
Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources

27 January, 2025

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources – Councillor R Brown

Director approving submission of the report:

Director of Law and Governance

Ward(s) affected:

Citywide

Title: Petitions Relating to the Budget Setting Proposals 2025/26

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive summary:

On 10 December, 2024, Cabinet approved the Pre-Budget Report for 2025/26 which outlined, for consultation, a set of new revenue budget proposals for 2025/26 to 2027/28 which represented changes to the Council's existing Budget. The proposals are subject to a consultation period which ends on 28 January, 2025. The outcome of the consultation process will be included in the final Budget Setting Report for 2025/26, which will be considered by Cabinet and Council at their meetings on 25 February 2025.

Three petitions have been received in relation to the proposals and this report outlines those petitions. In line with the Council's Petition Scheme, the petition organisers/sponsors have been invited to attend the meeting to outline their concerns to the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources is recommended to:

- 1) Note the petitions received and consider any comments and issues raised at the meeting.
- 2) Agree that the petitions and the issues raised be considered as part of the consultation process for the Budget Setting proposals for 2025/26.

List of Appendices included:

None

Background papers:

None

Other useful documents

Pre-Budget Report for 2025/26 – Cabinet, 10 December 2024

Has it or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

The outcome of the consultation on the Budget Setting for 2025/26 will be considered by Cabinet and Council on 25 February 2025

Will this report go to Council?

Yes – 25 February, 2025

Report title: Petitions Relating to the Budget Setting Proposals 2025/26

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 The Council is required to set a balanced budget and this legal duty is balanced with continuing to deliver the key services to residents and businesses in the City.
- 1.2 The Pre-Budget report forecast a shortfall of £14m for 2025/26, rising to c£15m the following year and indicated that this had been brought on by rising demand, underfunding and the tough economic climate, not just in Coventry but across the whole sector. As a result of these pressures, a number of cost-cutting proposals were put forward for residents, colleagues and businesses to comment on. The proposals are subject to a consultation period which ends on 28 January, 2025.
- 1.3 Three petitions have been received, the first in relation to the proposed car parking charges at the War Memorial Park. The proposal is to remove the current 3 hours free parking at the War Memorial Park and standardise parking charges with those at Coombe Country Park, as follows:

Up to 1 hour - £1
1-2 hours - £3
2-4 hours £3.50

- 1.4 The petition currently bears 673 signatures and reads:-

“We the undersigned petition the Council to cancel the proposed increased car parking charges at the War Memorial Park.”

The justification is as follows:-

“Increasing the parking charges at War Memorial Park should be cancelled because it disproportionately affects the most vulnerable members of the community, including families with children and individuals who rely on the park for exercise and well-being. Higher fees will discourage people from visiting the park, leading to reduced physical activity and social interaction, which are crucial for a healthy community. Additionally, the increased charges will cause displacement parking, burdening local residents with congestion and inconvenience. Cancelling the proposed charges will help maintain the park's accessibility and ensure that it remains a welcoming and inclusive space for everyone.”

- 1.5 A second petition, currently bearing 185 signatures, has been received in relation to the proposal to a £690k reduction in the Streetpride (cleansing) service, impacting the City Centre and priority neighbourhoods. The pre-budget report indicates that the “reduction in fly tipping clearance response times could lead to an increase in overall fly-tipping. Response times for graffiti removal and emergency cleansing would also increase”.

The petition reads:-

“We the undersigned petition the Council to abandon its reckless and short-sighted proposal to cut funding for fly-tipping clean-ups in our city. Clean streets are not a privilege - they are a fundamental right for every resident. By cutting this vital service, the Council risks turning our cherished city into a dumping ground. We call on the Council to cut fly-tipping, not the budget because Coventry deserves better.”

The justification for the petition reads:

“Fly tipped waste isn't just unsightly, it's hazardous. It contaminates our soil and water, harms wildlife, and poses serious health risk for residents. Fly-tipping vermin-infested rubbish near our schools and playgrounds. The council might save money now, but the long-term costs of environmental damage, public health and declining property values will be far greater. A clean city attracts businesses, boosts tourism and enhances our quality of life. Don't let Coventry become a dumping ground!!!”

- 1.6 The third petition, which currently bears 68 signatures, has been received in relation to the proposed Adult Social Care - Voluntary Sector Review. The pre-budget report indicates that Grant Aid agreements with 12 voluntary sector organisations end on 31 March 2025. The proposal is to commence a tender against a series of service areas for a total value of half of the current spend of £1.5m.

The petition reads:-

“We the undersigned petition the Council to review its pre-budget proposal to reduce funding to Grapevine by 45%. Grapevine delivers a vital early help service for people with learning disabilities, across Coventry, allowing them to remain independent and preventing the need for Council intervention.

The justification for the petition reads:-

This cut is part of the 50% to the voluntary sector support grant, proposal 25 in the pre budget proposals '25/26”.

- 1.7 Any additional signatures received to the petitions after the publication of this report will be reported orally at the meeting.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 A Budget Setting report is scheduled to be considered by Cabinet and Full Council on 25 February 2025 and the petitions and the issues raised in these petitions and the wider consultation will be taken into account as part of this decision-making. This is the recommended option.
- 2.2 The other option will be to “do nothing” which is not recommended.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

The proposals relating to the Budget Setting report 2025/26 have been the subject of an extensive consultation period that ends on 28 January, 2025. The outcome of the consultation will be included in the final Budget Setting report 2025/26 to be considered by Cabinet and Council on 25 February 2025.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

The Cabinet Member is considering the petitions during the consultation period in order that the issues raised can be fed into the consultation process and considered alongside other responses when Cabinet and Council make their final recommendations on the

Council's budget. Any decisions relating to the Budget Setting report will be implemented in the 2025/26 financial year.

5. Comments from the Director of Finance and Resources and the Director of Law and Governance

5.1. Financial Implications

There are no implications specific to the recommendations in this report. The cost savings identified in the pre-budget report in relation to each of these items per year are as follows:

	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
War Memorial Park – Parking Charges	£150k	£150k	£150k
Reduction in Streetpride budget	£690k	£690k	£690k
Adult Social Care - Voluntary Sector Review	£560k	£750k	£750k

5.2 Legal Implications

The petitions are being considered in line with the Council's Petition Scheme.

The proposals in the final Budget setting report are required to meet the Council's statutory obligations in relation to setting a balanced 2025/26 budget. This includes the duty to report to the Council on the robustness of the estimates provided and the adequacy of the financial reserves in place. Section 31A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 refer.

6. Other implications

6.1. How will this contribute to the One Coventry Plan?

<https://www.coventry.gov.uk/strategies-plans-policies/one-coventry-plan>

Not applicable to this report. The implications of the final recommendations will be contained in the Budget Setting Report 2025-26.

6.2 How is risk being managed?

Not applicable to this report. The implications of the final recommendations will be contained in the Budget Setting Report 2025-26.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

Not applicable to this report. The implications of the final recommendations will be contained in the Budget Setting Report 2025-26.

6.4 Equalities / EIA?

EIAs for all of the proposals contained in the Pre-Budget Report for 2025/26 were referred to in that report and are published on the Council's engagement platform, Let's Talk Coventry. The EIAs for each of the proposals will be updated to include any changes or additional information received as part of the public consultation ahead of the final Budget setting report.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) climate change and the environment?

Not applicable to this report. The implications of the final recommendations will be contained in the Budget Setting Report 2025-26.

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

Not applicable to this report. The implications of the final recommendations will be contained in the Budget Setting Report 2025-26.

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