

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4)
held at 10.00 am on Wednesday, 9 April 2025

Present:

Members: Councillor M Ali (Chair)
 Councillor B Christopher
 Councillor G Hayre
 Councillor L Kelly
 Councillor J McNicholas
 Councillor E Ruane
 Councillor T Sawdon
 Councillor R Thay

Employees (by Service
Area):

City Services and P Bowman, S Elliot, S Morris, M McHugh
Commercial

Adults and Housing J Crawshaw

Law and Governance: S Bennet, G Holmes, A Veness

Regeneration and M Dillow
Economy

Apologies: Councillor R Bailey

Public Business

29. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

30. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13th May 2025 were agreed and signed as a true record.

Further to Minute 25, it was noted that the information requested regarding the current situation of Coventry Swimming Baths had not been circulated and that this would be chased up.

31. Retrofit of Social Housing

The Scrutiny Board considered a Briefing Note of Citizen, together with a detailed presentation at the meeting, which provided information retrofitting of social housing provided by Citizen. Representatives from Citizen explain the work being undertaken and their long-term strategies.

Citizen Officers referred to the strong partnership with the City Council that had been effective and mutually beneficial for 22 years and indicated that they were proud of the work completed together.

The presentation covered:

- Investment in homes and places
- Improving quality and sustainability
- Decarbonisation – Tackling damp and mould
- Responding to customers and customers' feedback

In considering the Briefing Note and the presentation by Citizen, the Scrutiny Board asked questions, received responses and discussed a number of matters as summarised below_

- What happens when there are homes bought under the right to buy scheme adjacent or nearby and how in these cases Citizen tries to come to a mutually beneficial agreement, can offer help but ultimately it is up to the private owners and would need to be paid for by them.
- How Citizen conducts repairs or improvements in houses where tenants refuse entry, and that in these cases, they communicate and work closely with them to work out a strategy they feel comfortable with. In cases where they believe there may be illegal activity, they reserve the right to use legal enforcement to gain entry.
- That Citizen had officers who were happy to be contacted by Councillors with questions or suggestions and it was noted that contact details would be made available to all Councillor.
- Information relating to Awaab's Law that will require landlords to respond to complaints from tenants over hazards on their properties.
- That older properties had ventilation, heating or other issues that made them more likely to develop mould and harder to refurbish.

Citizen were thanked for their attendance and for the information provided.

RESOLVED that the Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4) note and welcome the information provided.

32. Litter and Community Volunteers

The Scrutiny Board considered a Briefing Note of the Report of the Director of City Services and Commercial which provided an update on the Council's street cleansing activities and work with community Volunteers.

The Briefing Note indicated that the team currently cleanse 10'000 miles of road network each year and empty over 3'000 street litter bins each week. Cleansing activities are also undertaken in the city's parks and open spaces.

Resources are allocated based on area need, which means that some areas receive more visits/resources than others. This is based on statistical data and levels of waste removed from both litter bins, streets and parks and open spaces. Furthermore, a Fundamental Service Review was undertaken in 2010, with a

further review in 2015 as part of the budget setting process for 2016/17, these reviews resulted in an overall reduction of 25% of the workforce. As a result, this has seen a reduction in service delivery, which has created challenges, particularly in respect to the cleanliness across the city.

The Cabinet Member for City Services indicated that there is a proactive group of volunteers whom the Council work closely with to provide equipment for litter picking, arrange collection of bags and large items. Meetings are held regularly with volunteer groups to discuss any local issues, share information and work together to find solutions. The Cabinet Member also thanked the litter picking volunteers and emphasised the big difference they made on the city and its cleanliness.

The Scrutiny Board asked questions, received responses and discussed a number of matters as summarised below.

- The reduction in numbers of fixed penalty notices issued since Covid and noted that this was due to a combination of less resources, lower footfall in the city centre and the switch from cigarettes to vapes.
- How the Community Payback Scheme supported the work, particularly in clearing entries.
- The need for witnesses to litter dropping to be able to issue fixed penalty notices, steps taken to get the public on board and using Communications to spread the message.
- It was noted that the money from fines goes back into the service supporting CCTV and other aspects of enforcement.
- How voluntary litter picking groups can liaise with area managers to ensure best allocation of resources and avoid duplication.
- Work undertaken to limit the amount of litter churned by mowing but that it won't be eliminated 100%.
- Issues with private rented sector properties and encouraging reporting of issues.
- The partnership work undertaken with Citizen to remove fly-tipping on their land, enabling the Council to assess for evidence before it is removed.
- Recognition that voluntary litter picking groups are to be commended, but that it's easy for enthusiasm to tail off.

The Scrutiny Board requested further information about work with Community Payback over the last 5 years to clear entries and thanked officers for all the work undertaken in this regard.

RESOLVED that the Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4):

- 1. Notes the information provided in the Briefing Note concerning litter and community volunteers.**
- 2. Recommends that the Cabinet Member for City Services gives consideration to maintaining the one-off budget increase in 2025-26 as part of the Budget Setting process for at least the next three years Resident Parking Schemes.**

33. Resident Parking Schemes

The Scrutiny Board considered a Briefing Note of the Director for City Services and Commercial which provided an update on the current arrangements and plans for the roll-out of residents parking permit charges.

The Briefing Note indicated that the Council has extremely limited financial resources to implement and manage resident parking schemes (RPS). Cabinet approved a policy for managing RPS in January 2017. The policy states that “the operational running costs, together with the cost of enforcement of the parking scheme must be self-funding with no financial burden on the Council.” The annual running costs of operating the RPS across the city is £240k. Therefore, historically RPS were contributing to an annual deficit of £210k.

To remedy this, the Budget Report for 2024/25 included a proposal to standardise the cost of a parking permit at £10 per year. The report was consulted on and then approved by full Council in February 2024. The final phase of the roll-out was completed in December 2024. Consequently, all pre-existing permit schemes have now transitioned to the standard permit charge of £10 per year.

As a result, the Council were now recouping £120k annually. The service still operated at a loss, but this was a much stronger position than previously, and they expected the situation to improve as uptake increased and vacant staff positions are filled.

The Cabinet Member for City Services noted that RPS were the subject of numerous petitions and, as a key priority for residents, it was therefore important to ensure they were financially sustainable.

In considering the Briefing Note, the Scrutiny Board asked questions, received responses and discussed a number of matters as summarised below:

- That although there was anecdotal evidence of cars lacking permits not being prosecuted for weeks, the scheme had seen a 20% increase in number of fixed penalty notices issued compared to the previous financial year and that that figure was predicted to continue to grow.
- It was requested that data regarding the number of fixed penalty notices issued per ward would be circulated.
- What the level of take up was for permits in areas with schemes and that although exact percentages were unavailable, they had issued approximately 12,000 permits in the previous financial year.
- Precise details surrounding the number of permits allowed per household and exemptions for events.
- How requests for schemes were dealt with on a case-by-case basis.
- That reminders were sent when a permit lapsed, but no subsequent reminders were sent if the initial reminder was not responded to.
- The different arrangements in place for the RPS around the Coventry Building Society Arena were noted.

RESOLVED that the Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4) note the completion of the roll-out of the standardised permit charge and the impact it has had on the Council’s finances.

34. **Work Programme 2024/2025**

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Board's Work Programme for 2024/25 be noted.

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

There were no other items of urgent public business.

(Meeting closed at 12.20 pm)