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## Coventry City Council

### Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities held at 9.30 am on Thursday, 30 January 2025

Present:

Members: Councillor AS Khan (Cabinet Member)  
Councillor P Akhtar (Deputy Cabinet Member)

Non-Voting Opposition Members: Councillor J Lepoidevin (Shadow Cabinet Member)

By Invitation: Councillor K Sandhu

Employees (by Directorate):

Chief Executive M Kumar, J Mann

City Services T Wetherhill

Law and Governance O Aremu, F Cartwright, L Knight

#### **Public Business**

##### **16. Declarations of Interest**

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

##### **17. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2024 were signed as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

##### **18. Petition - Petition Against Proposed Car Park Charges at the War Memorial Park**

The Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities considered a report of the Director of City Services and Commercial, which responded to a petition against proposed car park charges at the War Memorial Park.

The petition contained 27 signatures and was lodged by the Coventry Spires U3A and objected to charges for parking at in the Kenilworth Road car park a the War Memorial Park. In accordance with the City Council's procedure for dealing with petitions, those relating to parks are heard by the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities.

On receipt of the determination letter, the petition organiser requested that the issue be considered at a Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities meeting.

The report indicated that parking charges are necessary to meet the financial demands of maintaining Parks and Openspaces across the City including the War Memorial Park and its associated sites such as Spencer Park, Top Green and Allesley Parks. Over the past 6 years, the council has embarked on a commercialism approach that seeks to maximise the value of every asset that the Council holds, including seeking to generate new revenue for the Council, helping to protect, support and invest in services provided within the Parks and partially mitigates the impact of proposed/potential reductions in revenue for the service.

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. The Pre-Budget report 2024-2025 forecast a £9m shortfall and indicated that this had been brought on by rising demand, underfunding and the difficult 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 were subject to an eight-week consultation period which ended on 7 February 2024.

One such proposal was to remove the current 3 hours free parking at the War Memorial Park and standardise parking charges with those at Coombe Abbey Park, based on 23/24 charges at the time, as follows:

Up to 1 hour	£1.00
1-2 hours	£3.00
2-4 hours	£3.50
Day ticket	£5.00

However, this proposal was rejected, and the three hours period of free parking remains in place. The financial impact of removing all charges for parking would be significant and contra to the city councils One Coventry Plan - enabling priority – Continued financial sustainability of the council. The Cabinet Member noted that the income received in 2023/24 was £54,395 against an income target of £139k as a result of the service not being able to implement the intended charges following budget setting for 24/25 placing further pressure on the Parks and Open Spaces service.

Councillor Dr K Sandhu and the Petition Organiser spoke in support of the petition, highlighting the following points:

- That the Coventry Spires U3A are members of the University of the Third Age and hold group meetings on a regular basis between 10.30am and 12.30pm at the visitor centre in the War Memorial Park.
- The 3 hour parking limit is insufficient for them to enjoy refreshments in the café after the group meetings have concluded.
- There are a number of groups that make use of the education room at the park who will probably have to look elsewhere to hold meetings if the charges are implemented.
- It was unclear whether the £54k had come from the Kenilworth Road car park or the combination of both the Kenilworth Road and the Leamington Road car parks.
- That the loss of £54k is a very small sum against a shortfall of £9m.

- If charges are implemented, people will either not use the park or will park in local streets, destroying the local area.
- If parking is free, more people are likely to visit the park and use the café facilities.
- People want the opportunity to visit the park due to having memorial trees / benches for family members.
- The park should not be compared with Coombe Abbey Park as it is a War Memorial Park.
- The park does not belong to the Council as it was purchased by public donation as a War Memorial and should be treated differently to all other parks.

Officers responded to confirm that the proposals regarding the charges had not been implemented but that the petition refers to removing all charges. The sum of £54k was a total across both car parks, although the majority was from the Kenilworth Road Car Park and that the loss of this income would cause further pressures upon the service. It was also clarified that whilst the park had been purchased through public donations, the Council has the same obligations for maintenance and care at the War Memorial Park as with all other parks in the City.

**RESOLVED that, the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities:**

- 1. Notes the Petitioners' concerns.**
- 2. Endorses the actions which had been agreed to be issued by determination letter to the petition organiser, as detailed in Paragraph 1.0 of the report.**

**19. Annual Compliance Report 2023 - Regulatory & Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) 2000**

The Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities considered a report of the Director of Law and Governance, which outlined the Council's use of the Regulation of Powers Act 2000 (RIPA), which governed the acquisition and disclosure of communications data and the use of covert surveillance by local authorities.

The report indicated that the Council used powers under RIPA to support its core functions for the purpose of prevention and detection of crime where an offence may be punishable by a custodial sentence of 6 months or more or were related to the underage sale of alcohol and tobacco. There were three processes available to local authorities under RIPA: the acquisition of communications data; directed surveillance; and covert human intelligence sources ("CHIS").

The Act set out the procedures that the Council must follow if it wished to use directed surveillance techniques or acquire communications data in order to support core function activities (e.g., typically those undertaken by Trading Standards and Environmental Health). The information obtained as a result of such operations can later be relied upon in court proceedings providing RIPA was complied with.

The Home Office Code for Covert Surveillance and Property Interference recommended that elected members, whilst not involved in making decisions or specific authorisations for the local authority to use its powers under Part II of the Act, should review the Council's use of the legislation and provide approval to its policies. The Council adopted this approach for the oversight of the authority's use of Parts I and II of the Act.

2019 saw the implementation of Part 3 of the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 (IPA). The IPA consolidated all existing powers available to law enforcement and other agencies. The legislation also ensured that the powers conveyed were fit for the fast-moving digital age and introduced the Office for Communications Data Authorisation (OCDA) which is now responsible for independently authorising all applications for communications data. This has removed the requirement for local authorities to seek judicial approval for communications data.

The Cabinet Member noted that, for the period 1st January 2023 to 31st December 2023, no applications were made for either the Use of Directed Surveillance or Covert Human Intelligence sources or the Use of Acquisitions and Disclosure of Communications Data.

The Cabinet Member was advised that the report had also been considered by the Audit and Procurement Committee at their meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2024. Whilst the Committee did not make any recommendations to the Cabinet Member for consideration, they had queried whether RIPA was used for the purposes of surveillance of fly-tipping hotspots. They were advised that, currently, overt surveillance was used in respect to fly-tipping. After further investigations following the meeting, the Committee were provided with a briefing note which confirmed that, where appropriate, the provisions under RIPA could be used in respect of fly-tipping as it carries the relevant custodial sentence required for the use of RIPA.

**RESOLVED that, the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities:**

- 1. Notes the comments made by the Audit and Procurement Committee.**
- 2. Approves the report as a formal record of the Council's use and compliance with RIPA.**

**20. Proposed New Equalities Objectives 2025-28**

The Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities considered a report of the Director of Law and Governance, which set out proposed new equality objectives for 2025-2028.

The Council is required, as a listed public authority, to comply with all elements of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). This duty is comprised of the general duty and specific duties.

The general duty requires the Council to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017 requires the Council to publish equality objectives that it thinks it needs to achieve any of the aims of the general equality duty.

The existing set of 5 equality objectives were set in 2022 for a period of three years and will expire at the end of March 2025.

The report set out the equality objectives for the period 2025-2028 as indicated below:

- Equality Objective 1 – Deliver inclusive services that better meet the needs of our diverse communities through better use of data, including equalities data.
- Equality Objective 2 – Promote integration, remove barriers and improve community cohesion across Coventry through targeted activities that address the diverse needs of our newly arrived communities.
- Equality Objective 3 – To increase year on year the percentage of appointments made to candidates who are either LGBT+, with a Disability or from the Global Majority and reduce the number of leavers from these demographics.
- Equality Objective 4 – To improve outcomes and tackle inequalities within our communities.

The Cabinet Member noted that there had been a period of consultation on the proposed equality objectives from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 29<sup>th</sup> November 2024. Full details on the consultation responses was provided at Appendix 2 of the report. The results of the consultation would be fed into the development of action plans for each equality objective and the issues raised would be address through this approach. It was intended that the proposed new equality objectives would become operational from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025.

**RESOLVED that, the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities approves the formal adoption of the following proposed new equality objectives for the Council for 2025-28:**

**Equality Objective 1: Equality Objective 1 – Deliver inclusive services that better meet the needs of our diverse communities through better use of data, including equalities data.**

**Equality Objective 2: Promote integration, remove barriers and improve community cohesion across Coventry through targeted activities that address the diverse needs of our newly arrived communities.**

**Equality Objective 3: To increase year on year the percentage of appointments made to candidates who are either LGBT+, with a Disability or from the Global Majority and reduce the number of leavers from these demographics.**

**Equality Objective 4: To improve outcomes and tackle inequalities within our communities.**

21. **Outstanding Issues**

There were no outstanding issues.

22. **Any Other Business**

There were no other items of business.

(Meeting closed at 10.10 am)