

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Coventry Shareholder Committee held at 2.00 pm on
Tuesday, 7 October 2025

Present:

Members: Councillor G Duggins (Chair)

Councillor N Akhtar
Councillor R Brown
Councillor K Caan
Councillor P Hetherton
Councillor J O'Boyle
Councillor P Seaman

Non-Voting
Representatives: Councillor J Blundell
Councillor M Lapsa (substitute for Councillor J Gardiner)

Other Members: Councillor J McNicholas

Employees (by Directorate):

City Services M Adams (Interim Director), T Wetherhill

Finance and Resources P Helm

Law and Governance O Aremu, S Bennett

Property Services and
Development R Moon (Director)

Regeneration and
Economy J Hunt

Apologies: Councillors J Gardiner, AS Khan, Lepoidevin, G Lloyd,
K Sandhu

Public Business

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 April, 2025 were agreed and signed as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

3. **Council Acting as Charitable Trustees for War Memorial Park Regarding the Proposed Development of Padel Tennis Courts**

The Coventry Shareholders Committee considered a report of the Interim Director of City Services which sought agreement of the Committee, acting as sole Charitable Trustee of the War Memorial Park, to approve the lease of land adjacent to the existing tennis courts by inviting applications from interested companies to develop and operate Padel Court facilities under a 15-year lease (minimum term).

The Council holds the legal title to the War Memorial Park by virtue of a conveyance dated 27 January 1921. The land was transferred to the Council to be held 'to the use' of the Corporation and its successors and assigns 'to be maintained by the Corporation and dedicated in perpetuity as a public park or Recreation Ground for the people or for use for Agricultural Shows Flower Shows or similar purposes with a right to charge for admission'. The wording of this conveyance clearly settled the land on Charitable Trust and as such the Council is the sole corporate trustee of the Trust. As sole trustee, it is essential to ensure that the assets are held and applied in accordance with the Charity's purpose.

Any income received from any agreement can only be used toward furthering the purpose upon which the Charity was provided. It cannot be used for the local authority's general purposes and any income received from the asset must be kept separate from that of the Council and accounted for separately.

Subject to approval, it is intended to invite applicants to submit proposals for the development of Padel facilities at both War Memorial Park and Longford Park. Longford Park is Council owned and not subject to a Charitable trust. Padel is the fastest growing sport in Europe. It is accessible for all as it is a very inclusive game. The current demand for Padel courts across the UK is vast, and it is envisaged that this will support the health and wellbeing of residents but also add to the family leisure offer in both parks

The proposal is to go out to the market to invite operators to apply for the opportunity for them to develop and operate a Padel facility. This would be a legal arrangement with a minimum 15 year lease between the successful operator and Coventry City Council. Under this option the construction and operational costs would sit with the operator and they would pay an agreed rental plus a negotiated profit share. This option limits the financial return to the Council as well as control over how it is operated however it also limits the risk to the Council.

Following the closing date, applications will be evaluated, and the successful applicant's offer and the proposed lease terms will also have to be verified as representing best value and the best terms by an independent Charities Act report. The Committee noted that the tender evaluation will include social and community impact value.

In accordance with the Constitution, Councillor J McNicholas attended as nominee of the Chair of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee, Cllr Lloyd, and agreed the need for urgency such that call-in arrangements will not apply in relation to this decision. The reason for urgency is that in order to meet the construction programme and complete the new development before peak season ends in

Autumn 2026, the advertisement of the opportunity needs to go out in early October to allow for evaluation of proposals and legal commitment to be secured prior to the end of 2025 calendar year. Ensuring the facility can open during high season will improve the Council's return on this development and advertising the opportunity as soon as possible is the most sensible commercial decision as it will ensure we will have the widest range of bidders before they have the opportunity to build a competing facility which may not bring the same benefits to the residents of Coventry.

In agreeing the grounds of urgency on this occasion, Councillor McNicholas reiterated to officers the need to ensure that decisions are made in a timely manner to ensure that there is sufficient time to enable the call-in procedure to be open to Members of Scrutiny. This was supported by the Committee.

RESOLVED that, in its role as Charitable trustee of the War Memorial Park and in the best interest of the Charitable asset, Coventry Shareholders Committee:

- 1. Agrees to the carrying out a competitive procurement process inviting applicants to submit proposals outlining how they would develop and manage Padel facilities on a minimum 15-year lease at the proposed site shown edged red on the plan (Appendix 1) to the report, subject to:**
 - a. An independent Charities Act report recommending that the intended disposal between the Charitable Trust and the successful applicant represents best value to the Charity.**
- 2. Delegates authority to the Interim Director of City Services, following consultation with the Director of Property Services and Development, the Director of Finance and Resources and the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change, to:**
 - a. Prior to the lease, advertise and place a public notice detailing the intended lease of the land for the proposed Padel site in accordance with the guidance from the Charity Commission and in accordance with the Charities Act 2011 (as amended).**
 - b. Consider any comments and/or objections received in response to the advertisement and the public notice and decide whether the lease of the proposed Padel site be affected; and**
 - c. Select a successful applicant and negotiate the detailed terms of any agreements including but not limited to undertaking the appropriate due diligence and completion of the necessary legal documentation to bring into effect a new lease in accordance with the recommendations set out in this report.**

4. **Any Other Items of Urgent Public Business**

There were no other items of urgent public business.

(Meeting closed at 2.25pm)