



Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3)

Time and Date

2.00 pm on Wednesday, 4th February, 2026

Place

Diamond Rooms 1 and 2 - Council House

Public Business

1. **Apologies and Substitutions**
2. **Declarations of Interest**
3. **Minutes** (Pages 3 - 10)
 - (a) To agree the Minutes of the meeting held on 26th November 2025
 - (b) Matters arising
4. **Bus Franchising Update** (Pages 11 - 20)

Briefing Note of the Director of Regeneration and Economy
5. **Very Light Rail** (Pages 21 - 54)

Briefing Note of the Director of Regeneration and Economy
6. **Work Programme 2025/26** (Pages 55 - 60)

Report of the Scrutiny Co-ordinator
7. **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

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

Tuesday, 27 January 2026

Note: The person to contact about the agenda and documents for this meeting is Michelle Salmon, Governance Services, Email: michelle.salmon@coventry.gov.uk

Membership: Councillors P Akhtar, J Blundell, T Jandu, A Kaur, G Lewis, J McNicholas, R Singh (Chair) and CE Thomas

By invitation: Councillor J O'Boyle (Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration, and Climate Change)

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>

**Tom Robinson, Governance Services,
Email: tom.robinson@coventry.gov.uk**

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3)
held at 2.00 pm on Wednesday, 26 November 2025

Present:

Members: Councillor R Singh (Chair)

Councillor J Blundell
Councillor S Gray (Substitute for Councillor G Lewis)
Councillor T Jandu
Councillor A Kaur
Councillor G Lloyd (Substitute for Councillor P Akhtar)
Councillor J McNicholas
Councillor B Singh
Councillor CE Thomas

Other Members: Councillor J O'Boyle, Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change

Employees (by Directorate):

Law and Governance S Bennett, E Jones

People and Facilities L Lewis

Regeneration and Economy G Smailes, P Singh, S Weir

Others present: M Anderson, Bring Energy (for items contained in Minutes 23 and 25 below)

Apologies: Councillor P Akhtar
Councillor G Lewis
Councillor K Sandhu

Public Business

18. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

19. Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Board agrees to exclude the press and public under Sections 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 relating to the private item referred to in Minute 25 below headed 'Heatline District Heating Update' on the grounds that the report involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act

1972. The grounds for privacy are that it refers to information relating to the financial or business affairs of an organisation and the amount of expenditure proposed to be incurred by the Council under a particular contract for the supply of goods or services. The public interest in maintaining the exemption under Schedule 12A outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

20. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 22 October, 2025 were agreed and signed as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

21. Report on Progress Made Against Coventry Economic Development and Skills Strategies and Coventry & Warwickshire Economic Plan

The Scrutiny Board considered a Briefing Note of the Director of Regeneration and Economy, together with a comprehensive presentation at the meeting, which provided details against the key objectives of the Economic Strategy and Skills Strategy together with the Coventry and Warwickshire Economic Plan.

The Briefing Note provided context to the current economic position in the UK and the challenging business environment over the past twelve months, which has been reflected in the UK labour market. Unemployment has risen from 4.0% in August 2024 to 5.0% in September 2025. Over that time, the claimant count in Coventry has fallen from 14,065 to 13,660, suggesting that the local labour market remains robust in the face of national challenges.

The Skills Strategy was launched in November 2022. It takes a holistic approach to the skills system from early years through to lifelong learning to achieve the best outcomes for Coventry residents and businesses. It serves as a 'Framework for Action' with partners learning and developing creative solutions to skills challenges together to meet three Strategic Ambitions and eight priority areas within them.

The presentation highlighted the following key achievements of the Skills Strategy:-

- Achieved full West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) /Coventry City Council co-commissioning commitment (from April, 2026)
- Enabled Coventry College's Ofsted "Good" rating
- Supported over 1,600 residents into high-quality paid employment
- Launched the Green Skills Roadmap (January, 2025) and built momentum in key areas
- Expanded Primary Schools Aspirations – February's Primary Aspirations Week engaged 1,000 plus children in person and 2,500 plus online
- Summer Holiday Food Activity Skills Clubs
- Implemented Coventry Alternative Provision (CAP) Model – Rollout of a graduated, multi-tiered framework offering tailored support for students struggling in mainstream education

- Ensured a region-leading Adult Education Service: in the 2024/25 academic year, Coventry Adult Education supported over 7,500 learners (exceeded WMCA target)
- Taken action on graduate retention through Coventry University “Discover Coventry” programme

The Economic Development Strategy was launched in October 2022 and acts as the framework for creating a strong and resilient economy. The Strategy covered 8 priority areas.

The presentation highlighted the following key achievements of the Economic Development Strategy:-

- Delivered 257 engagements with Coventry SMEs between April and September 2025 – 91% of the 2025/26 target of 283
- Allocated £306k of the £628k SME capital grant fund in the first 6 months of 2025/26
 - £106k already claimed by Coventry SMEs, resulting in £176k additional investment
 - Followed £1.148m of grants being claimed in 2024/25, after Coventry City Council was awarded £450k top-up due to high demand – created 66 new jobs
- Delivered 23 energy audits to Coventry SMEs in the first 6 months of 2025/26 to reduce carbon emissions, with 13 audits currently in progress
 - Follows 151 completed audits in 2024/25
 - Businesses now need to use 25 MWH electricity per year to qualify for support`
- In 2024/25, Coventry and Warwickshire attracted 42 Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) projects (which equates to 32% of West Midlands FDI projects), supporting 2,828 jobs

Notable local FDI successes:-

 - Corona Energy locating in the Bourn building (150 jobs)
 - Octopus Energy expanding in Two Friargate (450 jobs)
 - Nurol Makina (defence company) locating in Leamington Spa (150 jobs)
- FDI European Cities and Regions of the Future publication 2025:
 - Coventry ranked 3rd amongst mid sized European cities for FDI Strategy
 - Coventry ranked 9th amongst mid sized European Cities for Economic Potential
- £23m of funding secured for the Coventry and Warwick Investment Zone (CWIZ)
 - Delivered a 30 MVA power supply to enable first phases of development of Greenpower park
 - Works will take just under 2 years – new power supply going live August 2027
- Worked with developers on 33 social value projects across Coventry in 2024/25
 - 153 local people employed on site
 - 24 new local apprentices started

- £930, 400 donations or in-kind contributions to local community projects
- Hosted roundtable with 10 local businesses and regional stakeholders to discuss ways to mitigate the impacts of US tariffs
- Coventry City Council and Warwickshire County Council have worked together to grow the sub-region's CreaTech cluster through the Coventry and Warwickshire Exchange (CWX) steering group
- To help increase the number of local scaleup businesses, CW Growth Hub's new CW Peer-to-Peer network has been established
- Coventry City Council has worked with Warwickshire County Council, the WMCA and the Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber to understand impacts of September's cyber-attack at Jaguar Land Rover on the local economy.

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

- Proposals for the City Centre South Development and work being undertaken with local businesses to ensure the best possible all round offer for attracting people to the city centre.
- The recent budget announcement regarding increased funding for the WMCA. It was noted that Coventry was already ahead of the game in relation to funding bids.
- The availability of grants for social enterprise businesses and start-up businesses and work undertaken in this regard.
- In response to a question, it was noted that there were very few Council owned empty properties in the City Centre and that attracting businesses to these properties was a continuous piece of work.
- An update on work undertaken in relation to the Green Skills programme was provided.
- Further information was provided in relation to the work undertaken with businesses in relation to energy audits and it was noted that each business was dealt with on a case to case basis.
- The Scrutiny Board noted the links between the Strategies and the One Coventry Plan.
- Work undertaken in relation to identifying skills shortages and the complexities of collating this data was noted.
- Information was provided on work being undertaken in relation to AI. It was noted that there was a WMCA AI fund and that Coventry was the lead for the public sector in relation to this. It was recognised that AI would have an as yet unknown impact on the labour market.
- The extensive engagement with both Coventry and Warwick University was outlined and welcomed.
- The Scrutiny Board indicated that it would be helpful to provide comparative information for future considerations of the Strategies to enable achievements and targets to be measured.
- The Scrutiny Board also indicated that it would be helpful to engage and receive feedback and information from businesses via the Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce.
- Details of work undertaken in deprived neighbourhoods was noted, particularly in relation to the success of the Jobs Fest and the hosting

- of the Job Shop in community venues across the City. The Scrutiny Board supported proposed future plans in relation to this work.
- Information regarding activity undertaken in both primary and secondary schools was provided and welcomed.
- The work undertaken by the Coventry Skills and Employment Board was noted and further consideration of the work of the Board was highlighted as a possible future item for the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee.
- It was noted that work was currently being undertaken in relation to supporting Coventry Market Traders who were being impacted by the City Centre South development.
- The difficulties in obtaining data regarding graduate retention was noted. Both Universities had been contacted in relation to this and it work was on-going in this regard.
- It was noted that Green Skills included adaption as well as de-carbonisation and that work in this regard was undertaken in conjunction with the Council's Sustainability Team.
- The importance of links with the Transport Strategy was reiterated, together with the importance of maintaining a regular and direct train service to London post HS2.
- It was noted that the City Centre South development was key to providing aspirational housing in the City Centre and attracting people to the City. It was also noted that the development would provide skilled jobs for local people.

RESOLVED that the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board:-

- 1) Notes the contents of the Briefing Note.**
- 2) Requests that future reports on this matter provide comparative information to enable the Scrutiny Board to review the Strategies and Plans objectively.**
- 3) Requests that the Chamber of Commerce be invited to attend a future meeting of the Scrutiny Board and that this be added to the Work Programme.**

22. Work Programme and Outstanding Issues 2025/26

The Scrutiny Board noted the Work Programme and outstanding issues for 2025/26, including the provisional date of 4 March, 2026 for a visit to UK BIC.

23. Heatline District Heating Update

The Scrutiny Board considered a Briefing Note of the Director of People and Facilities, together with a comprehensive presentation at the meeting, which provided an update on the funding of Heatline to date, its historic performance and future proposals for the network. The Scrutiny Board also considered a corresponding private Briefing Note which contained commercially sensitive information relating to this matter (Minute 25 below refers).

The Briefing Note indicated that the Coventry Heatline district heat network currently supplies recovered heat from the Energy from Waste (EfW) facility on London Road to 9 city centre buildings including 3 offices, 2 sports facilities, a Museum, a Hotel, the Cathedral and a Student Accommodation Block, via its 4km network of underground pipework.

The presentation covered:-

- The existing contract arrangements:-
 - Coventry District Energy Company (CDEC) responsible for:-
 - Recovering heat from steam
 - Distributing heat to customers
 - Generating any additional heat required by customers
 - Selling heat to customers
 - A summary of the concession contract
 - 25 year operating concession
 - Due to expire in 2038
 - Contract procurement allows for maximum term until 2045
 - CDEC fully responsible for operating and maintenance costs
 - “Super profits” protection with profit share mechanism
- A breakdown of Heatline Funding-
 - Original network total cost - £5.6m
 - To date 35% public sector financed
 - CDEC has been the largest investor in Heatline to date
- The financial performance to date:-
 - Key outcomes (reviewed 2024 compared to 2012 financial model:-
 - Revenues have been lower and operating costs have been higher
 - Increased capital investment for same customer demand
 - Net operating profit is lower than originally forecast
 - Key factors:
 - Lower inflation than allowed for
 - Slower buildout of Friargate Business District
 - Unexpected maintenance at Bar Road
- Current activities to address – Renewed efforts to expand the network by supporting customers with funding bids which will treble the customer demand connected to the network by 2028.
- Forecast breakdown of investment – extending the concession to 2043 enables significant grant funding to be accessed. This rebalance of investment profile will enable CDEC financial performance to move back towards original expectations without contributions coming from Coventry City Council.
- Social Value Impacts:-
 - Avoidance of carbon emissions

- To date 14,716 tCO2 avoided
 - Following expansion – 7,300 tCO2/year
 - Direct workforce
 - Indirect workforce
- Impact of forthcoming legislation

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

- Information relating to financial elements of the contract. It was noted that the requested confidential and commercially sensitive information regarding the “super profit” element of the contract would be circulated to the Scrutiny Board.
- Further information and explanation in relation to the proposals and funding to extend the current network to 11 Coventry University buildings, 2 Ministry of Justice court buildings and 6 new public sector connections in Hillfields. The Scrutiny Board also noted that City Centre South and the Friargate regeneration area were also expected to connect as they build out. The expansion of the network was welcomed.
- Details were provided in relation to the proposal to extend the current contract to 2043 to enable grant support to be maximised for the above expansion proposals.
- The environmental benefits of Heatline and the impact on the City’s emissions and air quality.
- Technical details in relation to the Energy from Waste facility.

RESOLVED that, subject to the consideration of the information contained in the corresponding private Briefing Note, the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board:-

- 1) Notes the information provided regarding the current status of the Heatline District Heat Network.**
- 2) Notes the forthcoming changes to the context of heat networks in the UK.**
- 3) Notes the proposed extension of the Concession Contract to 2043 to enable grant support to be maximised.**

24. Any Other Items of Urgent Public Business

There were no other items of urgent public business.

25. Heatline District Heating Update

Further to Minute 23 above, the Scrutiny Board considered a private Briefing Note of the Director of People and Facilities, together with a comprehensive presentation at the meeting, which set out the confidential commercial and financial matters relating to the Heatline District Heating update.

RESOLVED that having considered the information contained in the corresponding public Briefing Note, the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board:-

- 1) Notes the information provided about the current status of the Heatline District Heat Network.**
- 2) Notes the forthcoming changes to the context of heat networks in the UK.**
- 3) Notes the proposed extension of the Concession Contract to 2043 to enable grant support to be maximised.**

26. Any Other Items of Urgent Private Business

There were no other items of urgent private business.

(Meeting closed at 5.10pm)

To: Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3)

Date: 4 February 2026

Subject: Bus Franchising Update

1 Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 To introduce an item on an update on Bus Franchising from Transport for West Midlands

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board is recommended to:
 - 1) Consider the information in the presentation at Appendix 1
 - 2) Identify any further recommendations to TfWM or the relevant Cabinet Member.

3 Information and Background

- 3.1 The Board requested an update on bus franchising in the West Midlands following their consideration and contribution to the consultation at their meeting on 19th February 2025.
- 3.2 A presentation with further information can be found at Appendix 1

Appendix 1: Bus Franchising Update

Gennie Holmes
Scrutiny Co-ordinator
Law and Governance
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Bus Franchising update

Coventry Scrutiny Board

February 2026

Why are buses important?

Buses are crucial to connecting people to work, education, shops and leisure

Buses support objectives to reduce congestion, emissions and ensure transport affordability

2024 study showed bus is worth £4.4bn per year to the West Midlands economy

27%
of households in the West Midlands do not have access to a car, rising to 40% in some areas

240 million

bus journeys in the West Midlands in 2024

Why Franchising?

In May 2025, the West Midlands Combined Authority Board approved a transition to a Bus Franchising Operating Model, following Public Consultation that saw 75% support for bringing buses back under public control.

- **Passengers First.** The goal is to shift from a system driven by private profit to one that prioritises passengers by working with local people to ensure services are affordable, reliable, and meet the needs of the community. Longer term, Franchising provides the opportunity to co-ordinate and integrate the bus and wider public transport network to significantly increase the customer experience over time.
- **Cost & Control risks.** The West Midlands bus market is increasingly not commercially viable. Significant public subsidy is currently required to continue to offer our residents a comprehensive bus network. Despite the subsidies paid each year there is currently very limited control over the services, frequencies, fares or routes.
- **Public Control through a Contracting Model.** Unlike the current system where private companies decide routes and fares, under franchising, TfWM will be in control of the network's design, routes and fares. TfWM will put routes and services out to tender, with private companies bidding for the contracts to operate them.

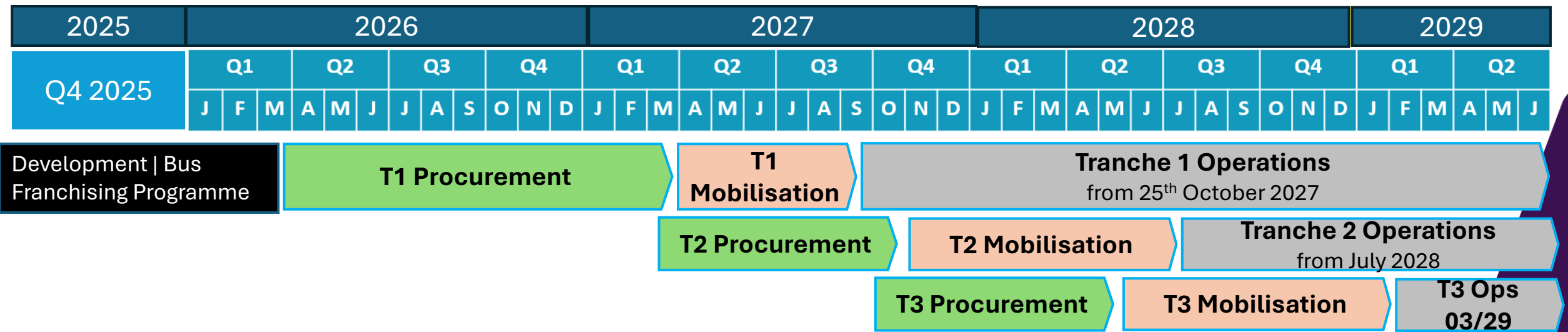
The Model

Under the future Franchising operating model TfWM will design routes, specify hours of operation, set service standards and award Operator contracts following competitive procurement. Operator contracts will be for set periods of time.

- ✓ TfWM will take the revenue risk (i.e. keep/reinvest the fares)
- ✓ TfWM will own the bus fleet and bus depots
- ✓ Operators retain Operational Staff (e.g. Drivers, Engineers)
- ✓ Consolidation of functions currently shared between TfWM and Operators (e.g. Customer Services, marketing, network planning) offering economies of scale
- ✓ TfWM will continue to manage infrastructure (e.g. bus stops, information provision)
- ✓ Local Councils will continue to manage highways



Bus Reform Programme | Status update



Key progress

- Programme Team and key appointments | Sept 25 to Jan 26
- Procurement and Legal Partners onboarded | From November 25
- New Governance stood up | From Dec 25
- Development of Franchising Operating Model | Currently
- Revised Procurement strategy and timeline agreed | Jan 26
- Pre Market engagement with Operators | April 2026























Tranche 1 Key dates

ITT Release | 17 August 26
Final tender submission | 18 Dec 26
Operational | 25 Oct 27


Bus depots acquired


Acocks Green Depot | End Dec 25
West Bromwich Bus park | End Dec 25


Bus Reform Governance Overview


18	January				February				March					April				May				June										
Week Beginning	5	12	19	26	2	9	16	23	2	9	16	23	30	6	13	20	27	4	11	18	25	1	8	15	22	29						
Political meetings (POG)							<div>9</div>			<div>4</div>																						
Officer meetings (BR Panel)					<div>28</div>				<div>25</div>				<div>25</div>				<div>22</div>				<div>20</div>				<div>17</div>							
Internal Governance			<div>14</div>		<div>28</div>		<div>11</div>		<div>25</div>		<div>11</div>		<div>25</div>		<div>8</div>		<div>22</div>			<div>6</div>		<div>12</div>		<div>20</div>			<div>3</div>		<div>9</div>		<div>17</div>	
Key decisions	Decision																	Governance route														
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Bus depot acquisition WMCA Board Sept 25 ApprovedStrategic direction on fleet WMCA Board Jan 26 ApprovedRevised Procurement strategy and timeline BRSG Jan 26 ApprovedSmall operators / contracts strategy BRSG – Feb 26Branding options Mayor & Met Leaders (TBC)																	<ul style="list-style-type: none">PB, SG, Leaders Briefings, WMCA BoardPB, SG , POG, Leaders Briefings, WMCA BoardPB, BRSGPB, BRSGTBC														

Key

 Political
Political Oversight Group

 Officer
Bus Reform Panel

 Internal meetings
Bus Reform Programme Board

 Bus Reform Steering Group

As of January
2026

Please direct questions to
busreform@tfwm.org.uk

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To: Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3)

Date: 4 February 2026

Subject: Very Light Rail

1 Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 The purpose of this note is to provide an update on the current status of the Coventry Very Light Rail (CVLR) programme, including an update on the following aspects:
- Project Timeline;
 - Stakeholder Engagement; and
 - Statutory Occupier Status.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) are recommended to:
- 1) Consider the information contained within this note and the Cabinet Report (Appendix A)
 - 2) Provide comments and any further recommendations.

3 Information and Background

- 3.1 CVLR is a key component of the Very Light Rail Regional Programme (VLRPP) funded by the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS), which is the primary funding source for the West Midlands Combined Authority's transport capital programme for 2022-27. The other elements of the VLRPP are the Very Light Rail National Innovation Centre (VLRNIC) in Dudley that provides test facilities for the vehicle and is operated by Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, and the Mass Transit Corridor Studies led by Transport for West Midlands which aim to identify potential mass transit routes on key corridors within the West Midlands, including Coventry City Centre to the Investment Zone and to Ansty Park.
- 3.2 CVLR is on target to deliver a new form of affordable rail-based mass transit that can be delivered in at least half the time and at least half the cost of conventional light rail in an urban environment. The project comprises of a lightweight battery-operated vehicle and a shallow track form that requires a dig depth of just 30cm. It

can be installed on top of most utilities' equipment, saving time and cost of delivery compared to traditional light rail.

- 3.3 The CVLR demonstration in Coventry city centre, known as the On Road Test (ORT), in Spring / Summer 2025 was a major success as our ground-breaking track was installed in just over eight weeks and proved that we are on target to achieve our target installation cost of circa £10m/km.
- 3.4 The next stage of the CVLR programme is to construct 800m of twin track for a City Centre Demonstrator (CCD) that will operate in a live traffic environment from Coventry Railway Station to Coventry University Technology Park. Appendix 1 of the Cabinet Report illustrates the route.
- 3.5 The delegations required to enter into contracts and deliver CCD were approved at Cabinet on 16th December 2025 and at Full Council on the 13th January 2026. The full report and its appendices are available in Appendix A. The key information from the Cabinet and Council reports is tabled below.
- 3.6 This demonstration phase builds on everything learned during 2025 and will help to lay the foundations for the first commercial route by:
 1. Operating the CVLR vehicle with live traffic – including the installation of a vehicle control system integrated with the city's traffic signal control system.
 2. Providing rides for the public and stakeholders to demonstrate how the vehicle has evolved since the On Road Test (ORT) in June 2025 and to take feedback on the system.
 3. Demonstrating at scale, using the learnings from the ORT, the speed of installation and affordability of the CVLR track.
 4. Expediting the design and delivery process.
 5. Utilising learning to inform the business case and design of a first commercial route and, more widely, to continue to stimulate national and global commercial interest.
- 3.7 As an added benefit to the above, in October 2027 the Intelligent Transport Systems World Congress (ITSWC) is being staged at the NEC in Birmingham. This provides an excellent opportunity to showcase, to a global audience, the benefits of CVLR, using it to carry delegates from the railway station to the National Transport Design Centre (on the Technology Park) to showcase Coventry's ground-breaking transport innovations.
- 3.8 As with any new and innovative project, there are associated risks. The programme risk register is regularly monitored and updated with oversight from Finance, Legal and Procurement.
- 3.9 To mitigate the risks, and to ensure the system operates safely, CCC and TfWM are working closely with an Independent Review Panel (IRP) of industry experts, and the Office of Road and Rail (ORR) through an appointed Independent Competent Person (ICP). The IRP have assessed all technical evidence, the case for safety, project costs and risk, and have recommended that the programme can proceed to CCD.

- 3.10 Vehicle performance trials received positive user feedback following the On Road Test in Spring 2025. In summary the surveys provided evidence that the ORT was well-received by the public that trialled the system, with 85% of people surveyed agreeing they would like to use CVLR regularly. A short video of the ORT can be found here: <https://www.coventry.gov.uk/coventry-light-rail>.
- 3.11 With respect to the track, evidence from test track installed at the VLRNIC in Dudley, at the Whitley Depot, and from the ORT indicates that the slab that is used for the track is outperforming expectations and is capable of carrying conventional trams as well as the lighter CVLR vehicles. This opens new markets and commercial opportunities as the CVLR track could potentially be used on conventional tram systems such as Midlands Metro and emerging systems in South and West Yorkshire. By using CVLR track on on-road sections of their systems, significant financial savings can be made on scheme costs by avoiding the need to move all utilities from the road. Further research and development activity is underway to refine the universal slab track for the conventional tram market, and conversations are advancing with the transport bodies responsible for developing those schemes. In parallel, CCC are progressing an ultra-thin slab investigation to allow for potential limited road depth constraints.
- 3.12 The funding for the final stage on the current CVLR programme was approved for release from the current City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) CVLR allocation at DfT's Roads Investment Committee on the 26th January 2026. Whilst the CRSTS programme is managed by the WMCA, DfT has specifically retained final approval of the CVLR programme due to its R&D nature.
- 3.13 The High-level timeline for delivery of the next phase is as follows:
- Feb 26 – Construction contract and programme agreed.
 - Feb 26 - New vehicle assembly contract and programme agreed.
 - March 26 – Utility works begin
 - April 26 – Procurement of construction/ vehicle components
 - June 26 – Detailed CCD route design complete
 - Aug 26 – Delivery of rail to site
 - March 27 – New vehicle build complete
 - June 27 – Start of vehicle testing and commissioning (T&C)
 - Oct 27 – T&C complete and CCD live traffic operation to residents, key stakeholders and delegates from ITSWC.
- 3.14 Engagement with a local Resident Liaison Group was held at the Council House 10 July 2025 and 15 January 2026 with delegations from the Council and Stoney Road Area Residents (STAR) to review CVLR to date and discuss the CCD. Several questions regarding the reasons for the route and the construction programme were asked and responses provided from the Director of Innovation.
- 3.15 A letter and leaflet, explaining the City Centre Demonstrator plans, were delivered to all nearby residents and businesses during week commencing 28 July 2025 and a further communication was issued in November inviting residents and businesses on Park Road to book a drop-in session with Council Officers.

3.16 During the drop-ins the businesses and residents that attended provided information about their access requirements and issues. The feedback gathered will be taken into consideration as we design and install the 800m of track. Further engagement on CCD construction will take place over the coming months when the design has matured and the construction programme options are available.

3.17 The top five CVLR risks and mitigations are summarised below;

Risk	Mitigation
Technical issues arise with the vehicle, track or infrastructure systems	All aspects of vehicle, track and infrastructure systems are scrutinised and documented at each phase with input from external companies with expertise in track and rolling stock, as well as the IRP (1.15). This process feeds to an appointed Independent Competent Person who signs off each element of the process, implementing the safety verification scheme for the project and ensuring that relevant industry standards are met.
Delays to vehicle build programme for live traffic operation	The new vehicle requires a live traffic compliant crash structure and control system to enable operation in a live road. The team are working with industry experts to achieve Case for Safety sign off ahead of operation in Autumn 2027. A plan B is in place for showcasing CVLR in the event the new vehicle is not ready for operation by October 2027.
Statutory Occupiers (Utility companies) may not consent to leaving assets in existing positions on the route.	Considerable consultation and collaboration have been undertaken and will continue between CCC and the Statutory Occupiers following the On-Road Test (ORT). Methods of access to assets have been trialled with positive results.
CCC may be liable for personal injury or Third-Party property damage	All road schemes undergo a Stage 1 and 2 Road Safety Audit (RSA) and it will be the same for CVLR. A Stage 3 RSA will be completed prior to operation. Any RSA recommendations made will be assessed, considered and responded to.
Delays to the procurement of an operator	CCC is currently engaging with the market to ensure an operator is procured ahead of operation in Autumn 2027

3.18 Continued collaboration with Statutory Occupiers remains a priority. Further dialogue with Statutory Occupiers will take place over the coming weeks and procedures for access will be agreed during the delivery of the CCD.

3.19 The team continue to promote the benefits of CVLR and the outputs/ lessons learnt from the delivery programme with the wider industry. There are several organisations, both in the UK and overseas, that have expressed interest in deploying either the CVLR system, or the advanced Universal Track, in the future. Conversations with the following combined authorities about opportunities for

Universal Track deployment have been initiated and are well underway; West of England, South and West Yorkshire, as well as Transport Infrastructure Ireland.

4 Health Inequalities Impact

- 4.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and will continue to be reviewed. The EIA is Appendix 2 of the Cabinet Report

Appendix A: Very Light Rail Cabinet Report 16 December 2025

Appendix 1: City Centre Demonstrator (CCD) Route

Appendix 2: Equalities Impact Assessment

Nicola Small
VLR Programme Director
Coventry City Council
Nicola.small@coventry.gov.uk

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Cabinet
Council

16 December 2025
13 January 2026

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change – Councillor J O’Boyle

Director approving submission of the report:

Director of Innovation

Ward(s) affected:

All

Title: Coventry Very Light Rail

Is this a key decision?

Yes - the proposals involve financial implications in excess of £1m per annum.

Executive summary:

The Coventry Very Light Rail (CVLR) demonstration in the city centre during Summer 2025 was a major success. Our mission is to create a tram system that can be installed quickly and at less than half the cost of conventional tram systems: our ground-breaking track was installed in just over eight weeks and proved that we are on target to achieve our target installation cost of circa £10m/km.

The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the construction of an 800m twin track City Centre Demonstrator (CCD) that will operate in a live traffic environment from Coventry railway station to Coventry University Technology Park (see Appendix 1 to the report for the route plan). This demonstration phase builds on everything learned in the summer and will help to lay the foundations for the first commercial route by:

1. Operating the CVLR vehicle with live traffic – including the installation of an autonomous ready vehicle control system integrated with the city’s traffic signal control system.
2. Providing rides for the public and stakeholders to demonstrate how the vehicle has evolved since the On Road Test (ORT) in June 2025 and to take feedback on the system
3. Demonstrating at scale, using the learnings from the ORT, the speed of installation and affordability of the CVLR track
4. Expediting the design and delivery process

5. Utilising learning to inform the business case and design of Coventry's first commercial route and, more widely, to continue to stimulate national and global commercial interest

The 800m route is intended to form part of the proposed first commercial route (subject to business case approval) running from the railway station to the West Midlands Investment Zone (Greenpower Park), with potential to extend northwards from the railway station through the city centre to connect to Pool Meadow, University Hospital Coventry & Warwickshire (UHCW) and to a Park and Ride at Ansty Park. The 800 m demonstrator section will be delivered using allocated grant funding from the City Region Sustainable Transport Funding (CRSTS) and is scheduled to be constructed by March 2027. Further funding will be sought from the Transport for City Region (TCR) fund, which replaces CRSTS from 1 April 2027.

As an added benefit in October 2027 the Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) World Congress is being staged at the NEC. This provides an excellent opportunity to showcase, to a global audience the benefits of CVLR using it to carry delegates to the National Transport Design Centre (on the Technology Park) to showcase Coventry's ground-breaking transport innovations.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is requested to recommend that the Council approve:

- 1) The installation of the CVLR slab track and a short period of operation, of the City Centre Demonstrator (CCD) from Coventry Railway Station to Coventry University Technology Park in a live traffic environment will follow the release of the next phase of approved funding by the DfT.
- 2) Delegated authority to the Director of Innovation, following consultation with the Director of Law and Governance, the Director of Finance and Resources, the Director of Regeneration and Economy, and Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change, to operate CVLR in a live traffic environment subject to risks being appropriately mitigated.
- 3) Delegated authority to the Director of Innovation to secure the necessary Statutory approvals to construct CCD.
- 4) Delegated authority to the Director of Innovation, following consultation with the Director of Law and Governance, the Director of Finance and Resources, the Director of Regeneration and Economy, and Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change, to enter into all necessary legal agreements for the CCD.
- 5) Delegated authority to the Director of Innovation, following consultation with the Director of Law and Governance, the Director of Finance and Resources, Director of Regeneration and Economy and Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change, to agree the award of contract(s) and for the Council to enter into all necessary contracts, including but not limited to constructing and operating the CCD.

- 6) Delegated authority to the Director of Innovation, following consultation with the Director of Law and Governance, the Director of Finance and Resources, the Director of Regeneration and Economy, and Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change, to enter into the appropriate lease agreements for associated infrastructure required to deliver a modified, enhanced CVLR system and its potential to facilitate the construction of conventional tramways to prove out the advanced slab track capabilities.
- 7) Delegated authority to the Director of Innovation, following consultation with the Director of Law and Governance, the Director of Finance and Resources, the Director of Regeneration and Economy, and Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change, to, subject to the necessary funding being secured, initiate the business case work for a commercial route in Coventry.

Council is requested to approve:

- 1) The installation of the CVLR slab track and a short period of operation, of the City Centre Demonstrator (CCD) from Coventry Railway Station to Coventry University Technology Park in a live traffic environment will follow the release of the next phase of approved funding by the DfT.
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List of Appendices included:

The following appendices are attached to the report:

Appendix 1 – City Centre Demonstrator (CCD) Route
Appendix 2 - Equalities Impact Assessment

Background papers:

None

Other useful documents

Council: Implementing the Devolution Agreement – Provision for Mayoral West Midlands Combined Authority 31 May 2016
Cabinet: City Centre South 24th January 2017
Cabinet: Connecting Coventry Strategic Transport Investment Programme 24th January 2017
Cabinet: 2018/19 Transportation and Highway Maintenance Capital Report, 6th March 2018
Cabinet: Coventry Very Light Rail, 12th October 2021
Cabinet: Transportation and Highway Maintenance Capital Programme, 15th March 2022
Cabinet: City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement, 6th September 2022
Cabinet: Coventry Very Light Rail, 7th January 2025
All previous reports are available via the Council's website:
<http://democraticservices.coventry.gov.uk/mqListCommittees.aspx?bcr=1>

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?

No

Will this report go to Council?

Yes - 13th January 2026

Report title: Coventry Very Light Rail

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 Coventry Very Light Rail (CVLR) is a pioneering research and development project, supported by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and the Department for Transport (DfT) with a £40.5m funding allocation as part of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS). Previous Cabinet reports document the context and reasons for delivering the programme.
- 1.2 The project is now gaining widespread attention due to its innovative and cost effective unique trackform and prototype vehicle, which has successfully completed an on-road test in a live, controlled, city centre environment. Around 3,000 people travelled on the vehicle on a short section of track built over a two-month period on Queen Victoria Road and Greyfriars Road, with the vehicle operating on this track over a four-week period.
- 1.3 Prior to the on road test, the vehicle had accumulated over 1000km under test at the Very Light Rail National Innovation Centre (VLRNIC) in Dudley and the track had also been robustly tested at the Council's own depot in Whitley, where a section of track had been laid on an access road used by the Council's refuse vehicles on a daily basis with over two million tonnes passing over it to date. With the data from both test sites, and now from the ORT, we have more certainty about the track and vehicle capabilities. The test tracks have outperformed expectations, and this success has led to the development of an advanced CVLR slab track, known as 'universal track,' which could have applications for conventional Light Rail schemes as well as CVLR.
- 1.4 We are now at the point where the next step for Coventry will be to construct a twin-track, longer demonstration section using the CVLR track and operate a modified new CVLR vehicle. The key aim will be to demonstrate that the track can be installed in a more complex environment at speed and within the cost envelope anticipated and that the vehicle can operate in live traffic.
- 1.5 The specific purpose of the City Centre Demonstrator is to:
 1. Operate the CVLR vehicle in live traffic – including the installation of an autonomous ready vehicle control system integrated with the city's traffic signal control system.
 2. Provide rides for the public, key stakeholders and visitors to the ITS World Congress to obtain further feedback on the system
 3. Demonstrate at scale, using the learnings from the ORT, the speed of installation and affordability of the CVLR track.
 4. Expedite the design and delivery process.
 5. Use the resulting evidence and data to inform the business case and design of Coventry's first commercial route and, more widely, to stimulate national and global commercial interest.
- 1.6 The CVLR vehicle is currently undergoing performance analysis following ORT. In order for the vehicle to achieve the required Case for Safety to permit running in live traffic a new vehicle will be built. This follows an analysis of the costs of modifying the existing vehicle, which showed it is more cost effective to build a new vehicle. There

is sufficient funding within the allocation to do this. This will enable feedback and learning to be incorporated in the new vehicle whilst the original vehicle can continue to be used to trial further innovations. Discussions with local manufacturers have confirmed that delivery of the new vehicle can be achieved in time for the demonstration runs in Autumn 2027.

- 1.7 Stabling, with basic maintenance facilities for the vehicle, will be provided on Coventry University land (as indicated in Appendix 1 to the report) to maintain vehicle performance and protect the vehicle from damage overnight. This will be the subject of a planning application.
- 1.8 During delivery, opportunities will be taken to improve pedestrian and cycle routes, especially in the vicinity of Junction 5 on the ring road, as the CCD route will pass through the southern side of the junction.
- 1.9 In the process of delivering CCD, we will be working closely with utilities companies with a view to leaving the majority of their equipment in situ and providing ducting where appropriate. The successful utility trials that were undertaken as part of the ORT demonstrated that access to equipment under the track can be gained in most cases without having to lift the track.
- 1.10 The CCD route will also potentially form the first section of the wider CVLR network that is in development, with a planned mass transit route connecting the city centre to Greenpower Park and the wider Investment Zone already under investigation as part of the regional VLR programme funded through CRSTS.
- 1.11 As well as offering a solution for Coventry, CVLR could benefit many towns and cities world-wide in the drive to combat climate change. Evidence suggests that rail based public transport systems stimulate modal shift, more than other forms of public transport, thanks to their permanence and quality of service. An integrated transport network, providing appropriate sustainable alternatives for individual journeys, is necessary to drive modal shift. Furthermore, this Coventry innovation offers the potential to create a new manufacturing sector, creating new jobs and skills in the city and wider region.
- 1.12 In parallel to delivering the 800m city centre demonstrator, the CVLR team will collaborate with TfWM and industry experts to further develop Universal Track (as mentioned in paragraph 1.3 of the report). The universal track could be game changing for the industry, as it will mean that standard trams could operate on it, due to the shallow depth and high weight bearing qualities of the slab. This will potentially offer enhanced performance and will benefit other cities as it will be cheaper and quicker to install than traditional light rail track, meaning less disruption to residents, visitors and businesses. To test this development, the team is working with Midland Metro and other tram operators to identify opportunities to trial universal track.
- 1.13 The project is generating world-wide interest, with approaches from interested parties who are keen to see the CVLR system demonstrated to prove the concept. Universal track will open more markets looking to capitalise on the cost savings from not having to re-locate utilities due to the shallow depth and high weight bearing qualities of the slab. The time savings from CVLR track installation are also appealing to other cities

that are keen to minimise disruption to the public and businesses during construction. CCC hold the patents for the technology and are therefore in prime position to exploit the commercial opportunities.

- 1.14 To increase the commercial opportunity, the next step will build upon ORT to now demonstrate how the whole system technology can integrate into a live City transport network.
- 1.15 As CVLR continues to be considered a research and development project, there is independent scrutiny of the test results, and an independent review panel (IRP) is in place. The IRP, comprising a number of industry experts, is assessing the outputs/ technical compliance of the ORT and the recommendations from the IRP will be known prior to DfT releasing the funding for construction.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

Option 1 - Recommended – Approve the installation and operation of 800m of twin-track CCD.

- 2.1. The purpose of CCD is tabled in paragraph 1.5 of the report, but in addition CCD will enable us to:
 - Develop the whole system, particularly the vehicle, to integrate into live traffic.
 - Showcase the CVLR technology and system to a global audience during the ITS Congress in October 2027, and with accessibility groups, politicians, funders, stakeholders and future investors.
 - Further collect technical data to enable the CVLR system to be commercialised.
 - Provide greater certainty over capital costs for future business case submissions to secure funding for commercial routes in Coventry and beyond.
 - To demonstrate the potential for CVLR to operate autonomously and thereby reducing costs.
- 2.2. It is intended that the vehicle will be operational for a limited period, at set times during the day. It will offer opportunities for residents and visitors to the ITS congress, as well as partners and possible future investors the chance to experience the system via escorted rides.
- 2.3. CCC will procure a competent operator who will hold the relevant licences to operate the system. The intention is to procure an operator that will be responsible for the operation of the CVLR system under contract to Coventry City Council and will be the duty holder undertaking both the Infrastructure Manager and Transport Undertaking roles under ROGS 2006. As such they will be responsible for ensuring the safe operation of CVLR during the period of operation and provide the necessary contractual protections for the Council.
- 2.4. The cost of the CCD will be funded from the current approved CRSTS budget. A change control for the initial section (Stage Gate 3A) to cover the 'prepare to construct' element was approved by DfT on 19 May 2025.

- 2.5. As with any new and innovative project, there are a number of associated risks. The programme risk register is regularly monitored and updated with oversight from Finance, Legal and Procurement.
- 2.6. To mitigate these risks, and to ensure the system operates safely, we are working closely with the Independent Review Panel (IRP) and the Office of Road and Rail (ORR) through our appointed Independent Competent Person (ICP). Stage gate 3B funding cannot be released without agreement from the IRP, who will assess all technical evidence, the case for safety, project costs and risk, with recommendations being presented to the DfT's Roads Investment Committee for approval. We cannot operate without the above and a letter of 'no objection' from the ICP. (Risk is also covered in Section 5 of this report). In addition, CVLR will also be subject to road safety audits (RSA) as is the case for all highway schemes.

Option 2 – Not Recommended – not to proceed with CCD.

- 2.7. This is discounted due to the positive outcomes from the ORT, the need to develop the commercial potential of the CVLR system, the support from WMCA and DfT for continuing with the CVLR programme, and the long-term benefits for Coventry's transport network, along with the potential to create local jobs and economic growth that will be realised through progressing with the development of the CVLR system.
- 2.8. As this is a research and development project, we must collect accurate data and provide the necessary evidence to utility companies, to give them confidence that their apparatus can be left in situ in most cases. Making sure the utility companies are on board is an essential part of the business case for CVLR and its wider adoption. Utilities companies are fully engaged with the project and attended sessions during the On Road Test in June and in August 2025 to provide further confidence in the ability to leave utilities equipment in situ wherever possible.
- 2.9. Installation of CCD also means that we are preparing the city for a first commercial route that would ultimately connect the Investment Zone to the Railway Station and onwards to Pool Meadow and UHCW.
- 2.10. Not proceeding will compromise the benefits of the grant funded investment already made to get the project to this stage. To date the CVLR programme has reaped positive results from the monitoring of both track and vehicle from the test sites, positive reactions from both public and industry sources to the ORT and has received continued support from both DfT and the WMCA to proceed with the second CCD.
- 2.11. CCD is essential to provide further data to feed into the business case work related to a future CVLR network for the city, building on existing mass transit studies (funded through TfWM) that are underway.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

- 3.1. Engagement with the Friargate Resident Liaison Group was held at the Council House 10 July 2025 with delegations from the Council and Stoney Road Area Residents (STAR) to review CVLR to date and discuss the future for the CCD. Several questions

regarding the reasons for the route were asked and responses provided from the Director of Innovation.

- 3.2. A letter and leaflet, explaining the City Centre Demonstrator plans were delivered to all nearby residents and businesses during week commencing 28 July 2025.
- 3.3. During ORT qualitative surveys were undertaken with visitors. The ORT was well-received by the public, with 85% of people surveyed agreeing they would like to use CVLR regularly.
- 3.4. During November 2025 drop-ins were offered to Park Road businesses and residents and the feedback gathered will be taken into consideration as we design and install the 800m of track.
- 3.5. Further engagement on CCD will take place over the coming months.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

- 4.1. The CRSTS funding is a 5-year programme from 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2027. Funding has been released to enable CCD design and the procurement of long lead items. Colas Rail Ltd are engaged through their existing contract with CCC. Once funding approval is obtained, the contract for construction can be let, an operator will be procured, and delivery will begin as soon as is practically possible. Construction of the route will take place in 2026/2027 with the CCD operational for public rides in Autumn 2027.

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

5.1. Financial Implications

- 5.2. The WMCA is the accountable body for the CRSTS funding and grant agreements are put in place between the WMCA and the Council to agree outputs for each stage, the stage gates have been agreed with DfT and WMCA. The CRSTS allocation for CVLR is £40.5m, the Grant Aid agreement for which requires a local (match) contribution of £3.2m. This has previously been approved by Cabinet on 12 October 2021. The Table below illustrates the Stage Gate funding released to date and the expected outcomes for each stage. The team have now finalised Stage Gate 2 outcomes and have initiated Stage Gate 3A deliverables.

Stage Gate	Key Outcomes	Status
1 – R&D Vehicle & Track	Performance tested vehicle with an appropriate safety case that demonstrates how the vehicle can be operated 3 Track Test Sites with data that demonstrates that the track is performing as, or better than, expected	Spent

2 – On Road Test (ORT) Construction and Demonstration Rides	CVLR Track installed for an On Road Test (ORT) of 220m section in Coventry City Centre with vehicle operation in a controlled environment. Approved Case for Safety Partial implementation of City Centre Traffic Management.	Spent 90% and remaining 10% committed
3A – Preparation for Construction of City Centre Demonstrator (CCD)	Vehicle performance and component analysis to develop the Gen 2 specification. Commercial strategy analysis and development. Statutory occupier engagement and process development. Slab track development for standard light rail applications and engineering complexities. Route design for CCD route. Systems integration and lessons learnt.	Released by DfT 19 th May Spend initiated
3B – Construction of CCD	Construction of the ITS route – which is 800m between Coventry Rail Station and Coventry University Technology Park. Modified new Gen1 vehicle. Lessons learnt documentation	To be released (subject to Independent Review Panel of Stage Gate 2 and DfT approval – targeting Jan 26 for release)
CRSTS CVLR Funding		40,500,000
CCC Match Contribution¹		3,200,000
Total		43,700,000

- 5.3. To date, CVLR research and development has been delivered within the budgets set aside, with contingency included in cost estimates for any potential cost overruns.
- 5.4. The IRP assessed the financial forecasts for scheme implementation before Stage Gate 2 funding was released to construct the showcase. The ORT provided reassurance that the forecast costs are realistic and therefore there is confidence that the CCD can be delivered within the construction budget available.
- 5.5. The construction budget will be released subject to DfT approval following IRP analysis of the technical, commercial and case for safety evidence from Stage Gate 2 and partial evidence from Stage Gate 3A.
- 5.6. Within the CRSTS Grant Agreements there is a 10% tolerance on cost and programme. Any spend or programme slippage more than the 10% tolerance will be dealt with through Change Control.
- 5.7. Funding release for each stage gate is dependent on fulfilment of the agreed deliverables (or key objectives) of the preceding stage gates, therefore grant clawback is not a risk for this project.

- 5.8. At present there is a low financial risk that agreements with utility companies will result in the Council being required to give an unlimited indemnity in the event of any damage to their utilities. It should be noted that the risk of damaging a utility asset is low as utilities equipment should be located a minimum of 450mm beneath the road surface (CVLR dig depth is 300mm). Furthermore, the CVLR track offers greater protection to underground assets as evidenced by the Council's data collection from trials undertaken to date.
- 5.9. There is provision within the allocated CVLR budget (with no impact on Highways budgets) in the unlikely event such incidents materialise, but it should be noted that the CVLR system is covered by appropriate insurance obtained and held by the Council as was the case during the ORT.
- 5.10. It is envisaged that the tracks would be retained in situ for data collection and as part of the first commercial corridor and funding from the above allocation has been committed to maintain and monitor the tracks.
- 5.11. An allocation of £1m has been agreed as a commuted sum for track and highway maintenance. The amount was calculated using robust specialist market data and ensures future proofing of the route.

5.12. **Legal Implications**

- 5.13. Certain legal implications associated with installing and operating the CCD have been considered. The key points from the legal analysis are summarised below.

Consenting

- 5.14. The Council as promoter of the City Centre Demonstrator should not assume that it can use its powers as highway authority, street authority, etc, as of right but instead should act as a third party would and apply for the relevant consents from itself as highway authority / street authority (i.e. using ethical walls, etc). This will provide greater transparency / resistance to legal challenge.
- 5.15. Planning permission is not required for the installation of CCD in adopted highway as it is permitted development but planning permission will be required for the vehicle stabling, platforms and any track which is not in adopted highway. The area subject to planning permission is shown in Appendix 1 to the report.
- 5.16. A Transport and Works Act Order ("**TWAO**") would provide the most certain form of authorisation for the CCD but is not deliverable in the necessary timeframe. A careful use of powers under the Highways Act 1980, street works licences and traffic regulation orders provides sufficient authority and consents to place the necessary works for the road test in the highway, mainly because there are no land requirements to deliver the CCD. However, it should be noted that a TWAO would be required to operate a fare paying passenger service and CCC intends to apply for a TWAO once a commercial route has been funded/ agreed.

5.17. As with conventional construction works, the Health and Safety Executive (“HSE”) would largely be the health and safety enforcing authority in respect of the construction of new tramways and extensions to existing systems. The Office of Road and Rail (“ORR”) has delegated powers from HSE to look at the implications for operational safety at the time of design and construction of such projects.

5.18. The safety verification process required for safety management systems under the Railways and Other Guided Transport Systems (Safety) Regulations 2006 must be followed in relation to the introduction of new or altered rolling stock or infrastructure.

Key Risks

The top five risks and mitigations are highlighted below:

Technical issues arise with the vehicle, track or infrastructure systems	All aspects of vehicle, track and infrastructure systems are scrutinised and documented at each phase with input from external companies with expertise in track and rolling stock, as well as the IRP (1.15). This process feeds to an appointed Independent Competent Person who signs off each element of the process, implementing the safety verification scheme for the project and ensuring that relevant industry standards are met.
Delays to vehicle build programme for live traffic operation	The vehicle will require some modifications during the new vehicle build to enable operation in live traffic. The team are working with industry experts to achieve Case for Safety sign off ahead of operation in Autumn 2027.
Statutory Occupiers (Utility companies) may not consent to leaving assets in existing positions on the route.	Considerable consultation and collaboration have been undertaken and will continue between CCC and the Statutory Occupiers following the On-Road Test (ORT). Methods of access to assets have been trialled with positive results.
CCC may be liable for personal injury or Third-Party property damage	All road schemes undergo a Stage 1 and 2 Road Safety Audit (RSA) and it will be the same for CVLR. A Stage 3 RSA will be completed prior to operation. Any RSA recommendations made will be assessed, considered and responded to.
Delays to the procurement of an operator	CCC is currently engaging with the market to ensure an operator is procured.

5.19. The Independent Review Panel which provides independent technical and financial challenge was procured via the Council’s existing Framework Agreement for the provision of Research and Development Services.

5.20. There is a detailed live programme risk register which is updated regularly, with the key implementation and operational risks and mitigations relating to the scheme.

5.21. All aspects of vehicle, track and infrastructure system safety are scrutinised and documented at each phase by a safety specialist, who provides advice and produces detailed cases for safety. This process then feeds to an appointed Independent Competent Person (ICP) as required under ROGS 2006 (Railways and Other Guided Transport Systems Safety Regulations 2006).

5.22. The ICP meets regularly with the CVLR teams alongside the safety specialist, and signs off each element of the process, implementing the safety verification scheme for

the project and ensuring that relevant industry standards are met where appropriate. The system only runs with a letter of no objection from the ICP.

- 5.23. Any risks associated with appointing an operator for the CDD have been mitigated by soft market testing, and confirmation that the operator appointed for the ORT would be prepared to operate the CVLR vehicle in live traffic subject to a letter of no objection from the ICP.

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>)

The CVLR programme will contribute to Council Plan objectives such as improving air quality and reducing the impacts of climate change by providing more sustainable forms of public transport, promoting the Council's 'Age Friendly' aspirations and helping to improve the health and wellbeing of the city's residents.

CVLR will ultimately help to address the plan priority of making streets and open spaces more attractive and enjoyable places to be, as well as improving the transport network and connectivity, encouraging investment in the city to promote jobs and growth, which in turn helps to tackle inequalities. CVLR will also enable access to jobs, leisure and study for local people.

6.2. How is risk being managed?

As with all Capital Schemes, CVLR is overseen by the Council's Transport Infrastructure Capital Programme Board, chaired by the Director of City Services, as well as a monthly CVLR Programme Board, chaired by the Director for Innovation, which provides robust governance, monitor progress, risk, and finance. Feeding into the Boards are three steering groups – Vehicle, Track and City Centre Demonstrator Delivery and Operation, each monitor in detail the individual workstreams, with additional monthly cashflow and risk meetings.

CVLR has an established project team in place with a core management team made up of Coventry City Council officers to oversee development and delivery. As part of the key project activities, a programme risk register is established and is regularly monitored, with input from individual project teams and oversight from Finance, Legal and Procurement colleagues to ensure risks are actively managed and mitigations put in place. There is contingency in the budget for each workstream at the appropriate level for stage of development.

To manage physical risks, the Construction and Design Management (CDM) process will be followed to ensure that risks are designed out and that construction takes place by an approved contractor in a safe way.

As mentioned earlier in this report, risk is also scrutinised by the Independent Review Panel and the Independent Competent Person.

6.3. What is the impact on the organisation?

The CVLR programme will be delivered using existing resources where possible, utilising professional services where necessary via the appropriate frameworks. Works will be tendered to external contractors as appropriate.

6.4. Equalities / EIA?

An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has been developed to consider any impacts on protected characteristic groups of the city centre demonstration route and any mitigation required. The EIA will be regularly reviewed and updated where necessary. It is acknowledged that by introducing the track onto the existing carriageway that there may be implications for people with disabilities, older people and those using bikes and pushchairs. We will be working with representatives of these groups to understand the best way to mitigate any issues. This may include audio and visual warnings, signage, lighting and anti-slip materials.

We will also investigate similar schemes in other towns and cities to make sure that we can understand and use any examples of best practice.

CCD will provide us with an opportunity to engage with representative groups in the city and to invite them to try the demonstrator and provide feedback ahead of any first route in the city.

There are many positives for passengers from protected characteristic groups of CVLR and the feedback from ORT was invaluable in helping the team plan for the next generation of CVLR vehicle. Other positives in future will include accessible vehicles and stops, access to employment, healthcare and social activities, improved air quality and links to active travel.

The CVLR programme as part of the Connecting Coventry Programme will ultimately improve economic outcomes and transport in the area. No adverse impact on any group protected under the Equalities Act is anticipated.

Accessibility groups will be invited to experience the CCD as part of the trial, and their feedback will be incorporated into the next stages of the project. Further EIA work will be undertaken for the first commercial route.

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

CVLR will help address the 'Net Zero' target for transport, as it is zero emission at point of use and will encourage modal shift.

6.6. Implications for partner organisations?

Coventry City Council will work closely with Transport for West Midlands, and West Midlands Combined Authority through scheme development and delivery. The programme has a robust governance process in place with a regional Programme Board with Department for Transport representatives involved. Coventry will also work with appropriate research and development partners, procured through the R&D framework, at appropriate stages during scheme development and delivery. Coventry is working with relevant supply chain organisations and is working closely with the

appointed contractor Colas Rail Ltd, who come with a breadth of knowledge and experience from delivering traditional light rail schemes nationally and globally. A detailed stakeholder analysis has been developed and will help us understand how we best work with partner organisations.

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Innovation

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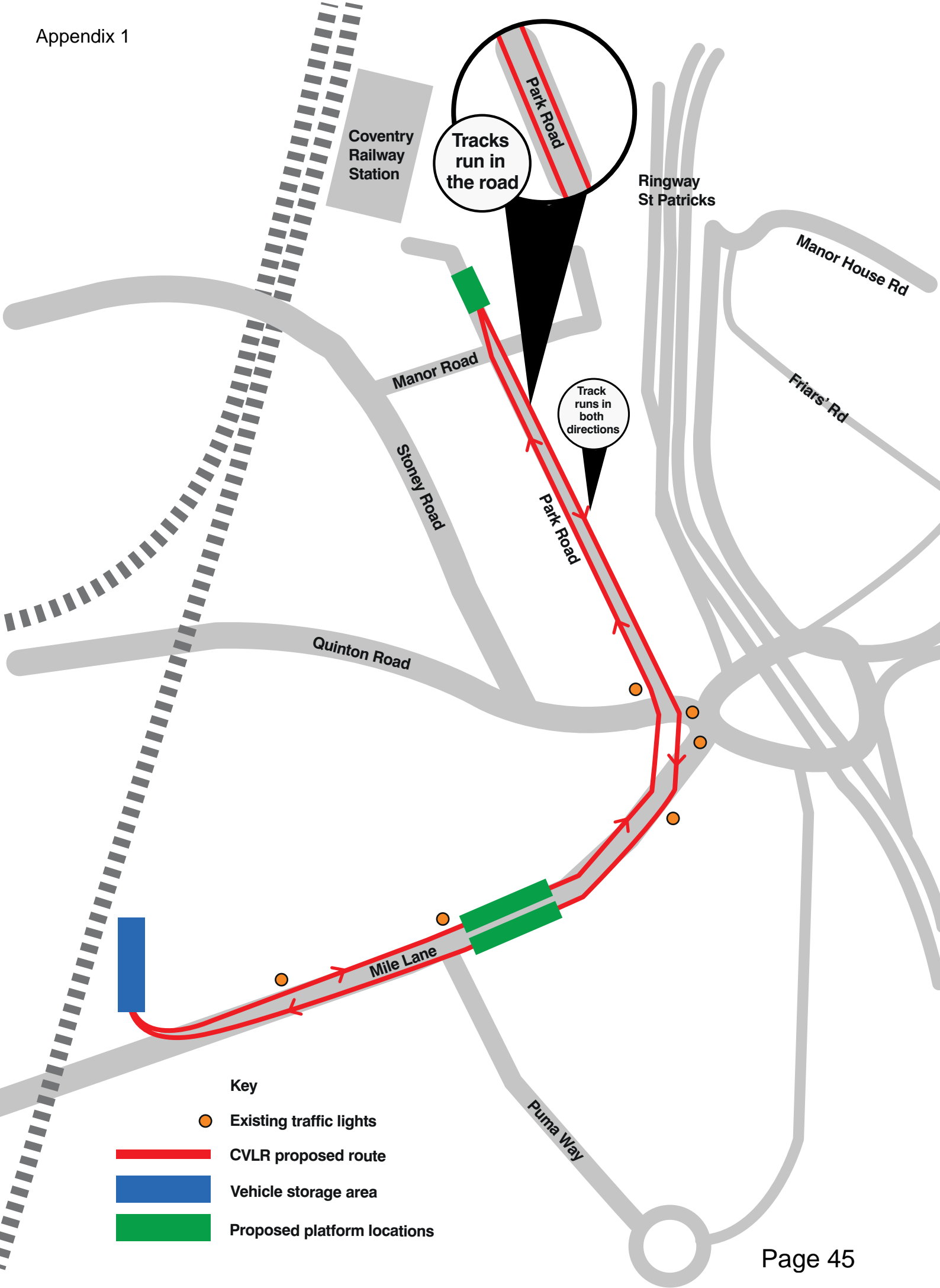
Enquiries should be directed to the above person

Contributor/ approver name	Title	Directorate	Date doc sent out	Date response received or approved
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Simon Colclough	CVLR Commercial Lead	Regeneration and Economy	17/11/25	17/11/25
Michelle Salmon	Governance Services Officer	Law and Governance	17/11/25	17/11/25
Gurbinder Singh Sangha	Major Projects Commercial Lawyer	Law and Governance	19/11/25	20/11/25
Names of approvers for submission: (officers and members)				
Phil Helm	Head of Finance	Finance and Resources	17/11/25	20/11/25
Colin Knight	Director of Innovation	-	13/11/25	17/11/25
Julie Newman	Director of Law and Governance	-	19/11/25	20/11/25

Andy Williams	Director of Regeneration and Economy	-	20/11/25	21/11/25
Barry Hastie	Director of Finance and Resources	-	20/11/25	21/11/25
Mark Adams	Interim Director of City Services	-	17/11/25	18/11/25
Councillor J O'Boyle	Cabinet Member, Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change	-	20/11/25	24/11/25

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Equality Impact Assessment

EIA-737608810 - Coventry Very Light Rail - City Centre Demonstrator

Details

Title	Coventry Very Light Rail - City Centre Demonstrator
Author	Simon Colclough (Strategic Commercial Lead)
Head of Service	John Seddon (Strategic Lead - Policy and Innovation)
Cabinet Member	Jim O'Boyle (Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change)
Director	Colin Knight (Finance and Resources)

Context and background

EIA carried out on	New service
Background	<p>Coventry Very Light Rail is now moving to a new phase whereby we will be installing a new track and utilising the CVLR vehicle in a live, unsegregated city environment. The new 800m twin-track will run from the Coventry rail station to the Coventry University Technology Park. The target demonstration dates are October 2027.</p> <p>Blue light services CCC Highways CCC Network Management CCC Planning CCC Streetscene and Greenspace Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Department for Transport Elected members - particularly the Leader, Cabinet Members and Ward Councillors Emergency Planning Friargate Joint Venture Landowners affected by the scheme Office of Rail and Road Transport for West Midlands West Midlands Combined Authority</p>

Stakeholders

Access Department Group
 Bus / Coach operators
 Coventry University
 Designing Out Crime / British Transport Police
 Disability Groups including National Federation for the Blind, Guide
 Dogs Association, Coventry Wheelchair users
 Friargate Resident Liaison Group
 Stoney Road Area Residents
 Historic Coventry Trust
 Local / National environmental bodies
 Local Business owners
 Residents associations
 Schools, shops and small businesses on / adjacent to the route
 Student accommodation
 Taxi drivers
 Avanti Trains
 Bus passengers
 Community transport groups, e.g. school services, Shopmobility,
 Meals on Wheels
 Coventry BID
 Coventry Society
 ITS World Congress associates
 Childrens champion
 Cross Country Trains
 Delivery and courier services
 Federation of Small Businesses
 National Highways
 Network Rail
 Railway Industry Association
 Residents
 Royal Mail
 Special Interest / community groups
 West Midlands Trains
 Canal and River Trust
 Coventry and Warwickshire champions
 Coventry Rail Action Group
 Cycling organisations
 Heart of England Community Partnership
 Local Media / specialist press
 Statutory / Community involvement stakeholders including Culture
 West Mids, DEFRA, Equal Opps Commission, Gypsy Council,
 National Trust
 Tourists / visitors
 Think Tanks

Responsibility

The CVLR Project Team

The City Centre Demonstrator route will provide us with further opportunity to engage with representative groups ahead of any first route in the city.

There are many positives for passengers from protected characteristic groups of a Very Light Rail scheme. These include accessible vehicles and stops, access to employment, improved air quality and links to active travel.

Of the 2382 people who responded to our post-ride questionnaire, 42 had accessibility issues, and 173 were of the age group 70+.

Accessibility groups will be invited to ride on the vehicle and their feedback will be incorporated into any future development.

Coventry demographic information:

Sex and gender

In 2021, the population of Coventry was estimated to be 345,324. This was split approximately 50.1% female and 49.9% male. This is comparable with the estimates for the West Midlands, with 50.8% being female and 49.2% male. These percentages are also in line with national averages.

Age

In 2021, Coventry had a slightly younger population on average than England and Wales combined. The percentage of people aged 20-24 years in Coventry was 8.69%, compared with 5.89% for England and Wales. Furthermore, Coventry had a slightly lower percentage of people in all age groups between 45 and 90 years, compared with England and Wales. This is highlighted in the 70-74 years group. In Coventry, 3.78% of people belong to this group where the national percentage is 5.09%.

Disability

In 2021, the percentage of people in Coventry who self-reported living with health issues that meant day to day activities were limited a lot was 7.4%. This is slightly lower but broadly in line with the national percentage of 7.6%.

Sight loss is an impairment that can impact on the affected population's daily activities, for example being able to drive or take the train. The percentage of people living with some level of sight loss in Coventry was estimated to be 2.4% in 2021. This is lower than the average for England at the time, which was 3.3%.

Hearing loss can also impact on the population's ability to use public transport. In the UK, there are 12 million adults living with hearing

information loss of greater than 25dBHL. This is equivalent to 1 in 5 people. In Coventry, there are an estimated 230 people who use sign language or other forms of communication as their main language.

Race

In 2021, Coventry was estimated to have a smaller percentage (65.5%) of people who identify as White, than in England overall (81%). The groups with the largest difference to the national average were Asian/Asian British. In Coventry, 18.5% of people identified as being part of these groups. This was higher than England where the percentage was 9.6%

In 2021, the numbers of people in Coventry who do not have English or Welsh as their first language is generally higher than the national average. The percentage of households in Coventry which have no people with English as their first language is 10.6%. This is higher than the percentage for England which is 5%.

Unemployment and deprivation

In 2021, the proportion of people who are unemployed in Coventry (5.6%) is slightly higher than the British average (3.8%). Out of people in full time work, the average weekly pay is slightly lower in Coventry (£630.60) than it is in Britain (£642.20) as a whole. People (aged 16 years and over) are defined as being economically active if they are; in employment, unemployed but looking for work and could start within 2 weeks, or unemployed with an accepted job offer. 28 out of Coventry's 195 neighbourhoods, (14%) are amongst the most deprived 10% in England. Coventry has an IMD rank of 81 out of 317 local authorities nationally, where rank is the most deprived.

Background reports

The CVLR project has been through a number of approvals and the relevant reports are linked below:

Cabinet report - Connecting Coventry, Strategic Transport Investment Programme
24 January 2017

[https://edemocracy.coventry.gov.uk/documents/s32649/Connecting Coventry - Strategic Investment Programme.pdf](https://edemocracy.coventry.gov.uk/documents/s32649/Connecting%20Coventry%20-%20Strategic%20Investment%20Programme.pdf)

Cabinet Report - Very Light Rail
18 December 2019

[https://edemocracy.coventry.gov.uk/documents/s51349/Coventry Very Light Rail.pdf](https://edemocracy.coventry.gov.uk/documents/s51349/Coventry%20Very%20Light%20Rail.pdf)

Coventry Draft Transport Strategy
July 2022

<https://www.coventry.gov.uk/transport-strategy-2/transport-strategy>

Marmot Principles

- | | |
|----|---|
| 3. | Ensure a healthy standard of living for all |
| 5. | Create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities |
| 6. | Strengthen the role and impact of ill health provision |
| 8. | Pursue environmental sustainability and health equity |

Protected groups - Impact on Coventry Residents and Visitors

Age 0-18

Positive impact - Research has indicated that children, older people and people with disabilities are also more likely to be negatively impacted by air pollution. In the long term, CVLR will help to reduce air pollution by reducing reliance on the car.

As with the On-Road Test (ORT), children and young people will be invited to ride the vehicle and give feedback.

Age 19-64

Positive impact - There are businesses, residential properties, and the University of Coventry along the CCD route. We will need to ensure communication is clear and obtain feedback from all affected.

<p>Age 65+</p>	<p>Both positive and negative impacts - This is both positive and negative as there will be some pedestrian diversions in place while the construction works take place. There will be clear delineation between the public and the operations during construction, which may include diversion routes. The tracks will remain in the ground after the test and will eventually form part of the first route to the Investment Zone.</p> <p>Best practice measures will be used throughout to minimise impacts on air quality and the associated health impacts. These will be addressed through the implementation of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).</p> <p>Longer term the improvement to transport may benefit older people by reducing isolation. Opportunities to access social activities would be increased by improving transport links.</p> <p>Accessible seating is available on the vehicle and measures will be made to aid the requirements for its use when the demonstration is in progress.</p>
<p>Disability</p>	<p>Both positive and negative impacts - There may be some pedestrian diversions during the construction phase. We will work with the disability groups and the Independent Travel Team to ensure these are suitable for people with disabilities.</p> <p>Accessibility groups will be invited to ride on the vehicle as part of the demonstration event and their feedback will be incorporated in the future developments.</p> <p>Best practice measures will be followed during construction will the implementation of a CEMP.</p> <p>Access and egress onto the vehicle and platforms will be designed in accordance with Inclusivity Mobility guidance.</p> <p>Good lighting will be used to adhere to mobility guidance.</p>
<p>Gender reassignment</p>	<p>No impact -</p>
<p>Pregnancy and maternity</p>	<p>Positive impact - The CVLR vehicle and platforms can accommodate pushchairs as necessary. Rides will be pre-booked to ensure arrangements are made for these requirements.</p> <p>Longer term CVLR will help improve air quality in the area. Pregnant women who are exposed to high levels of pollution are at risk of giving birth to low birthweight baby and low birthweight can lead to an increased risk of children developing chronic diseases.</p>

Race	Positive impact - We will ensure that all communication is accessible and clear for those who have English as an additional language.
Religion and belief	No impact -
Sex	No impact -
Sexual orientation	No impact -

Additional groups

Care experienced	No impact -
Armed forces	No impact -
Socio economic groups	<p>Positive impact - Once the trial phase concludes and the Coventry Very Light Rail (CVLR) is integrated into the city's public transport network, both the vehicles and track systems—designed for local production—will be manufactured in Coventry, boosting local industry and generating employment.</p> <p>The CVLR will supplement Coventry's existing electric bus routes, with planned extensions to strategic locations such as the Coventry Gigafactory and the University of Warwick. These routes are expected to stimulate economic growth in key business zones and enhance connectivity across the city.</p> <p>CVLR will offer a reliable and affordable option for those without access to cars, helping reduce transport inequality. The Battery-powered vehicles eliminate the need for overhead wires and reduce air pollution, contributing to better air quality.</p>

Next steps

Inequality	Action	Owner	Timescale

Monitor and evaluation

Feedback has been obtained from the ORT phase and is being evaluated for implementation into the CCD phase. Furthermore, Coventry University has been engaged to analyse the feedback which will inform decisions on the future development of CVLR. This feedback loop will continue throughout CCD.

Impact on Council staff

Will there be an impact?

No

Completion statement

Potential equality impact

Both positive and negative impact has been identified for one or more protected groups

Agenda Item 6

Business, Economy and Enterprise (3) Work Programme 2025-26

Last updated on 26 January 2026

Please see page 2 onwards for background to items

9 July 2025
Cabinet Member Portfolio Priorities Cycling and Walking Plan – Task & Finish Group
17 September 2025
EV charging point infrastructure Strategy roll-out Domestic Retrofit - Update
22 October 2025
Destination Coventry
26 November 2025
Economic Development Strategy/Skills Strategy 25/26 CW Economic Development Strategy Heatline
4 February 2026
Update on Bus Delivery Options Very Light Rail – route identification
18 March 2026
One Coventry Approach to Apprenticeships Greenpower Park - West Midlands Investment Zone Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan Task and Finish Group Recommendations
25/26
Commonwealth Games Legacy Fund City Centre South Development Visit to UK BIC
26/27
City Centre North Rail Update Destination Coventry Economic Development Strategy/Skills Strategy 25/26 / CW Economic Development Strategy Labour Market - assessing number of skills and identify gaps Domestic Retrofit Programme

Date	Title	Detail	Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer
9 July 2025	Cabinet Member Portfolio Priorities	To invite Cllr O'Boyle to identify their priorities for the coming year, for Scrucro to be able to identify future items and hold Cabinet Members to account	Cllr O'Boyle
	Cycling and Walking Plan – Task & Finish Group	<p>A Local Cycling and Walking Innovation Plan Task and Finish Group be established - Progress on implementation of the Plan – Member contribution pre-consultation during summer 25.</p> <p>The T&F be requested by SCRUCO to include consideration of the issues relating to the use of e-bikes and e-scooters and report the outcome of the Group's work on this matter the Committee.</p>	John Seddon / Andrew Saffrey Cllr O'Boyle
17 September 2025	EV charging point infrastructure Strategy roll-out	This item will consider how the strategy is being delivered, as well as steps being taken to encourage EV vehicles by large commercial fleets. Including accessible parking charging points and rapid charging points. Information on usage, locations, car parks overnight e.g. Development of charging station in the north of the city.	Cllr O'Boyle John Seddon Shamala Evans-Gadgil
	Domestic Retrofit - Update	updates regarding the overall progress of the domestic retrofit programmes across the city.	Rhian Palmer Matthew Dillow Cllr O'Boyle
22 October 2025	Destination Coventry	Update on Destination Coventry including its performance. How we are supporting attractions across the city? How are we performing as DMO compared to other benchmarking including KPI's? Income sources and funding.	Paula Deas / Cllr O'Boyle

Date	Title	Detail	Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer
26 November 2025	Economic Development Strategy/Skills Strategy 25/26	Last came November 24. A further progress report in 25/26 which includes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress against benchmark data Work to retain graduates in the city	K Mawby / S Weir
	CW Economic Development Strategy	Following Cabinet March 18 th 2025	S Weir Cllr O'Boyle
	Heatline	Update on the use of Heatline, income generated, efficiency and best use of the resource, how it is contributing to net zero – Update in Feb 2026 – To include a private item to be arranged by officers including Bring Energy to update Members of the board with the financial side of Heatline to include value of assets etc.	Lowell Lewis / Mark Anderson (Bring Energy) / Cllr O'Boyle
4 February 2026	Update on Bus Delivery Options	To include progress on bus franchising as well as whether the on-demand bus service could include a Birmingham drop off.	TfWM
	Very Light Rail – route identification	An item to include information about the feasibility of routes and how members of the public will be engaged in the process.	Cllr O'Boyle John Seddon
18 March 2026	One Coventry Approach to Apprenticeships	To be included as a follow on to Skills Strategy item. To consider how SME's are supported to deliver apprenticeships. What support is offered to people who come through the door of the Job Shop? Possibly March 2026. Including partners – private sector and HE.	Kim Mawby/ Cllr O'Boyle/Cllr Sandhu
	Greenpower Park - West Midlands Investment Zone	To pick up progress, including promotion of the Green Power Park. Understanding the challenges and the timelines. Check planning status. Last came March 2025. Info on how many	S Weir Cllr O'Boyle

Date	Title	Detail	Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer
		apprentices from Coventry are employed on the site to be included – Good Work clauses	
	Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan Task and Finish Group Recommendations	To agree the recommendations from the LCWIP T&F	Elan Jones Cllr R Singh
25/26	Commonwealth Games Legacy Fund	Coventry's aspect– update due 2024/25	David Nuttall Cllr O'Boyle
	City Centre South Development	Update on progress – Requested at the last meeting of the Municipal year 2024	Richard Moon Adam Hunt
	Visit to UK BIC		Steve Weir / Cllr O'Boyle
26/27	City Centre North	To consider potential development in the north of the city centre – 2026/27	
	Rail Update	Formation of Great British Railways and proposals be included on a future agenda for the Board, once the current rail contract expires. Dependant on national legislation. Possibly 2026/27	Rosie Coyle / Cllr O Boyle
	Destination Coventry	Update on Destination Coventry including its performance following on from 24/25. that there is clarification on the value for money of the Council's financial contribution to the DMO and that up to date data is provided from a variety of sources.	Paula Deas / Cllr O'Boyle
	Economic Development Strategy/Skills Strategy 25/26 / CW Economic Development Strategy	Last came November 25. A further progress report in 26/27 - that future reports on this matter provide comparative information to enable the Scrutiny Board to review the Strategies and Plans objectively.	K Mawby / S Weir

Date	Title	Detail	Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer
	Labour Market - assessing number of skills and identify gaps	That the Chamber of Commerce be invited to attend a future meeting of the Scrutiny Board and that this be added to the Work Programme	
	Domestic Retrofit Programme	An update to include information on able to pay households that are not eligible for retrofit grant funding, and comparative data on the national distribution of funding to support domestic retrofit.	

Work Programme Decision Flow Chart

