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Coventry City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member for City Services held at 2.30 pm on Wednesday, 15 June 2022

Present:

Members: Councillor P Hetherton (Cabinet Member)
Councillor G Lloyd (Deputy Cabinet Member)

Other Members: Councillor M Heaven (Shadow Cabinet Member)
Councillor R Simpson (for matter in minute 13)

Employees (by Service):

Law and Governance O Aremu, M Rose, M Salmon

Transportation and Highways J Seddon, R Smith

Streetscene and Regulatory Services M Coggins

Apologies: Councillor L Bigham
(Chair of Communities and Neighbourhoods Community Scrutiny Board (4) – by invitation)

Public Business

11. Declarations of Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

Councillor Lloyd declared an other interest regarding 'Petitions to Save Upper Hill Street', minute 13 below, as a Ward Councillor.

12. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 6th April, 2022 were agreed and signed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

13. Petitions - Save Upper Hill Street

The Cabinet Member for City Services considered a report of the Director of Transportation and Highways concerning 2 petitions, bearing 950 and 44 signatures, requesting that the Council abandon plans to open Upper Hill Street to through traffic. The petition was supported by Councillor R Simpson, a Cheylesmore Ward Councillor, who, together with the Petition Organiser, attended the meeting and spoke on behalf of the petitioners. A plan of the proposed works at Upper Hill Street was appended to the report.

The Cabinet Member had considered the petitions prior to this meeting and requested that the petitions were dealt with by determination letter rather than a

formal report being submitted to a meeting, to be able to deal with the matter more efficiently. The determination letter advised that the petitions be added to the record of the public consultation carried out in November and December 2021. On receipt of the determination letters the petition organisers advised officers that they wanted the matter considered at a Cabinet Member for City Services meeting.

Since 2017 the Council had been working closely with the Government's Joint Air Quality Unit (JAQU) to develop an action plan to reduce Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) levels, to below the legal limit of 40ug/m³, in the shortest possible time. The Council developed a Local Air Quality Action Plan (LAQAP) following consultation in 2019 and 2020. To develop the plan, around fifty individual packages of measures were assessed using traffic and air quality models, with the resulting preferred option being approved by Cabinet in July 2020 (their minute 16/20 refers). A Full Business Case for that option was submitted to Government's Joint Air Quality Unit (JAQU) in December 2020 following further approval from Cabinet (their minute 47/20 refers). A further consultation was held in November and December 2021 on the details of the infrastructure schemes which formed a key part of the approved package of measures.

The mandated scheme which formed part of the Legal Direction (Environment Act 1995 (Coventry City Council) Air Quality Direction 2021), issued by Government in May 2021, was a left in and left out junction arrangement that linked Upper Hill Street to the slip road at Junction 8 of the A4053 Ringway. As part of the public consultation carried out in November and December 2021, the Council shared an alternative left in only option at Upper Hill Street.

The LAQAP measures allowed Coventry City Council to achieve its legal obligations under the Direction without the need for a Clean Air Zone (CAZ), which would require all non-compliant vehicles entering the zone to be charged. With a daily charge of £12.50 for private cars and an impact on an area where 82,000 residents live, a CAZ would have had severe economic and social impacts for the city.

During the public consultation there was significant opposition to the proposed left in only option. Local residents, St Osburg's School, and St Osburg's Church all voiced significant opposition.

Construction of the new junction between the Ringway and Upper Hill Street represents some significant engineering and programming difficulties. In particular, the impact of major services on costs and the programme had become more apparent as site investigation works had begun, as part of the detailed design process. Additionally, the construction of the left in only option required the re-dedication of some school land as highway, which required the approval of the Secretary of State for Education.

The Council were investigating alternative engineering options that could achieve the required reduction in NO₂ levels to meet the outcome required in the Ministerial Direction, but which could be delivered quicker than the current proposals. However, any change would be subject to agreement by JAQU and the Council would need to go through a formal change process to get this agreed.

The Petition Spokesperson understood the need to reduce pollution in the area but raised concerns about the risks generated by the proposal, to add a slip road outside a school and mother church (the oldest Catholic church in the City). The proposal increased the dangers to young people and parishioners by creating a traffic island. She urged the Council to consider alternative solutions that would not put people at risk. The Petition sponsor Councillor Simpson also recognised the need to reduce pollution but felt that there was also a need to listen to local communities regarding the proposed actions. He felt that it had taken a long time for the Council to recognise local views and residents felt that a lot of work had been wasted. The Deputy Cabinet Member requested that other residents who had been involved in previous meetings be included in any further discussions. The Shadow Cabinet Member asked about other options explored including a Park and Ride.

Officers reported that the Government's Joint Air Quality Unit (JAQU) were very thorough about approval of any proposals put forward, detailed evidence must be submitted by the Council and the thresholds for approval were high. The achievable impact of each proposal must be great enough to warrant compliance and funding. The Park and Ride proposal was an example of a proposed action discussed but the evidence of impact on NO2 was not enough to achieve compliance and funding.

Any alternative engineering options that could achieve the required reduction in NO2 levels to meet the outcome required in the Ministerial Direction, must be delivered quicker than the current proposals. Also any change would be subject to agreement by JAQU and the Council would need to go through a formal change process to get this agreed.

The Cabinet Member felt it was important that the local community felt listened to and she was optimistic that an alternative solution could be discussed and investigated further.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for City Services having considered the petitions that have been raised in objection to the construction of a junction, from the Ringway into Upper Hill Street, notes that work is continuing to seek a solution that can be delivered in a shorter time and with less impact on Upper Hill Street.

14. Designating Cycle Routes - Canal Basin Connections

The Cabinet Member for City Services considered a report of the Director of Transportation and Highways that sought approval to make a temporary cycle route permanent, linking the city centre to Coventry Canal Basin from Upper Well Street to Leicester Row, by creating sections of segregated 'cycle track' utilising the Council's powers under the Highways Act. The report also sought approval to create a shared 'cycle track' from Draper's Field to the Canal Towpath entrance on Leicester Row and from Friargate Boulevard to Greyfriars Road to connect to the station. This formed part of a cycle route from the station to the canal towpath for the Commonwealth Games.

The report noted that 'Cycle Track' had a legal definition pursuant to Section 329 of the Highways Act 1980. Options for the provision of a permanent route

between Upper Well Street in the City Centre and the Canal Basin on Leicester Row had been considered. This was necessary as cycling was not permitted across the Canal Basin Bridge due to the narrow bridge deck. A previous scheme had been proposed to provide a crossing of the Ring Road but had been rejected.

The preferred options were detailed in the report as figures 1 to 3. Figure 1 in the report created a permanent 2-way cycle track on Upper Well Street Lamb Street junction, Ringway Junction 9, Ringway St Nicholas anti-clockwise off slip (nearside lane) and Ringway St Nicholas clockwise on slip (nearside lane). This retained 2 vehicle lanes on the anti-clockwise off slip and one lane on the clockwise on slip as now. The Canal Towpath provided a route for visitors to access the Commonwealth Games. There was only one access point to the Canal Towpath from Leicester Row, so the option shown in figure 2 in the report converted a section of footway from Draper's Field to Leicester Row to cycle track. To assist visitors to the Commonwealth Games a designated cycle route was proposed across Greyfriars Green and provided a more direct route for people cycling. The preferred option shown in figure 3 converted a section of footway (Freemans Way) between Friargate Boulevard and Warwick Row to cycle track.

The temporary route was established through the government's Emergency Active Travel Fund programme. The canal basin connection scheme was developed as a temporary measure under an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) and no objections were received to it being made permanent. The barriers on Radford Road and the roundabout would no longer be required in the permanent scheme. If approval was given for these designations, the appropriate signage and infrastructure would be implemented in the 2022/23 financial year.

The Shadow Cabinet Member and Deputy Cabinet Member discussed with officers the promotion of the routes, cycling data collection and the consultation.

Officers reported that promoting cycling routes was a priority, technology for data collection was improving and there had been no objections to the proposals. Councillor Heaven was invited to join officers on a visit to the Cycle Routes.

The Cabinet Member was positive about connecting cycleways across the City and the benefits of enabling safe alternative transport to cars for residents and visitors.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for City Services approve the creation of the cycle tracks shown in figures 1, 2 and 3 in the report.

15. **Results of Consultation on proposals for Hackney Carriage Fares 2022**

The Cabinet Member for City Services considered a report of the Director of Transportation and Highways that sought approval of one of the four proposed Hackney Carriage fare increase options, detailed in the report, subject to advertising and objections. The three-week consultation with the Coventry City Council trade and comments were detailed in appendices to the report.

The report noted that Hackney Carriage fares were regulated by the City Council and the last increase was implemented in September 2014. Although the City Council had no power to directly regulate private hire fares, it was custom and

practice in Coventry for private hire fares to reflect hackney carriage fares. The justification for local authorities being able to regulate Hackney Carriage fares was that customers hailing taxis from the street or from a rank had little or no bargaining power.

A three-week consultation had been carried out with the entire trade (hackney carriage drivers, private hire drivers, hackney carriage vehicle proprietors, private hire vehicle proprietors and private hire operators). Four options to increase fares were considered. There were 405 responses from the trade, these were attached to the report as appendix A, with an overall weighting score. The trade were also asked for their comments. There were 100 comments from the trade (these were attached to the report as appendix B).

Option A was to keep fares at the current rate (i.e. September 2014 level) with a start point daytime tariff of £2.80 and an incremental increase per 1/10th of a mile at 25p (placing Coventry hackney carriage fares as the 128th most expensive out of 356 licensing areas per Private Hire Monthly magazine April edition). 34.22% of the trade chose this option as their number one choice.

Option B was the Taxi Trade preferred option with a start point daytime tariff to increase to £3.80 and an incremental increase per 1/10th of a mile increasing to 30p (placing Coventry hackney carriage fares as the 8th most expensive out of 356 licensing areas per Private Hire Monthly magazine April edition). 42.71% of the trade chose this option as their number one choice.

Option C was a start point daytime tariff to increase to £3.80 with an incremental increase per 1/10th of a mile remaining at 25p (placing Coventry hackney carriage fares as the 20th most expensive out of 356 licensing areas per Private Hire Monthly magazine April edition). 16.45% of the trade chose this option as their number one choice.

Option D was a start point daytime tariff to increase to £3.30 with an incremental increase per 1/10th of a mile remaining at 25p (placing Coventry hackney carriage fares as the 48th most expensive out of 356 licensing areas per Private Hire Monthly magazine April edition). 8.79% of the trade chose this option as their number one choice.

It was proposed that the Cabinet Member choice be advertised and subject to objections. If there were no objections, then it was intended that the new meter rate would be programmed into computers week commencing 1st August 2022. If there were objections, then a further Cabinet Member report would be heard on the 3rd August 2022.

The Cabinet Member thanked officers for taking time to consult with the trade for the first time.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for City Services, having considered the four proposals, gave approval to Option B, as detailed in the report, subject to advertising and objections.

16. **Outstanding Issues**

There were no outstanding issues.

17. **Any other items of Public Business**

There were no other items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 3.30 pm)