social mobility and increase the diversity of our apprentices.

8 School engagement and work experience

8.1 The team prioritises engagement with schools that have the highest percentage of students on free school meals. This metric highlights the schools with the most disadvantaged students and those with additional barriers.

8.2 This engagement takes the form of:

A) School Insight Days

A group of 15 students attend a day at the Council, learning about what we do as an employer and provider of services. The students hear talks from Senior Leaders, go on a tour of Council offices, undertake a variety of employability activities, and talk with our current apprentices about their careers. These sessions have been very successful, gaining excellent feedback from the students and teachers and have now started to result in applications for apprenticeships from those that attended in recent years and have finished school.

B) Work experience

Three placements have been allocated to each of the top five schools on the free school meals list, to take place in June and July. Placements are taking place across all service groups within the Council to provide a breadth of opportunities. These schools have been asked to put forward students that may not have otherwise secured a work experience placement.

C) Careers fairs and school assemblies

The team attends a variety of careers fairs and school assemblies to talk to students about Council apprenticeships, always taking a current apprentice with them to talk directly about their experience.

D) Targeted advertising

A pilot is shortly being launched to advertise two Paralegal Apprenticeships in Legal Services. These roles are only being advertised to Coventry Schools for those students finishing their A-Levels this year (Applicants require A-Levels to undertake this apprenticeship). The direct advertising to school leavers is a positive action step to increase the number of young people at the Council. In addition to this, to further target young people from under-represented groups, colleagues in the Apprenticeship Team and Legal Services will be holding talks and information sessions at the top five schools for

free school meals to provide additional details and to encourage applications from those who may not have considered such an opportunity before.

E) Care Leavers

The team works closely with Through Care to identify Care Leavers that may be interested in Council Apprenticeships and to provide them with support in applying for and securing roles. Additional support and guidance are provided throughout their apprenticeship to enable them to complete and move into a positive destination afterwards.

F) General support

All shortlisted applicants for apprenticeships are invited to attend a 'pre-interview' session prior to the final interview with the recruiting manager. At this session, the team give applicants an overview of what to expect from the final interview, as well as advice and guidance on how to prepare. This stage was created in recognition that not all applicants receive the required support from parents/carers prior to an interview and this may put them at a disadvantage.

G) Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs)


The Apprenticeship Team is working with colleagues in Adult Education to support the launch of a new 'Pathways 2 Apprenticeships' programme. This programme is for NEETs aged 19-29 and is designed to provide the required skills and experience for those who are not quite apprenticeship ready at the moment. Apprenticeship vacancies have been identified for suitable participants on the programme to move into upon successful completion.

H) General engagement

The team has built an extensive list of partners including charities, youth groups, community groups, and those in the third sector supporting young people with employability, that it shares vacancies to ensure a broad range of awareness of Council apprenticeships.

9 Benefits

9.1 The current benefits employees are able to access besides the pension scheme, 28 days annual leave and flexible working are listed below.

 My cash	 My discounts	 My way
<u>Competitive salary</u> <u>Pay progression through multiple increments</u> <u>Additional role-related allowances</u> <u>Salary match opportunity</u> <u>Employee Welfare Support Loan</u>	<u>Lifestyle savings</u> <u>Our local discounts</u> <u>Company discounts</u>	<u>Cycle to work</u> <u>Bike shop</u> <u>Car scheme</u> <u>Workplace parking scheme</u> <u>Business car park passes</u> <u>Travelcards</u> <u>Payroll Giving Scheme</u> <u>Home and Electronics Scheme</u>

 <p>My time</p> <p>Generous annual leave allowance (starting at 28 days plus Bank Holidays)</p> <p>Annual leave purchase scheme</p> <p>Flexible working arrangements supporting work-life balance</p> <p>Parental leave</p>	 <p>My voice</p> <p>Employee Networks - Embrace, Pride, Disabled, Young, Women</p> <p>Recognised Trade Unions and active membership</p>	 <p>My health and wellbeing</p> <p>Award-winning occupational health team</p> <p>Counselling service</p> <p>Employee Assistance Programme</p> <p>Advantage Voluntary Health Plan</p>
 <p>My awards</p> <p>Employee recognition</p>	 <p>My opportunities</p> <p>Corporate Learning and Development offer</p> <p>Improve your maths</p>	 <p>My savings</p> <p>Generous local government pension scheme</p> <p>Clockwise Credit Union</p> <p>Salary Finance</p> <p>My Money Matters</p>

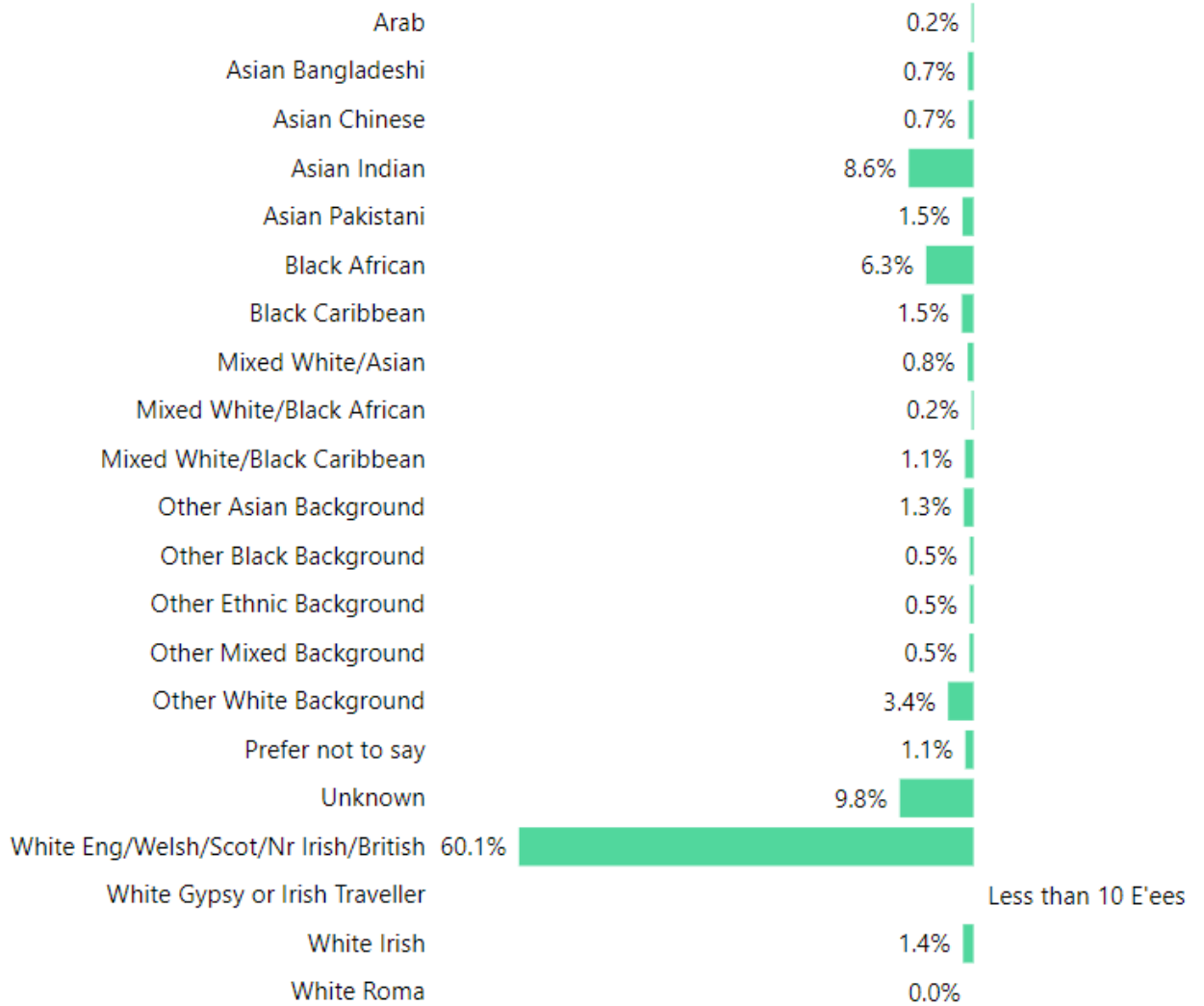
9.2 The benefits are subject to regular review, and financial well-being is an area we have increased over the last year. We have introduced a Welfare Loan Scheme, AVC's via salary sacrifice are also new and we are currently running a reduced travel card offer in conjunction with WMCA.

9.3 We promote the schemes as often as possible either through the intranet, People Hour or Employee Information Cascade. In April we are promoting the schemes at a weeklong event.

Author:
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Director of People

Appendix 1

Ethnicity Long Description



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Agenda Item 7

SB1 Work Programme 2024/25

Last updated 27th January 2025

Please see page 2 onwards for background to items

17th July 24
Establish a Task & Finish Group – Home to School Travel (July) CIPFA Financial Management Code
11th September 24
Cabinet Member Priorities of the year Workforce Reports and HR Response to Staff Survey
9th October 2024
Budget Pre-Engagement
6th November 24
Reserves Position Council Tax Arrears and Collection Establish a Task & Finish Group – Review Agency Staff and Staff Sickness
8th January 2025
Draft Medium-Term Financial Strategy Budget Consultation
12th February 25
Council Investment Portfolio Procurement Process Recruitment and Retention
26th March 25
#CovConnects Task and Finish – Home to School Taxi (Final Report)
2024/25
Council Office Accommodation Budget Pre-Budget Report following Cabinet 10/12/24 Artificial Intelligence Policy
2025/26
Outturn Performance for the Tax year 2024/25 Reserves Position Following Implementation of the Spending, Saving and Council Tax Proposals 25/26

Date	Title	Detail	Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer
17th July 24	Establish a Task & Finish Group – Home to School Travel (July)	Agreed to establish a Task and Finish Group to review the current DPS arrangement in order to ensure best value for the home to school taxi service	Jeanette Essex, Rob Amor, Ewan Dewar, Sarah Elliot
	CIPFA Financial Management Code	briefing note and appendix containing an assessment against a number of prescribed standards.	Phil Helm / Cllr Brown
11th September 24	Cabinet Member Priorities of the year	Item to discuss the highlights of the year of the Cabinet Member where Scrutiny Board members can pick up on any areas that they'd like to take forward.	Cllr Brown
	Workforce Reports and HR Response to Staff Survey	Workforce Reports to include Work on Health and Wellbeing and update regarding the proposed HR response to the findings of the survey and progress of the emerging HR plan at a future meeting.	Susanna Chilton / Cllr Brown
9th October 2024	Budget Pre-Engagement	Pre-cursor to the established budget setting process/consultation. Pre-consultation scoping	Cllr Brown, Barry Hastie, Tina Pinks, Phil Helm
6th November 24	Reserves Position	Reserves position 23/24 statement	Barry Hastie / Cllr Brown
	Council Tax Arrears and Collection	To consider what steps the Council are taking to ensure good rates of Council Tax collection as well as national comparators To include – understanding the process of collecting arrears, how are individuals supported when in difficulty.	Barrie Strain Cllr Brown

Date	Title	Detail	Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer
	Establish a Task & Finish Group – Review Agency Staff and Staff Sickness	To establish a Task and Finish Group to review issues around the use of agency staff and staff sickness.	Susanna Chilton
8th January 2025	Draft Medium-Term Financial Strategy	To discuss the draft Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy prior to its development for approval at Cabinet and Council. To include information on distribution of Government funding which had been identified in the 2024 Autumn Budget if available	Cllr Brown /Barry Hastie/ Tina Pinks / Phil Helm
	Budget Consultation		Tina Pinks Cllr Brown
12th February 25	Council Investment Portfolio	Risks and returns	Barry Hastie / Cllr Brown
	Procurement Process	Procurement Strategy to include the procurement process and updates to the Council's framework in preparation for the implementation of the Procurement Act and associated regulations	Cllr Brown Rob Amor Remi Aremu
	Recruitment and Retention	Diversity within recruitment and retention (SB1)	Susanna Chilton Cllr Brown
26th March 25	#CovConnects	further report at a future meeting which would focus on partnerships and how they work in practice. To include progress around Digital Exclusion as identified in Scruco on the 25 th September.	Cllr Brown/Cllr Hetherton Adrienne Bellingeri, Laura Waller
	Task and Finish – Home to School Taxi (Final Report)		

Date	Title	Detail	Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer
2024/25	Council Office Accommodation	Review the usage of Council office space within the context of making savings.	Cllr O'Boyle Cllr Brown Richard Moon
	Budget Pre-Budget Report following Cabinet 10/12/24		Tina Pinks, Cllr Brown
	Artificial Intelligence Policy	A further item to consider how AI can be used strategically to save money and improve service delivery. Include Digital Strategy with Paul Ward, Referred to Scruco in March 2025	Cllr Hetherton Paul Ward
2025/26	Outturn Performance for the Tax year 2024/25	Meeting to take place municipal Year 25/26	Barrie Strain / Cllr Brown
	Reserves Position	Reserves position 23/24 statement – During Q4 (July)	Barry Hastie / Cllr Brown
	Following Implementation of the Spending, Saving and Council Tax Proposals 25/26	Update report on the outcomes and impacts of implementation, be submitted to the Board in 12 months' time. (April 2026)	Barry Hastie / Barri Strain Cllr Brown