

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Council held at 2.00 pm on Tuesday, 13 January 2026

Present:

Members: Councillor R Lancaster (Chair)

Councillor S Agboola
Councillor N Akhtar
Councillor M Ali
Councillor R Bailey
Councillor L Bigham
Councillor J Birdi
Councillor J Blundell
Councillor R Brown
Councillor K Caan
Councillor B Christopher
Councillor J Gardiner
Councillor S Gray
Councillor L Harvard
Councillor M Heaven
Councillor P Hetherton
Councillor A Hopkins
Councillor J Innes
Councillor T Jandu
Councillor A Jobbar
Councillor S Jobbar
Councillor A Kaur
Councillor L Kelly
Councillor AS Khan
Councillor T Khan

Councillor R Lakha
Councillor M Lapsa
Councillor G Lewis
Councillor G Lloyd
Councillor P Male
Councillor K Maton
Councillor J McNicholas
Councillor B Mosterman
Councillor M Mutton
Councillor S Nazir
Councillor J O'Boyle
Councillor E M Reeves
Councillor G Ridley
Councillor K Sandhu
Councillor T Sawdon
Councillor P Seaman
Councillor B Singh
Councillor R Singh
Councillor R Thay
Councillor CE Thomas
Councillor D Toulson

Honorary Alderman: D Chater, K Taylor

Apologies: Councillor F Abbott, P Akhtar, G Duggins, G Hayre,
J Lepoidevin, C Miks, E Ruane and A Tucker
Honorary Alderman: J Clifford, H Fitzpatrick and M Hammon

Public Business

66. Minutes of the Meeting held on 2 December 2025

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 2 December 2025 were agreed and signed as a true record.

67. Coventry Good Citizen Award

On behalf of the City Council, the Lord Mayor and Her Honour Judge Montgomery KC, Honorary Recorder, presented Harry Byrne with the Good Citizen Award. His citation read:

“Harry is recognised for outstanding service to young people and the wider community, and for transforming personal adversity into a force for good across our city.

Having faced significant personal challenges, Harry demonstrated extraordinary resilience and an unwavering determination to rebuild his life, transforming adversity into opportunity.

Through his commitment to personal growth and his passion for helping others, he supports young people navigating difficulties across Coventry, using outdoor education and nature-based activities to inspire confidence and hope.

His achievements have been recognised nationally with the King’s Trust Young Achiever Award and the Pride of Britain King’s Trust Young Achiever title in 2025, reflecting the depth of his impact and integrity.

His journey exemplifies courage, leadership, and the power of giving back, making him a true role model for his community and beyond.”

68. **Correspondence and Announcements of the Lord Mayor**

1. Bondi Beach Attack

The Lord Mayor referred to the recent attack on Bondi Beach which tragically killed multiple people and injured many others. The Lord Mayor, on behalf of the City Council, had written to the Mayor of the Local Government area expressing sincere condolences to all those affected and to offer our solidarity at this difficult time.

2. Death of former Councillor and Honorary Alderman John Gazey

The Lord Mayor referred to the recent sad news of the death of Honorary Alderman John Gazey.

John had represented Bablake Ward for a total of 23 years and during his lengthy service he had served on a wide range of Committees. John had also been Lord Mayor of Coventry in 2024-25

On behalf of the Council, a letter of condolence had been sent to John’s family expressing our thoughts and best wishes at this sad time.

3. Death of former Councillor, Gillian Darby

The Lord Mayor referred to the recent sad news of the death of former Councillor, Gillian Darby who had represented Whoberley Ward from 1996-2000. During her time as a Councillor, Gillian served on a number of Committees and had been Chair of the Arts and Culture Policy Team.

In respect of items 2 and 3 above, the Council observed a Minute’s silence as a mark of respect for John and Gillian.

4. New Year's Honours 2026

The Lord Mayor referred to the following people who were linked to Coventry and were recognised in the recent New Years Honors list:

- Rebecca Bollands, Headteacher of Earlsdon Primary School was awarded an MBE for services to Cultural Education in the West Midlands.
- Professor Jacquelyn Dunne, Vice-Chancellor of Birmingham Newman University was awarded an MBE for services to Higher Education.
- Amanda King, Early Years Strategic Lead, Warwickshire County Council and Coventry City Council was awarded an MBE for services to Early Years Education.
- Clare Sawdon JP, DL, Magistrate and Chair of the Coventry and Warwickshire Bench, was awarded an MBE for services to Justice.
- Sandra Crowder, Foster Carer was awarded a BEM for services to Adoption and Foster Care
- Amy and Ryan Jackson, Co-Founders and Operations Manager and Managing Director respectively of The Lily Mae Foundation were awarded a BEM for services to Bereaved Parents.
- Colin Wells, Ambulance Support Volunteer, West Midlands, British Red Cross was awarded a BEM for Voluntary Services.

The Lord Mayor and Members congratulated all recipients on their awards.

69. Petitions

RESOLVED that the following petitions be referred to the appropriate Cabinet Member/City Council body/external organisation:

1. **Request for a solution to the ongoing flooding in the walkway between Torrington Avenue and Papenham Green – 31 signatures, presented by Councillor M Lapsa.**
2. **Request to deal with fly tipping in Lower Stoke – 19 signatures, presented by Councillor J McNicholas.**

70. Declarations of Interest

Councillor R Bailey declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in the matter referred to in Minute 75 (Debate – Regional Tourist Tax). He withdrew from the meeting during consideration of that item.

71. Coventry Very Light Rail

Further to Minute 46 of the Cabinet, the City Council considered a report of the Director of Innovation, on the Coventry Very Light Rail research and development project.

The Coventry Very Light Rail (CVLR) demonstration in the city centre during Summer 2025 was a major success. The mission was to create a tram system that could be installed quickly and at less than half the cost of conventional tram systems: the ground-breaking track was installed in just over eight-weeks and proved that the Council were on target to achieve the target installation cost of circa £10m/km.

The purpose of the report was to seek approval for the construction of an 800m twin track City Centre Demonstrator (CCD) that would operate in a live traffic environment from Coventry Railway Station to Coventry University Technology Park (see Appendix 1 to the report for the route plan). The demonstration phase built on everything learned in the summer and would help to lay the foundations for the first commercial route by:

1. Operating the CVLR vehicle with live traffic – including the installation of an autonomous ready vehicle control system integrated with the city's traffic signal control system.
2. Providing rides for the public and stakeholders to demonstrate how the vehicle has evolved since the On Road Test (ORT) in June 2025 and to take feedback on the system.
3. Demonstrating at scale, using the learnings from the ORT, the speed of installation and affordability of the CVLR track.
4. Expediting the design and delivery process.
5. Utilising learning to inform the business case and design of Coventry's first commercial route and, more widely, to continue to stimulate national and global commercial interest.

Details of the 800m route were set out in the report.

The following amendment was moved by Councillor J Blundell, seconded by Councillor T Sawdon and, in accordance with paragraph 15.1.7 of the Constitution, accepted by Councillor J O'Boyle, thus becoming the substantive Motion:

“That the Recommendations as set out as Item 7 on the agenda relating to Coventry Very Light Rail be amended as follows:

That after the words “Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change” in Recommendations 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7, the following additional words be inserted:

“and the Main Opposition Group Shadow Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change”

The amended Recommendations as set out below were agreed:

RESOLVED that the City Council approves:

- 1) The installation of the CVLR slab track and a short period of operation, of the City Centre Demonstrator (CCD) from Coventry Railway Station to Coventry University Technology Park in a live traffic environment will follow the release of the next phase of approved funding by the DfT.
- 2) To delegate authority to the Director of Innovation, following consultation with the Director of Law and Governance, the Director of Finance and Resources, the Director of Regeneration and Economy, and Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change and the Main Opposition Group Shadow Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change, to operate CVLR in a live traffic environment subject to risks being appropriately mitigated.
- 3) To delegate authority to the Director of Innovation to secure the necessary Statutory approvals to construct CCD.
- 4) To delegate authority to the Director of Innovation, following consultation with the Director of Law and Governance, the Director of Finance and Resources, the Director of Regeneration and Economy, and Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change and the Main Opposition Group Shadow Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change, to enter into all necessary legal agreements for the CCD.
- 5) To delegate authority to the Director of Innovation, following consultation with the Director of Law and Governance, the Director of Finance and Resources, Director of Regeneration and Economy and Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change , and the Main Opposition Group Shadow 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 constructing and operating the CCD.
- 6) To delegate authority to the Director of Innovation, following consultation with the Director of Law and Governance, the Director of Finance and Resources, the Director of Regeneration and Economy, and Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change and the Main Opposition Group Shadow Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change, to enter into the appropriate lease agreements for associated infrastructure required to deliver a modified, enhanced CVLR system and its potential to facilitate the construction of conventional tramways to prove out the advanced slab track capabilities.
- 7) To delegate authority to the Director of Innovation, following consultation with the Director of Law and Governance, the Director of Finance and Resources, the Director of Regeneration and Economy, and Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change and the Main Opposition Group Shadow Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change, to, subject to the necessary

funding being secured, initiate the business case work for a commercial route in Coventry.

72. **Brandon Wood Nature Reserve**

Further to Minute 54 of Cabinet, the City Council considered a report of the Director of the Director of Regeneration and Economy which sought approval for the in-principal change of use of Brandon Wood Golf Course to a nature reserve and a registered Biodiversity Net Gain habitat bank. Appendices to the report provided: a Site Plan; a Landscape wide plan; and Proposed Interventions.

Coventry City Council had a unique opportunity to repurpose the former Brandon Wood Golf Course as a nature reserve, creating rich habitats to support wildlife and developing a new visitor destination for people to enjoy. The UK was one of the most nature depleted nations in the world, with one in six species at risk of extinction. The Council made a commitment in the Climate Change Strategy (2024-2030) to take action to support nature recovery, and this site presented a significant opportunity to do this at scale. The former golf course is 64ha, which meant it would be able to support a huge variety of habitats through the creation of wetlands, grassland and shrub. A much bigger opportunity was also unlocked as it would join up a number of parcels of land already being managed for nature covering 356ha in total (see plans in Appendix 1-3 to the report). Together this would create the biggest area of land managed for nature anywhere in the West Midlands, and at 6km from the city centre, it would be the closest nature reserve of this scale to a city centre in England.

The golf course was closed to the public in 2020, and a number of options had been assessed to identify the most appropriate future use of the site. The golf course was managed by Coventry Sports Trust, but the site was prone to regular flooding which limited the accessibility of part of the site. It had now been deemed financially unviable to continue as a golf course. In 2024 Defra introduced a new mechanism whereby new developments were required to offset any biodiversity loss through the purchase of 'Biodiversity Net Gain' (BNG) units, which provided a significant new income stream for creating and maintaining areas for nature conservation for 30 years. The business case for the new nature reserve was based on a sustainable finance model whereby up to 304 BNG units were created that would generate income to cover costs of creating and managing the nature reserve, with no Council funding required. Further details on the BNG were set out in the report.

RESOLVED that the City Council:

- 1) Approves the in principal change of use of Brandon Wood Golf Course to a nature reserve and a registered Biodiversity Net Gain habitat bank, including demolition of the former golf club house subject to a formal planning process via Rugby Borough Council to deliver proposed changes to the Site (as shown in Appendix 1 and 3 to the report) and land appropriation within the Council between service areas.**
- 2) Delegates authority to the Director of Regeneration and Economic Development, following consultation with the Director of Property Services and Development, the Director of Finance and Resources (s151**

Officer), the Director of Law and Governance, and the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change to:

- 2a) Enter into the appropriate legal agreements (including but not limited to a property transaction) and to make necessary variations from time to time between the Council and Warwickshire Wildlife Trust Group for up to thirty years for the Site.
- 2b) Undertake all necessary due diligence including the investment strategy and subsequent phasing of the project and enter into necessary legal agreements (and make necessary variations from time to time) to maximise Biodiversity Net Gain Units for the whole Site up to £8m.
- 2c) Enter into appropriate legal agreements to enable the Council to join the Nature Capital Investment Strategy partnership with Warwickshire County Council and Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, including acceptance of funding to support delivery of BNG on the Site if this becomes available through the partnership, subject to formal governance processes.
- 2d) Accept up to £2m in the sale of BNG units to deliver the initial phase of delivery of the Site.
- 2e) Approve the addition of up to £1.4 million for the purposes of delivering the Project (subject to the financial mitigations set out in the financial implications).

- 3) Approves that all Biodiversity Net Gain income from the Site is ringfenced and reinvested in biodiversity and enabling activities.

73. Question Time

Councillors N Akhtar, AS Khan, J O'Boyle and P Seaman provided written answers to the questions set out in the Questions Booklet, together with oral responses to supplementary questions at the meeting. The following Members answered oral questions put to them by other Members as set out below, together with supplementary questions on the same matters:

| | Questions asked by | Question put to | Subject matter |
|---|---------------------------|---|---|
| 1 | Councillor M Lapsa | Cllr J McNicholas (in the absence of Cllr P Akhtar) | This Council's representations to the consultation on the new Bus on Demand service (formerly Ring & Ride) and the introduction of the new 5-mile radius limit. |
| 2 | Councillor G Lewis | Councillor B Singh | West Midlands Pension Fund – steps taken since the submission of a petition regarding divestment. |
| 3 | Councillor G Ridley | Councillor AS Khan | Police and Crime Commissioner report on budget shortfall and |

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|---|-----------------------|------------------------|--|
| | | | potential cuts. |
| 4 | Councillor J Gardiner | Councillor AS Khan | Whether there was a response from this Council to the WMPCC following the banning of Maccabi Tel Aviv fans from the match with Aston Villa in November 2025. |
| 5 | Councillor T Jandu | Councillor P Hetherton | Graffiti in the city. |
| 6 | Councillor M Lapsa | Councillor P Hetherton | Ongoing yellow line breaches in the Beechtree Avenue area. |
| 7 | Councillor J Gardiner | Councillor AS Khan | The recent announcement about increased police funding and the share allocated to Coventry and the wider West Midlands. |

74. **Statement**

The Cabinet Member for City Services, Councillor P Hetherton, made a Statement on the recent announcement by the Department for Transport that this Council had been awarded a green rating for its approach to tackling potholes. The rating reflected Coventry's strong performance in road condition, capital investment and best practice.

Councillor M Heaven, on behalf of the Conservative Group, responded to the Statement.

Councillor E Reeves, Leader of the Green and Independent Alliance Group, responded to the Statement.

Councillor M Lapsa, on behalf of the Reform UK Group, responded to the Statement.

The Cabinet Member for City Services made a short reply.

75. **Debate - Regional Tourist Tax**

The following Motion was moved by Councillor G Ridley and seconded by Councillor M Heaven:

"This Council notes the Government's proposal to allow regional mayors to levy a tourist tax and expresses its serious concern regarding the negative impact this could have on Coventry's visitor economy. In particular, the impact on key local assets such as Coombe Abbey Hotel and heritage attractions like St Mary's Guildhall.

This Council resolves to make immediate, strong representations to the West Midlands Combined Authority and His Majesty's Government, firmly opposing the implementation of a tourist tax within the City of Coventry."

The following amendment was moved by Councillor J O'Boyle, seconded by Councillor R Singh and carried:

After the words "This Council notes the Government" delete the remainder of the first paragraph and replace with the following:

1.has launched a consultation on the design of a new Mayoral power to introduce a visitor levy on paid overnight stays in England, and that this is not currently a power for English councils or Mayors.
2. The proposals are for a discretionary levy, with Government explicitly stating that no Mayor would be compelled to introduce it.
3. The Mayor has given no indication that he intends to implement such a power.
4. The Mayor is a member of the Government's Visitor Economy Advisory Council which is a joint industry and government-led board composed of employers, small businesses and representative organisations from across the visitor economy.
5. The consultation proposes that any future levy would require a published prospectus, a formal public consultation including accommodation providers and visitor economy stakeholders and a minimum of twelve months' notice before introduction.
6. Primary legislation would be required before any levy could be introduced, meaning implementation is not imminent and would be 2028 or later, after the next Mayoral election.

This Council further notes that the Conservative Motion mischaracterises these proposals as an immediate "tourist tax" and seeks to manufacture alarm for Coventry businesses without acknowledging the consultation, safeguards, notice period, or the fact that no decision can be taken now.

After the words "This Council resolves to", delete the remainder of the paragraph and replace with the following:

- a) Respond constructively to the Government consultation, setting out Coventry's interests and evidence on impacts, including on major employers and visitor assets such as Coombe Abbey and St Mary's Guildhall, and the conditions necessary to protect competitiveness.
- b) Call on the West Midlands Combined Authority and the Mayor to continue to engage transparently with the hospitality and visitor economy, making clear that any future consultation response will be co-designed with the sector. And focused on improving the visitor experience and the city's attractiveness.
- c) Oppose irresponsible scaremongering that risks damaging Coventry's reputation as a welcoming destination, and instead back a grown-up approach: evidence-led policy, proper consultation, and local democratic accountability.

The amended Motion now to read:

This Council notes that:

1. The Government has launched a consultation on the design of a new Mayoral power to introduce a visitor levy on paid overnight stays in England, and that this is not currently a power for English councils or Mayors.
2. The proposals are for a discretionary levy, with Government explicitly stating that no Mayor would be compelled to introduce it.
3. The Mayor has given no indication that he intends to implement such a power.
4. The Mayor is a member of the Government's Visitor Economy Advisory Council which is a joint industry and government-led board composed of employers, small businesses and representative organisations from across the visitor economy.
5. The consultation proposes that any future levy would require a published prospectus, a formal public consultation including accommodation providers and visitor economy stakeholders and a minimum of twelve months' notice before introduction.
6. Primary legislation would be required before any levy could be introduced, meaning implementation is not imminent and would be 2028 or later, after the next Mayoral election.

This Council further notes that the Conservative Motion mischaracterises these proposals as an immediate “tourist tax” and seeks to manufacture alarm for Coventry businesses without acknowledging the consultation, safeguards, notice period, or the fact that no decision can be taken now.

This Council resolves to:

- a) Respond constructively to the Government consultation, setting out Coventry's interests and evidence on impacts, including on major employers and visitor assets such as Coombe Abbey and St Mary's Guildhall, and the conditions necessary to protect competitiveness.
- b) Call on the West Midlands Combined Authority and the Mayor to continue to engage transparently with the hospitality and visitor economy, making clear that any future consultation response will be co-designed with the sector. And focused on improving the visitor experience and the city's attractiveness.
- c) Oppose irresponsible scaremongering that risks damaging Coventry's reputation as a welcoming destination, and instead back a grown-up approach: evidence-led policy, proper consultation, and local democratic accountability.

RESOLVED that the amended Motion, as set out above in bold, be adopted.

(Note: Councillor R Bailey, having declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in the Minute above, left the meeting for the duration of the item)

76. **Debate - Right to Trial by Jury**

The following Motion was moved by Councillor J Gardiner and seconded by Councillor M Lapsa:

“This Council values the British constitutional right for Coventry Citizens to be subject to justice as administered by a jury of their peers and calls upon the government to abandon plans to permanently further restrict the right to trial by jury.”

The following amendment was moved by Councillor CE Thomas, seconded by Councillor A Jobbar and carried:

After the words “This Council ” delete the rest of the Motion and replace with the following:

..strongly reaffirms its commitment to access to justice, fairness, and public confidence in the justice system. The Council recognises the historic importance of trial by jury and is clear that serious and complex cases will continue to be heard by a jury. The Council supports the Labour Government’s decisive action to tackle unacceptable court backlogs, speed up justice for victims and defendants, and ensure the justice system works efficiently and fairly. The Council therefore endorses proportionate and evidence-based reforms that protect fundamental rights while strengthening the capacity of the courts to deliver timely justice.”

The Motion now to read:

“This Council strongly reaffirms its commitment to access to justice, fairness, and public confidence in the justice system. The Council recognises the historic importance of trial by jury and is clear that serious and complex cases will continue to be heard by a jury. The Council supports the Labour Government’s decisive action to tackle unacceptable court backlogs, speed up justice for victims and defendants, and ensure the justice system works efficiently and fairly. The Council therefore endorses proportionate and evidence-based reforms that protect fundamental rights while strengthening the capacity of the courts to deliver timely justice.”

RESOLVED that the amended Motion as set out above in bold, be adopted.

77. Debate - Decisions to Lift the Two-Child Benefit Cap and Reinstate the Winter Fuel Allowance

The following Motion was moved by Councillor S Agboola and seconded by Councillor P Seaman:

This Council notes.

- The Government’s decision to lift the two-child benefit cap, which will provide fairer support for families and improve outcomes for children across Coventry.
- The reinstatement of the Winter Fuel Allowance, which will offer crucial assistance to older residents and help reduce fuel poverty.

This Council believes:

- These decisions represent an important step towards tackling child poverty, supporting family wellbeing, and protecting vulnerable pensioners.
- Local authorities play a key role in working with government to ensure residents can access the support they are entitled to.

This Council resolves:

- To welcome and endorse the Government's actions as positive measures that will improve the lives of Coventry residents.

RESOLVED that the Motion as set out above be adopted.

78. **Debate - Explore the Adoption of 4-Day Week**

The following Motion was moved by Councillor G Lewis and seconded by Councillor E Reeves:

This council notes:

1. The growing evidence from both public and private sector organizations that suggests that a 4-day working week can deliver significant benefits, including:
 - Improved staff wellbeing and health
 - Enhanced recruitment and retention
 - Maintained or improved productivity and efficiency
 - Reduction of spending on agency staff
2. The example of South Cambridge District Council where core services - including household waste collection, and planning - were maintained or improved, while applications for vacancies rose 120%, staff turnover fell by 40%, resident's services weren't compromised, and annual savings of £370,000 were reported.
3. That Coventry has employed the use of a 4-day week in waste services

This council believes:

1. The recent letter from Labour's Local Government Secretary Steve Reed discouraging councils from adopting 4-day week models is concerning, noting that such a position may limit Coventry's ability to attract and retain skilled staff, reduce agency spend, and position it as a forward thinking employer, thereby impacting the council's reputation.
2. Decisions about the working hours and schedule of Council staff should be made by the council on the basis of the requirements of the job, the services residents receive, and the welfare of our employees.

This council resolves:

1. To explore the possibility of a council wide adoption for a 4-day week model, starting with identifying specific departments who would most benefit
2. Engage with council staff to identify how a 4-day week could be implemented without disrupting services, or reducing resident satisfaction (i.e. staggering schedules)

3. Outline a timeline for any pilot and any subsequent implementation
4. Pilot, monitor and report outcomes - including using metrics of staff wellbeing, productivity, service delivery for residents, reduction of agency costs, recruitment, and retention in any trials which take place
5. To reply to Steve Reed advocating for more flexible and innovative approaches to local government employment practices, identifying successes from other public sector organisations and our own use of a 4-day week schedule.

RESOLVED that the Motion as set out above be not adopted.

(Meeting closed at 5.58 pm)