

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee held at 11.00 am on
Monday, 10 June 2024

Present:

Members: Councillor N Akhtar (Chair)

Councillor M Ali
Councillor L Kelly (Deputy Chair)
Councillor R Lakha
Councillor G Lewis
Councillor R Singh

Other Members: Councillor G Duggins

Employees (by Service Area):

Finance and Resources: B Hastie (Director)

Human Resources: G Haynes

Law and Governance: S Bennett, E Jones

Regeneration and
Economy: A Williams (Director)

Transformation: M McGinty

Apologies: Councillors J Lepoidevin, C Miks, G Ridley and CE Thomas

Public Business

1. Thanks and Welcome

The Chair, Councillor N Akhtar, placed on record his thanks and appreciation for all of the work undertaken by Councillor E Ruane and Councillor R Thay in their roles during the Municipal Year 2023/24 as Chair of the Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1) and the Deputy Chair of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee respectively.

The Chair welcomed Councillor L Kelly to her new role as Deputy Chair of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee for 2024/25.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

3. **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 April, 2024 were agreed and signed as a true record.

Further to Minutes 56/23 and 58/23 relating to “Parking Enforcement and Road Safety” and “Rebuilding Drug and Alcohol Treatment and Recovery Services” respectively, the Committee noted that the relevant Cabinet Members had received the Committee’s Recommendations in relation to those matters and had accepted the Recommendations. In addition, the further information requested in relation to those matters had been circulated to Members of the Committee.

4. **Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge 2024 – Outcome of Peer Challenge**

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Executive which outlined the outcome of the Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge held in Coventry in January, 2024. The Committee noted that the report would also be considered by Cabinet at their meeting on 11 June, 2024, prior to consideration by Council on 9 July, 2024.

The report indicated that that the Local Government Association (LGA) is the national voice of local government, working with Councils to support, promote, and improve local government. The LGA’s Corporate Peer Challenge offer is effective and well regarded by the sector and provides robust, strategic and credible challenge and support to Councils.

It is expected that all Councils receive a Corporate Peer Challenge at least every five years covering core areas and any specific areas requested by the Council. Coventry City Council’s first Corporate Peer Challenge took place in October 2018. In 2023, it was agreed that Coventry City Council would again host a Corporate Peer Challenge as this was now timely.

The Peer Challenge took place from 15th to 18th January 2024. The visit focused on five core themes (local priorities and outcomes, organisational and place leadership, governance and culture, financial planning and management, and capacity for improvement). These areas are critical to Councils’ performance and improvement.

The Peer Team were also asked to provide feedback on transformation: the organisation’s corporate capacity and plans for service transformation. Transformation was specifically chosen on the basis that it would benefit from some external challenge and feedback on future delivery plans.

The LGA Corporate Peer Challenge feedback report was provided as an appendix to the report (Appendix A). This report provided a detailed response on findings, including a number of observations and suggestions within the main section of the report.

In summary, during the course of the Peer Challenge week, the Peer Team found that:

- Coventry is an ambitious place that is on the up, with examples of innovation and a willingness to embrace change, whilst not forgetting its heritage
- Coventry is a well-run Council, with strong officer and political leadership
- Employees and elected members are passionate and proud about what they do
- The Council should take further steps to improve diversity across the organisation at all levels
- There is recognition that tough times are still ahead, but people are up for the challenge
- There is a need to ensure that the transformation programme is adequately resourced to enable delivery at pace
- The Council should use the established performance framework to drive improvement and bring greater prioritisation and visibility to areas that require improvement
- Partners and residents are eager to step up and become more involved at an earlier and more strategic level
- There is a need to review our external and internal communications and engagement strategy

There are some areas where further work is suggested by the Peer Team. These areas are described in the 'Key recommendations' section of the LGA's feedback report.

Following the Peer Challenge in January, the Council has reflected on the Peer Team's findings in order to determine its response to the recommendations that have been made. The Council response was provided as an appendix to the report (Appendix B). The report indicated that the Council are embracing the opportunity to reflect on this feedback and are committed to making improvements where it can through organisational ownership.

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

- How internal and external communication will be improved within the Council
- Collaborative work between business owners and the Council to improve street pride
- Reassurance that improvements are made in terms of diversity within recruitment processes
- Details of the Transformation Programme and what it means to residents

Following discussion, the Committee highlighted a number of issues to be added to the Committee's Work Programme for 2024/25 and noted that street lighting was included in the relevant Scrutiny Board's Work Programme for 2024/25.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee:-

- 1) Supports the recommendations contained in the report**

- 2) Requests that the Committee receives a further progress update after the LGA's feedback report has been received
- 3) Requests that the following issues be added to the Committee's Work Programme for 2024/25:-
 - Major Cultural Events (Godiva/Motofest etc)
 - Recruitment and Retention
 - CCC Transformation Programme

5. **Scrutiny Annual Report 2023/24**

The Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee received a Briefing Note of the Director of Law and Governance appended to which was the Scrutiny Annual Report 2023/24. The report details highlights from the year, including cross-cutting themes considered by the Committee as well as work undertaken by the individual Scrutiny Boards. The Constitution requires that Scrutiny report annually to inform Council of its work.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee:

- 1) Accepts the content of the draft report at Appendix 1.
- 2) Recommends that Council considers the Scrutiny Annual Report at its meeting on 9 July, 2024.

6. **Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee Work Programme and Outstanding Issues 2024/2025**

The Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee considered their Work Programme for the Municipal Year 2024/25.

Further to Minute 4 above, it was noted that the following items would be added to the Work Programme:-

- Major Cultural Events (Godiva/Motofest etc)
- Recruitment and Retention
- CCC Transformation Programme

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee notes and approves the Work Programme and Outstanding Issues for 2024/25.

7. **Scrutiny Management**

In accordance with the Constitution, the Committee were informed that Councillor N Akhtar, Chair of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee, attended the meeting of Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change on 13 May, 2024 for consideration of an item relating to "Progress House, Westwood Way Westwood Business Park Coventry - Lease Re- gear "

Councillor Akhtar agreed that the decision was urgent and that call in should not apply. In accordance with the Constitution, this matter is reported to inform the Committee of the reason for urgency which is:-

“In order to meet the construction programme and complete the new development for the occupation by students before the commencement of the academic year in September 2026, the legal agreement and commitment were required to be completed by the 20th May 2024. If this timescale is not achieved, then a delay of a further 12 months would be incurred, which would mean that the improved income for the Council is also delayed by a year. “

8. **Any Other Business - Green Group Representation on Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee**

The Committee were informed that, in order to enable and ensure cross party discussion, the Chair of the Committee, Councillor N Akhtar, had extended an invitation for a Member of the Green Group to attend all future meetings of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee as a non-voting Member.

(Meeting closed at 12.15 pm)