



Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources

Time and Date

3.00 pm on Monday, 27th January, 2025

Place

Committee Room 3 - Council House

Public Business

1. **Apologies**
2. **Declarations of Interest**
3. **Minutes** (Pages 3 - 6)
 - a) To agree the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 February, 2024
 - b) Any matters arising
4. **Petitions Relating to the Budget Setting Proposals 2025/26** (Pages 7 - 14)

Report of the Director of Law and Governance

 1. A petition relating to 'Cancelling proposed increased car parking charges at the War Memorial Park' bearing 673 signatures has been submitted. The petition is being supported by Councillor J Lepoidevin, a Woodlands Ward Councillor, who has been invited to the meeting for this item, along with the Lead Petitioner.
 2. A petition relating to 'Stopping the proposed cuts to tackling fly-tipping in our city' bearing 185 signatures has been submitted. The petition is being sponsored by Councillor T Sawdon, a Wainbody Ward Councillor, who has been invited to the meeting for this item, along with the Lead Petitioner.
 3. A petition relating to 'Reviewing pre-budget proposals to reduce funding to Grapevine' bearing 68 signatures has been submitted. The petition is being supported by Councillor J Gardiner, a Sherbourne Ward Councillor, who has been invited to the meeting for this item, along with the Lead Petitioner.

5. **Any other items of public business which the Cabinet Member decides to take as matters of urgency because of the special circumstances involved.**

Private Business

Nil

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

Friday, 17 January 2025

Note: The person to contact about the agenda and documents for this meeting is Suzanne Bennett Tel: 024 7697 2299

Membership: Councillors R Brown (Cabinet Member)

By invitation:

Councillor P Male (Shadow Cabinet Member)
Councillor J Lepoidevin (For Item 4 – Petition)
Councillor T Sawdon (For Item 4 – Petition)
Councillor J Gardiner (For Item 4 – Petition)

Public Access

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Suzanne Bennett
Tel: 024 7697 2299

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources
held at 10.00 am on Monday, 5 February 2024

Present:	Councillor R Brown (Cabinet Member) Councillor P Male (Shadow Cabinet Member)
Other Members:	Councillor J Blundell Councillor M Heaven Councillor Dr L Kelly Councillor AS Khan (Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities) Councillor J Lepoidevin Councillor S Nazir Councillor A Tucker
Employees (by service area):	
Education and Skills:	R Sugars
Finance:	P Helm
Law and Governance:	O Aremu, M Salmon, C Taylor
Public Health and Wellbeing:	K Larsen
Streetscene and Regulatory Services:	A Walster (Director of Streetscene and Regulatory Services)
Apologies:	Councillor G Ridley

Public Business

9. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

10. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 7th March 2023 were agreed and signed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

11. Petitions Relating to the Budget Setting Proposals 2024/25

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources considered a report of the Chief Legal Officer relating to petitions that had been received in relation to the budget setting proposals for 2024/25 to 2026/27. In line with the Council's Petition Scheme, the petition organisers/sponsor had been invited to attend the meeting to outline their concerns to the Cabinet Member.

On 12th December 2023, Cabinet approved the Pre-Budget Report for 2024/25 which outlined, for consultation, a set of new revenue budget proposals for 2024/25 to 2026/27 which represented changes to the Council's existing Budget. The proposals were subject to an 8-week consultation period ending on 7th February 2024. The outcome of the consultation process would be included in the final Budget Setting Report for 2024/25, which would be considered by the Cabinet and Council at their meetings on 20th February 2024.

A petition had been submitted headed 'Memorial Park Free Parking', bearing 3307 signatures, relating to the proposal to remove the current 3 hours free parking at the War Memorial Park and to standardise parking charges with those at Coombe Abbey Park. The proposed parking charges were as follows:

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

The petition was sponsored by Councillor Blundell, a Wainbody Ward Councillor, who attended the meeting and spoke on behalf of the petitioners. The Petition Spokesperson was unable to attend the meeting.

Councillor Blundell spoke in support of the petition explaining that it had been raised due to concerns from park users, in particular, from parents of children at Styvechale Primary School who used the car park to park to walk their children to and from the school. He also raised concerns relating to the resulting additional parking pressures that would be created in nearby streets and the War Memorial Park café attracting less patronage if people changed their parking habits as a result of the introduction of charges.

Councillor Kelly and Councillor Tucker, Earlsdon Ward Councillors, also spoke in support of the petition outlining their concerns, in particular, that the War Memorial Park was used differently to Coombe Abbey Park and couldn't be used as a comparison and that the streets of Earlsdon would be adversely affected, especially in light of the Earlsdon Liveable Neighbourhood Scheme's implementation.

Councillor Male spoke in support of the petition, concurring with Councillors comments, and referring to the results of the impact study which was carried out when parking charges were first applied to the War Memorial Park.

The issues raised were summarised as follows:

- Parents used the War Memorial Park car park to park their cars to walk children to and from Styvechale Primary School.
- The proposed charges would result in additional parking pressures on nearby roads and the café in the park would attract less patronage if people changed their parking habits.
- It was likely that the proposed car parking charges would not achieve the income target of £150k.

- Additional monies had recently been received from Government and those, along with the surplus from the budget proposals, would allow a balanced budget without the inclusion of the proposed parking charges at the park.
- The charges could have an adverse impact on the Earlsdon Liveable Neighbourhood Scheme proposals, due to the likelihood of more cars being parked in nearby streets.
- The proposals did not fit with the promotion of healthier living as part of the One Coventry Plan, if the charges deterred people from using the park.
- The War Memorial Park should not be compared to Coombe Abbey Park as the parks were used for different purposes.

Officers responded, advising of the following:

- By increasing parking charges, officers were confident that the £150k savings would be achieved.
- The charges would bring car parking charges at the War Memorial Park in line with Coombe Abbey Park. This was based on car parking charges applied elsewhere and in line with actual car numbers using the Park.
- The impact study results when charges had first been introduced at the park had shown no detriment to parking on the surrounding streets.
- There would be a review of parking in the streets around the War Memorial Park to measure impact post implementation.

Two petitions had been submitted in relation to the proposal to remove funding that subsidised the provision of non-statutory school transport, affecting 5 dedicated school routes to Bishop Ullathorne Secondary school and an extension to a public transport route serving Blue Coat Secondary school, affecting approximately 400 pupils. The Council had provided funding to subsidise these routes following a commercial provider ceasing to operate during the pandemic in 2020. The Council would continue to provide bus passes for children entitled to statutory support for home to school transport to enable them to utilise the public transport network.

The first petition was headed 'Save Our Buses' and contained 538 signatures. The Petition Organiser attended the meeting and spoke on behalf of the petitioners.

The second petition headed 'Removal of Funding Subsidy to Faith School Bus Routes', contained 250 signatures. The Petition Organiser attended the meeting and spoke on behalf of the petitioners.

The Petition Organisers raised the following issues:

- Public transport buses were already full to capacity.
- More buses were needed to ensure all children could be accommodated.
- If the funding was removed and the school buses were stopped, children would not be able to get home safely and reliably.
- Petition organisers had contacted the Mayor for the West Midlands and Transport for West Midlands about the issue but had received little or no response.
- The need for pupils to travel to and from school safely and reliably has not gone away since the pandemic.

- Traffic volumes, due to parents using cars for school drop-offs and pick-ups, would increase and the impact on the environment and the air quality would decrease.
- It was necessary to arrange an additional bus service using the same route with an appropriate provider.
- It was suggested that the City Council, Transport for West Midlands, and the school should work together to find a solution for the future.

Councillors Blundell, Heaven, Lepoidevin, Male and Nazir spoke in support of the petition and concurred with the comments made by the Petition Organisers.

Officers responded, advising of the following:

- The City Council provided a short-term response to the situation following the commercial provider ceasing to trade.
- Concerns relating to bus capacity would be taken up with Transport for West Midlands.
- When the commercial provider ceased trading, the City Council was in receipt of a grant from the Department for Education for transport relating to social distancing. This grant was used for the 2021 and 2022 academic years after which the grant ended. Initially the grant provided additional transport for 15-16 schools in the city. Once the grant had finished all additional transport to schools stopped with only the bus to Bishop Ullathorne School remaining.
- Officers were in touch with schools and Transport for West Midlands were aware of the issue.
- The Council had not been subsidising the bus routes.
- Officers were aware that transport costs had increased and there had been difficulties in recruiting bus drivers.

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources thanked everyone for attending the meeting and for the comments made and confirmed that the issues raised would be considered as part of the consultation process for the Budget Setting proposals for 2024/25.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources:

- 1) Notes the petitions received and considers comments and issues raised at the meeting.**
- 2) Agrees that the petitions and issues raised be considered as part of the consultation process for the Budget Setting proposals for 2024/25.**

- 12. Any other items of public business which the Cabinet Member decides to take as matters of urgency because of the special circumstances involved.**

There were no other items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 11.00 am)



Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources

27 January, 2025

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources – Councillor R Brown

Director approving submission of the report:

Director of Law and Governance

Ward(s) affected:

Citywide

Title: Petitions Relating to the Budget Setting Proposals 2025/26

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive summary:

On 10 December, 2024, Cabinet approved the Pre-Budget Report for 2025/26 which outlined, for consultation, a set of new revenue budget proposals for 2025/26 to 2027/28 which represented changes to the Council's existing Budget. The proposals are subject to a consultation period which ends on 28 January, 2025. The outcome of the consultation process will be included in the final Budget Setting Report for 2025/26, which will be considered by Cabinet and Council at their meetings on 25 February 2025.

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

Recommendations:

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

- 1) Note the petitions received and consider any comments and issues raised at the meeting.
- 2) Agree that the petitions and the issues raised be considered as part of the consultation process for the Budget Setting proposals for 2025/26.

List of Appendices included:

None

Background papers:

None

Other useful documents

Pre-Budget Report for 2025/26 – Cabinet, 10 December 2024

Has it or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

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

The outcome of the consultation on the Budget Setting for 2025/26 will be considered by Cabinet and Council on 25 February 2025

Will this report go to Council?

Yes – 25 February, 2025

Report title: Petitions Relating to the Budget Setting Proposals 2025/26

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 The Council is required to set a balanced budget and this legal duty is balanced with continuing to deliver the key services to residents and businesses in the City.
- 1.2 The Pre-Budget report forecast a shortfall of £14m for 2025/26, rising to c£15m the following year and indicated that this had been brought on by rising demand, underfunding and the tough economic climate, not just in Coventry but across the whole sector. As a result of these pressures, a number of cost-cutting proposals were put forward for residents, colleagues and businesses to comment on. The proposals are subject to a consultation period which ends on 28 January, 2025.
- 1.3 Three petitions have been received, the first in relation to the proposed car parking charges at the War Memorial Park. The proposal is to remove the current 3 hours free parking at the War Memorial Park and standardise parking charges with those at Coombe Country Park, as follows:

Up to 1 hour - £1
1-2 hours - £3
2-4 hours £3.50

- 1.4 The petition currently bears 673 signatures and reads:-

“We the undersigned petition the Council to cancel the proposed increased car parking charges at the War Memorial Park.”

The justification is as follows:-

“Increasing the parking charges at War Memorial Park should be cancelled because it disproportionately affects the most vulnerable members of the community, including families with children and individuals who rely on the park for exercise and well-being. Higher fees will discourage people from visiting the park, leading to reduced physical activity and social interaction, which are crucial for a healthy community. Additionally, the increased charges will cause displacement parking, burdening local residents with congestion and inconvenience. Cancelling the proposed charges will help maintain the park's accessibility and ensure that it remains a welcoming and inclusive space for everyone.”

- 1.5 A second petition, currently bearing 185 signatures, has been received in relation to the proposal to a £690k reduction in the Streetpride (cleansing) service, impacting the City Centre and priority neighbourhoods. The pre-budget report indicates that the “reduction in fly tipping clearance response times could lead to an increase in overall fly-tipping. Response times for graffiti removal and emergency cleansing would also increase”.

The petition reads:-

“We the undersigned petition the Council to abandon its reckless and short-sighted proposal to cut funding for fly-tipping clean-ups in our city. Clean streets are not a privilege - they are a fundamental right for every resident. By cutting this service, the Council risks turning our cherished city into a dumping ground. We call on the Council to cut fly-tipping, not the budget because Coventry deserves better.”

The justification for the petition reads:

“Fly tipped waste isn't just unsightly, it's hazardous. It contaminates our soil and water, harms wildlife, and poses serious health risk for residents. Fly-tipping vermin-infested rubbish near our schools and playgrounds. The council might save money now, but the long-term costs of environmental damage, public health and declining property values will be far greater. A clean city attracts businesses, boosts tourism and enhances our quality of life. Don't let Coventry become a dumping ground!!!”

- 1.6 The third petition, which currently bears 68 signatures, has been received in relation to the proposed Adult Social Care - Voluntary Sector Review. The pre-budget report indicates that Grant Aid agreements with 12 voluntary sector organisations end on 31 March 2025. The proposal is to commence a tender against a series of service areas for a total value of half of the current spend of £1.5m.

The petition reads:-

“We the undersigned petition the Council to review its pre-budget proposal to reduce funding to Grapevine by 45%. Grapevine delivers a vital early help service for people with learning disabilities, across Coventry, allowing them to remain independent and preventing the need for Council intervention.

The justification for the petition reads:-

This cut is part of the 50% to the voluntary sector support grant, proposal 25 in the pre budget proposals '25/26”.

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

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 A Budget Setting report is scheduled to be considered by Cabinet and Full Council on 25 February 2025 and the petitions and the issues raised in these petitions and the wider consultation will be taken into account as part of this decision-making. This is the recommended option.
- 2.2 The other option will be to “do nothing” which is not recommended.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

The proposals relating to the Budget Setting report 2025/26 have been the subject of an extensive consultation period that ends on 28 January, 2025. The outcome of the consultation will be included in the final Budget Setting report 2025/26 to be considered by Cabinet and Council on 25 February 2025.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

The Cabinet Member is considering the petitions during the consultation period in order the issues raised can be fed into the consultation process and considered alongside other responses when Cabinet and Council make their final recommendations on the

Council's budget. Any decisions relating to the Budget Setting report will be implemented in the 2025/26 financial year.

5. **Comments from the Director of Finance and Resources and the Director of Law and Governance**

5.1. Financial Implications

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

	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
War Memorial Park – Parking Charges	£150k	£150k	£150k
Reduction in Streetpride budget	£690k	£690k	£690k
Adult Social Care - Voluntary Sector Review	£560k	£750k	£750k

5.2 Legal Implications

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

The proposals in the final Budget setting report are required to meet the Council's statutory obligations in relation to setting a balanced 2025/26 budget. This includes the duty to report to the Council on the robustness of the estimates provided and the adequacy of the financial reserves in place. Section 31A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 refer.

6. **Other implications**

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

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

Not applicable to this report. The implications of the final recommendations will be contained in the Budget Setting Report 2025-26.

6.2 **How is risk being managed?**

Not applicable to this report. The implications of the final recommendations will be contained in the Budget Setting Report 2025-26.

6.3 **What is the impact on the organisation?**

Not applicable to this report. The implications of the final recommendations will be contained in the Budget Setting Report 2025-26.

6.4 **Equalities / EIA?**

EIAs for all of the proposals contained in the Pre-Budget Report for 2025/26 were referred to in that report and are published on the Council's engagement platform, Let's Talk Coventry. The EIAs for each of the proposals will be updated to include any changes or additional information received as part of the public consultation ahead of the final Budget setting report.

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

Not applicable to this report. The implications of the final recommendations will be contained in the Budget Setting Report 2025-26.

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

Not applicable to this report. The implications of the final recommendations will be contained in the Budget Setting Report 2025-26.

Report author:

Suzanne Bennett
 Governance Services Co-ordinator

Service Area:

Law and Governance

Tel and email contact:

Tel: 02476 972299

Email: Suzanne.bennett@coventry.gov.uk

Enquiries should be directed to the above person

Contributor/approver name	Title	Service Area	Date doc sent out	Date response received or approved
Contributors:				
Caroline Taylor	Governance Services Officer	Law and Governance	8.1.25	8.1.25
Adrian West	Head of Governance	Law and Governance	8.01.25	8.01.25
Oluremi Aremu	Head of Legal and Procurement	Law and Governance	13.01.25	13.01.25
Kristie Larson	Lead Officer – Consult and Engage	Public Health and Insight	13.01.25	13.01.25
Tim Wetherhill	Parks and Open Space Manager	City Services and Commercial	14.01.25	14.01.25
Names of approvers for submission: (officers and members)				
Phil Helm	Head of Corporate Finance	Finance	13.01.25	14.01.25
Julie Newman	Director of Law and Governance	-	13.01.25	14.01.25
Councillor R Brown	Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources	-	13.01.25	17.01.25

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