

Public Document Pack

Coventry City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet held at 2.00 pm on Tuesday, 13 December 2022

Present:

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

Non-Voting Deputy
Cabinet Members: Councillor P Akhtar
Councillor G Hayre
Councillor G Lloyd
Councillor S Nazir

Non-Voting Opposition
Members: Councillor P Male
Councillor G Ridley

Employees (by Service):

Chief Executive M Reeves (Chief Executive)

Adult Services and
Housing S Atkins, J Reading

Finance B Hastie (Chief Operating Officer (Section 151 Officer)), P
Jennings, B Strain

Law and Governance J Newman (Chief Legal Officer), L Knight,

Public Health and
Wellbeing A Duggal (Director of Public Health and Wellbeing), P Barnett,
V Castree, R Chapman, I Kaur

Streetscene and
Regulatory Services A Walster (Director of Streetscene and Regulatory Services),
D Butler, C Styles, B Taylor

Transportation and
Highways J Shore

Apologies: Councillor N Akhtar
Councillor L Bigham
Councillor B Gittins
Councillor R Lakha
Councillor R Singh

Public Business

58. Declarations of Interest

The Chief Legal Officer (Monitoring Officer) reported that a dispensation had been granted to Members with a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) in the item of business referred to in Minute Number 66 below, headed “Council Tax Premiums for Empty Properties and Second Homes”.

Members are required to disclose any interest in land in the City as a DPI. An interest in land includes owning or renting one or more property. A DPI does not need to be declared in the matter of setting the annual Council Tax or precept since these decisions do not materially affect the Councillor’s specific interest in the land and affects the generality of the public in Coventry to the same extent, rather than the Councillor as an individual.

However, while the majority of people are liable to pay Council Tax, the matter of paying a Council Tax premium on a second home is a more specific payment limited to a smaller number of individuals. Therefore, it could be construed that a Councillor with an interest in a second home is affected as an individual over and above the generality of the citizens of Coventry.

Under Part 2M paragraph 6.8.4, the Monitoring Officer has delegated authority to determine requests for dispensation under section 33 of the Localism Act 2011.

Having considered the issues raised and the recommendations in the report to Cabinet and Council, and reviewed the Members registers of interests, the Chief Legal Officer (Monitoring Officer) has granted a dispensation on the basis that without it the proportion of the Council that would be prohibited from participating would impede the transaction of that business.

59. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 15th November 2022 were agreed and signed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

60. Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED that the Cabinet agrees to exclude the press and public under Sections 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 relating to the private report in Minute 73 below headed ‘Refugee Resettlement and Newly Arrived Communities’ on the grounds that the report involves the likely disclosure of information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 3 of Schedule 12A of the Act, as it contains information relating any individual and relating to the financial affairs of a particular person (including the authority holding that information) and in all circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

61. Biodiversity Net Gain Supplementary Planning Document - Adoption

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Streetscene and Regulatory Services, which sought the adoption of the Biodiversity Net Gain supplementary

Planning Document (SPD), following public consultation which was undertaken between 6th July and 17th August 2022.

It was noted that SPDs add further detail to the policies in the development plan, but cannot introduce new policy. SPDs provide additional guidance for development and are capable of being a material consideration when making decisions on planning applications.

Increasing the sustainability credentials of the City by promoting biodiversity over the Plan period to 2031 was a key objective of the adopted Coventry Local Plan. Biodiversity Net Gain is an approach to development that aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand. From 2023, the Environment Act 2021 will require a minimum of 10% gain as a result of all developments, managed for a minimum of 30 years. The aim of this SPD is to facilitate the delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain as set out in the Environment Act.

The additional guidance provided within the SPD outlined how developments can achieve Biodiversity Net Gain, both through established methods on and off site and other financial mechanisms. This included outlining relevant policy and legislation. Responses to the consultation had been analysed and taken account of when amending the SPD. The proposed final version was attached at Appendix 1 to the report, and a summary of representations along with responses and proposed amendments was provided at Appendix 2.

RESOLVED that, the Cabinet:

- 1. Adopts the Biodiversity Net Gain Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).**
- 2. Delegates authority to the Strategic Lead (Planning) following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities to make any necessary further non-substantive (minor) changes to the document.**

62. New Residential Buildings Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) - Adoption

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Streetscene and Regulatory Services, which sought adoption of the New Residential Buildings Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), following public consultation which was undertaken between 6th July and 17th August 2022.

SPDs add further detail to the policies in the development plan but cannot introduce new policy. SPDs provide additional guidance for development and are capable of being a material consideration when making decisions on planning applications.

This SPD provided design guidance for applicants and developers proposing the creation of new residential dwellings within the city. Responses to the consultation had been analysed and taken account of when amending the SPD. The proposed final version was attached at Appendix 1 to the report submitted, and a summary

of representations along with responses and proposed amendments was provided at Appendix 2.

RESOLVED that, the Cabinet:

- 1. Adopts the New Residential Buildings Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).**
- 2. Delegates authority to the Strategic Lead (Planning) following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities to make any necessary further non-substantive (minor) changes to the document.**

63. Tall Buildings Design Guide and Three Spires View Management Framework Supplementary Planning Document SPD) - Adoption

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Streetscene and Regulatory Services, which sought adoption of the Tall Buildings Design Guide and Three Spires View Management Framework Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), following public consultation which was undertaken between 3rd August and 14th September 2022.

SPDs add further detail to the policies in the development plan but cannot introduce new policy. SPDs provide additional guidance for development and are capable of being a material consideration when making decisions on planning applications.

The city had seen an increase in tall building developments in the last few years, and the first part of the SPD – the Tall Buildings Design Guide - sets out the criteria and information that would need to be provided alongside such applications.

The second part of the SPD, the Three Spires View Management Framework, detailed the protected view of Coventry's famous spires ensuring their preservation into the future. Responses to the consultation had been analysed and taken account of when amending the SPD. The proposed final version was attached at Appendix 1 to the report submitted, and a summary of representations along with responses and proposed amendments was provided at Appendix 2.

RESOLVED that, the Cabinet:

- 1. Adopts the Tall Buildings Design Guide and Three Spires View Management Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).**
- 2. Delegates authority to the Strategic Lead (Planning) following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities to make any necessary further non-substantive (minor) changes to the document.**

64. **2023/24 Pre Budget Report**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Chief Operating Officer (Section 151 Officer) which outlined a set of new revenue budget proposals for 2023/24 to 2025/26 as a basis for consultation. Consultation views were also being sought on the potential level of Council Tax and Adult social care Precept increases for 2023/24. The final Budget proposals and the Council Tax and Adult Social Care Precept increases would be subject to Council approval in February 2023.

The need to deliver the Council's overall future strategy continues to be the focus of the Pre-Budget proposals. The strategy was contained within the draft "One Coventry Plan" which set out key priorities including: improving the economic prosperity of the city and region; improving outcomes and tackling inequalities within communities; and tackling the causes and consequences of climate change. Implicit within the plan was the Council's commitment to delivering a range of core services to everyone in the city. Following an extensive period of engagement, the Plan would be brought for approval in 2023.

The Council's financial plans were heavily dependent on both the allocation of Government grant resources and Government decisions which dictated councils' tax-based income streams. The turmoil in national politics through 2022 had made it more difficult than usual to anticipate the key decisions that the Government would make on these matters. As a result, a number of key elements of the Council's financial plans were subject to some uncertainty with a degree of risk that the position presented within the report could be subject to change once the details of the Local Government financial settlement were published. The Provisional Local Government Settlement for 2023/24 was expected to be published in the week beginning 19th December, and this would provide a stronger indication of the likely position.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer set out the Government's Autumn Statement on 17th November 2022. The Statement provided a two year Department Expenditure Limit position for the Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) which indicates an increase in its budget compared with the previous position. The estimated impact for Coventry, if this movement was reflected in the resources made available to local government, was included within Appendix 1. The largest single change was the flexibility to use an estimated £5m of additional grant in 2023/24 which was earmarked previously by Government for Adult Social Care charging reforms that have now been postponed. Additional flexibility had also been provided with regard to the maximum permissible increase in Council Tax. As a result, this report recommended that the Council should consult on the basis of increasing the Adult Social Care Precept by 2%, and the Council Tax for other services by just under 3%, an overall combined rise of just under 5%.

The financial measures in the report included some service savings or additional income proposals although only a very small number affect services to the public. This had been achieved due to the combination of the overall impact of the Autumn Statement plus the proposed implementation of a range of technical measures. Depending on the final outcome of the Local Government Settlement this could include using one-off resources (in the form of reserves) to meet one-off pressures, if required, although no such measures were proposed at this stage. The Council was keen to avoid the need to reduce vital services and would seek to

explore all possible avenues to do this. The report included sufficient measures to set a balanced budget in 2023/24 albeit with financial gaps in future years.

A Medium Term Financial Strategy was intended to be presented alongside the final Budget Report in February 2023. This would include the dramatically changed economic and financial landscape facing the Council and would include approaches informed by the draft One Coventry Plan. This may include: delivering some services flexibly across roles, services and organisations; investing resources with other public sector partners; and actively seeking new opportunities and cultivating new relationships. This was expected to form an increasing focus of the Council's activity in the future to improve the manner and cost effectiveness with which the Council would be able to deliver and facilitate the provision of services to its citizens.

The proposals in the report were made as a basis for public consultation and the results of the consultation would be reflected in the final Budget Report in February and considered as part of the final decisions recommended in that report. Further work would be undertaken to confirm all the financial assumptions included, between now and the final Budget Report in February.

An outline of the resources and the spending and savings proposals were provided in Section 2 and on a line by line basis in Appendix 1. The Council's Council Tax assumptions and the basis on which it is consulting was set out within Section 2.

The report included an indicative outline of the Council's prospective Capital Programme for 2023/24 based on current knowledge. This would be updated in the February Budget Report, reflecting the most up to date programme information available. The draft programme was based overwhelmingly on pre-existing decisions and patterns of expenditure.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet, approve as a basis for consultation, the revenue spending and savings options in Section 2 and Appendix 1 of the report; the broad Capital Programme Proposals in Sections 2.6 to 2.9 of the report; the approach in relation to Council Tax and the Adult Social Care Precept in Section 1.8 of the report, including a Council Tax rise of just under 3% and an Adult Social care Precept of 2%.

65. **2022/23 Second Quarter Financial Monitoring Report**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Chief Operating Officer (Section 151 Officer), which set out the forecast outturn position for revenue and capital expenditure and the Council's treasury management activity as at the end of September 2022. The headline forecast for 2022/23 is for net expenditure to be £11.3m over budget. At the same point in 2021/22, there was a projected overspend of £3.1m.

The Council continued to face budget pressures due to increased volumes and higher costs of placements within Children's Services and costs incurred due to the previous refuse drivers' industrial dispute within Streetscene and Regulatory Services. A range of other smaller but still significant overspends were also being

reported in several other services including Legal and Governance Services and Business, Investment and Culture.

As reported at Quarter 1, significant additional costs were also being faced due to inflationary pressures affecting the Council, with the approved local government pay award and costs affecting contracts for energy and social care amongst others. The in-year and ongoing impact of these inflationary pressures was a serious factor affecting the Council's ability to manage its budgetary position.

The Council's capital spending was projected to be £165.8m and included major schemes progressing across the city. The size of the programme and the nature of the projects within it continued to be fundamental to the Council's role within the city. There was limited evidence that inflationary pressures referenced above on capital projects this year and the assumption is that stand-alone projects that were already in-progress would be delivered as planned. It was more likely that future projects that had not yet started may need to be re-evaluated to determine their deliverability within previously defined financial budgets.

The Council's services had moved to a business as usual position with activity and impacts arising from the Covid pandemic having reduced significantly. Some pockets of service activity continued to be affected but this was not resulting in a large financial cost. The Council did not expect to receive any Government support linked to Covid within the 2022/23 financial year.

The emerging inflationary risks facing the Council and the wider local government sector had renewed the imperative to maintain financial discipline and prioritise the Council's medium-term financial position. This would be a key focus of the Council's activities over the remainder of the year and several key measures were set out in section 5 of the report to help minimise the size of any budgetary overspend.

The Cabinet noted that the report would also be considered by the Audit and Procurement Committee at its meeting scheduled for 30th January 2023.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet:-

- 1. Approve the Council's revenue monitoring position.**
- 2. Approve the revised forecast capital outturn position for the year of £165.8m incorporating £3m net increase in spending relating to approved / technical changes, £0.6m net overspend and £0.8m of net rescheduling of expenditure into future years.**
- 3. Approve the use of corporate capital receipts to fund the £0.6m Public Realm 5 overspend as referenced in Section 5 and Appendix 4 of the report.**

66. Council Tax Premiums for Empty Properties and Second Homes

The Cabinet considered a report of the Chief Operating Officer (Section 151 Officer), which set out proposal in respect of council tax premiums for empty properties and second homes.

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill (the Bill) proposed to allow billing authorities to charge a 100 per cent long term empty premium on unfurnished empty properties after the property had been empty for 12 months rather than the current period of 24 months.

The Bill also proposed to give billing authorities the power to apply a 100 per cent council tax premium for furnished empty properties (second homes, including second homes which are occupied but the occupiers main home is somewhere else).

The policy objective of these measures was to improve the supply of housing or for owners of second homes to make a greater contribution to council tax receipts.

If the Bill was enacted, reducing the timescale for long term empty property premiums from 24 months to 12 months could generate up to £0.9 million per annum in additional council tax. This figure would likely reduce over time as the policy intention began to influence the behaviour of owners of empty properties.

This change, from 24 months to 12 months, for the long term empty premiums may be applied from 1 April 2024 and it was recommended that Council approve this measure.

The implementation of a premium for second homes could generate £3.6 million. The implementation of this type of premium was more complex in terms of the potential implications for housing policy and the impact on different stakeholders. It was not recommended that the Council proceed with this measure from April 2024 and instead review this option in the coming 12 months.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet recommend that Council approve the implementation of a provision within the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill to:

- **Apply a 100 per cent premium for properties that have been empty and unfurnished for 12 months or longer – this charge would be implemented from 1st April 2024 and applied to any property that had been empty for 12 months at that point and going forward.**
- **Agree to review the option of implementing a 100 per cent premium on second homes following the Enactment of the legislation and receive a further report detailing any recommendations proposed to come into effect from April 2025.**

67. Approval of Rough Sleeper Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant 2022-2024

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Public Health and Wellbeing, which sought approval to receive the Rough Sleeping Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant.

The City Council was successfully awarded a grant of up to £640,361 to support rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping to engage with and access drug and alcohol treatment in January 2022, which was to fund activity up to March

2023. Following confirmation of this funding, the Council were asked to revise their bid for 2022/23 and to bid for funding for 2023/24. As a result of this, the Council had now been awarded £1,228,092 from the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities - Department of Health and Social Care (“OHID”) for the period April 2022 to March 2024. It was expected that there may be one further round of bidding for the Rough Sleeping Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant (RSDATG) to provide funds in 2024/25.

The Council’s constitution required formal Cabinet approval prior to agreeing to receive external grants in excess of £500,000. Where time does not allow this to happen approval could be sought by the relevant Director in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member and Scrutiny Chair, with a requirement to then report retrospectively to Cabinet. As time was not available to report in advance of signature for this grant, approval was gained by the Director of Public Health and Wellbeing, in consultation with Councillor Caan (Cabinet Member for Public Health and Sport), Councillor Duggins (Cabinet Member for Policy and Leadership) on behalf of Councillor Welsh (Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness) and Councillor N Akhtar (Chair, Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee); with agreement for a retrospective report to Cabinet.

The purpose of the grant was threefold:

- to support people experiencing, or at risk of, rough sleeping to access and engage in drug and alcohol treatment.
- to ensure that the engagement that people have had with drug and alcohol treatment services whilst rough sleeping or in emergency or temporary accommodation is maintained as they move into longer term accommodation.
- to build resilience and capacity in local drug and alcohol treatment systems to continue to meet the needs of this population in future years.

Following the initial invitation to submit proposals for the Rough Sleeper Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant scheme, Public Health and Housing teams identified the need to create a number of dedicated outreach roles to support this population to engage in treatment, including:

- a specialist drug and alcohol outreach worker within the Council Rough Sleeper Outreach team to engage with people currently ‘bedding down’ into treatment services.
- a team of outreach workers within Change, Grow, Live (CGL Coventry - the Council’s commissioned drug and alcohol treatment service) to engage with people in temporary accommodation and at risk of rough sleeping.
- a team of allied specialist roles including a physical healthcare nurse, a Non-Medical Prescriber and an occupational therapist to support people to engage in treatment. These roles will predominantly deliver services at times and places which meet the specific needs of people rough sleeping in order to maximise engagement.

The original bid was submitted in June 2021 and totalled spend of up to £640,361 over a 21-month period to March 2023. However, confirmation of the successful bid was not received until December 2021, which created a delay in starting the

project. This delay, coupled with recruitment challenges, which were seen nationwide, resulted in an underspend for 2021/22.

In May 2022, OHID requested revised bids be submitted for the period July 2022 to March 2023 and to extend the scheme to March 2024 to bring the different phases of the grant in line.

On 13th October 2022, OHID announced Coventry's second bid had been approved. A formal grant award was subsequently received on 13th October 2022. This grant award was for the period April 2022 to March 2024 and was for the sum of £1,228,092.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet:

- 1. Note the approval to retrospectively accept the Rough Sleeping Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant in the sum of £1,228,092 from the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities for the period April 2022 to March 2024.**
- 2. Authorise the Council to bid and accept further grant monies from the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities for Rough Sleeping Drug and Alcohol Treatment in the maximum sum of £2,499,000 for the period 2024 – 2025.**
- 3. Delegate authority to the Director of Public Health and Wellbeing, following consultation with the Chief Legal Officer and the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Sport to undertake the necessary due diligence, negotiate terms and conditions of any funding agreement with the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities and enter into the necessary agreements to bring into legal effect the recommendation set out in 2. above.**

68. Public Realm - Phase 6

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Transportation and Highways, which set out proposals for the Public Realm Phase 6 programme.

In March 2018, Cabinet and Council gave approval to proceed with an ambitious Coventry City Centre Public Realm Phase 5 programme. Following a successful bid and a funding award of £44m from the Coventry and Warwickshire LEP and the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), the council transformed the city centre by improving and enhancing the main shopping precincts, the Bull Yard, Pepper Lane and Hertford St as well as improving signs and lighting around the city centre.

The public realm 5 project was undertaken from October 2019 and completed in time for UK City of Culture 2021, additionally it was delivered in unprecedented times throughout the Covid 19 pandemic in which the importance of the city's public spaces was thrust to the forefront of everyone's minds. In order to continue to build on the legacy which the public realm 5 project had left, the project team had identified areas for further enhancement which were not part of the original project scope but would further improve the city centre areas.

A review of the works delivered had identified a public realm 6 programme of works that would focus on improving security and lighting and refreshing some of the areas surrounding Broadgate, The Precinct, Priory Place and the Cathedral. The schemes would deliver high quality improvements to strategic areas of the city and also enhance the setting of the key events venues and visitor attractions.

The key projects to be completed were:

- Retail Quarter Phase 2 – this will focus on upgrading some of the structures and facades around Broadgate, The Precinct, Market Way and Barracks Way tunnel
- Public Realm Refresh – there are some areas like Priory Place which have damaged water features and areas around the cathedral which need lighting upgrades.
- City Centre security which forms the largest part of the budget. This includes applying security measures to the area around the Cathedral, the University to create a safe events space and The Wave.

The Public Realm Phase 6 programme would be delivered in a co-ordinated way with businesses, Coventry BID and council partners to ensure any disruption is kept to a minimum.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet:

- 1. Agree the revised scheme list and delegate authority to the Director of Transportation and Highways following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change, to agree the detailed works for schemes in Coventry City Centre Public realm Phase 6.**
- 2. Delegate authority to the Director of Transportation and Highways, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change and the Chief Operating Officer to agree the detailed works and budgets for additional Public Realm Phase 6 funding.**
- 3. Delegate authority to the Director of Transportation and Highways following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change, alongside Procurement Board to agree the most appropriate procurement route for the works to be delivered.**
- 4. Recommend that Council approve the addition of £1.8m of corporate resources to the 5 year capital programme to deliver the Public Realm Phase 6 programme, funded from capital receipts.**

69. Adult Social Care Preventative Support Grants

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Adult Services and Housing, which sought approval to award Adult Social Care Preventative Support Grants for a period of up to two years.

Preventative support and early intervention are effective ways of preventing escalation of need that can lead to poorer outcomes, loss of independence and reliance on social care and health services.

The report indicated that the City Council has a long history of working with the voluntary and third sector to support adults who required support from Adult Social Care. The most recent iteration of this was the introduction of a Preventative Support programme, jointly funded with the Integrated Care Board (ICB), which commenced in 2018 and awarded a series of five-year grants following a grant bidding process. Through the grant programme, support had been successfully delivered to thousands of Coventry residents with a wide variety of needs across learning disabilities; mental health; sensory impairments; carers' support; people with dementia and their families; older people; and people who hoard.

Over the five-year grant period the Covid-19 pandemic had been a significant disruptor of how support was delivered, where what the organisations had planned to do was quickly replaced by what they had to do to support vulnerable people within the city. In addition, organisations in receipt of a grant were now adapting to provide the support people required in respect of cost-of-living crisis where many people are turning to voluntary sector organisations for support. In addition to these factors the local authority faced uncertainty in respect of its future resources which created challenges in making long term funding decisions.

As a result of this combination of factors it was recommended that grants be awarded for up to two years for similar purposes following a short bidding process.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet:

- 1. Approve the award of grants totalling £5,406,000 to be awarded to voluntary sector organisations for a period of up to two years to 31st March 2025.**
- 2. Delegate authority to the Director of Adult Services and Housing, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Adult Services, to undertake the necessary grant funding process for voluntary sector organisations to apply for grant funding and undertake the necessary due diligence, negotiate the terms and conditions of any grant funding agreement with the voluntary sector organisations and enter into the necessary agreements to bring into legal effect the recommendation set out at 1. above.**

70. Refugee Resettlement and Newly Arrived Communities

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Public Health and Wellbeing, in respect of refugee resettlement and newly arrived communities.

A corresponding private report detailing confidential matters was also submitted for consideration (Minute 73 below refers).

The report submitted provided an update on the current position concerning the arrival and welcome of people from asylum seeking, refugee and migrant communities to the city. The report also reflected on work done under a range of

resettlement schemes, detailed in Appendix 3, as well as grant allocations awarded to the Council to support delivery of these resettlement schemes, which were set out in Appendix 1.

In addition, the report set out the council's preferred position regarding the dispersal of asylum seekers in the city, in line with the Government's new Full Dispersal Policy. It was noted that both Coventry and the wider West Midlands were disproportionately impacted by the current dispersal of asylum seekers. The local authority, along with other regional partners, had for a number of years advocated for a fairer dispersal system. The West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership had developed a regional plan of allocation as set out in Appendix 2 of the report, which should see local numbers drop, over time. However, this would require early action by the Home Office to exit contingency asylum hotels to see numbers drop more quickly. The Council had no obligation to agree the regional plan of allocation; however, it was recommended that the Council support the plan in order to establish an equitable dispersal of asylum seekers.

The Cabinet noted the current and projected challenges and opportunities, presented by refugee resettlement, as well as the potential benefits to the local economy and communities from investing in a successful approach to resettlement, inclusion and integration.

The Cabinet were advised that the Council's Migration service also bid for and received a range of grants which funded specific projects to support the same communities. The report submitted therefore sought approval to accept further grant funding under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) which would be used to extend the My Coventry project by a further 12 months. Details of all relevant grant allocations awarded to the Council from the Home Office and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities under the grant schemes was included in Appendix 1.

The Cabinet were also asked for approval for the Council's pledge to the Government's various refugee resettlement schemes.

It was noted that the report did not cover Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children as this client group are supported by Children's Services.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet:

- 1. Approve the proposed regional model put forward by the West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership to disperse people who are asylum seekers across the West Midlands region, as set out in Appendix 2. As set out in section 1.5 providing information on 'Move to Full Dispersal' policy and described in Option 2 of the Options and Recommended proposal section.**
- 2. Reaffirm the position of Coventry as a City of Sanctuary, City of Peace and Reconciliation and continue to be a welcoming and inclusive place for people from asylum seeking, refugee and migrant communities. This is with a particular emphasis on supporting new arrivals to be able to make a positive contribution to local communities and the local economy.**

- 3. Confirm the Council's pledge to resettle 125-150 people per annum from the Government's Resettlement Schemes. This would reflect the capacity in the city to support these very vulnerable refugees and make a positive contribution to the Government's request for support with the challenges faced particularly by the collapse of the previous Afghan regime in August 2021.**
- 4. Delegate authority to the Director of Public Health and Wellbeing following consultation with the Chief Operating Officer and Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities to be able to increase or decrease the Council's pledge to the Government's refugee resettlement schemes. This would be in accordance with Coventry's capacity to deliver effective integration support and would be based on the population size of the city.**
- 5. Authorise the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities following consultation with the Head of Service Libraries and Migration and the Chief Legal Officer to prepare and thereafter issue a letter to the Home Secretary stating the following:**
 - That the City Council remains supportive of the West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership's plan which reflects the move to a new and better dispersal model;**
 - That the current contingency hotels are stood down in the City of Coventry; and**
 - No further contingency hotels are to be created in the future within the City of Coventry**
- 6. Accept all government grant allocations awarded to the Council per individual under the grant schemes programmes listed in Appendix 1 for current and future years and delegate authority to the Head of Service Libraries and Migration following consultation with the Chief Operating Officer and Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities to take all necessary actions to bring into effect this recommendation.**
- 7. Authorise the Council to accept additional grant funding award of £794,753 from the Asylum Migration Integration Fund (AMIF) subject to the appropriate match funding being secured by all necessary delivery partners which shall thereafter be utilised to extend the current MyCoventry programme for a third year (ending December 2023) as described in Paragraph 1.10 below.**
- 8. Delegate authority to the Head of Service Libraries and Migration following consultation with Chief Operating Officer and Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities to enter into the appropriate agreements:**
 - To secure the additional grant funding; and**
 - Back-to-back funding agreement with the necessary delivery partners.**

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.

73. **Refugee Resettlement and Newly Arrived Communities**

Further to Minute 70 above, the Cabinet considered a private report of the Director of Public Health and Wellbeing, which set out the confidential matters relating to refugee resettlement and newly arrived communities.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet:

1. **Approve the proposed regional model put forward by the West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership to disperse people who are asylum seekers across the West Midlands region, as set out in Appendix 2. As set out in section 1.5 providing information on 'Move to Full Dispersal' policy and described in Option 2 of the Options and Recommended proposal section.**
2. **Reaffirm the position of Coventry as a City of Sanctuary, City of Peace and Reconciliation and continue to be a welcoming and inclusive place for people from asylum seeking, refugee and migrant communities. This is with a particular emphasis on supporting new arrivals to be able to make a positive contribution to local communities and the local economy.**
3. **Confirm the Council's pledge to resettle 125-150 people per annum from the Government's Resettlement Schemes. This would reflect the capacity in the city to support these very vulnerable refugees and make a positive contribution to the Government's request for support with the challenges faced particularly by the collapse of the previous Afghan regime in August 2021.**
4. **Delegate authority to the Director of Public Health and Wellbeing following consultation with the Chief Operating Officer and Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities to be able to increase or decrease the Council's pledge to the Government's refugee resettlement schemes. This would be in accordance with Coventry's capacity to deliver effective integration support and would be based on the population size of the city.**
5. **Authorise the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities following consultation with the Head of Service Libraries and Migration and the Chief Legal Officer to prepare and thereafter issue a letter to the Home Secretary stating the following:**

- That the City Council remains supportive of the West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership's plan which reflects the move to a new and better dispersal model;
 - That the current contingency hotels are stood down in the City of Coventry; and
 - No further contingency hotels are to be created in the future within the City of Coventry
6. **Accept all government grant allocations awarded to the Council per individual under the grant schemes programmes listed in Appendix 1 for current and future years and delegate authority to the Head of Service Libraries and Migration following consultation with the Chief Operating Officer and Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities to take all necessary actions to bring into effect this recommendation.**
7. **Authorise the Council to accept additional grant funding award of £794,753 from the Asylum Migration Integration Fund (AMIF) subject to the appropriate match funding being secured by all necessary delivery partners which shall thereafter be utilised to extend the current MyCoventry programme for a third year (ending December 2023) as described in Paragraph 1.10 below.**
8. **Delegate authority to the Head of Service Libraries and Migration following consultation with Chief Operating Officer and Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities to enter into the appropriate agreements:**
- **To secure the additional grant funding; and**
 - **Back-to-back funding agreement with the necessary delivery partners.**
74. **Any other items of private business which the Chair decides to take as a matter of urgency because of the special circumstances involved.**

There were no other items of private business.

(Meeting closed at 3.00 pm)