

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet held at 2.00 pm on Tuesday, 7 January 2025

Present:

Cabinet Members: Councillor G Duggins (Chair)
 Councillor A S Khan (Deputy Chair)
 Councillor N Akhtar
 Councillor K Caan
 Councillor J O'Boyle
 Councillor K Sandhu
 Councillor P Seaman
 Councillor P Hetherton

Non-Voting Deputy Cabinet
Members: Councillor S Agboola
 Councillor P Akhtar
 Councillor S Nazir
 Councillor D Toulson

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

Other Non-Voting Members: Councillor R Lakha
 Councillor G Lloyd
 Councillor C E Thomas

Employees (by Service):

Chief Executive Julie Nugent (Chief Executive)

Childrens Services and
Education S Kinsell

City Services and
Commercial A Walster (Director of City Services and Commercial),
 N Small

Finance and Resources B Hastie (Director of Finance and Resources)

Innovation C Knight (Director of Innovation)

Law and Governance J Newman (Director of Law and Governance), L Knight

Apologies: Councillors R Brown, L Bigham and G Hayre

Public Business

51. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

52. **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2024 were agreed and signed as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

53. **Council Tax Base Setting Report 2025-26**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Finance and Resources (Section 151 Officer), which sought to establish the 2025/26 Council Tax Base for tax setting purposes.

The report indicated that the Council Tax base is the measure of the taxable capacity of an area, for the purpose of calculating an authority's Council Tax. It represents the estimated number of Band D equivalent chargeable dwellings for the year. It also takes into account the authority's estimated Council Tax collection rate.

The report did not set the actual level of Council Tax in Coventry, that would be set by Council on 25th February 2025.

RESOLVED that, the Cabinet:

- 1. Approves that the Council Tax collection rate for 2025/26 be set at 97.6%.**
- 2. That, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 2012, the amounts calculated by the City Council for 2026/26 shall be:**

A net tax base of 90,062.6 for the whole of the City Council area made up as follows:

Allesley Parish	451.3
Finham Parish	1,585.7
Keresley Parish	616.3
All Other Coventry City Council Wards	87,409.3
TOTAL	90,062.6

- 3. That the following grant payments should be made to parish council's to reflect the impact of 2025/26 of Council Tax reductions on their tax bases:**

Allesley Parish	£2,209
Finham Parish	£2,525
Keresley Parish	£1,697
TOTAL	£6,431

54. **Outcomes of the Fair Funding Consultation 2025-26**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Children’s Services and Education, which set out the results of the consultation on proposed changes to the Fair Funding Scheme of Delegation (the Scheme) and sought approval for recommended changes to the Scheme and the Fair Funding Formula.

The report indicated that, under Section 48 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, Local Authorities (LAs) are required to have schemes of delegation which set out the financial controls and arrangements that will operate between schools and the LA. Any proposed revisions to these schemes and / or the Fair Funding Formula must be the subject of consultation and require approval by the Schools Forum.

The Department for Education (DfE) introduced its National Funding Formula (NFF) for LAs in 2018/19, whereby mainstream school allocations for LAs were determined under the NFF approach, but LAs retained control over how they chose to distribute that funding amongst their schools. In Coventry, since 2018/19, has been to mirror the NFF allocation for schools as far as possible. This has provided all schools with annual increase at least in line with the maximum per pupil funding increase set out in the NFF, where this has been affordable. This approach would also minimise funding volatility when local control and flexibility I removed from LAs.

In a standard funding cycle indicative NFF allocations and operational guides are published in July, with final NFF allocations being issued in December. Due to the change in government and the timing of the Chancellor’s budget, LAs were informed that the 2025/26 indicative NFF allocations would not be published in July and, instead, would be delayed until the end of November 2024. To support schools and LAs with financial planning, the DfE published a policy note and in this they announced there would not be any significant changes required to the operation of the local school funding formula for 2025/26 compared to 2024/25.

The Coventry Fair Funding Consultation document was circulated on 7th November 2024 to Head Teachers, including Academy Head Teachers / Principals, Chairs of Governing Bodies, relevant Councillors, Trade Unions, Diocesan authorities, the Coventry Governors Association and members of the School’s Forum. The consultation period ended after 2 weeks on 22nd November 2024.

Stakeholder groups were briefed throughout the consultation period. These included Primary Finance representative head teachers and the School’s Forum. The consultation document also sought to act as an information document to school stakeholders regarding anticipated local budget pressures.

The Cabinet noted that the NFF continued to be in a 'soft' phase. This meant that the DfE would run the NFF for each individual school and the total of Coventry schools' allocations would become a total budget available for schools in Coventry. The LA Is still required to go through the usual budget setting process and run the local schools funding formula for maintained schools and academies to distribute the resource. From 2027/28, it is expected that the DfE will operate a direct NFF, through which it will allocate funding directly to the mainstream schools without LA involvement.

The recommended changes to the Fair Funding Formula and the Fair Funding Scheme of Delegation were summarised in Section 2 of the report. The results of the consultation were set out in Appendix 1 to the report. Appendix 2 gave details of the De-delegation levels for 2024/25, and Appendix 3 to the report provided the Fair Funding Consultation 2025/26.

RESOLVED that, the Cabinet:

- 1. Approves the recommended changes to the Fair Funding Formula and Fair Funding Scheme of Delegation, which are summarised in Section 2 of the report.**
- 2. Delegates authority to the Director of Children's and Education Services, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, to make any necessary amendments to the final detail of these recommended changes, in order to comply with the School Finance (England) Regulations once full detail of the school funding settlement has been published by the Department for Education for 2025/26. Any changes will be made following discussion with the School's Forum as appropriate.**

55. Coventry Very Light Rail (VLR)

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Innovation, which sought approval to let a contract for the construction and operation of a 220m long single-track demonstrator of Coventry's Very Light Rail on Greyfriars Road and Queen Victoria Road.

The report indicated that, following successful development and trials of track and vehicle, Coventry's groundbreaking Very Light Rail is now ready to be tested in an on road live environment. This would be a crucial step in the Council's mission to develop and deliver an affordable tram system with a target cost of £10m/km.

The initial section of track, a 220m track on Greyfriars Road and Queen Victoria Road, would test the track and vehicle in a live setting and is intended to be completed in Spring 2025, with the vehicle in operation for a four-week period. This would provide an opportunity for local people, along with other interested parties, to ride on the vehicle in a controlled environment and provide feedback.

The purpose of the on-street showcase / or demonstrator is to:

- Trial and optimise installation methods on a live road;

- Prove that the track can be installed in significantly less time and at a much-reduced cost compared to conventional tram systems;
- Provide assurance to utility companies that it is possible for their apparatus to remain under the track;
- Monitor and collect data on track performance;
- Stimulate commercial interest.

RESOLVED that, the Cabinet recommend that Council:

- 1. Provide approval to proceed with the installation and operation of the four-week on road test in Greyfriars Road / Queen Victoria Road, which is funded within the existing Coventry Very Light Rail approved budget.**
- 2. Provide approval to proceed with securing the necessary Statutory approvals to construct the on-road test in Greyfriars Road / Queen Victoria Road.**
- 3. Delegate authority to the Director of Law and Governance, the Director of Finance and Resources and the Director of Innovation, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change, to enter into all necessary legal agreements for the on road test in Greyfriars Road / Queen Victoria Road.**
- 4. Delegate authority to the Director of Law and Governance, the Director of Finance and Resources and the Director of Innovation, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change, to agree the award of contract(s) and for the Council to enter into all necessary contracts, including but not limited to construct and operate the on-road test in Greyfriars Road / Queen Victoria Road.**
- 5. Delegate authority to the Director of Law and Governance, the Director of Finance and Resources and the Director of Innovation, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change, to enter into the appropriate lease agreements for associated infrastructure required to deliver and promote the Coventry Very Light Rail system.**

56. Outstanding Issues

There were no outstanding issues.

57. Any Other Items of Urgent Public Business

There were no other items of urgent public business.

(Meeting closed at 2.20 pm)