

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee held at 2.00 pm on
Thursday, 3 July 2025

Present:

Members: Councillor G Lloyd (Chair)

Councillor M Ali
Councillor S Jobbar (Substitute for Councillor A Jobbar)
Councillor L Kelly
Councillor R Lakha (Substitute for Councillor R Singh)
Councillor J Lepoidevin
Councillor J McNicholas (Deputy Chair)
Councillor C Miks
Councillor G Ridley

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Other Members: Councillor S Agboola, Deputy Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities
Councillor N Akhtar, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities
Councillor P Akhtar, Deputy Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities
Councillor G Duggins, Leader of the Council
Councillor AS Khan, Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities
Councillor E Reeves (by invitation)

Employees:-

Care, Health and Housing and Housing P Fahy (Director), J Crawshaw, S Hall

Law and Governance J Adams, S Bennett, G Holmes, H Lawson

Apologies: Councillors A Jobbar and R Singh

Public Business

7. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

8. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5 June, 2025 were agreed as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

9. **Coventry Protocol for Addressing Adult Modern Slavery**

The Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee considered a report of the Director of Law and Governance which indicated that the Council has a legal responsibility to address modern slavery under the Modern Slavery Act 2015, and the Modern Slavery: Statutory Guidance for England and Wales (under s49 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015). Locally, the Council's modern slavery approach is coordinated through various subgroups within the Community Safety Partnership. Modern slavery and exploitation are key priorities in the Coventry Community Safety Partnership Plan 2025-2028. The Coventry Protocol for Addressing Adult Modern Slavery (The Protocol), a copy of which was appended to the report, is the first document to formalise the City's operational and strategic response to adult exploitation.

The Protocol, which will be considered by Cabinet on 8 July, 2025, sets out the strategic vision for the Coventry Modern Slavery Partnership, the City's multi-agency forum tasked with determining and implementing the strategic response to adult exploitation. The Protocol also presents the operational pathways to guide frontline professionals through the practicalities of modern slavery case management.

The Protocol has the following objectives:

- To present Coventry Modern Slavery Partnership's local strategic approach to modern slavery via the pursue, prevent, protect, prepare approach as set out by the central government.
- To present the operational processes for responding to modern slavery in Coventry via the creation of survivor support pathways. The pathways are diverse and aim to guide staff through every aspect of case management. Some pathways are general for any professional to use, others have been created by and for priority teams (e.g. Adult Social Care, NHS, and Trading Standards).
- To establish the ongoing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for the strategy and pathways.

The Protocol was developed between October 2023 – November 2024 by the Coventry Modern Slavery Protocol Partnership Group. The Group was formed of several Council departments and over 30 partner organisations. The Protocol underwent consultation with over 150 professionals as well as a lived experience advisory panel formed of consultants with personal experience of modern slavery in early 2025. The Protocol was presented to the Coventry Community Safety Partnership Board on 12th of May 2025.

The Committee asked questions and received responses on the following areas:-

- Less than 4% of local authorities (which includes Coventry) have a dedicated officer for addressing Modern Slavery. A recent report produced by the Human Trafficking Foundation was referred to which provides more detail. Members requested copies of this report.

- There is a wide variety of support offered to survivor which is person-centred, and trauma informed.
- There are close relationships with UHCW regarding training on awareness levels for staff as health professionals are more likely to receive a disclosure than other professionals.
- The work done to disrupt the financial aspect of modern slavery, including using civil enforcement powers the Council has, as well as those of the police.
- How Ward Councillors can support the work being delivered and resources available to Members to raise awareness.
- The governance process for reporting progress on the delivery of the Protocol and that it is formally reported on as part of the Community Safety Plan.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee recommend that:-

- 1) Cabinet approve the recommendations in the report.**
- 2) Cabinet commend the Protocol to Council given the importance of the Protocol, together with the leading and innovative role that Coventry is undertaking in this work nationally.**

10. The Re-commissioning of the Housing Related Support Services

The Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee considered a report of the Director of Care, Health and Housing, which outlined the extensive engagement with key stakeholders in Coventry and which proposed recommendations as to the requirements for the commissioned housing related support services, effective from 1st April 2026. The report will also be considered by Cabinet on 8 July, 2025.

The report indicated that the existing housing related support contracts went live on 1st April 2020, at that point the country had been in a national lockdown due to the Coronavirus pandemic for approximately 1 week. Contract mobilisation at a time of national crisis was challenging however the providers mobilised and started delivering support and services to those in need of housing related support. The existing contracts are due to expire on 31st March 2026.

The housing related support services support the statutory homelessness service in a number of ways. Without the hostel type accommodation that is commissioned, a significant percentage of the occupants would need to be provided with Temporary Accommodation (TA) by the Council. This would result in additional financial pressure on the service. In addition to this a percentage of the floating support provision supports people in hostel type accommodation e.g. Frank Walsh House, The Foyer etc. Any reduction in support to this provision could result in these services being unviable and therefore placing another pressure on the Council's TA numbers and provision.

Since the contracts were previously awarded in 2020 there has been an increase of 95% in the number of households and individuals approaching the Council in housing need. This is particularly the case for families and for individuals who require support for multiple complex needs. This has placed substantial pressure on the housing and homelessness service and its budget over the last few years.

The new provision will support the delivery of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (2025- 2029). The key aim is to ensure that the newly commissioned services are not only focussed on the delivery of services to households who are in a crisis, but that prevention work is fundamental in the delivery of these services.

It is proposed that there will be 5 commissioned Lots instead of the current 4 to deliver housing related support services and specialist accommodation and that, within these, there are specific Lots that address and support the aspirations within the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and for specific groups at risk of homelessness. The Lots that approval is sought to commission through this exercise are Adults with Complex Needs, Older Single People (25yrs +), Young People (18-24), Families, and Women with Complex Needs.

In terms of how the new Lots will compare with previous Lots there will be some difference, which includes a slight reduction in the number of commissioned bed spaces, and a reconfiguration of the floating support provision. This is because although costs have increased, the budget has remained static so need to ensure that the services are targeted where they will have the greatest impact and supports how we meet our statutory obligations to the residents of Coventry.

The Committee asked questions and received responses in relation to the following areas:

- Clarification that Lot 2 (Complex Needs Provision (Over 25's) provides support services for both men and women but accommodation for men only and Lot 5 (Women with Complex Needs Provision) provides support services and accommodation for women only.
- LGBTQ+ people are referred to appropriate support services and that there is a specific policy for trans people being placed into temporary accommodation.
- There is a requirement of the contracts that there has to be a plan of support offered which is reviewed every four weeks to support people being tenancy ready.
- That the contracts would be robustly monitored and that the finances are safeguarded. This included regular visits to providers to meet residents as well as regular qualitative and quantitative reporting.
- That the contracts will deliver actions within the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and contribute to the priorities and performance indicators in the One Coventry Plan.
- That there are several routes to access support including the Council's own services, those of partners and self-referral.

The Committee requested that the Equality Impact Assessment be circulated prior to consideration of the report by Cabinet. The Committee also requested that information about the awarded contracts be sent to Chairs of Audit and Procurement and the Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4).

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee endorse the report and recommend that the Cabinet approve the report at their meeting on 8 July, 2025.

11. Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee Work Programme and Outstanding Issues 2025/2026

The Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee considered a report of the Director of Law and Governance that provided information regarding the Committee's Work Programme and Outstanding Issues for 2025/26. The Committee noted changes to the Work Programme in relation to the consideration of the One Coventry Plan.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee notes the Work Programme attached as an appendix to the report.

12. Any Other Items of Public Business

There were no other items of urgent public business.

(Meeting closed at 3.10pm)