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### **Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1)**

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**Time and Date**

1.30 pm on Wednesday, 9th October, 2024

**Place**

Committee Room 3 - Council House

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**Public Business****1. Apologies and Substitutions****2. Declarations of Interest****3. Minutes**

(a) To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2024  
(Pages 3 - 6)

(b) Matters Arising

**4. Pre-Budget Engagement 2025-26 (Pages 7 - 14)**

Briefing note

**5. Work Programme and Outstanding Issues (Pages 15 - 18)**

Report of the Scrutiny Co-ordinator

**6. 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

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

Tuesday, 1 October 2024

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

**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**  
**carolyn.sinclair@coventry.gov.uk**

**Coventry City Council**  
**Minutes of the Meeting of Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1) held**  
**at 10.00 am on Wednesday, 11 September 2024**

Present:

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

Other Members:               Councillor R Brown, Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance  
  and Resources  
  Councillor G Duggins, The Leader & Cabinet Member for  
  Policy and Leadership

Employees:

Human Resources:               S Chilton, Director

Law and Governance:        E Jones  
  C Sinclair

Apologies:                       Councillor G Lewis and A Tucker

## **Public Business**

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

There were no declarations of interest.

### **8.       Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2024 were agreed and signed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

### **9.       Cabinet Member Priorities for the year**

The Board received a briefing from the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources setting out his priorities for the forthcoming year.

The Cabinet Member highlighted that the budget was the main priority, and the presentation covered:

- Financial challenges and pressures – including £30m savings which needed to be made whilst maintaining services
- The legal responsibility of balancing the budget which was achievable but was becoming ever more challenging
- The ongoing work that was being undertaken to identify savings

- The impact of Coventry receiving less-than-average funding compared to other authorities in the West Midlands region

The Board asked a number of questions arising from the presentation including on the following issues:

- How the Chancellor was helping local authorities to deliver their needs.
- What actions were being taken in respect of Coventry's underfunding compared to other local authorities

In noting the report, the Board requested that the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources:

- Consider how best to present the challenges outlined in his presentation (including any involvement with SIGOMA) at a future meeting.
- Consider, for future annual priorities presentations, what data could be distributed to the Board in advance of the meeting.

## 10. **Workforce Metrics**

The Board noted a report which provided the current workforce analytics, the data within it included the numbers employed, turnover, starters, leavers, sickness absence, agency workers, and, where possible historical data had been included for comparative purposes. The report enabled a comprehensive overview and explanation of the workforce and related metrics.

HR were now able to provide 'live' workforce analytical information due to the development of the data warehouse. This had been a shared development between HR and IT. Information was refreshed daily and was accessible to directors and managers on their desktops and it was flexible enough to be able to view at both service level and by category, ie grade, contract type, occupied and vacant posts.

The presentation also set out data on:

- Agency staff
- New developments in relation to the recruitment process
- Workforce diversity and inclusion data
- Retention
- Sickness absence
- Learning and development
- Benefits

The Board questioned the officer on a number of matters arising from the presentation including the following:

- The measures taken to address sickness absence in respect of the category 'stress, depression and anxiety.'
- The use of agency staff particularly in areas where there had been difficulties in recruiting.

Following questions, the Board asked to receive up to data information on the following:

- Number of vacant posts.
- Number of staff using counselling services

**Resolved that the Board**

- a) Note the contents of the report**
- b) Acknowledge and commend the on-going work being undertaken to improve the range and access of data to address workforce challenges**
- c) Establish a Task and Finish Group to look at issues around the use of agency staff**

**11. Work Programme and Outstanding Issues**

The Work Programme was noted with a request from Members for Officers to provide clarification on the item entitled 'alternative accommodation'.

There were no outstanding issues.

**12. Any other items of Public Business**

There were no other items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 12.00 pm)

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Coventry City Council

## Briefing note

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**To: Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1)**

**Date: 9 October 2024**

**Subject: Pre-Budget Engagement 2025/26**

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### **1 Purpose of the note**

- 1.1 Local Authorities are required to set a balanced budget prior to the beginning of each financial year. Historically in Coventry, members have approved a pre-budget report in December each year following which a formal public consultation process happens to inform the final budget setting proposals in February. This note proposes a pre-budget consultation process for 3 weeks in October 2024 to inform member choices in the December pre-budget report.

### **2 Recommendations**

Members of Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board are recommended to:

- a) Note the contents of the proposed pre budget engagement included at Appendix A.
- b) Identify any recommendations for the Cabinet Member (Strategic Finance and Resources) to consider as part of the proposed pre budget consultation proposed to take place in October 2024.

### **3 Information/Background**

- 3.1 All Local Authorities must legally set a balanced budget prior to the beginning of each financial year. Coventry City Council has historically approved a final budget and set Council tax in February each year, following a pre-budget report in December, and a formal eight week consultation between December and early February.
- 3.2 In previous years, the formal engagement process has taken the form of public meetings, workforce meetings, and online surveys. Historically however, public engagement has been limited. This additional process aims to improve the level of engagement from residents.

- 3.3 Given the decreasing real terms resources for local government as a sector, and the widespread activity and inflationary pressures across all services, particularly social care and homelessness, this has meant steady year on year reductions in resources for non-statutory service areas. At the same time, there has been a steady increase in the amount that residents and businesses pay for services through Council Tax and Business rates.
- 3.4 The squeeze on public finances has left little or no room for policy choices to invest in many of the services which both the people of Coventry and elected members value greatly, often resulting in disinvestment in many cases.
- 3.5 The City Council has a formal medium-term plan which sets out its priorities, called the One Coventry Plan (2022-2030), which was recently refreshed and approved in March 2023, following its own consultation process. There are strong links between service priorities and the Councils medium term financial sustainability set out in the plan.
- 3.6 It is proposed to create even stronger links between the Council priorities in the One Coventry Plan and the budget setting process by carrying out a pre-budget engagement exercise in October, which would inform the proposals to elected members in the pre-budget report in December
- 3.7 The exercise would not include any financial proposals, but would seek views on what taxpayers in the city value most from their Council, and how they would prioritise services, such that members and officers can better shape budget proposals for the following financial year.
- 3.8 Attached is a draft survey, which is proposed to be publicised following Scrutiny Board. It is hoped that by promoting the survey widely, this will attract more members of the public and other stakeholders to take part in shaping how the City spends and deploys its resources.
- 3.9 Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board is requested to consider the draft documents and provide feedback to the Cabinet Member of Strategic Finance and Resources, in order to inform the process to aid its effectiveness.

**Name** Phil Helm  
**Job Title** Head of Finance  
**Contact Details** 024 7697 2092 [phil.helm@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:phil.helm@coventry.gov.uk)



As we shape our financial plans in Coventry, we want to hear from local people about their views and values.

We would be really keen to hear your views about:

- the things that concern both you and your family; and
- where we should focus resources as we work to improve lives across our city.

**1. Which of the following are you concerned about? (please select up to three responses)**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> My physical health and fitness</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> My mental health and wellbeing</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Being lonely</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Climate change</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Housing security</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Housing affordability</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Employment security</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Future job prospects</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Paying bills</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Educational provision</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Raising children</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Levels of crime in my town/neighbourhood</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Anti-social behaviour in my community</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The local environment/ pollution</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Cleanliness of street and local area</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Condition of roads and pavements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Community relations</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Public transport</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other _____</li> </ul> |
|--|---|
- None of these

**2. Coventry City Council has set out a range of commitments that it will deliver over the next six years. Which of these should the council prioritise? (Please select up to four responses)**

Good local jobs	<input type="checkbox"/>	Attract new investment for businesses	<input type="checkbox"/>	Invest in new technologies	<input type="checkbox"/>	Enable more 'sustainable' and active travel	<input type="checkbox"/>
Grow the 'green' economy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Support communities to tackle climate change	<input type="checkbox"/>	Improve energy efficiency in homes	<input type="checkbox"/>	Minimise the amount of waste generated	<input type="checkbox"/>
Promote biodiversity and green spaces	<input type="checkbox"/>	Encourage healthier lifestyles	<input type="checkbox"/>	Help vulnerable people to live independently	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tackle violence and abuse in all forms	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improve standards in education	<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide support to struggling families	<input type="checkbox"/>	Protect vulnerable children	<input type="checkbox"/>	Increase digital inclusion	<input type="checkbox"/>

**3. How strongly do you agree or disagree that Coventry City Council should do each of the following when faced with financial pressures? (Select one per statement)**

	Agree strongly	Agree slightly	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree slightly	Disagree strongly
Introduce charges for some services which are currently free/subsidised	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduce or stop delivering some services to protect others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Encourage local people and communities to deliver certain services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Help people to help themselves more so they have less reliance on publicly funded services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prioritise spending to protect services for the most vulnerable and those without choice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use / partner with other organisational bodies to provide services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**4. Please rank the following Council services in order of importance to you, with 1 being the most important and 12 being the least important.**

- Adult Social Care (for example support for carers and specialist equipment to help people live at home)
- Schools (special needs support and help with school admissions)
- Childcare and Early Years (provide parents to be and expectant parents with extra support)
- Environment and Waste (Tackling fly tipping and waste collections)
- Highways and Lighting (Road maintenances and street lighting)
- Public Health (Helping with stopping smoking, alcohol and drugs prevention and mental health support)
- Housing and Homelessness (Improving access to social housing and support for homeless families)
- Sport and Leisure (increasing access to sports activities and facilities)
- Library Services (availability of library services near where you live)
- Economic Development (helping regeneration, jobs and skills)
- Street Cleaning (Reducing litter on streets)
- Parks (Better access to and facilities at local parks)

**5. If you have any suggestions how we might do things differently, please tell us below.**



**Please select which area of Coventry you live or work in (please select one)**

- Bablake
- Binley and Willenhall
- Cheylesmore
- Earlsdon
- Foleshill
- Henley
- Holbrook
- Longford
- Lower Stoke
- Radford
- St Michaels
- Sherbourne
- Upper Stoke
- Wainbody
- Westwood
- Whoberley
- Woodlands
- Wyken
- I do not live or work in Coventry
- Other

**Tell us about yourself.**

**These optional questions help us to understand how different people are affected by the proposals:**

- How did you find out about this survey? (please select one)
- Councillor
- Facebook
- From a friend/family member
- From a Voluntary, Community Sector Organisation
- From Coventry City Council's website
- Newsletter from Coventry City Council
- Newsletter from Let's Talk Coventry
- Newspaper
- Poster
- X (Twitter)
- Other

**What age group are you in?**

- Under 16
- 16-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75-84
- 85 or over

**How would you describe yourself?**

- Male
- Female
- In another way
- Prefer not to say

**Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?**

- Yes
- No, write in gender identity
- Prefer not to say

**Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?**

- Straight/Heterosexual
- Gay or Lesbian
- Bisexual
- Other sexual orientation, write in
- Prefer not to say

**Which of the following best describes your ethnic background?**

- White English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British
- White Irish
- White Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- White Roma
- Other White Background
- Mixed White and Black Caribbean
- Mixed White and Black African
- Mixed White and Asian
- Other Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Background
- Asian or Asian British Indian
- Asian or Asian British Pakistani
- Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi

- Asian or Asian British Chinese
- Other Asian Background
- Black or Black British African
- Black or Black British Caribbean
- Other/Black/African/Caribbean background
- Arab
- Other
- Prefer not to say

**What is your religion?**

- No Religion
- Christian (including Church of England, Catholic, Protestant and all other Christian denominations)
- Buddhist
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Sikh
- Atheist
- Prefer not to say
- Other

**Do you consider yourself to be a disabled person?**

- Yes
- No

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# Agenda Item 5

SB1 Work Programme 2024/25

Last updated 24<sup>th</sup> September

Please see page 2 onwards for background to items

<b>17<sup>th</sup> July 24</b>
Establish a Task & Finish Group – Home to School Travel (July) CIPFA Financial Management Code
<b>11<sup>th</sup> September 24</b>
Cabinet Member Priorities of the year Workforce Reports and HR Response to Staff Survey
<b>9<sup>th</sup> October 2024</b>
Budget Pre-Engagement
<b>6<sup>th</sup> November 24</b>
Reserves Position Council Tax Arrears and Collection
<b>8<sup>th</sup> January 2025</b>
Medium-Term Financial Strategy Budget Consultation
<b>12<sup>th</sup> February 25</b>
Council Investment Portfolio Artificial Intelligence Policy Recruitment and Retention
<b>26<sup>th</sup> March 25</b>
#CovConnects
<b>2024/25</b>
Council Office Accommodation Procurement and Social Value Budget Pre-Budget Report following Cabinet 10/12/24 Task & Finish Group – Increased use of agency staff

Date	Title	Detail	Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer
17 <sup>th</sup> 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
11 <sup>th</sup> 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
9 <sup>th</sup> 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
6 <sup>th</sup> 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



<b>Date</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Detail</b>	<b>Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer</b>
<b>8<sup>th</sup> January 2025</b>	Medium-Term Financial Strategy	To discuss the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy prior to its approval through the political process. This is an annual item.	Cllr Brown /Barry Hastie/ Tina Pinks / Phil Helm
	Budget Consultation		Tina Pinks Cllr Brown
<b>12<sup>th</sup> February 25</b>	Council Investment Portfolio	Risks and returns	Barry Hastie / 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,	Cllr Hetherton Paul Ward
	Recruitment and Retention	Diversity within recruitment and retention (SB1)	Susanna Newing Cllr Brown
<b>26<sup>th</sup> March 25</b>	#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 <sup>th</sup> September.	Cllr Brown/Cllr Hetherton Adrienne Bellingeri, Laura Waller
<b>2024/25</b>	Council Office Accommodation	Review the usage of Council office space within the context of making savings.	Cllr O'Boyle Cllr Brown Richard Moon
	Procurement and Social Value		Rob Amor, Cllr Brown
	Budget Pre-Budget Report following Cabinet 10/12/24		Tina Pinks, Cllr Brown

Date	Title	Detail	Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer
	Task & Finish Group – Increased use of agency staff		S Newing / Cllr Brown