

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member for Community Development held at
11.00 am on Wednesday, 1 November 2017

Present:

Members: Councillor L Bigham (Chair)
 Councillor C Thomas (Deputy Cabinet Member)
 Councillor R Bailey (Shadow Cabinet Member)

Other Members: Councillor J Blundell
 Councillor G Crookes
 Councillor T Sawdon

Employees (by Directorate):

People P Barnett, J Mann, S Miraj
Place M Andrews, O Aremu, M Rose

Public Business

38. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Blundell declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in the matter referred to in Minute 40 below, "Response to the Petition – Introduce an Article 4 direction with regards Houses in Multiple Occupation (HiMO's) in the Cannon Park area of Coventry". He withdrew from the meeting during the consideration of this matter.

39. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 18th September, 2017 were agreed and signed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

40. Response to the Petition - Introduce an Article 4 direction with regards Houses in Multiple Occupation (HiMO's) in the Cannon Park area of Coventry

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) in response to a petition which requested that the Council limit the number of houses in multiple occupation (HiMO's) within the Cannon Park area of Coventry by introducing an Article 4 direction. The petition stated that without an Article 4 direction being introduced the City would continue to support landlords gaining profits from students and destroying the normal amenities that rate paying residents of the area were entitled to.

The report noted that an Article 4 direction had not been proposed in Coventry in relation to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HiMO's). This had most recently been considered as part of the new draft Local Plan. In this regard, the need for an Article 4 direction in relation to HiMO's would remain subject to the monitoring of this Plan (assuming it is adopted as drafted). The report detailed permitted developments and licensing links and also reasons why Article 4 was an

inappropriate action and alternative approaches. Appended to the report was the draft policy and supporting text from the Local Plan relating to student accommodation and HiMO's.

The petition bearing 15 signatures was submitted by Councillor Sawdon, a Westwood Ward Councillor, who attended the meeting and spoke in support of the petition. Mrs Bowen, petition organiser and Mr Parsons, representative of the local residents association, also attended the meeting and presented the concerns of the petitioners. Councillor Crookes, also a Westwood Ward Councillor, spoke in support of the petition. Other local residents were in attendance at the meeting.

The petition organiser spoke about the effect properties in multiple occupation had on other residents including the stress caused. The representative from the residents association discussed findings from a survey they had conducted in the area and the need to restrict property conversions in the area. Councillor Sawdon was clear that they were not anti-student but anti-absent landlords. He raised concerns about social cohesion in the area and also that the report focused on Coventry University and not Warwick University which impacted on the Cannon Park area referred to in the petition. He had met on site with officers and this was not mentioned in the report. He also referred to the Task and Finish Group set up to look at options for addressing residents' concerns about Houses in Multiple Occupation (HiMO) due to an increasing number of complaints received about these properties, particularly from residents in certain areas of the City. Councillor Crookes raised queries about Article 4 and consideration of a Selective Licensing approach in St Michaels Ward.

The Shadow Cabinet Member expressed concerns regarding the residents' association survey and the numbers of HiMOs in the area.

The Cabinet Member and Deputy Cabinet Member clarified permitted development rights with officers and it was noted that the new local plan policy framework would be more robust, including H10 and H11 Policies detailed in the Appendix to the report.

The Cabinet Member thanked all those in attendance for contributing to the discussion and was grateful that the residents' association survey could be used by officers as part of further investigation work and a report back in 12 months.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Community Development

- 1) Endorse the proposed monitoring arrangements outlined in the draft Local Plan in relation to HiMO concentrations across the city and how this relates to the upturn in new purpose built student accommodation. The outputs of this monitoring work should also feed into the new Housing Strategy.**
- 2) Request a review be undertaken in relation to HiMO's in the Cannon Park area of Coventry to include data collected by the local resident association and report back on findings in 12 months' time.**

41. **Update report on Grant Award to Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre in April 2016**

The Cabinet Member for Community Development considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (People) which provided an update on the progress of the Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre (CRMC) and the proposed review of services in June 2018. The Centre Director, Toni Soni, was present at the meeting to discuss the progress with the Cabinet Member and others present.

Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre offer advice and support to asylum seekers, refugees and EU migrants. The service supported a range of people in the City, many of whom do not speak English and some who had escaped persecution in their own countries. The Centre aimed to prevent homelessness and destitution, helped people to make a positive contribution to the City, supported access to employment opportunities and encouraged integration.

The Centre had received funding from Coventry City Council since 2003. In April 2016, Cabinet Member (Community Development, Co-operative and Social Enterprise) approved the award of a two year grant of £387,752 per annum for the period October 2016-September 2018. It was also agreed that a service review was undertaken to ensure alignment of refugee support in the City and that a progress report be submitted 12 months after the grant was awarded.

The report detailed service provision, customer demographics, demand, staffing, value for money and change of premises. Officers highlighted the positive support given to refugees and migrants in the city, the increasing demand and complexity of cases, value for money and a reduction in funding and the new premises.

The Cabinet Member discussed the reasons for and impact of the rise in demand. The Shadow Cabinet Member clarified the capacity against the increased demand and the data.

The Cabinet Member commended the work of the Centre and was looking forward to visiting the new premises.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Community Development :

- 1) **Note the update on the progress of the Refugee and Migrant Centre.**
- 2) **Endorse the proposed review of CRMC services, with the findings to be presented in June 2018 and that a notice of 2 months will be served within the existing grant period and a further 1 month be offered as a transition period in the new grant awarded to implement the agreed changes.**

42. **New Central Credit Union - Grant Aid Agreement Year 3 Progress Report**

The Cabinet Member for Community Development considered a report of the Chief Executive (People) concerning progress made by New Central Credit Union during the third (final) year of the Grant Aid Agreement. The New Central Credit Union Manager, Alistair Wilkinson and Vice Chair, David Lawrence-Halgarth, were present at the meeting to discuss progress with the Cabinet Member and others present.

The report noted that the New Central Credit Union (NCCU) signed a Grant Aid Agreement with Coventry City Council on 2nd June, 2014. The purpose of the grant was to support and enhance the provision of credit union services to Coventry Residents. NCCU was a financial co-operative, owned by its members, providing fair, affordable, accessible savings and loans products. It's core values were to promote good savings habits and responsible borrowing. The Council had supported NCCU so that it played a key role in offering ethical financial products to the community of Coventry. The support envisaged helping the credit union to be an effective alternative to high cost credit provided by home credit, pay day and short-term loan companies, as well as the illegal lending market.

The objective of the initial three-year grant was to enable NCCU to build their business and loan book in order to generate increased revenue which would enable them to be sustainable without dependence on council grants and public funding. The grant enabled use to be made of an empty council property in the city centre, providing members optimum access from all parts of the city and appropriate operational space.

Industry data showed a continuing demand for borrowing across all sectors of the community. Wage constraints place a burden on working families, whilst welfare reform continued to have an impact on those on benefits. This had created a market opportunity for various high cost lenders to exploit, whose capitalisation and market budget were considerably in excess of the credit unions. New Central Credit Union received a Council grant of £27,024 per annum over 3 years towards rent, rates and refurbishment cost of premises on Smithford Way.

The report also considered members, products and services for financially excluded and vulnerable households, performance and objectives.

The Cabinet Member and Deputy Cabinet Member for Community Development and the Shadow Cabinet Member discussed with the representatives of NCCU the following:

- The possibility of cheaper property and the disadvantages of locating outside of the city centre
- Increasing membership
- Financial education
- Pre-paid cards
- Providing services face-to face and through the use of technology
- Customer base

The Cabinet Member thanked the representatives from the NCCU for contributing to the discussion and commended them for their work in the city, especially financial education for young people and pre-paid card services. The Cabinet Member requested that officers explore ways to support the Union now that the 3 year grant is coming to an end, for example, investigating business rates for premises.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Community Development endorse the progress made by New Central Credit Union during the third (final) year of the Grant Aid Agreement.

43. **Outstanding Issues Report**

There were no outstanding issues to report.

44. **Attendance at Conference**

The Cabinet Member for Community Development considered an Authority for Attendance at Conference form which requested approval for the attendance of Sunairah Miraj at the Urban Innovation Actions – Project Co-ordinators Kick off Meeting to be held in Brussels on 14th and 15th November 2017.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Community Development approve the attendance of Sunairah Miraj at the Urban Innovation Actions – Project Co-ordinators Kick off Meeting to be held in Brussels on 14th and 15th November 2017.

NOTE: This matter was considered as urgent public business, the reasons for urgency being the need for approval for attendance at the conference to be secured before the next scheduled meeting of the Cabinet Member.

45. **Any other items of public business which the Chair decides to take as matters of urgency because of the special circumstances involved**

There were no further items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 1:00pm)