

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities held at 9.00
am on Thursday, 10 April 2025

Present:

Members: Councillor AS Khan (Cabinet Member)
Councillor P Akhtar (Deputy Cabinet Member)
Councillor J Lepoidevin (Shadow Cabinet Member)

Other Members (By Invitation): Councillor N Akhtar
Councillor S Jobbar

Employees (by Directorate):

Law and Governance J Adams, F Cartwright, L Knight, L Nagle

Public Business

29. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

30. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 27th February 2025 were agreed and signed as a true record.

31. Renewal of a Public Spaces Protection Order for St Michaels and Surrounding Area

The Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities considered a report of the Director of Law and Governance, which sought approval to renew the Public Spaces Protection Order for St Michael's and surrounding areas.

In 2019 a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) was created for St Michael's Ward and the surrounding areas. The Order was granted following public consultation that was overwhelmingly in favour of the Order being granted. The matter was discussed by the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee at its meeting on 11th June 2019. The Order was subsequently renewed in 2022.

The original reason for the Order being sought was in response to the serious instances of public place violence witnessed in the city and criminal exploitation of young people. Tackling public place and serious youth violence remained a key priority for the Council and partners and it was felt that this Order plays an important part in trying to address this and make people feel safer in their communities.

Significant resources had been allocated to address matters, both regionally and locally. Whilst there appeared to be a reduction in visible "postcode gangs", it was believed that many young people were still vulnerable to criminal exploitation,

particularly around the drugs trade and, rather than be in street gangs, they were more likely to be involved in Organised Crime Groups. These groups often used violent methods to protect the areas they operate in and to deter others.

In recent times, an increase in violent incidents had been seen in the areas the Order is applicable to. Whilst it was acknowledged that a PSPO would not tackle these issues on its own, it was a tool for Police Officers to use. PSPOs were useful in that they could be used proactively for situations where officers have a concern that matters might get out of hand, people can be directed to disperse from an area rather than having to wait for an actual criminal offence to occur, which would involve additional resources and public expenditure.

Details of crime statistics for St Michael's Ward were appended to the report submitted, although it was noted that all potential criminal acts addressed or deterred by the use of the Order would not occur solely in St Michael's Ward as gangs also carried out criminal acts elsewhere in the city and outside of the city boundaries.

The Order is an "informed order", meaning that someone would be informed that there is an order in place and that their behaviour was unacceptable. Should they accept an officer's instruction and disperse, there would be no further action taken. Should they refuse to disperse and leave the area, that would be a breach of the Order. Police colleagues now record their use of PSOP's and their interactions with the public on body worn cameras and, as such, if people have a complaint regarding the use of the powers, this could be assessed.

The Cabinet Member noted that there is currently an IT issue that means current information regarding the usage of the Order is unavailable. It was reported at the meeting that work is ongoing to establish a recording mechanism to fully understand where there has been a compliance at first request therefore making it unnecessary to issue a Notice under the provisions of the Order.

The Cabinet Member noted impact statements from West Midlands Police, the Business Improvement District, Staff from the Parks and Streetscene within the Council, and the Police and Crime Commissioner, which were also appended to the report. In addition, the Cabinet Member also considered oral representations at the meeting from Chief Inspector Hamir Godhanian and several members of the public, who highlighted the antisocial behaviour and criminal activities which impact their lives.

RESOLVED that, the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities:

- 1. Note the impact statements and crime statistics from key agencies attached to the report and their rationale for extending the existing Order.**
- 2. Approve that the Order be extended for a period of three years from the date the current Order is due to expire.**
- 3. Request that all partners continue with their current actions, patrol plans and monitor the surrounding areas for any potential displacement of the issue.**

32. Response to Petitions to Tackle Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour within Hillfields

The Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities considered a report of the Director of Law and Governance, which responded to petitions seeking to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) in Hillfields.

Officers had reviewed the action taken by the City Council and the Police to address the issues raised by the petitioners. Over the past 4 years a number of initiatives had been run using a partnership approach to tackle issues of crime and ASB in Hillfields. Most recently Citizen and Coventry City Council partnered to improve outcomes and the physical environment for residents in the St. Michael's ward, with a specific focus on the Hillfields area.

Taking a partnership approach with the local Police team, social landlords and other agencies worked together to address a number of issues. This included work to reduce the risk of sexual exploitation for women and a coordinated and sustained disruption approach to known criminal offenders within the area. The partners shared local intelligence and utilised tools such as Community Protection Notices, Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) and Stop and Search to reduce ASB activity.

It was noted that redeployable cameras have been installed in fly-tipping hotspots, including Hillfields. These cameras have helped reduce fly-tipping by capturing evidence for legal action. While their main purpose is to monitor fly-tipping, they also record other crimes. Residents are encouraged to report crime issues to 101 or 999 in emergencies.

There are scheduled programs for street cleansing, with Hillfields receiving more frequent cleaning than other areas of the city. There is also a contracted weed removal service scheduled twice a year.

The Council acknowledged that public space drinking impacts safety perceptions but it cannot prohibit street alcohol consumption or fine individuals for it. Excessive alcohol consumption leads to crime and ASB. To tackle this, the Council has introduced PSPOs. The City-Wide PSPO empowers Police to confiscate alcohol from street drinkers in certain circumstances, allowing early intervention to prevent intoxication-related ASB. Additionally, specific powers enable Police action against groups involved in crime and ASB in Hillfields. To determine the effectiveness in Hillfields, the use of these powers is currently being monitored by the City Tasking Group on behalf of the Coventry Community Safety Partnership.

The Council recognised the importance of providing comprehensive activities for children during school holidays. In Coventry, the Council offers the Coventry Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme, a national initiative by the Department for Education. This programme allows eligible children and young people to participate in free activities and experiences, with complimentary meals included. The scheme operates in the Hillfields area and is promoted to children and parents through communications with local schools.

In addition, the Coventry Community Safety Partnership supports the delivery of the Steps Together Programme in Hillfields, an after-school chaperone programme, to ensure children have a safe route home from secondary school. Within Hillfields, a regular programme of activities is also provided by the Positive Youth Foundation through the Hillfields Young Peoples Centre. These services target older children and aim not only to divert them from crime and exploitation but also to help develop positive opportunities for their future.

The Positive Parenting team deliver a parenting support programme, which offers a range of parenting support for all families, covering courses from antenatal programmes to early years and teenagers.

The St Michaels Policing Team covers the Hillfields area. There are a number of police officers and PSPOs assigned to this area, addressing various crimes and incidents of ASB. Rebuilding community policing is a primary objective of the West Midlands Police Crime Commissioner, aiming to increase the visibility of officers within communities. Although new plans will be published in April 2025, initiatives are already in progress. These are being implemented through Operation Advance, an intelligence-led operation that allocates significant police resources to the area.

Councillor N Akhtar and the Petition Organiser spoke in support of the first petition, highlighting the following points:

- Fly-tipping and street drinking, particularly around the Harnall Lane East area.
- People bringing alcohol into the area and drinking outside all night.
- Litter being left by those drinking, including cans, bottles and food waste if they eat.
- Children of school age out in the street during the day while they should be at school, causing health and safety concerns with road traffic and a nuisance to residents by knocking doors and running away and kicking footballs against walls and doors. This is a particular concern around the Craner Road area.
- Risks of child exploitation, particularly when there are 10 year old girls on the streets.
- Drug dealing in the local area, causing a nuisance; being abusive and swearing at local residents, with little police support when reported.
- Weed plantations within the neighbourhood.
- Many properties in the area don't have front gardens, resulting in these incidents happening very close to homes.

Councillor S Jobbar spoke in support of the second petition, highlighting the following points:

- An increase in the number of ASB incidents.
- The impact on resident's safety and wellbeing.
- Drug taking in the area has been dramatic.
- Criminal gangs using larger alleyways for their criminal activities.
- Requirement for an action plan with housing providers to tackle the issues.

In response, the Cabinet Member was advised by officers that the work undertaken in the area was continuing and petitioners were reminded of the importance of reporting incidents of ASB, in order to ensure that there is a full picture of activity which can inform future resources.

RESOLVED that, the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities:

- 1. Requests that West Midlands Police and Council officers continue their monitoring of the area and respond accordingly to residents requiring assistance.**
- 2. Encourages residents to report crime, ASB and environmental issues to the Police and Council.**
- 3. Requests that the Coventry Community Safety partnership identify key initiatives for reducing crime and ASB in Hillfields.**
- 4. Requests that the City Tasking sub-group of the Coventry Community Safety Partnership continue to monitor the use of a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) in Hillfields and monitor the progress of the key initiatives to reduce crime and ASB in Hillfields.**
- 5. Requests that information be passed to the Attendance Team to investigate non attendance at school of children in the Craner Road area.**

33. Outstanding Issues

There were no outstanding issues.

34. Any Other Business

There were no other items of business.

(Meeting closed at 10.22 am)