

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet held at 2.00 pm on Tuesday, 16 February 2021
(This meeting was held remotely)

Present:

Members: Councillor G Duggins (Chair)
Councillor A S Khan (Deputy Chair)
Councillor R Brown
Councillor K Caan
Councillor K Maton
Councillor M Mutton
Councillor J O'Boyle
Councillor P Seaman
Councillor P Hetherington
Councillor D Welsh

Non-Voting Deputy
Cabinet Members:

Councillor P Akhtar
Councillor G Lloyd

Non-Voting Opposition
Members:

Councillor A Andrews
Councillor G Ridley

Other Non-Voting
Members:

Councillor N Akhtar
Councillor L Bigham
Councillor J Clifford
Councillor R Lakha
Councillor C Miks
Councillor R Singh
Councillor C Thomas

Employees (by Service):

Chief Executive	M Reeves (Chief Executive)
Deputy Chief Executive	G Quinton (Deputy Chief Executive)
Finance	B Hastie (Director of Finance), P Jennings
Law and Governance	J Newman (Director of Law and Governance), L Knight, M Salmon,
Streetscene and Regulatory Services	D Blackburn, S Chantler
Transportation and Highways	C Knight (Director of Transportation and Highways), J Seddon

Apologies: Councillor B Gittins
Councillor K Sandhu

Public Business

66. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

67. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 12th January 2021 were agreed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

68. 2020/21 Third Quarter Financial Monitoring Report (to December 2020)

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Finance, which would also to be considered by the Audit and Procurement Committee at their meeting on 15th March 2021, that set out the forecast outturn position for revenue and capital expenditure and the Council's treasury management activity as at the end of December 2020. The headline revenue forecast for 2020/21 was for net expenditure to be £33.3m (£36.3m at Quarter 2) over budget before the application of COVID-19 emergency funding for local government. After the use of this grant, the net under-spend was £0.5m (£3.5m overspend at Quarter 2). At the same point in 2019/20 there was a projected underspend of £1.9m.

The position included an underlying overspend of £9m within Children's Services although £6.7m of this had been attributed to the pandemic and funded from one-off Covid funding accordingly leaving a net overspend of £2.3m. Where financial pressures were anticipated to continue beyond the current financial year, they had been reflected in the forthcoming 2021/22 Budget Report. Underspends within Central Budgets and Housing and Transformation had helped to deliver the overall underspend position.

The Council had been able to stabilise its 2020/21 financial position both in terms of its business as usual services and the activity and impacts arising from the Covid pandemic. It was clear though that significant financial risk remained in relation to the future trajectory of Covid costs and funding. There remained a financial imperative to focus on the medium-term horizon and it was important for the Council to tackle the anticipated legacy effects of Covid.

The Council's capital spending was projected to be £231m and included major scheme expenditure which ranged from investment in to the A46 Link Road, Coventry Station Masterplan, Whitley South infrastructure, Public Realm, Secondary Schools expansion and the National Battery Plant. The impact of Covid had been relatively modest in terms of delays to progressing capital schemes and the Council was on track to exceed the high levels of programme spend achieved in 2019/20.

No recommendations were made by Audit and Procurement Committee in relation to the Quarter 2 report.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet:

- 1) Approves the Council's revenue monitoring position incorporating the application of Covid emergency funding.**
- 2) Approves the revised forecast capital outturn position for the year of £231m incorporating: £4.3m net increase in spending relating to approved/ technical changes, £23.9m net rescheduling of expenditure from 2021/22.**

69. All Electric Bus City and Enhanced Partnership Plan

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Transportation and Highways on the proposals for an all-Electric Bus City and Enhanced Partnership Plan. Appendices to the report provided a copy of a Letter from the Department for Transport to the West Midlands Combined Authority and the West Midlands Combined Authority Enhanced Partnership Plan, November 2020.

The Department for Transport (DfT) launched the All Electric Bus Town fund in February 2020, with £50 million in grant funding made available to allow one town or city within England to make the transition to a bus network operated fully by electric powered buses. The West Midlands Combined Authority, as the strategic transport authority for the West Midlands, submitted an Expression of Interest for Coventry. The Expression of Interest was developed by the City Council in partnership with Warwickshire County Council and Transport for West Midlands and covered all public bus services operating within the city and in surrounding areas of Warwickshire.

The Department for Transport subsequently confirmed that the Coventry and Warwickshire bid had been shortlisted alongside a second bid from Oxfordshire County Council based on Oxford. In the Budget Statement on 25th November 2020, Government increased the amount of funding available for the All Electric Bus Town competition, and the Department for Transport confirmed to the Chief Executive of the West Midlands Combined Authority, that the Coventry/ Warwickshire proposal would be funded subject to the submission of a satisfactory Full Business Case.

The Department for Transport had also confirmed that the West Midlands Combined Authority would be the accountable body for the Coventry and Warwickshire scheme, as the strategic transport authority for the Coventry area, and that responsibility for the development and approval of the Full Business Case was proposed to be devolved from the Department of Transport to the West Midlands Combined Authority. The Full Business Case would be presented to the West Midlands Combined Authority Board at its meeting on 19th March 2021 for approval.

City Council officers had taken a lead role in the preparation of the Full Business Case and, if successful, the bid would see around 297 new electric buses come into operation in Coventry over the next four years. This meant that by Winter 2025 every public bus service in the city would be operated by a zero-emission electric vehicle, supporting the Council's objectives of a green economic recovery through the de-carbonisation of the city's transport network, with an estimated annual emissions saving of around 24,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide and 55 tonnes of nitrogen dioxide.

The West Midlands Combined Authority had also published a notice to make an Enhanced Partnership Plan for the West Midlands area, to which Coventry City Council, as a constituent authority of the West Midlands Combined Authority, would need to be a signatory. Once made, this would enable an Enhanced Partnership Scheme to be established for the Coventry area requiring all future public bus services in the city to be operated by zero-emission buses, thereby enshrining the principles and objectives established by the All Electric Bus Town project.

Members requested that officers provide them with an update on vehicle provision for the Ring and Ride Service and the Head of Transport and Innovation undertook to circulate this information.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet:

- 1) Authorises the Director of Transportation and Highways, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Jobs and Regeneration and the Director of Law and Governance, to work with officers of Transport for West Midlands on the development of a Full Business Case for the All Electric Bus Town for submission to the West Midlands Combined Authority Board seeking £50 million in grant funding.**
- 2) Supports the Enhanced Partnership Plan for the West Midlands, recognising the benefit this could bring for the successful delivery of the All Electric Bus Town programme.**
- 3) Authorises the Director of Transportation and Highways, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Jobs and Regeneration and the Director of Law and Governance, to work with officers of Transport for West Midlands on the development of an Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme that would ensure that the benefit of the All Electric Bus Town investment would be maximised by ensuring the all future bus services operating in the city would be operated by zero emission buses subject to complying with the statutory preparation, notice and consultation on the Enhanced Partnership.**
- 4) Authorises the Director of Law and Governance to negotiate, execute, seal and complete all necessary documentation to give effect to the above recommendations.**

70. **Review of Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy 2018**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Streetscene and Regulatory Services that sought approval of the amended Policy for Enforcing Standards in Private Sector Housing 2021, following a review of the Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy 2018. The amended Policy was attached as appendix to the report.

The provision of good quality housing for Coventry residents was a priority for the City Council. The adopted Coventry Local Plan 2016 detailed how Coventry City Council would meet the future house building needs up to 2031, however there was also a need to consider the city's existing housing stock and in particular the quality of homes provided via the Private Rented Sector.

Government had legislated to provide local authorities with additional powers to tackle poor quality homes in the Private Rented Sector. The new powers were available to the City Council under the following legislation:

- a) The Tenant Fees Act 2019
- b) The Domestic Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES)
- c) The Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England)
- d) Regulations 2020 under Section 122 & 123 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016
- e) Consumers, Estate Agents and Redress Act 2007
- f) Redress Schemes for Lettings Agency Work and Property Management Work (requirement to belong to a Scheme etc.) England) Order 2014
- g) The Client Money Protection Schemes for Property Agents (Requirement to Belong to a Scheme etc.) Regulations 2019
- h) The Energy Performance of Buildings (England and Wales) Regulations 2012 as amended

To use these powers, the Council were required to publish a policy setting out how it would implement them in relation to properties in the Private Rented Sector. The Authority took the opportunity to review its Policy and to set out how it would implement the powers given in the legislation.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet:

- 1) **Approves the amended Policy for Enforcing Standards in Private Sector Housing 2021 attached as Appendix 1 to the report.**
- 2) **Authorises the Director of Streetscene and Regulatory Services to implement the policy as detailed in the report and delegate the power to the Strategic Lead for Regulation to issue, use, amend and enforce civil penalties and all other enforcement powers under the Housing Act 2004 (as amended), the Housing and Planning Act 2016 (and subsequent Regulations and Orders), the Consumers, Estate Agents and Redress Act 2007, Redress Schemes for Lettings Agency Work and Property Management Work (requirement to belong to a Scheme etc.) England) Order 2014, the Client Money Protection Schemes for Property Agents**

(Requirement to Belong to a Scheme etc.) Regulations 2019, and the Energy Performance of Buildings (England and Wales) Regulations 2012 as amended.

71. Outstanding Issues

There were no outstanding issues.

72. Any other items of public business which the Chair decides to take as a matter of urgency because of the special circumstances involved.

There were no other items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 3.00 pm)