



Coventry City Council

Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change

Time and Date

2.00 pm on Thursday, 19 March, 2026

Place

Diamond Room 2 - Council House

Public Business

1. **Apologies**

2. **Declarations of Interest**

3. **Minutes**

a) To agree the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 December, 2025

b) Any matters arising

4. **Community Growing Sites in Coventry**

Report of the Director of Regeneration and Economy

5. **Any other items of urgent public business**

Private Business

Nil

Julie Newman, Director of Law and Governance, Council House, Coventry

11 March, 2026

Note: The person to contact about the agenda and documents for this meeting is Suzanne Bennett, Governance Services, Email Suzanne.bennett@coventry.gov.uk

Membership: Councillor J O'Boyle (Cabinet Member)

By invitation: Councillor J Blundell (Shadow Cabinet Member)

Public Access

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**Suzanne Bennett, Governance Services, Email
Suzanne.bennett@coventry.gov.uk**

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change held at 1.00 pm on Thursday, 18 December 2025

Present:

Members: Councillor J O'Boyle (Chair)

Councillor J Blundell (Shadow Cabinet Member)

Others Members present: Councillor R Bailey (for item contained in Minute 18 below)

Employees (by Directorate):

Law and Governance S Bennett, J Redfern

Property Services and Development R Moon (Director), M A Hunt, M Gahir

Public Business

15. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

16. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 November, 2025 were agreed and signed as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

17. Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 for the private report contained in Minute 22 below headed 'Mercia Business Centre, Westwood Way Westwood Business Park, Coventry – Lease Regear (Surrender and Re-grant) ' on the grounds that the report involves the likely disclosure of information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, as it contains information relating the identity, financial business affairs of an organisation and the amount of expenditure proposed to be incurred by the Council under a particular contract for the supply of goods or services, and in all circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

18. Supporting Coventry Market and its Traders

The Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change considered a report of the Director of Property Services which indicated that Coventry Market is

a hugely important asset which has been serving Coventry's communities since the 1950s. The Market has 150 stalls and sells a huge variety of goods and services and is a key footfall generator for the city centre. However, similar to the retail sector and "High Streets" generally, the Market has been struggling for many years in terms of vacancy levels, the trading environment and financial performance (the Market currently operates at a loss to the Council of c.£80k per year).

The Market is located on Rover Road and is adjacent to the Council's flagship regeneration scheme for the city, City Centre South (CCS), where £450m of public and private investment is transforming the city centre and delivering over 1,500 new homes, new business and job opportunities and high quality landscaped public spaces and streets. The Council has been working for a number of years to seek to ensure that any negative impacts arising from the scheme on the Market are minimised and that the Market can benefit from the investment and new residents who will live within the surrounding area.

The report highlights two key elements from this ongoing prioritisation of the Market. Firstly, a key focus of the negotiations by Council officers with the CCS developer when the scheme was being designed was to ensure that the impact on the Market and traders was minimised as far as possible. This included securing that the Market could remain open and trading during the demolition works, construction and delivery of the scheme; that appropriate servicing arrangements were put in place so that the traders could continue to service their businesses without major disruption; and to ensure that any negative impacts from the hoardings were minimised wherever possible.

Furthermore, as part of the preparatory work for CCS, the Council put a huge amount of energy into negotiating with the previous owners of the Market, Royal London, to take the ownership of the Market back from them to put the Council in a stronger place to be able to secure investment to deliver longer term improvements for the Market and its traders. The Council took ownership back of the Market in November 2024 (before then the Council only managed it on behalf of the owners Royal London). The arrangements during the period when Royal London owned it and the Council managed it meant that neither party was incentivised to invest in improving the Market so capital spend has been minimal for many years. This has meant that the building has deteriorated and there has been no investment planning aligned with a forward looking management strategy to make the Market relevant for 21st century retail needs.

Whilst options for longer term improvement are worked up for consideration, there is a more immediate challenge. The delivery of the CCS scheme requires a significant part of the city centre to be hoarded off whilst demolition and construction occurs. This is necessary to ensure the safety of the public and the contractors working on the site. The hoardings are necessarily located very close to the Market and its entrances and the Council recognises that this may be having an impact on footfall and the trading environment for the stallholders.

Recognising the direct impact of the CCS works on the trading environment of the Market, the report proposed that proportionate and time limited financial support is provided to Market traders. Firstly, rent relief (including Service Charge), to be effected by providing traders with the equivalent of two quarter's rent concession

during the 2026 calendar year and one quarter's rent concession during the 2027 calendar year. This offer would only initially be made available to those traders who are not in an arrears position and it will be effected through a pro rata reduction in traders' rental payments. It should also be noted that delegated authority (see recommendation 6) was being sought which allows for variations to the criteria set out in the report to be made.

Secondly, those traders who are liable for Business Rates are currently benefitting from Business Rates relief for 2025/26. It is proposed that this continues for 2026/27 and 2027/28.

As well as the financial support proposed, the report indicated that the Council will continue to engage in dialogue with the Market traders and provide a broad range of communications and marketing support. The Council will also work with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) who have recently appointed an organisation called "Good 2 Great" through its Market Boost programme to provide business support to Market traders and, from January 2026, the Council will be linking this organisation up with a number of traders to provide this support.

The report also indicated that it is important to recognise the significant benefits the CCS scheme will bring to the city and the Market traders. This scheme will realise £450m of investment in the city centre, create high quality, landscaped public spaces next to the Market, provide opportunities for new jobs and businesses and also provide much needed affordable homes. It will also result in thousands of new residents living next door to the Market and there is an opportunity for the Market to become the main amenity, retail and leisure offer for these new residents. The CCS scheme will also significantly improve the servicing arrangements for the Market traders through the provision of a new, covered service yard. The operating environment for the traders will also be greatly enhanced as it will no longer be hidden away behind shops and within poor quality service yards and will instead sit within a new landscaped environment. This provides the context to look at longer term opportunities for investment into the Market and Officers will explore options for funding for these improvements and opportunities to help create a sustainable future for the Market and its traders.

This work will include exploring options for improving the external façade of the Market. The current façade has deteriorated significantly over many decades, looks tired and doesn't offer an inviting welcome and "front door" for the Market. The Council is proposing to work with key stakeholders, including the CCS developer and Market traders, to identify improvements (such as windows, doors, external lighting, shutters, signage, paintwork etc) for the façade and sources of funding for the work (recognising that the Market is a Grade 2 listed structure). The improvements to the façade are also given greater emphasis by the fact that by mid 2028 the Market will be "opened up" and will sit within fantastic new public realm and next to high quality new homes. Without improvements to the façade, the contrast between old and new will be telling.

Improvements to the external appearance of the Market is only one, albeit necessary, step in helping to create a sustainable trading environment for the traders and a sustainable financial position for the Council. Identifying the longer term "offer" and focus for the Market needs to be a priority and the Council will be working with specialists in the Market sector to identify options and business cases

for change and investment in the Market. This work will also be undertaken with the involvement of key stakeholders which will include the CCS developer and Market traders. As options are developed, there will be reports back through Governance approval processes.

Two petitions have also been received in relation to Coventry Market. The first petition bears a total of 723 signatures and reads:-

“Coventry Market – Improve Access after Disruptions Following Redevelopment”.

The petition requests:-

- i) Changes to the hoarding and construction barriers in place for the City Centre South development; and
- ii) If no changes are possible then a suspension or lessening of rents

The second petition bears a total of 549 signatures and reads:-

“Support the Coventry Market Traders. The iconic round market is open but due to building work around it, people think it's closed or cannot find it. Please support them by visiting and shopping for all kinds of everything”.

One of the petition organisers together with the petition sponsors, Councillors Bailey and Blundell, attended the meeting to present their petitions. The petition organiser present and the sponsors indicated their support for the recommendations contained in the report.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change:-

- 1) Considers and notes the two petitions, together with the comments raised at the meeting.**
- 2) Approves the proposal to provide rent relief to Coventry Market Traders who satisfy the criteria set out in section 3.2.3 of this report to be funded from existing resources.**
- 3) Notes that the Business Rates relief for applicable Coventry Market traders provided by way of discretion under section 69 of the Localism Act 2011 will be extended to also cover the 2026/27 and 2027/28 calendar year.**
- 4) Notes that Officers will be exploring options to secure funding to improve the external façade of Coventry Market and any subsequent decision will be the subject of separate Governance approvals as required.**
- 5) Notes that Officers will be working with specialists and key stakeholders to look at options for long term improvement to Coventry Market to ensure it has a financially viable future and any**

subsequent decision making will be the subject of separate Governance approvals as required.

- 6) Delegates authority to the Director of Property Services and Development, following consultation with the Director of Law and Governance, the Director of Finance and Resources and the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change to take all necessary, incidental or ancillary steps for the carrying into effect any of the recommendations set out in this report including but not limited to the authority to make necessary variations to the criteria set out in section 3.2.3 of this report.**

19. Mercia Business Centre, Westwood Way Westwood Business Park, Coventry - Lease Regear (Surrender and Re-grant)

The Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change considered a report of the Director of Property Services and Development that sought approval to the surrender of the current leases on Mercia Business Centre and to the simultaneous regrant of a new long lease. This would facilitate the demolition of the existing buildings to be replaced with purpose-built student accommodation and ancillary commercial accommodation. The student accommodation scheme was approved at Planning Committee on 31 July 2025 and is subject to completion of a Section 106 agreement.

The report indicated that Westwood Business Park is evolving into a student accommodation hub on the north side of Westwood Way, where Mercia Business Centre is located, bringing economic opportunities for the City and delivering financial returns to help support the delivery of services to Coventry residents.

Purpose-built student accommodation supports the University of Warwick as a leading place of learning and research in the UK, providing businesses an opportunity to recruit their future skilled workforce and help strengthen the economy of the city.

The proposed scheme for Mercia Business Centre involves the Council and the developer entering into an Agreement for Lease which will be conditional on the developer:-

- 1) Securing an acceptable planning permission for the proposed development
- 2) Entering into a building contract and
- 3) Acquiring the interests of the existing occupational leasehold interests.

The subject property is a collection of two-storey office buildings comprising 23 units with associated parking built in the late 1980/early 1990's, located on Torwood Close on the northern side of Westwood Way. It has been occupied by a variety of businesses and has been let on mainly short term occupational tenancies, three of which are partially occupied and nine vacant units (approx. 40% of the property).

The site, which extends to approximately 2.89 acres (1.17 Ha) is subject to seven headleases granted for a term of 125 years from 22 November 1988 expiring on the 21 November 2113. A capital premium payment was received by the Council when granting the original leases hence the current rent passing is a peppercorn. The leases currently restrict the use of each demise to offices. The developer, Skybridge Property Mercia Limited (SPML) is acquiring the headleases from the long leaseholders.

SPML are proposing to construct a purpose-built student housing development of up to 1,006 beds with ground floor commercial. They have agreed to acquire the headleases from Mercia Business Village (Coventry Ltd), which have an unexpired term of 88 years. SPML are seeking a new 153-year lease (which allows the proposed development on the land outlined in red in Appendix 1). The new lease is to include a piece of amenity land currently accommodating trees and shrubs on the corner of Westwood Way and Torwood Close (shown hatched red on the plan). The amenity land is owned by the Council and is also part of the adopted highway.

SPML intend to forward sell the completed development to an investor or investment fund. As such the Council may be asked to grant the lease in the name of the fund or investor. If the funder requires the demise to be split across two separate leases rather than a single lease, officers will review the arrangement to ensure it continues to meet the Council's requirements, and its position remains fully protected.

The Council has been professionally advised by independent property consultants Avison Young in the commercial negotiations around the terms of the new lease to ensure 'best consideration' is obtained.

The Business Park has already seen other sites on the estate redeveloped for high quality student housing and the advice provided by Avison Young is that due to the changing nature of the way offices are occupied, the demand for older second-hand office space, such as that at Westwood Business Park, is low and does not show signs of improvement. Therefore, finding suitable alternative uses for the land which can support the continued growth and improved experience of students attending the University of Warwick, is important for effective land use and economic growth for the city.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change, subject to the consideration of the additional confidential information contained in the corresponding private report,:

- 1. Approves the surrender of the existing leases across the former Mercia Business Centre site at Westwood Business Park.**
- 2. Approves the simultaneous grant of new 153-year lease(s) to Skybridge Property Limited or their nominated investment fund or investor, to facilitate the development of up to 1,006 bed Purpose-built student accommodation scheme with a new ground rent.**

3. **Delegates authority to the Director of Property Services and Development, following consultation with the Director of Finance and Resources, the Director of Law and Governance and the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change, to negotiate and finalise the terms of the grant of the new lease(s), to undertake the necessary due diligence, complete all necessary legal documentation to facilitate the completion of the transaction and to take all necessary, incidental or ancillary steps for the carrying into effect any of the recommendations set out in this report.**

20. **Outstanding Issues**

There were no outstanding issues.

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

There were no other items of urgent public business.

22. **Mercia Business Centre, Westwood Way Westwood Business Park, Coventry - Lease Regear (Surrender and Re-grant)**

Further to Minute 19 above, the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change considered a private report of the Director of Property Services and Development which set out the confidential commercial and financial matters relating to the surrender of the current leases on Mercia Business Centre and to the simultaneous regrant of a new long lease.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change, having considered the corresponding public report,:

1. **Approves the surrender of the existing leases across the former Mercia Business Centre site at Westwood Business Park.**
2. **Approves the simultaneous grant of new 153 year lease(s) to Skybridge Property Limited or their nominated investment fund or investor, to facilitate the development of up to 1,006 bed Purpose-built student accommodation scheme with a new ground rent on the terms as detailed in the report.**
3. **Delegates authority to the Director of Property Services and Development, following consultation with the Director of Finance and Resources, the Director of Law and Governance and the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change to negotiate and finalise the terms of the grant of the new lease, to undertake the necessary due diligence, complete all necessary legal documentation to facilitate the completion of the transaction and to take all necessary, incidental or ancillary steps for the carrying into effect any of the recommendations set out in this report.**

23. **Any Other Items of Urgent Private Business**

There were no other items of urgent private business.

(Meeting closed at 1.40pm)



Public report
Cabinet Member

Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change

19 March 2026

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cllr J O'Boyle, Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change

Director approving submission of the report:

Director of Economic Growth

Ward(s) affected:

All

Title:

Coventry Community Growing Sites

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive summary:

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

One of the initiatives within the Strategy is focused on the development of a network of community growing sites across the city for residents to help create and enjoy. This report focuses on bringing forward opportunities for residents to utilise Council-owned land which is disused or underutilised for community growing sites, to support food growing and wildlife. This will deliver significant benefits, including increased social cohesion, improved health and well-being and increased neighbourhood pride, as well as generating environmental benefits and increased climate resilience.

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. In Coventry we have 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 Council would like to extend this opportunity to communities across the city who are interested in setting up community growing areas in their neighbourhood, through offering Council-owned underused land, through introducing a new policy and guidance to support this.

This is a brilliant opportunity to help tackle inequalities in access to green space across the city and provides a new opportunity to bring people and communities together. This will be delivered through a new policy and application process which it is estimated will cost the Council £100k per year. This includes a full-time community growing coordinator to support residents and coordinate with Council service areas that are required to support delivery.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change is recommended to:

- (1) Approve the principle of community growing to be permitted on Council-owned land which is disused or underused across the city.
- (2) Delegate Authority to the Director of Economic Growth following consultation with the Director of Law and Governance, the Director of Finance and Resources, the Director of Property Services and Development, the Director of City Services and the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change to develop a policy, procedure and process for the use of Council owned land for Community Growing Sites.
- (3) Note the commitment for £0.1m annually to support the community growing initiative as outlined in the 2026/27 Budget Setting Report
- (4) Agree that that Community Growing Sites is added to the Scrutiny Board 4 Work Programme to provide a progress report 1 year after implementation, as recommended by Scrutiny Coordination Committee.
- (5) Delegate Authority to the Director of Economic Growth following consultation with the Director of Law and Governance to complete the necessary legal documentation with successful applicants for the community growing sites

Background papers:

Scrutiny Coordination Committee 5 February 2026 [Coventry Community Growing Sites](#)

Space for food growing: a guide, published 22 August 2012 [Government Guidance | Space for food growing GOV.UK](#)

Hull Right to Grow Scheme: [Right to grow | Hull City Council](#)

Warwickshire County Council: [Apply for a licence to plant on a highway - Warwickshire County Council](#)

Right to Grow campaign by Incredible Edible: [Incredible Edible Right To Grow: Benefits for Local Authorities full report.pdf](#)

Other useful documents

Cabinet Report December 2024: [Agenda item - Climate Change Strategy 2024 - 2030 - Coventry City Council](#)
[Climate Change Strategy – Coventry City Council](#) and [Climate Change Action Plan – Coventry City Council](#)

Has it or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No – however, this issue was considered by the Scrutiny Coordination Committee on 5th February 2026

Has it or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report title: Coventry Community Growing Sites

1. Context (or background)

1.1. One of the initiatives within Coventry's Climate Change Action Plan is the development of a network of community growing sites across the city for residents to help create and enjoy. This report focuses on bringing forward opportunities for residents to utilise Council-owned land which is disused or underutilised for community gardening sites, to support food growing and wildlife. This will bring significant benefits for communities 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 in areas of green space deprivation, improving air quality
- Climate resilience: producing locally grown food for communities to help increase food security, which is a significant climate related risk for UK cities
- Education and skills: this provides an opportunity for residents to learn new skills about creating sustainable growing spaces, horticulture, composting and caring for wildlife.
- Pride of place: this will help to engender pride of place

1.2. 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. In Coventry we have 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.

1.3. The pilot projects have seen the first site established in Stoke at Heath Road, with further sites being developed in Hillfields, Foleshill and Tile Hill and 58 community volunteers involved to date. The projects have been led by the Council, with support from Grapevine to bring new community growing groups together and Garden Organic to provide training to residents – with gardening novices very much encouraged to get involved. The pilot projects have benefitted from funding to support site set up, tools, equipment and seeds. The Council would like to extend this opportunity to communities across the city who are interested in setting up community growing areas in their neighbourhood, through offering Council-owned underused land.

1.4. This could include planting areas of mown grass on streets, taking on larger plots of land for food growing and nature gardens, using Council-owned planters, as well as potentially planting orchards and hedgerows in some of our parks and open spaces. A policy and process will be in place to provide guidance and support communities to ensure what is planted is appropriate for the location, which will include consultation with nearby residents.

- 1.5. 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 health food for all. Expanding community growing sites across the city will 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.
- 1.6. This is a brilliant opportunity to help tackle inequalities in access to green space across the city and provides a new opportunity to bring different people and communities together. This could link in well with local schools and existing voluntary groups, as well as provide opportunities for new groups to come together and encourage more diversity and inclusion in community growing initiatives.
- 1.7. The Council's Green Skills Strategy identifies nature conservation, and land-based skills including horticulture as areas that need to be strengthened. This initiative will help support this, helping to provide more practical opportunities for residents to develop and maintain growing spaces. Programmes such as Coventry's Nature Towns and Cities Green for All will provide resources to support residents with training and skills from organisations including Garden Organic and Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, alongside the opportunity for groups to learn from more experienced gardeners in their areas.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

2.1. Option one: Do nothing (not recommended)

This option would restrict community growing opportunities in the city to existing sites, which includes allotments and Coventry Grows pilot sites. Whilst there are some excellent community sites already operating in the city, this option would not allow for the extension of the growing network and mean that some residents and communities will miss out on the opportunity to get involved where nothing exists in their neighbourhood, and associated benefits outlined in section 1 of the report.

2.2. Option two – Continue developing Coventry Grows pilot sites (not recommended)

This option would see the Council seek to secure further funding to support additional community growing sites as part of the Coventry Grows pilot. Funding could be made available through E.ON and potentially other private sector organisations, alongside grant funding that the Council or community groups apply for.

This option would help to increase the number of community growing sites across the city, supplementing allotments and existing sites, but activity would be limited by funding available. This option would not provide the opportunity to open up wider pockets of disused land owned by the Council for community growing and means that some residents and communities will miss out on the opportunity to get involved and get the associated benefits.

2.3. **Option three - (recommended)**

This option will extend the opportunity to all communities to access disused or underused Council land for community growing. This builds on the Coventry Grows pilot and existing allotment network and creates a significant opportunity to improve the quality and extent of green space across the city for the benefit of people and nature.

In order to facilitate community growing across the city, a new policy will be introduced where residents will be able to apply to use Council-owned land for community growing sites. The Council will 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 will be regulated, with a legal agreement between the Council and residents to enable them to use the land for growing and regular inspections of sites. Growing guidance will also be available, with lists of plants permitted which will include food (subject to soil testing), native plants, fruit tree orchards and wildflowers.

Whilst plans at this stage will focus on Council-owned land, there is 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 is proposed that there is dedicated resource allocated to coordinating the community growing sites, who will be able to help simplify the process for communities by coordinating with Council services that will need to be consulted on sites, which includes Parks and Open Spaces, Climate Change & Sustainability, Sports, Education, Ecology, Drainage, Highways, Streetpride, Legal, Property, Insurance and Finance amongst others. The resource can also help to signpost to funding opportunities, provide guidance and help build a community growing network across the city so that groups can learn from each other. The Council will help to support groups by offering a tool library.

Note that there will likely be a small charge to community groups in order to support initial site surveys and legal agreements which will be set out as part of the policy.

3. **Results of consultation undertaken**

- 3.1. Public consultation was undertaken as part of development of the Council's Climate Change Strategy, which includes a lot of responses from residents regarding green space, food growing and nature which this initiative will support.
- 3.2. We have had positive feedback from residents involved in the Coventry Grows pilot alongside engagement with existing community growing groups in the city such as the Food Union, Coventry Urban Eden, Team Springboard, Coventry Green Growthers and Groundwork who are already doing brilliant work in the city with demonstrable benefits to residents.

- 3.3. Key service areas that are or could be impacted by this proposal have been consulted and are supportive.
- 3.4. This initiative was unanimously supported via a Motion at a Full Council meeting on 2 December, 2025.
- 3.5. The proposed policy was taken to Scrutiny Coordination Committee on 5th February, where valuable feedback was provided that will be built into the policy going forwards, and is reflected in this report.
- 3.6. As part of the new policy, meaningful engagement will need to be undertaken with nearby neighbours and ward councillors ahead of confirming licence agreements for all sites. Friends of Parks groups are consulted where relevant.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

- 4.1. It is proposed that the Citywide Community Growing Policy will be drawn up, agreed and implemented Spring 2026. It will be led by the Sustainability Team, with input from services impacted. The Sustainability Team will oversee delivery, with monitoring arrangements of sites to be agreed.

5. Comments from Director of Finance and Resources and Director of Law and Governance

5.1. Financial Implications

The Coventry Grows pilot projects have been led by a programme coordinator based in the Council's Climate Change team, working across a number of service areas including Property, Legal, Insurance, Parks and Open Spaces, Ecology and Finance. This has been funded by E.ON as part of the pilot. Given the number of service areas that this scheme will cut across, there is a strong case for a Council resource to coordinate applications and support community groups, helping to grow the network of community growing groups and facilitate shared learning, alongside monitoring of the programme.

The estimated delivery costs of the policy is £0.1m annually, which will include a new Council coordinator resource. There will also be some recharge costs to other service areas for their time to support applications, which includes developing legal agreements, checking land ownership documents and undertaking surveys..This will be funded from revenue as part of the policy options approved at budget setting in February 2026.

It is envisaged that successful applicants for community growing sites will pay a small fee of around £250.00 to support some of these costs – this is in line with other local authorities who are already doing this including Warwickshire. The policy will explore options to reduce or waive fees for low income groups to help make the programme as inclusive as possible.

It is recognised that the Coventry Grows pilot has also provided funding to cover some of the practical elements of setting up community gardens, including tools, storage, seeds etc, alongside training. It is not proposed that the citywide Community Growing initiative would receive any additional funding for these activities as we don't have budget to support all groups at this time. However, the Council are working to try and secure more sponsorship from the private sector alongside public sector grants and can also work with community organisations to support grant applications to help raise funds to support site activities.

Insurance

Alongside signing a legal agreement, groups or individuals who are successful in procuring a plot of land through the policy will be required to have a standard cover of Public Indemnity Insurance of £5 million. The insurance requirement may be higher where growing sites are located on Highway land.

There will be consideration of insurance arrangements to ensure fairness and clarity for participating residents and groups.

5.2. Legal Implications

The Council has a general power of competence under the Localism Act 2011 to enter into legal agreements for the purpose of any agreed policy

The policy will ensure that applications are assessed to ensure they are for Council owned land and to ensure that there is no interference with any third party ownership, and that any third party rights or interest are not impacted and that all permissions are granted from the responsible service area. A map showing potential sites and Council-owned land will be published to help provide guidance to applicants with this process to ensure applications for sites are appropriate.

Legal agreements will be required between the Council and residents and groups for community growing sites to ensure that the legal interests of the Council are protected as well as ensuring that the temporary use does not risk falling within the definition of a statutory allotment within the meaning of the Allotments Acts.

It is proposed that licence agreements will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that sites are being managed in a compliant manner, with inspections to be undertaken throughout the year to support this. Only Coventry residents will be able to participate in the scheme, and there will be a limitation on the number of sites an individual can be involved in to help make the scheme equitable.

6. Other implications

6.1. How will this contribute to the One Coventry Plan?

<https://www.coventry.gov.uk/strategies-plans-policies/one-coventry-plan>

Provide commentary on how the proposals contribute to the Plan's Vision - **Working together to improve our city and the lives of those who live, work and study here**"

This policy supports delivery of the One Coventry Plan by:

Improving outcomes and tackling inequalities within our communities:

community growing sites provide an opportunity for local people to grow food and help reduce food poverty, alongside improve access to fresh seasonal produce. The initiative will also help to tackle inequalities in terms of access to green space across the city.

Improving the economic prosperity of the city and regions: Community growing initiatives can positively contribute towards the local economy, encouraging footfall within neighbourhoods and improving community health, which could help reduce demand for local services.

Tackling the causes and consequences of climate change: improving the quality and variety of green spaces across the city will help to support biodiversity, improve air quality and increase climate resilience

Council's role as a partner, enabler and leader: the Council is in a unique position with significant land assets across the city to facilitate this scheme and will help make better of underused land to be enjoyed by communities.

6.2. How is risk being managed?

The agreed policy and process will be supported by a risk register which will be regularly reviewed, and each site will need to be assessed for risks as appropriate. Some of the key risks and mitigation includes ensuring that Council records are kept up to date, so growing sites are protected from routine maintenance as appropriate. There is a risk that sites are not managed in line with legal agreements, so monitoring will be in place to ensure sites are being used as agreed, with regular scheduled inspections. There will also be a process developed to deal with potential problems such as vandalism or fly-tipping. If sites aren't managed in accordance with the policy they will come back to the Council so that another resident or group is afforded the opportunity to use the site instead.

The Council will provide guidance to ensure that all sites are managed in a safe way. Public liability insurance will be required for all sites. All potential sites will require a permit to dig and be scanned for utilities; this is for the safety of users of the site. Additional soil sampling and testing may be required.

There will be clear guidance in place regarding how sites can be used, including around appropriate native plant species. Support will be in place from stakeholders such as Warwickshire Wildlife Trust and Garden Organic as part of the city's Nature Towns and Cities Green for All programme. Our partners can help provide training and

guidance to ensure that residents and groups without any prior gardening experience can take part to mitigate the risk of this programme not being inclusive.

6.3. What is the impact on the organisation?

The initiative impacts on a large number of service areas who are all very supportive, but there will be some impacts on staff time to assess applications, draft legal agreements and deal with any issues as they arise. It is proposed that there is a full time Community Growing coordinator post that helps to coordinate the process smoothly and will be the point of engagement for residents.

This will impact on Council land in terms of more areas being subject to legal agreements with residents or groups but given that proposed sites will be on underused Council land the implications are considered minimal.

Underused land is considered to be small plots of land that are not being used for a particular purpose and likely have little development value, the Property team will need to review sites to ensure there is no conflict with proposed development plans. Some of the Council's parks and greenspaces will be affected by covenants or conditions linked to previous common status, so each application will need to be considered to ensure that the site is appropriate for growing purposes. If residents or groups propose sites that aren't deemed appropriate, the Council will work with them to identify nearby alternatives.

Maintenance regimes will need to be altered to protect community growing sites. The maintenance team have proposed the potential to lend Council tools to groups via a tool library, which could be delivered via the Food Union who already operate a tool library for local people.

The impact of the programme will be evaluated annually to assess impact on sites and participation.

6.4. Equalities / EIA?

The policy will create an accessible process that unlocks barriers to accessing green space for residents across Coventry, particularly in areas of green deprivation. The Coventry Grows pilot project sites were selected from a long list of potential sites to target green deprived neighbourhoods in Coventry and the policy would continue this work at a larger scale.

To ensure the process is equitable, there is an opportunity to apply a discount for the application to groups or individuals in areas of green deprivation presented clearly by red and orange areas on the map of access to green space in Coventry. Promoting the scheme locally in these areas of green deprivation will further help to encourage uptake in these neighbourhoods. The ReachDeck software on the Coventry City Council webpages will allow residents to translate any information shared on the Right

to Grow policy, helping to ensure the scheme is accessible to residents where English isn't their first language.

An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken to ensure that the impact of the policy is considered.

6.5. Implications for (or impact on) climate change and the environment?

This project will deliver positive environmental impacts through improving the biodiversity of green spaces across the city, alongside climate resilience.

Encouraging communities to take stewardship of green spaces will increase planting and improve pockets of land for biodiversity and wildlife, helping to create nature corridors which are important to support wildlife in urban areas. It will also help to improve air quality and reduce flood risk, alongside providing more shade to protect against the urban heat island effect.

Coventry's Adaptation and Resilience Risk Assessment identifies food security as one of the most significant climate related risks for the city. Supporting residents to grow their own food across Coventry will help to mitigate this risk at a local level and encourage more organic and sustainable methods of food growing, supplementing the wider food system.

6.6. Implications for partner organisations

This could have positive implications for partner organisations and communities across the city. There is potential opportunity to work with existing community and voluntary organisations to support the development of a citywide growing network, which will help to join groups together to benefit from shared learning, seed swaps, etc.

There are also opportunities to link with public health organisations and charities to involve residents and groups in initiatives such as green prescribing to support mental health and well-being.

There is opportunity for partner organisations to provide funding to sponsor growing sites, following in the steps of E.ON which has successfully supported four pilot sites in the city.

There is also an opportunity for other landowners in the city to get involved in the programme and provide land that can be used by communities.

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