

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee
held at 2.00 pm on Thursday, 5 February 2026

Present:

Members: Councillor G Lloyd (Chair)
Councillor J McNicholas (Deputy Chair)
Councillor M Ali
Councillor A Jobbar
Councillor L Kelly
Councillor J Lepoidevin
Councillor R Singh
Councillor CE Thomas (Substitute for Councillor C Miks)

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Other Members (By Invitation): Councillor S Agboola (Substitute for Councillor N Akhtar)
Councillor L Bigham
Councillor P Hetherington
Councillor J O'Boyle
Councillor EM Reeves
Councillor P Seaman

Employees (by Service Area):

Care, Health and Housing P Fahy (Director of Care, Health and Housing), K Clarke

Children and Education J Jones
Services

Law and Governance E Jones, L Knight

Planning and Performance A LeCras

Regeneration and Economy D Nuttall, R Palmer, S Virman

Apologies: Councillor N Akhtar (By Invitation)
Councillor K Caan (By Invitation)
Councillor G Duggins
Councillor C Miks
Councillor G Ridley

Public Business

50. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

51. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11th December 2025 were agreed and signed as a true record.

52. **Review of Statutory Complaints Reports 2024-25**

The Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee considered a briefing note of the Director of Customer and Business Services, that provided oversight of the published complaints reports and outcomes for 2024/25.

The Committee noted that the Council is expected to address complaints in accordance with the relevant statutory complaints processes and / or the advice and guidance issued by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) under their powers under section 23(12A) of the Local Government Act 1974. In addition, statute requires an annual report on the operation of the complaints process and the lessons learnt or service improvements arising from them for both Children Services and Adult Social Care complaints.

The LGSCO issue an Annual Review letter each July in respect of those complaints (both statutory and non-statutory / corporate) which have exhausted the Council's complaints process and escalated to, investigated by and decided upon by the Ombudsman. The Letter is addressed to the Council's Chief Executive and the Chair of Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee "to encourage effective ownership and oversight of complaint outcomes". A report similar to the statutory Childrens and Adults reports is prepared following receipt of the LGSCO's letter. These reports are each considered in detail at relevant Cabinet member meetings and at Ethics Committee, ahead of being submitted to the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee for overview and review. The reports are also published on the Council's website.

In respect of Children's Services, the LGSCO had received 257 complaints in 2024/25, an increase of 5 from the previous year. 181 of these were statutory complaints, compared to 143 in 2023/24. 69 of these complaints were fully or partially upheld, which was 6 more than the previous year, although 6% lower in overall percentages. Appendix 1 provided a further breakdown of the themes of the complaints received along with the stages and whether corporate, informal or ombudsman complaints. In addition, the time taken to respond to complaints was also provided. The remedies provided and lessons learned were also summarised. The Committee noted that, in addition to complaints, 154 compliments had been received and these were broken down by team.

In relation to Adult Social Care, the LGSCO had received 148 complaints in 2024/25, up from 94 in the previous year. 85 of these were statutory complaints, compared to 59 in 2023/24. 42% (34) of the complaints were fully or partially upheld, a reduction from 49% in 2023/24. Appendix 2 provided a further breakdown of the themes of the complaints received along with the stages and whether corporate, informal or ombudsman complaints. In addition, the time taken to respond to complaints was also provided. The remedies provided and lessons learned were also summarised. The Committee noted that, in addition to complaints, 185 compliments had been received.

Appendix 3 set out information relating to the LGSCO's annual letter regarding complaints. The LGSCO had received 101 complaints and enquiries in 2024/25, which was an increase of 21 from the previous year. Details of the complaints by category was set out along with comparative data for the previous 5 years. The LGSCO had determined that 3 complaints were incomplete or invalid; 22 were referred back to the local authority for local resolution; 53 were closed after initial enquiries; and 22 complaints were investigated, with 17 being upheld and 5 not upheld. Benchmarking data against Coventry's 15 statistically equivalent peers was included within the Appendix along with a comparison to the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) constituent authorities. Additionally, lessons learned from the complaints and a summary of agreed actions was provided.

The Committee made statements, asked questions and received responses across a number of topics which, in summary, included:

- In relation to complaints where a financial remedy was provided, who decides on the amount to be paid and what types of scenarios / complaints could lead to a financial remedy.
- Where complaints have risen significantly within a particular area, whether the reasons for the had been identified.
- Acknowledging that the local authority is often providing a service when the service user is at crisis point and whilst it is essential to ensure that anything that can be done, is done, there is also a need to manage expectations.
- What a minimal level of communication would look like to a service user.
- The impact of a growing complexity of issues in respect of complaints and the importance of triage at the early stages to ensure that most urgent matters are dealt with first.
- Whether the ethnicity of complainants is reflective of the community being served.

Following discussions, the Committee requested that:

- a) Officers provide case studies outlining the types of complaints that result in financial remedy payments, including real examples, appropriately redacted, that illustrate why a payment was made and how the level of redress was determined; and
- b) Officer provide the Committee with a copy of the LGSCO guidance referred to at the meeting, including the sections that outline examples and scenarios where financial remedies are considered appropriate.

RESOLVED that, the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee:

- 1. Reviewed and considered the contents of the Children's Services, Adult Social Care and LGSCO Complaints reports for 2024/25.**
- 2. Confirm that there are no further recommendations for the appropriate Cabinet Member and support a positive complaint handling culture.**

53. **Community Growing Sites in Coventry**

The Scrutiny Coordination Committee considered a briefing note and presentation by the Director of Regeneration and Economy, which set out plans to enable Coventry residents and community groups to access Council-owned land that is underutilised for food growing and wildlife gardening.

Coventry's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan outlined an ambitious vision for the city which would help to improve the lives of people that live and work here, alongside supporting nature's recovery.

One of the initiatives within the Strategy was focussed on the development of a network of community growing sites across the city for residents to help create and enjoy. The scheme would support residents and community groups to take ownership of their local environment through maintaining and improving the open areas for the benefit of the local community. Bringing forward opportunities for residents to utilise Council-owned land which is disused or underutilised for community growing sites, supporting food growth and wildlife, would deliver significant benefits including:

- Health and wellbeing: encouraging physical activity in fresh air, improved wellbeing by spending more time in green space, increasing locally grown fruit and vegetable consumption;
- Social cohesion and community: fostering stronger relationships within communities;
- Environmental: increasing and enhancing local green spaces and biodiversity;
- Climate resilience: producing locally grown food for communities to help increase food security;
- Education and skills: providing an opportunity for residents to learn new skills about creating sustainable growing spaces, horticulture, composting and caring for wildlife;
- Pride: this will help engender local pride.

The Committee noted that, nationally, there is a campaign for Government to adopt the principle of a 'Right to Grow' across the UK due to the benefits for people and wildlife. Coventry had already started doing this through 'Coventry Grows', a project which started in 2024 through the city's Climate Change Board to develop a number of pilot community growing sites in some of the city's most green-deprived areas, backed by funding from E.ON through the city's Strategic Energy Partnership. The pilot projects have seen the first site established in Stoke Heath, with further sites being developed in Hillfields, Foleshill and Tile Hill, with 58 community volunteers involved over the last 12 months.

The Council has worked with the Coventry Food Network in securing the national recognition to obtain the status as a 'Sustainable Food Place'. This recognises the City's partnership making healthy and sustainable food a defining characteristic of where people live, which includes building public awareness, active food citizenship and local good food movement, with healthy food for all. Expanding community growing sites across the city would help to support this and help benefit communities if produce can be distributed via the Food Network and local networks where this is a surplus.

The Coventry Growing Sites policy would enable the Council to extend the opportunity to all communities across the city to access disused or underused Council land for community growing and nature gardening, building on the Coventry Grows pilot and existing allotment network and creating a significant opportunity to improve the quality and extent of green space across the city for the benefit of people and nature.

The policy would be introduced where residents could apply to use Council-owned land for community growing sites. The Council would provide guidance in terms of available sites through an online map, alongside growing advice and any requirements to support site set up, such as surveys. Community growing sites would be regulated, with a legal agreement between the Council and residents to enable them to use the land for growing. It was proposed that the land would be available on a rolling annual basis, allowing for the agreement to be terminated should the land be required for other purposes in the future or if the project comes to an end.

Whilst plans were initially focussed on Council-owned land, the Committee acknowledged that there was an opportunity to work with other landowners across the city as part of the initiative. This could include partners such as social housing provider, Citizen, who have expressed an interest, alongside the Canal and River Trust, where there is potential land that could be used adjacent to the canal.

It was further proposed that there be dedicated resource allocated to co-ordinating the community growing sites, who will be able to help simplify the process for communities by co-ordinating with Council services that would need to be consulted on sites, which would include Parks and Open Spaces, Climate Change and Sustainability, Sports, Education, Ecology, Drainage, Highways, Streetpride, Legal, Property, Insurance and Finance, amongst others. The Council would also help support groups by offering a tool library.

Having considered the briefing note and the presentation, the Committee provided feedback to assist in drafting the policy and the guidance available, to include:

- Clear guidance for growers on appropriate native species, with input from local Wildlife Trusts;
- Clarification on whether developers are encouraged to offer land or growing space as part of new developments;
- Ensuring fair access, limiting one lease per applicant where appropriate;
- Meaningful engagement with nearby residents and ward councillors ahead of confirming leases;
- Strong expectation that Friends of Parks groups are consulted where relevant;
- Opportunities to engage with mental health organisations, including the Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust, due to the wellbeing benefits of growing activities;
- Partnership opportunities be identified with the Canal and River Trust for linear orchards and canal-side growing initiatives;
- Sites should only be allocated to Coventry residents and activities must be restricted to growing and biodiversity enhancement;

- Incorporation of a Risk Management process, including scheduled inspections and steps for responding to problems such as vandalism and fly-tipping;
- Consideration of insurance arrangements to ensure fairness and clarity for participating groups;
- Ensuring that the Policy considers scalable delivery and a mechanism for evaluating the scheme's success over time.

RESOLVED that, the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee:

- 1. Endorse the proposal to be taken forward to the Cabinet Member for formal approval in March 2026.**
- 2. Provide feedback, as indicated above, to help assist in drafting the policy and guidance.**
- 3. Support with engaging communities at a ward level to encourage uptake.**

54. Coventry Creative Industries Strategy 2026 - 2029

The Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee considered a report of the Director of Regeneration and Economy, that set out the Coventry Creative Industries Strategy 2026-2029.

The Committee noted that the report was due to be considered by the Cabinet at its meeting scheduled for 10th February 2026.

It was noted that, with strengths in both creativity and technology, two strong universities and the creative legacy of UK City of Culture 2021, Coventry was well placed to maximise the potential of its creative industries. However, Coventry did not currently have an adopted Creative Industries Strategy. This had become more pertinent following the publication of the Government's Creative Industries Sector Plan in June 2025, including significant sector investment for 2026-29. This included a £25m allocation to the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) to drive growth of creative industries, aligning with the West Midlands Growth Plan, which identified creative industries as a priority sector.

Ahead of the Government sector plan, the Council's Culture and Creative Economy team commissioned an independent Coventry Creative Industries mapping report in May 2025. The purpose was to provide fresh evidence about the size of the sector, as well as to identify key opportunities and challenges. The mapping involved stakeholder consultation through roundtables and focussed interviews. A public event was held on 24th June 2025 to share key findings and collect further evidence, followed by an All-Members' Seminar on 6th October 2025.

The mapping report and its key recommendations have strongly informed the development of the Creative Industries Strategy. The Strategy would provide a future roadmap for the development of creative industries in Coventry as well as giving an opportunity to articulate priorities to potential funders and other

stakeholders. It was highlighted that the adoption of the Strategy was time sensitive given the WMCA funding detail due to be confirmed at the end of March 2026.

Whilst the Strategy was developed with stakeholders and partners by the Council's Culture and Creative Economy team, there were no new and direct cost implications for the Council within the Strategy itself. The accompanying delivery plan was based on either existing funding or capacity, but with the ambition to secure further funding in the future, including potentially from the WMCA through alignment with the West Midlands Growth Plan.

The Committee made statements, asked questions and received answers in respect of the following:

- The strategy strengthens the Council's position to access funding and support a growing sector within Coventry's economy.
- Concerns were raised about reliance on national data, with an expectation that future versions will include a stronger Coventry-specific baseline drawing on local evidence.
- The need for more explicit and detailed KPIs was highlighted, with a commitment for clearer measures to be set out in the delivery plan.
- Few comparable strategies exist at local authority level; most are developed regionally. Coventry is viewed as an early adopter in this space.
- Universities are recognised as key partners, with potential to further strengthen data, analysis and evaluation within the strategy.
- Long-term outcomes will be tracked through a structured monitoring approach built into the delivery plan, enabling assessment of progress over time.
- Assurance that the strategy will continue to evolve, with data and KPIs refined as new guidance and evidence become available.

RESOLVED that, the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee;

- 1. Note the content of the report.**
- 2. Request that the Cabinet consider the comments made by the Committee.**
- 3. Indicate their support of the recommendations for the Cabinet within the report submitted.**

55. Work Programme 2025-26 and Outstanding Issues

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 agreed that reports from two Task and Finish Groups from the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) be included on the work programme for the Committee.

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

56. Any Other Items of Public Business

There were no other items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 4.08 pm)