

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Council held at 2.00 pm on Tuesday, 18 January 2022

Present:

Members:

Councillor J McNicholas (Chair)

Councillor P Akhtar	Councillor J Lepoidevin
Councillor M Ali	Councillor G Lloyd
Councillor R Auluck	Councillor A Lucas
Councillor R Bailey	Councillor P Male
Councillor L Bigham	Councillor A Masih
Councillor J Birdi	Councillor K Maton
Councillor J Blundell	Councillor J Mutton
Councillor R Brown	Councillor M Mutton
Councillor K Caan	Councillor S Nazir
Councillor J Clifford	Councillor J O'Boyle
Councillor G Duggins	Councillor G Ridley
Councillor B Gittins	Councilor K Sandhu
Councillor G Hayre	Councillor T Sawdon
Councillor M Heaven	Councillor P Seaman
Councillor P Hetherton	Councillor R Simpson
Councillor A Hopkins	Councillor B Singh
Councillor T Jandu	Councillor R Singh
Councillor S Keough	Councillor C Thomas
Councillor T Khan	Councillor A Tucker
Councillor AS Khan	Councillor S Walsh
Councillor R Lakha	Councillor D Welsh
Councillor M Lapsa	

Honorary Alderman: T Skipper

Apologies: Councillors F Abbott, N Akhtar, L Harvard, J Innes,
R Lancaster, C Miks, B Mosterman, E Ruane and D Skinner
and Alderman Fitzpatrick, Hammon, Foster, Taylor

Public Business

64. Minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2021 were agreed and signed as a true record.

65. Correspondence and Announcements of the Lord Mayor

(a) Queen's New Year Honours

The Lord Mayor referred to awards made to the following citizens associated with Coventry in the recent New Year's Honours List:

OBE to Pauline Black for Services to Entertainment

OBE to Professor John Robert Fyfe Bolton, former Director of Social Services in Coventry for Services to Social Care

OBE to Alpesh Chauhan for Services to the Arts

BEM to Siraj Ali for Services to the Community in Coventry, particularly during Covid-19

BEM to Donald Maynard Brown for voluntary service to Blind and Visually Impaired people

BEM to Sgt Julie Godwin for services to policing

BEM to Janice Mathias, Custody Visitor, West Midlands Police for services to the Custody Visitor Scheme

The Lord Mayor, on behalf of the City Council, had sent a letter of congratulations all the recipients.

(b) Death of Lonnie Downes

The Lord Mayor referred to the recent death of Lonnie Downes on 31st December 2021.

Lonnie, a former recipient of the Coventry Good Citizen of the Month award, worked tirelessly for the benefit of local residents and as Welfare Officer for the Bedworth Branch of the Parachute Regiment Association. Lonnie was instrumental in setting up the Airborne Forces Memorial in the War Memorial Park.

Members paid tribute to Lonnie and it was noted that a letter conveying the City Council's sincerest condolences had been sent to Lonnie's family.

66. **Petitions**

RESOLVED that the following petitions be referred to the appropriate City Council body or external organisation: -

- a) Parking problems for residents on Lythalls Lane due to businesses - 26 signatures presented by Councillor S Nazir
- b) Request for traffic calming measures on Allesley Old Road and Prince of Wales Road – 370 signatures presented by Councillor R Simpson
- c) Petition requesting the Council not to approve plans to open Upper Hill Street from the Ring Road – 950 signatures presented by Councillor R Simpson
- d) Petition requesting the Council to further improve road safety on Allesley Old Road and roads nearby and oppose Government plans for a charging zone on Coventry

- e) Petition requesting a review of the latest plans submitted in respect of West Coventry Academy, Nutbrook Avenue referring to the landscaping and buffer – 8 signatures presented by Councillor M Lapsa
- f) Request for a residents parking scheme for Broadmere Rise – 13 signatures presented by Councillor M Lapsa
- g) Objection to planning application OUT/2021/3538, land at Anderton Road – 18 signatures presented by Councillor L Bigham
- h) Request for traffic calming measures on Swan Lane – 57 signatures presented by Councillor D Welsh
- i) Request for the installation of surveillance cameras in Dorset Road and Somerset Road to stop fly-tipping – 21 signatures presented by Councillor M Ali

67. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

68. Medium Term Financial Strategy

Further to Minute 52 of the Cabinet, the Council considered a report of the Director of Finance which presented the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for adoption by the Council.

The previous strategy was approved as part of the 2021/22 Budget Report in February 2021. The Strategy set out the financial planning foundations that supported the Council's vision and priorities and the financial and policy context for the Council's current Budget process. Cabinet considered the proposals within the Pre-Budget Report in December 2021 and the final Budget Setting Report would be brought to Cabinet and Council in February 2022.

The national funding background to the MTFS was that the local government would be subject to a new settlement from Government within the financial parameters of the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021 (SR2021) announced in October. Although a major upheaval in the funding arrangements for all councils had been signalled at regular intervals this was once again postponed in SR2021 and there would be no structural changes to the system until 2023/24 at the earliest. In addition, SR2021 provided only indicative control totals for the sector and it would not be until the provisional local government settlement was released in December 2021 that firmer indications would be provided of the Council's outline financial settlement for the next three years. The Pre-Budget report that would be considered by Cabinet alongside this one set out the best estimate of the Council's three-year settlement financial position. Current medium-term estimates were still based on assumptions of local authorities continuing to face significant financial pressures.

Notwithstanding the approaches set out in the strategy, the Council would need to maintain dynamic financial models that took account of changes in its medium-

term budget position and ongoing re-evaluation of its Capital Programme. These would be set out fully at the point of decision making.

RESOLVED that the Council approves the Strategy as the basis of its medium-term financial planning process.

69. **External Auditor Appointment from April 2023**

Further to Minute 62 of the Cabinet, the City Council considered a report of the Director of Finance, that set out the options for appointing the external auditor to the Council for the five years commencing 2023/24 as the current nationally regulated arrangements only covered audits up to and including 2022/23. The appointment of the Council's auditors was a matter reserved for full Council.

The Council's current auditors were Grant Thornton UK LLP working under a 5-year contract let by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) – a body set up principally to manage this process. The planned audit fees for 2020/21 were £211k.

The PSAA was inviting the Council to opt into the national arrangements for the next 5-year period along with all other authorities, so that the PSAA could enter into a number of contracts with appropriately qualified audit firms and appoint a suitable firm to be the Council's auditor.

The report compared the options for appointing the external auditor to the Council and sought approval for its recommended approach.

The Cabinet agreed to recommend that Council approves Option 2, as described in the report, which was to accept Public Sector Audit Appointments' invitation to 'opt in' to the sector led option for the appointment of external auditors for the five financial years commencing 1 April 2023.

RESOLVED that Council approves Option 2, as described in the report, which is to accept Public Sector Audit Appointments' invitation to 'opt in' to the sector led option for the appointment of external auditors for the five financial years commencing 1 April 2023.

70. **Question Time**

Councillor AS Khan provided a written answer to the question set out in the Questions Booklet together with oral responses to supplementary questions put to him at the meeting.

A Motion without Notice was moved by Councillor Ridley, seconded by Councillor Sawdon and lost, that the agenda be re-ordered to enable the Leader to make his Statement before Question Time

The following Members answered oral questions put to them by other Members as set out below, together with supplementary questions on the same matters:

No	Questions asked by	Question put to	Subject matter
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1	Councillor Heaven	Cllr L Bigham	Adding impact of bin strike to Work Programme for Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4)
1	Councillors Heaven, Ridley, Male, Simpson and Lepoidevin	Councillor Hetherton	Bin strike
2	Councillor Tucker	Councillor AS Khan	Recent siege in Earlsdon
3	Councillor Blundell	Councillor O'Boyle	Sale of council owned land in Kings Hill
4	Councillor Heaven	Councillor Welsh	HiMOs and Article 4 Direction
5	Councillor Ridley	Councillor Duggins	Potential conflict of interest in bin strike
6	Councillor Sawdon	Councillor Brown	Financial costs of bin strike
7	Councillor Male	Councillor Seaman	Request to discuss siege at future meeting of Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board
8	Councillor Male	Councillor Duggins	Impact of bin strike on City of Culture

71. **Statements**

The Leader, Councillor G Duggins, made a Statement in respect of the recent siege in Earlsdon and the current bin strike.

Councillor G Ridley responded to the Statement.

72. **Debate - Additional Funding to Level up Education in Coventry**

The following Motion was moved by Councillor J Blundell and seconded by Councillor M Heaven:

“Coventry City Council welcomes the additional funding of £24Million to level up education in Coventry.”

The following amendment was moved by Councillor K Sandhu, seconded by Councillor A Tucker and carried:

At the end of the Debate, delete the full stop, insert a comma and the following additional words:-

“but regrets that this is far less than the £32.3 Million in annual funding needed to return spending to 2010 levels.”

The amended Motion now to read:-

“Coventry City Council welcomes the additional funding of £24 Million to level up education in Coventry, but regrets that this is far less than the £32.3Million in annual funding needed to return spending to 2010 levels.”

RESOLVED that the amended Motion, as set out above, be adopted.

73. **Debate: Funding for Coventry**

The following Motion was moved by Councillor B Singh and seconded by Councillor K Maton:

“We note that Coventry is towards the bottom of the pile when it comes to core funding and therefore this Council calls upon the government to rectify this with an immediate funding increase to create a level playing field with all other Councils recognising the cost- of- living crisis facing ordinary working families in Coventry.”

The following amendment was moved by Councillor T Sawdon, seconded by Councillor G Ridley and lost:

After the words “ ...when it comes to core funding” delete the rest of the Motion and insert the following words:-

“in receiving only 6.5% compared with the average of 6.9% but recognise that this is more than compensated for by the large increases in capital funding, the well organised grants to help with the Covid crisis and the more than generous funding received as the City of Culture.”

The amended Motion now to read :-

“We note that Coventry is towards the bottom of the pile when it comes to core funding in receiving only 6.5% compared with the average of 6.9% but recognise that this is more than compensated for by the large increases in capital funding, the well organised grants to help with the Covid crisis and the more than generous funding received as the City of Culture.”

RESOLVED that the substantive Motion as set out above (in bold) be adopted.

(Meeting closed at 5.50 pm)