

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1) held
at 10.00 am on Wednesday, 10 September 2025

Present:

Members: Councillor A Jobbar (Chair)
Councillor J Blundell
Councillor J Innes
Councillor R Lakha
Councillor K Maton
Councillor J McNicholas

Other Members: Councillor R Brown, Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance
and Resources

Employees:

Finance and Resources: B Hastie, T Pinks

Law and Governance: G Holmes, C Sinclair

Apologies: Councillor P Male and CE Thomas

Public Business

9. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

10. Minutes

(a) The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 July were agreed and signed as a true record.

(b) Matter arising - Minute 5 (Procurement Strategy), the Board requested an update from the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources on Recommendation (b) relating to the contract with Palantir. Officers confirmed that this would be followed up with the Cabinet Member.

11. Revenue and Capital Outturn 2024-25

The Board considered a briefing note setting out details for Members to consider whether they wished to further scrutinise any aspect of the Council's financial position.

The Council's Revenue and Capital Outturn report 2024/25, which had been considered by Cabinet, the Audit and Procurement Committee and Council, was appended to the briefing note.

The overall financial position included the following headline items:

- An underspend of £1.8m, balanced by a contribution to earmarked reserves.
- Capital Programme expenditure of £128.8m
- A small increase in the level of available Council revenue reserves from £118m to £119m

The Council had faced significant pressures within both Adults and Children's social care, and City Services, reflecting national issues in most cases. Other overspends were also being reported in Regeneration and Economic Development, Legal and Governance and People and Organisational Development. These financial pressures were being caused by a combination of continued increases in service demand, complexity of cases and social care market conditions, legacy inflation impacts, income shortfalls due to reduced activity, and slippage in the delivery of some service savings.

Good practice in financial scrutiny recommended that financial scrutiny takes place at a service level. It was therefore recommended that the Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1) identify any further areas identified in the report for further for further discussion.

The Board explored areas where further scrutiny at a service level could be valuable. Members expressed concerns regarding the significant overspend against Corporate Parenting and Sufficiency, what steps had been taken to address this and reasons that Members were not notified earlier. In response, officers explained the volatility of the market, nationally recognised to be broken and gave assurance that they make every effort to forecast accurately using a complicated model. It was not just placement costs that were volatile, but also activity levels and demand for placements. It was noted that a balanced budget was forecast for Q1 for 2025/26.

The Board also asked questions on Godiva Festival financing and costs relating to the decision to reinstate street lighting at night. In respect of the costs and complexity in care for children and young people the Board noted that an agenda item on this matter would be discussed at the next meeting of the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board and Members asked Officers to report back on the outcome of that discussion.

RESOLVED that the Board:

(a) Note the content of the financial position of the Council as shown in the Revenue and Capital Outturn 2024/25 Report at Appendix 1.

(b) Request that following the Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1) meeting on 11 September 2025, this Board receive an update from on the discussions and any resolutions in respect of the agenda item on 'Children in Care Placements.'

12. Proposals for Task and Finish Group

The Board had been asked to identify a topic area to be pursued as a task and finish group for the municipal year 2025/26. It was therefore proposed that the

Board support the Ethics Committee in their work to tackle and mitigate the impact of abuse and intimidation that Councillors may encounter by considering a task and finish group on Ending Abuse in Public Life.

At their meeting on 25th September 2025 Ethics Committee would receive a report recommending that they request the Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1) to establish a task and finish group as outlined above.

Councillor Innes agreed to Chair the Task and Finish Group and Members were asked to volunteer if they were interested in sit on the Group.

RESOLVED that the Board note the content of the Briefing Note and agree in principle to establish a task and finish group to look at the support offered to Members to tackle and mitigate the impact and risk of abuse and intimidation.

13. **Work Programme and Outstanding Issues**

The Work Programme for 2025-26 was noted.

There were no outstanding issues.

14. **Any other items of Public Business**

There were no other items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 10.50 am)