

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee held at 10.00 am on
Wednesday, 20 December 2023

- Present: Councillor N Akhtar (Chair)
Councillor R Thay (Deputy Chair)
- Councillor G Gardiner (Substitute for Councillor G Ridley)
Councillor R Lakha (Substitute for Councillor M Ali)
Councillor P Male
Councillor M Mutton (Substitute for Councillor C Miks)
Councillor E Ruane
Councillor R Singh
Councillor CE Thomas
- Other Members: Councillor G Duggins, Cabinet Member for Policy and Leadership
Councillor P Seaman (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People)
Councillor D Welsh (Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing)
- Others Present : Professor J Neelands, University of Warwick (For Minute 38 below)
Temporary Chief Inspector J Moran, West Midlands Police (For Minute 39 below)
- Employees (by Service Area):
- Chief Partnerships Officer: K Nelson
- Business, Investment and Culture: D Nuttall
- Law and Governance: S Bennett, G Holmes, E Jones
- Public Health and Wellbeing: A Duggal (Director), V De Souza
- Apologies: Councillors M Ali, C Miks and G Ridley

Public Business

36. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

37. **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 22 November, 2023 were agreed and signed as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

38. **Coventry Cultural Strategy - Next Steps and Learning from City of Culture**

The Committee considered a Briefing Note of the Director of Business, Investment and Culture which provided an overview of the next steps in the ongoing development and delivery of the Coventry Cultural Strategy 2017-2027, drawing on and considering learning insights from the UK City of Culture 2021 (UK CoC 2021) Impact Evaluation Final Report.

In January 2017, Cabinet approved a new, partnership Coventry Cultural Strategy 2017-2027, in support of the long-term positioning of culture in the city. The Cultural Strategy set out a ten year-vision for the cultural life of Coventry, building on the existing heritage and culture of the city. The Strategy was structured around Five Goals for cultural growth in the city, each of which was under-pinned by 'Seven Big Ideas' that support the transformation of the cultural life of the city. The Strategy was designed to span a timeline in which Coventry was bidding for and had the potential to be UK CoC 2021. It was therefore acknowledged from the outset that the Strategy approach would need to remain flexible, consultative, and responsive, continuing to evolve over the full ten-year period in order to achieve the vision.

The Final UKCoC 2021 Impact Evaluation Report was published on 2 November 2023 and forms part of a platform which contains over forty evaluation reports, research outputs and analysis relating to Coventry's time as the UKCoC 2021. The report details the impact of taking a hyperlocal, community co-production approach to supporting engagement with cultural activities. The report includes considerations regarding the success of the approach and the resource commitment required to achieve success. The Briefing Note detailed the following Learning Insight:-

- a) Culture makes a significant contribution to community engagement through co-creation and hyper local projects and to wider non-cultural outcomes through working with voluntary and community organisations.
- b) Investment in cultural and heritage assets and the public realm transform the city's landscape and internal and external perceptions of Coventry as a city to live in, work in and visit.
- c) The title and year-long programme helped bring millions of pounds of investment to the city and stimulated a £150 million boost in tourism income above pre-Covid levels.
- d) Co-created programmes have a direct impact on local policy development and can influence change in practice through building a deeper connectivity with, and understanding of, community need, interests and/or key global and social agendas.
- e) Projects which engage the most vulnerable residents have the highest Social Return on Investment.

- f) Engagement and participation have a direct impact on the individual lives of many participants. These impacts include the formation of new social connections, a developing sense of agency and inclusion, and a growing sense of ability to influence change at a variety of levels.
- g) Significant communication problems within the Trust led to difficulties in maintaining partner relationships, lack of timely communication of the programme (both locally and regionally) and missed opportunities to market the UK CoC 2021 more effectively.
- h) The lack of clarity about agreed budgets and costs for both Trust staff and partners impeded project delivery.
- i) In some neighbourhoods, activity was limited. Activity took place in every ward, however at the more granular neighbourhood level, activity was limited in some neighbourhoods.
- j) Transparency around programme decisions made by the Trust was lacking. This led to the local cultural sector perceiving that projects coming from local artists were overlooked or not prioritised.

Broader Lessons learned include:

- k) A temporary organisation like the Trust cannot be expected to deliver longer-term, sustainable outcomes for the city without enduring place-based governance arrangements including key stakeholders.
- l) The strong civic partnership that developed the Cultural Strategy and the bid needs to be revitalised and invested in to ensure a sustainable and lasting legacy that focusses on how culture can contribute to communities, increase tourism and attract investment.

The Committee noted that detailed findings of the Impact Evaluation Report were considered by the City Council at a dedicated All-Member Seminar held on 1 December 2023, supported by representatives of the Core Monitoring and Evaluation Team. In addition, an amended Motion received cross-party support at Full Council on 5 December 2023, stating “In light of Coventry’s recent experience hosting the City of Culture, this Council calls upon the Government to review the governance arrangements for future events and commit dedicated legacy funding to secure legacy work beyond the year itself”.

Further to the Trust entering administration, in June 2023, Coventry University, the University of Warwick and Coventry City Council announced their support, as Principal Partners, for ‘Coventry Culture Works’ – an inclusive partnership approach, working alongside leaders from the cultural, creative and wider sectors in the city to take culture forward and deliver the city’s ambitious 10-year Cultural Strategy.

The Culture Works model is focused around:

- Inspiring – New voices, ideas and experiences
- Connecting – Communities, cultures and ambitions for change
- Supporting – A creative economy, future skills and healthy lives

The Briefing Note indicated that on 18 January 2024, ‘The Future Works’ gathering – an event led by local creatives, supported by the City Council and the city’s two universities – will bring together a wide mix of people from across the city, from

cultural and creative sectors, wider partners, businesses, and institutions. The event will seek to shape and create a vision for the next chapter for culture in the city; to explore the current challenges and barriers; to put down route markers; to revitalise the refresh of the Cultural Strategy; and to set in motion tangible city and region-wide action. The event will build on collaborative, sector and partners' discussions around 'next steps' for culture in the city, including those of the city's National Portfolio Organisations, CW9 Group and F13 Group (a network of independent and small-scale arts organisations, freelance artists and creative practitioners).

It is proposed that a refreshed, Coventry Cultural Strategy Action Plan 2024-2027 will clearly highlight the contribution culture is making to improving outcomes for our communities, including in delivering One Coventry Plan priorities.

Through Culture Works, the Council has further committed to supporting development of a new Creative Economy Strategy, Heritage Strategy and Public Art Strategy, across 2024. Investment from the University of Warwick, Coventry University and the Council will support a new, joint-funded Head of Culture and Creative Economy role from 2024. The City Council further continues to progress the city's cultural capital investment programme, through key legacy projects such as the Albany Theatre Phase 1 capital works and the City Centre Cultural Gateway project, which continues to build and develop long-term partnerships with national and local partners.

The Committee asked questions and made comments on a number of issues including:-

- Apprenticeships and job creation (particularly in the tourism and hospitality sectors) as a result of the UK CoC 2021
- Opportunities that have arisen in the creative sector in the City and how these opportunities are being pursued
- The failure of the Trust model to deliver UK CoC, in Coventry and in Derry and Hull, and the recognition of this by the Government, who have changed the delivery model post 2029. This was welcomed by the Committee.
- The transparency and quality of the evaluation report was recognised.
- Information in relation to the performance of Charterhouse, Drapers Hall and the Guildhall and on the former IKEA building. It was noted that this information would be provided in future updates
- An update on the cultural element of the Levelling Up Fund. It was noted that information from the Government on bidding for this was still awaited.
- The need for communication and engagement with Coventry residents in developing the new Cultural Strategy and applying the One Coventry approach to this process. Examples of successful community participation and engagement during the UK CoC 2021 were noted.
- The importance of ensuring Members were informed of cultural events taking place in their Wards was noted.

- Issues relating to intellectual property associated with the UK CoC 2021
- Further information in relation to the Coventry Culture Works event to be held on 18 January, 2024 was provided, particularly in relation to the role of residents and future Member involvement.
- The health and well-being benefits of culture to residents were recognised
- Information was provided into work being undertaken by both Universities to attract undergraduates and retain graduates in the City in the creative arts industry.
- The Council's commitment to continue the legacy of the UK CoC 2021 was recognised and welcomed.

The Committee noted the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities commitment to involving local people in the development of the new Strategy and to embed transparency and accountability in the process. It was noted that further details would be provided in the Action Plan to the new Strategy.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee:-

- 1) Notes and welcome the learning insights from the UK City of Culture 2021 Impact Evaluation Final Report**
- 2) Notes (i) the impact of community engagement and participation in culture and (ii) the economic impacts of culture and the creative economy, and how these might shape the Council's approach to delivering its One Coventry Plan priorities through the refresh of the Cultural Strategy and Action Plan.**
- 3) Requests that a progress report on the work being undertaken on the new Cultural Strategy be submitted to the Committee in 6 months**
- 4) Requests that all Councillors receive information and updates regarding cultural events in their Ward on a regular basis**

39. One Coventry Plan Annual Performance Report 2022-23

The Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee considered a report of the Chief Partnerships Officer which indicated that the One Coventry Plan includes the Council's vision and priorities, new ways of working, and core areas of activity to deliver the plans objectives, key strategies, and approaches. The current plan, last refreshed in 2022, covers the period from 2022-2030. It builds on the Council's long-standing principles (being globally connected, locally committed, and working together to deliver priorities with fewer resources) and continues to set out new ways of working to help the Council face the current challenges of increasing demand and reduced real terms funding.

The annual performance report sets out the progress made towards the One Coventry Plan. For each objective, this report sets out the trends, actions taken, and performance metrics, to provide an assessment of the progress made against previous years and other places.

The Council uses agreed indicators to show progress made towards its priorities. This is supported by a wider basket of measures such as equality and perception measures that help explain the trends and story behind the headlines. Indicators are selected from key strategies and aligned to directorate priorities and equality and health inequalities objectives.

The Council's priorities are delivered through strategies aligned to the One Coventry Plan; as set out in the performance management framework. As part of the performance management process, leadership teams within each directorate and the Corporate Leadership Team have been involved in ensuring that the organisation's key strategies are aligned to the One Coventry Plan.

The One Coventry Plan is currently measured using 73 indicators, of which 36 indicators improved; 6 stayed the same; 15 indicators got worse; can't say for 1 indicators; and progress is not available for the remaining 15 indicators. This means, 74% (42/57) of directional indicators (excluding cannot say or not available) improved or stayed the same. This compares to the performance seen in previous years: 69% (40/58) in 2021-22; 79% (50/63) in 2019/20, 78% (52/67) in 2018/19, 71% (42/59) in 2017/18, and 75% (43/57) in 2016/17.

Many of the Council's key priorities have an equality dimension or address an inequality caused by economic or social circumstances.

The Committee were informed of the intention to refresh the content and regularity of the suite of performance reports available in the future and were provided with a demonstration at the meeting of an interactive dashboard programme that would facilitate this.

The Committee asked questions, made comments and sought assurances/information on a number of issues including:-

- The importance of receiving performance data, recognising that this was not a statutory requirement
- How members of the community can be involved in accessing performance information as well as understanding the achievements of the Council.
- Specific performance areas including:
 - o NEET numbers
 - o Early Years performance
 - o Migration data
 - o Foreign inward investment
 - o Tourism statistics
 - o Fly-tipping and tip booking process.
 - o Prosecutions

(It was noted that further information/data in relation to these issues would be available at an all Members Seminar to be held in the New Year)

- Available data from partners including the NHS and the West Midlands Police (who were in attendance at the meeting and provided data in relation to crime levels in the City)

In particular, the Committee welcomed the significant improvements in performance in Childrens Services and commended the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and relevant officers for work in this regard.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee:-

- 1) **Notes the Council's performance as set out in the performance report.**
- 2) **Notes that, where targets had not been achieved, those issues would be referred to the appropriate Scrutiny Board for further consideration**
- 3) **Welcomes the intention to refresh the content and regularity of the suite of performance reports available in future.**

40. Work Programme 2023/24 and Outstanding Issues

The Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee received their Work Programme for the Municipal Year 2023/24 and noted the following changes:-

- 1) Scrutiny of the West Midlands Combined Authority would be considered at the meeting on 24 January, 2024
- 2) The One Coventry Climate Change Strategy would be considered at the meeting on 20 March, 2024.

41. Any Other Items of Public Business

There were no other items of urgent public business.

(Meeting closed at 1.00 pm)