

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3)
held at 2.00 pm on Wednesday, 4 February 2026

Present:

Members: Councillor R Singh (Chair)
Councillor P Akhtar
Councillor J Blundell
Councillor T Jandu
Councillor A Kaur
Councillor G Lewis
Councillor J McNicholas
Councillor B Singh

Other Members: Councillor J O'Boyle (Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration, and Climate Change)
Councillor A Tucker (Representing West Midlands Combined Authority Transport Delivery Overview and Scrutiny Committee)

Employees (by Service Area):

Innovation C Knight (Director)
Law and Governance G Holmes, T Robinson
Regeneration and Economy J Seddon, N Small
Apologies: Councillor CE Thomas

Public Business

27. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

28. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 26th November, 2025 were agreed and signed as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

29. Bus Franchising Update

The Scrutiny Board considered a Briefing Note of the Director of Regeneration and Economy and presentation by Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) providing an update on Bus Franchising.

Previously, at their meeting on the 19th February 2025, the Scrutiny Board contributed to the consultation on franchising with key updates being summarised one year on. The officer's presentation, attached at Appendix 1 to the note, covered the following areas:

- A bus service that prioritises people.
- Why franchising? – background behind decision and public support.
- A contracting model instead of the previous commercial model.
- Bus reform programme – status update.
- Bus reform governance overview.

The Scrutiny Board made comments, sought assurances and asked questions on a number of issues including:

- That there will be opportunities for members of the public and Members to feed into routes, fares and locations post-franchising, but to ensure a smooth transition the network would be kept consistent in the first instance.
- How the existing Mayoral Task Force on Journeys could be aligned to involve the customer voice in the work stream
- That TfWM have already identified and are currently working with partners who have experience of commissioning and legal processes required, from areas where franchising has already taken place, such as Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire
- That TfWM are confident that there will be companies to bid for routes and the smaller service providers will encouraged to bid for contracts in order to avoid a monopoly of providers.
- That the contracts will be managed robustly to ensure that there are clear enforceable penalties for under performance, using learning from other areas.
- That franchising will mean there is greater control over routes and pricing, which meets the needs of the public not shareholders.
- Progress is being made on acquiring Pool Meadow depot.
- No decision have yet been made on branding, however TfWM has existing branding which other areas did not have before franchising.

Members supported the progress being made but wanted to ensure that the public were also aware of the timescales for delivery and for any positive changes to bus services to be realised.

RESOLVED that the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board identities the additional recommendation to Transport for West Midlands (TfWM):

- 1) Make sure the public is updated and to manage expectations that initially the outcome will be a like for like service. Changes will come after the franchising process is finished.**

30. **Very Light Rail**

The Scrutiny Board considered a Briefing Note of the Director of Regeneration and Economy and a presentation by officers providing an update on the current status of the Coventry Very Light Rail (CVLR) programme, including the following key aspects:

- Project Timeline;
- Stakeholder Engagement; and
- Statutory Occupier Status.

The Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change, Councillor J O'Boyle, began the discussion by providing a summary of progress and recognising how CVLR was more than just a transport scheme but an economic opportunity to export CVLR to interested groups in the UK and internationally. He also highlighted future innovations such as autonomous CVLR to reduce costs and improve service.

The Scrutiny Board made comments, sought assurances and asked questions on a number of issues including:

- Communication of any potential disruption along the route with business owners, mitigation factors, and opportunities for plan redesign to reduce disruption such as elevation.
 - Use of modelling to assess route design and managing disruption both during and after construction to ensure delays are contained to weeks and not years.
 - The opportunity the route can have at demonstrating the success of CVLR with shop frontages.
 - Building tracks at ground level (instead of elevated) to minimise costs.
- VLR as a UK, and regional, manufacturing project – with slabs currently being built in Spain but likely developed in the UK in the future.
- Previous metro contributions (pre-CVLR) offering few results for Coventry's transport infrastructure.
- The viability of the slab track for heavy vehicles, its durability testing, and its cost effectiveness in comparison to other West Midland metro infrastructure projects.
- The trialling of autonomous vehicles and its appliances to VLR.
- Joining up carriages and the infrastructure benefits of smaller vehicles.
- VLR being a predominantly central government funded project.
- The development of the universal slab product and creating a route map for eventual commercialisation.
- Transport infrastructure budgets compared to London.
- Governance arrangements and the Department of Transport's validation for the scheme.
- Confidence in delivery of the project despite potential political changes post May elections – contingency plans.
- The appointment of an independent overseer to ensure the scheme has an arbiter for safety.

The Scrutiny Board thanked officers for their presentation and continued work.

RESOLVED that the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board considers the information within the Briefing Note and the Cabinet Report (attached at Appendix A).

31. **Work Programme 2025/26**

The Scrutiny Board noted the Work Programme and informed Members of the visit to UK BIC (Battery Innovation Centre) planned for March 4th 2026.

32. **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 4.00 pm)