

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet held at 10.00 am on Wednesday, 15 May 2024

Present:

Members: Councillor G Duggins (Chair)
Councillor L Bigham
Councillor K Caan
Councillor P Seaman
Councillor P Hetherton
Councillor R Brown
Councillor K Sandhu
Councillor P Seaman

Non-Voting Deputy
Cabinet Members:

Councillor S Agboola
Councillor P Akhtar
Councillor G Hayre
Councillor A Jobbar
Councillor G Lloyd
Councillor S Nazir

Non-Voting Opposition
Members:

Councillor G Ridley

Other Non-Voting
Members:

Councillor N Akhtar
Councillor R Lakha

Employees
(by Service area):

Chief Executive Julie Nugent (Chief Executive)
Education and Skills K Nelson (Chief Partnerships Officer), R Sugars, C Webb
Finance B Hastie (Director of Finance and Resources)
Law and Governance J Newman (Director of Law and Governance), M Salmon
Property Services and
Development R Moon (Director of Property Services and Development)

Apologies:

Councillor AS Khan
Councillor J O'Boyle
Councillor C Thomas

Public Business

107. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

108. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 16th April 2024 were agreed and signed as a true record.

109. 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 113 below headed ‘Woodfield Relocation to Woodlands Site - Budget Increase’ on the grounds that the report involves the likely disclosure of information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Act, as it contains information 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.

110. Woodfield Relocation to Woodlands Site - Budget Increase

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Partnerships and Performance on a budget increase associated with the Woodfield Schools relocation to the Woodlands School Site.

A corresponding private report detailing confidential financial matters was also submitted for consideration (Minute 113 below referred).

In accordance with the Constitution, Councillor N Akhtar, Chair of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee, had been invited to attend this meeting of Cabinet for this item of business (both the public and the private reports) to agree the need for urgency such that call-in arrangements will not apply. The reason for urgency was that the tender process had taken place, and the costs were held until 24th May at which point the validity period had passed. If a decision was not made by this date, the costs were subject to review and were likely to increase. The construction programme could not be confirmed until the award of contract, this meant the delivery of the new facility would be delayed, impacting the school pupils and could impact the Local Authority reputationally. The academy trust had set out the conversion could not take place until the works contract was signed. This meant any delays to appointing the contractor would impact the academisation process. The school was subject to an Academy Order and the DfE were applying pressure to both the Local Authority and the Academy Trust to move this process forward.

Under Section 14 of the Education Act 1996, Coventry City Council had a statutory duty to ensure sufficient school places and fair, appropriate access to education for all. It was the Council’s role to plan, commission and organise school places in a way that raised standards, managed supply and demand and created a diverse infrastructure.

On 18th October 2021, Council approved in principle the refurbishing of the existing Woodlands School site to provide a new home for the existing Woodfield Primary and Secondary Schools which would facilitate the subsequent relocation of the Woodfield Schools to the Woodlands site. This report approved the award of contract subject to it being within the approved amount capital refurbishment budget. It was also noted in the report that where the cost of delivering the project exceeded the approved budget limit, a further report to address the shortfall gap would be presented to Cabinet and/or Council for approval prior to award of the contract to the successful building contractor.

Officers had continued to monitor the financial position and on receipt of further funding for SEND capital, the One Strategic Plan report presented to Cabinet on 10th January 2023 which allocated further resource to the project.

The Council had commenced a comprehensive tendering process to appoint the building contractor which had identified a shortfall gap for the main works. This report therefore provided an update and included a request to approve additional resource to enable the award of contract for the main works.

The shortfall gap was due to inflation, complexities of the design and refurbishment of the listed building, additional costs incurred (e.g. for more invasive surveys), and the increased timescales associated with the complex planning requirements around the three sites (Woodfield Primary, Woodfield Secondary, and Woodlands). As a consequence, the cost of the capital refurbishment works had increased to the sum identified in the private element of this report, requiring additional resource in order to award the main construction contract. The total project cost was anticipated to be the sum set out in the private element of this report, which included the project contingency and additional project fees. This was funded by existing education funding and corporate receipts. A detailed breakdown of the costs was included within the finance section of the private element of this report.

The Council had received an additional High Needs Capital funding in March 2024. This funding would be allocated as part of the annual One Strategic Plan report.

It should also be noted that Woodfield Special School was currently in the process of academy conversion, with the conversion being dependent upon significant progress being made on this project. The academy conversion was the subject of a separate Cabinet report in October 2021.

Councillor Akhtar agreed the need for urgency and therefore the decisions in relation to this matter are not subject to call in.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet:

- 1) Approves a further sum as identified in the private element of this report for the delivery of the capital refurbishment works to enable the award of the main construction contract which will be financed from within existing Education capital resources.**

- 2) **Delegates authority to the Director of Finance and Resources, following consultation with the Director of Partnerships and Performance (or in his/her absence the Chief Executive), the Director of Law and Governance and the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, to undertake the necessary due diligence including approving any incidental and ancillary actions required to bring into legal effect the recommendation set out in Recommendation 1) above.**

111. **Outstanding Issues**

There were no outstanding issues.

112. **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 urgent public business.

113. **Woodfield Relocation to Woodlands Site - Budget Increase**

Further to Minute 110 above, the Cabinet considered a private report of the Director of Director of Partnerships and Performance which set out the commercially sensitive confidential matters relating to a budget increase for the Woodfield Schools relocation to the Woodlands School site.

As indicated in Minute 110 above, Councillor Akhtar, Chair of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee, having considered both the public and private report, agreed the need for urgency and therefore the decisions in relation to this matter are not subject to call in.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet:

- 1) **Approves a further sum for the delivery of the capital refurbishment works to enable the award of the main construction contract which will be financed from within existing Education capital resources. The total main construction contract value will be increased to the sum now indicated.**
- 2) **Delegates authority to the Director of Finance and Resources, following consultation with the Director of Partnerships and Performance (or in his/her absence the Chief Executive), the Director of Law and Governance and the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, to undertake the necessary due diligence including approving any incidental and ancillary actions required to bring into legal effect the recommendation set out in Recommendation 1) above.**

114. **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 urgent private business.

(Meeting closed at 10.40 am)

