

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee
held at 2.00 pm on Thursday, 20 November 2025

Present:

Members: Councillor G Lloyd (Chair)

Councillor J McNicholas (Deputy Chair)

Councillor A Jobbar

Councillor L Kelly

Councillor J Lepoidevin

Councillor J McNicholas

Councillor C Miks

Councillor G Ridley

Councillor R Singh

Other Members: Councillor P Hetherston, Cabinet Member for City Services

Councillor M Mutton

Councillor E Reeves

Others in attendance: Chief Inspector H Godhania, West Midlands Police

Employees (by Directorate):

Digital Services P Ward (Director of Digital Services)

Finance and Resources R Hartopp, B Strain

Law and Governance D Blackburn, G Holmes, L Nagle, M Salmon

Planning and Performance C Boden-Hatton (Director of Planning and Performance)

Apologies: Councillor P Akhtar (by invitation)

Councillor M Ali (Substitute Councillor R Lakha)

Councillor R Brown (by invitation)

Councillor G Duggins (by invitation)

Councillor AS Khan (by invitation)

Public Business

37. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosable pecuniary Interests.

38. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 30th October 2025 were agreed and signed as a true record.

Further to minute 27/25 headed 'Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee One Coventry Plan Deep Dive Recommendations', Members noted that the recommendations to Cabinet on the One Coventry Deep Dive KPI's were agreed. The next step was to pick up the recommendations specifically for Scrutiny.

39. **Update on City Centre Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO)**

The Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee received a briefing note of the Director of Law and Governance that provided a progress report on the action taken in relation to the City Centre Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) further to the Order being amended on 21st November 2023 to include restrictions to e-bikes and e-scooters in the city centre. An Appendix to the briefing note PSPO set out detailed enforcement results for the period August - October 2025. Councillor AS Khan, Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities, and Councillor P Akhtar, Deputy Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities, had been invited to the meeting for this item but were unable to attend.

Cabinet approved the renewal of the City Centre PSPO on 13th June 2023 (their minute 3/23 referred), and also the submission of a progress report to the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee to enable them to monitor the impact of the Order. Cabinet, at their meeting on 7th November 2023 (their minute 44/23 referred), considered a report on the amendment of the City Centre PSPO which included the requirement for e-bikes and e-scooter riders to dismount when entering the designated area in the city centre. They noted Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee's concerns regarding enforcement of the amendment in terms of police capacity and priority within the city centre. A briefing note was circulated to Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee in August 2024 outlining the actions taken to engage and educate e-bike and e-scooter riders as well as the general public about the Order, and to ensure it could be adequately managed and enforced. Actions proposed, and implemented included an education campaign, signage, training for officers, joint patrols, and larger multi agency operations to bring in regional resources as needed.

Progress on enforcement included:

- A new role of Community Warden in the Community Safety Team, predominantly city centre based and providing availability at weekends and early evening, with primary duties to provide a reassuring presence by engaging, educating and enforcing all aspects of the PSPO's that are live in the city centre.
- A dedicated Police officer acting as a point of contact for partners and to co-ordinate ongoing joint patrols and operations at a local level.
- A City Centre Case management meeting enabling greater joint partnership working, to discuss problematic individuals/issues.
- Joint operations in the city centre with the Police, that had included local agencies as well as regional and national resources, and West Midlands wide Police force resources including traffic support, pursuit riders, drones and similar.
- Engagement with community groups including regular contact with the Disability Equality Action Partnership and attendance at their meetings.
- Elected Members attended multi-agency operations in the city centre.

- Engagement with the Council's Migration Team and key third sector partners to reach out to asylum-seekers to warn about the dangers of being exploited by working illegally for food delivery firms.
- Alongside the Business Improvement District, sought feedback from businesses and stakeholders in the city centre regarding matters affecting them.
- Continued monitoring and renewal of signage around the City Centre - no single case where a Fixed Penalty Notice had been appealed, on the basis that the rider was unaware or hadn't seen signage.

Results on enforcement included:

- 25 Fixed Penalty Notices to e-bike and e-scooter riders in the three months between August-October 2025.
- Current methods of recording enforcement interactions had improved due to a Home Office initiative targeting city centres over the summer, this method would continue as it better expressed the current situation in the city centre.
- In addition to the PSPO powers, due to the modification of e-bikes to increase their speed meaning they were a motor vehicle and require appropriate insurance, policing partners seized 35 illegal e-bikes between August-October 2025.
- Overall, addressing the issue of e-bikes and e-scooters in the city centre through effective engagement, education and enforcement, was improved.
- Pedal cycles were permitted in the restricted areas and although action could be taken against those riding in a reckless manner, the practicalities of getting them to stop remained an issue.

The next steps to improve the City Centre PSO compliance were:

- Continue to use action days with partners in West Midlands Police and the Business Improvement District, to include partners from Immigration Services to check the work status of riders where possible.
- Community Wardens would link with the Council and partner agencies to concentrate on PSPO enforcement in the city centre.

In considering the briefing note, the Committee asked questions and received responses on matters in the following areas:

- Signage had been put in place to assist members of the public with the legal requirements and awareness raising of the PSPO. Work was continuing on improvements to signage and their locations, and further Communications work would also be looked at
- Officers engaged with food delivery organisations and further work would be carried out on this
- Local and regional enforcement operations were in place to maximise effectiveness
- Officers were aware of the exploitation of asylum seekers for deliveries for which discussions with organisations had taken place
- Multi-agency site visits would be arranged, with all Members of the Committee invited to attend to observe
- E-bikes were not illegal. Offences that were illegal included not wearing helmets and e-bikes that exceeded the power limit of 15mph - the Police had seized 50 e-bikes to date

- Bicycles could also be an issue due to speed and unsafe riding
- The PSPO covered some nuisance issues for which general notices could be issued however, Community Wardens dealt with noise issues rather than Enforcement Officers
- The figures suggested a small number of tickets had been issued to date however, it was difficult to compare data from the previous years as the recording system for incidents had evolved over time and each year had varied information recorded
- The resources available, including a re-structured enforcement team, links with the Council's migration team, partnership working with the police, delivery companies, the Home Office and BID, and the potential use of drones.
- Deterrents were essential. Food delivery businesses needed to take more responsibility with harder consequences for offenders who worked for them, but it was important not to stifle the food delivery businesses.
- Food delivery riders were classed as self-employed and therefore were not employees of food delivery businesses
- All Local Authorities were currently looking for revised, more effective, legislation on the use of e-bikes. The Council called for this in a motion at the meeting of the Council on 2nd September 2025
- Current legislation was through the Road Traffic Act which were all applied in a similar way
- Officers to undertake further discussions with partners on alternative routes for e-bike food deliveries, including directing them to designated cycle routes rather than riding through the City Centre's pedestrian areas
- Members were encouraged to report any e-bike 'hotspots' of concern situated outside of the City Centre area, to enable targeting for further investigation
- There had been opposition to a total ban of e-bikes and bicycles in the City Centre due to the environmental benefits of e-bikes and bicycles, over driving
- There was on-going engagement with charities, universities, asylum seekers, and more, regarding the issues with e-bikes and the requirements of the PSPO
- Anti-social behaviour concerns in Lady Herbert Gardens and Millenium Place were looked at on a multi-agency working basis
- Officers were part of a working group for anti-social behaviour matters - the Group's work was continuing and fed into the Community Safety Partnership
- Cycling was recognised as a good form of green travel however, finding the balance between sensible use as a lower carbon alternative to a car with ensuring the safety of pedestrians and riders was essential. The further education of riders regarding safe riding practices and defined routes, was needed

A Radford Ward constituent, supported by Councillor M Mutton, a Radford Ward Councillor, attended the meeting and made a statement on her experience of being injured by an e-bike travelling at over 40mph in the city centre and the outcome of the court case, whereby the judge was frustrated at the lack of powers to give a stronger sentence. The Committee thanked the Radford Ward

Constituent for sharing the details of the e-bike incident and the injuries she had sustained and wished her well in her continued recovery.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee:

- 1) Notes the contents of the Briefing Note and Appendix, and the associated presentation.**
- 2) Has no further recommendations to make for the Cabinet Member or partners organisations.**
- 3) Agrees that the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) Task and Finish Group for Active Travel be requested 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 to the Committee.**
- 4) Agrees that officers liaise with the Council's Communications Team regarding the creation of a video message on the dangers of e-bikes and e-scooters and to pursue this being televised on relevant media channels, and the local press also be requested to highlight this issue.**
- 5) Agrees that officers further liaise with the Council's Communications Team in respect of promoting an awareness raising campaign on the potential dangers of e-bikes and e-scooters, their acceptable use, and the requirements of the Public Spaces Protection Order, in partnership with West Midlands Police, local press, national media and other relevant partners, including on the run-up to the Festive period.**
- 6) Agrees that a further update on the actions taken in relation to the City Centre Public Spaces Protection Order be submitted to the Committee in 6-months' time and this be added to the Work Programme accordingly.**

40. Benefit Take Up and Financial Support

Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee received a briefing note of the Director of Finance and Resources that set out the activities undertaken by the Council to maximise the take up of financial support for Coventry residents. Councillor R Brown, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources had been invited to the meeting for this item but was unable to attend.

The Council was directly responsible for the provision of various forms of financial assistance to residents which included:

- Council Tax Support – means tested support which could reduce council tax payments for working-aged people by 80 per cent and by 100 per cent for people of pension age.
- Discretionary Housing Payments - a Government scheme administered and partly funded by the Council that provided financial assistance to support low-income households with the cost of housing.

- Housing Benefit – a means tested statutory benefit for people of pension age and for people of working age who resided in temporary or supported accommodation.
- Household Support Fund – a Government funded scheme to provide emergency financial support to assist with the costs of utilities, essential household goods and food.
- Community Support Grants – a Council funded programme of assistance to support people with the cost of goods to assist them in setting up a new home.
- Administration of Free school meals.

The Council also provided advice, signposting and various resources to support benefit take-up and income maximisation. Council officers were active members of various multi-agency anti-poverty forums including the Poverty Alliance and the Coventry Inclusion Forum.

In response to the COVID pandemic and the subsequent cost of living crisis, the Council worked collaboratively with third sector partners to establish a single, central online resource for people looking for financial and wellbeing support. The resource covered a range of themes from benefits take-up to help with utility bills, from specialist money advice signposting to credit unions and, clothing and employment. The Council's website included an intuitive and interactive benefits calculator which allowed residents to identify types of support. The Council also employed two Welfare Benefits Advisors who undertook reactive and proactive income maximisation work with customers.

Council tax support:

- Nearly 24,000 Coventry households benefitted from council tax support at an annual cost to the Council of £28million.
- Support was recognised to be one of the most underclaimed benefits: people weren't aware that they could get help with their council tax payments; people didn't prioritise claiming; residents didn't notice any practical consequences if they didn't make council tax payments - people in this circumstance often had a range of debts and council tax liability was not a priority for them.
- Underclaiming of council tax support had become an increasing problem with the migration of housing benefit to Universal Credit for people of working age - people would claim Universal Credit but neglect to or fail to realise they could, claim council tax support.
- The Council had established a proactive approach to awarding council tax support using the minimum level of information to make an award of council tax support even where the customer had not made a formal application, including using information provided by the Department for Work and Pensions.
- The Council used a number of methods to publicise council tax support, including articles in Your Coventry, and literature with annual council tax bills.
- The Council's debt recovery team worked closely with colleagues in the Benefits Teams to identify and refer debtors who may have an entitlement to council tax support.
- Increasing the take-up of the benefit would ultimately increase cost to the Council by way of reduced council tax receipts. However, channelling support to those that needed it most, had wider social benefits for the city and potentially reduced the risk of more costly interventions for those households in the future.

Wider Income Maximisation:

- The Council used software to profile Coventry's most financially vulnerable residents and proactively target take-up and support. The Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT) product assisted in working with third sector partners to identify residents who may not be receiving all of the support to which they were entitled.

Through the LIFT programme, the Council and partners had been able to:

- Proactively award Free School Meals through an opt-out campaign, awarding to households who had otherwise not actively claimed themselves - in 2024/25, this resulted in Free School Meals awards to an additional 752 children and an additional £0.975 million pupil premium for Coventry schools, and in 2025/26, an additional 478 children had been awarded Free School Meals and additional pupil premium income of £0.64 million.
- Identify retrospective eligibility for Severe Disability Premium for 25 households, resulting in additional housing benefit and council tax support entitlement of £93,000 for those households.
- Promote Pension Credit take-up with an additional 79 customers in receipt of Pension Credit as a result. Whilst the Council did not administer pension credit, the Communications Team promoted the take up of a range of benefits and ran a publicity campaign during national Pension Credit Week of Action. As part of this campaign the Council also targeted communication at younger generations who may know or support someone of pension age.
- Partner with Central England Law Centre to get specialist support for people who were subject to the national benefit cap.
- Raise awareness of the Holiday Activities and Food programme by including information about this on Free School Meals letters.
- Raise awareness of the Healthy Start Programme by text messaging 16,000 households in receipt of Housing Benefit or Council Tax Support.

As part of the wider digital agenda, work was ongoing to look at opportunities to join up financial support streams across the Council so that customers weren't asked to claim multiple times. The workstream would look at single points of access for customers to access a range of different types of support, could be created. It would also look at how data was used across the organisation to better identify and channel support to the right people.

In considering the briefing note, the Committee asked questions and received responses on matters in the following areas:

- The Education Service be consulted on the impact on schools' budgets in respect of universal free-school meals for infant age children and parents not actively having to register
- Following the Government's initial decision that only those in receipt of Pension Credit could claim the winter fuel allowance, there was promotional campaign both locally and nationally on the issue resulting in many new claimants.
- Claiming DWP pension credit was an issue for some who were uncomfortable with the concept of claiming benefits

- Those that claimed pension credit also made applications for additional Council benefits however, there was no evidence to quantify an increase in other applications following the pension credit campaign
- The Government's recent change meant that many more were eligible the winter fuel allowance, including those not on Pension credit
- A guide for Elected Members on the financial support available to residents and where to sign-post them for assistance, would be useful

Members of the Committee agreed that benefits data on the caseloads for each service provided be circulated to the Committee. They also agreed that a Briefing Note on the impact on schools' budgets in respect of free-school meals for infant age children, be added to the work programme for Education and Skills Scrutiny Board (2).

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee:

- 1) **Notes the actions taken to promote benefit take-up.**
- 2) **Agrees that Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources be requested to agree to the provision of a guide for Elected Members on the financial support available to residents and where to sign-post them for assistance.**

41. Change (Transformation) Programme Update

The Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee received a report of the Director Transformation and Planning that updated Members on the One Council Change Plan for 2025/26, summarising progress since the last Transformation Programme report to the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee in November 2024 (minute 45/24 referred). Appendices to the report provided the Transformation Plan 2024/25 Update, and the 2025/26 Change Plan Key Deliverables. Councillor R Brown, Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources, had been invited to the meeting for this item but was unable to attend.

The 2024/25 Transformation Plan comprised seven programmes and 23 projects. Eleven projects had been completed or transitioned to business as usual, while twelve continued under the 2025/26 Change Plan. The 2024/25 plan delivered £4.65 million in savings and resulted in: faster service response times through automation in Council Tax billing; improved customer satisfaction, with a 28% reduction in formal complaints following the creation of a centralised service in January 2024; and increased community engagement, such as higher attendance at Rhymetime sessions after relocating Holbrooks Library to the Dementia Partnership Hub.

The 2025/26 Change Plan was developed with input from the Leadership Team and Senior Leadership Network, emphasising organisational resilience, staff engagement, and a strong, inclusive culture. The plan identified eleven priority areas, grouped into four categories:

- Service Redesign: Customer-focused improvements across teams and departments.
- Transformational Change: Fundamental changes to systems, services, and processes.

- Continuous Improvement: Ongoing enhancements to ways of working and organisational structure.
- Enablers: Core tools and systems supporting change.

Programme leadership was distributed, with Directors leading specific programmes to foster shared ownership. Details of the programmes, aims, and officer point of contacts were set out in the briefing note. The Council was focusing on the key areas where it was believed there was the greatest opportunity for impactful change or where change was necessary through reform.

Overseeing and supporting delivery of change - a streamlined Change Board, chaired by the Chief Executive, met weekly to oversee progress, strengthen accountability, and address issues. The Board monitored financial savings and overall delivery, supporting Council-wide savings targets. Regular updates were provided to the Leadership Board, and an internal communications plan ensured staff and residents were informed of changes and impacts.

In considering the briefing note, the Committee asked questions and received responses on matters in the following areas:

- Members recognised the impact on the delivery of services resulting from the budget cuts over a number of years which included the reduction in staffing levels to deliver services, and the difficulty finding further ways to make savings
- Enabling AI was an essential tool for the future to assist with service delivery where appropriate and would result in efficiency and also identified savings
- Discussions with an AI service provider would shortly be concluded and the outcomes would be reported to the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources
- The Change Plan was an internal programme that would provide an opportunity for impactful change or where change was necessary through reform.
- The outcomes from the Task and Finish Group for Special Educational Needs Transport were an example of how improvements could be made and savings achieved, without impacting service users
- Despite the budget cuts that the Council had encountered, savings had been made and a balanced budget provided whilst full support had been maintained for vulnerable citizens who were the priority for services.
- The regeneration project identified as not being on track, continued to progress and was being monitored by the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) who had included it in their Work Programme for 2026.

The Committee affirmed its view that, as per the organisational procurement processes established to support the constitution, that no technology purchases should be made or installed prior to them being taken through rigorous testing and established governance processes to ensure their effectiveness and value for money. They also agreed that a further progress report be submitted to the Committee in the Municipal Year 2026-27.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee:

- 1) Notes the content of the Briefing Note and presentation providing an overview of the One Council Change Plan 2025/26, including expected benefits, programme details, key priorities, and progress to date.
- 2) Affirms its view that, as per the organisational procurement processes established to support the constitution, no technology purchases should be made or installed prior to them being taken through rigorous testing and established governance processes to ensure their effectiveness and value for money. Should they fail to aid or work in a cross-departmental way, they should not be installed.
- 3) Requests that a further progress report be submitted to the Committee in the Municipal Year 2026-27 and this be added to the Work Programme accordingly.

42. **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.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee notes the Work Programme attached as an Appendix to the report and agrees that the following be added to the Programme:

- a) A further update on the actions taken in relation to the City Centre Public Spaces Protection Order, to be submitted to the Committee in 6-months' time.
- b) A further progress report on the Change (Transformation) Programme, to be submitted to the Committee in the Municipal Year 2026-27.

43. **Any Other Items of Public Business**

There were no other items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 4.20 pm)