

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change held at 2.00 pm on Thursday, 19 March 2026

Present:

Members: Councillor J O'Boyle (Cabinet Member)

Employees (by Directorate):

Law, Governance and Safer Communities S Bennett, J Redfern

Regeneration and Economy R Palmer

Apologies: Councillor J Blundell (Shadow Cabinet Member)

Public Business

24. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

25. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 December, 2025 were agreed and signed as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

26. Community Growing Sites in Coventry

The Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change considered a report of the Director of Regeneration and Economy which indicated that one of the initiatives within Coventry's Climate Change Action Plan is the development of a network of community growing sites across the city for residents to help create and enjoy. The report sought approval to bringing forward opportunities for residents to utilise Council-owned land which is disused or underutilised for community gardening sites, to support food growing and wildlife which will bring significant benefits for communities including:

- Health and wellbeing: encouraging physical activity in fresh air, improved wellbeing by spending more time in green space, increasing locally grown fruit and vegetable consumption
- Social cohesion and community: fostering stronger relationships within communities
- Environmental: increasing and enhancing local green spaces and biodiversity in areas of green space deprivation, improving air quality

- Climate resilience: producing locally grown food for communities to help increase food security, which is a significant climate related risk for UK cities
- Education and skills: this provides an opportunity for residents to learn new skills about creating sustainable growing spaces, horticulture, composting and caring for wildlife.
- Pride of place: this will help to engender pride of place

Nationally, there is a campaign for government to adopt the principle of a 'Right to Grow' across the UK due to the benefits for people and wildlife. In Coventry this has already started through the 'Coventry Grows', a project which started in 2024 through the City's Climate Change Board to develop a number of pilot community growing sites in some of the city's most green-deprived areas, backed by funding from E.ON through the City's Strategic Energy Partnership.

The pilot projects have seen the first site established in Stoke at Heath Road, with further sites being developed in Hillfields, Foleshill and Tile Hill and 58 community volunteers involved to date. The projects have been led by the Council, with support from Grapevine to bring new community growing groups together and Garden Organic to provide training to residents, with gardening novices very much encouraged to get involved. The pilot projects have benefitted from funding to support site set up, tools, equipment and seeds. It is proposed to extend this opportunity to communities across the City who are interested in setting up community growing areas in their neighbourhood, through offering Council-owned underused land.

This could include planting areas of mown grass on streets, taking on larger plots of land for food growing and nature gardens, using Council-owned planters, as well as potentially planting orchards and hedgerows in some of our parks and open spaces. A policy and process will be in place to provide guidance and support communities to ensure what is planted is appropriate for the location, which will include consultation with nearby residents.

The report indicated that Council has worked with the Coventry Food Network in securing the national recognition to obtain the status as a 'Sustainable Food Place'. This recognises the City's partnership making healthy and sustainable food a defining characteristic of where people live, which includes building public awareness, active food citizenship and local good food movement, with health food for all. Expanding community growing sites across the city will help to support this and help benefit communities if produce can be distributed via the Food Network and local networks where this is a surplus.

The report concluded that the proposal is a brilliant opportunity to help tackle inequalities in accessing green space across the City and provides a new opportunity to bring different people and communities together. This could link in well with local schools and existing voluntary groups, as well as provide opportunities for new groups to come together and encourage more diversity and inclusion in community growing initiatives.

The Council's Green Skills Strategy identifies nature conservation, and land-based skills including horticulture as areas that need to be strengthened. This initiative will help support this, helping to provide more practical opportunities for residents

to develop and maintain growing spaces. Programmes such as Coventry's Nature Towns and Cities Green for All will provide resources to support residents with training and skills from organisations including Garden Organic and Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, alongside the opportunity for groups to learn from more experienced gardeners in their areas.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change:

- (1) Approves the principle of community growing to be permitted on Council-owned land which is disused or underused across the City.**
- (2) Delegates authority to the Director of Economic Growth following consultation with the Director of Law, Governance and Safer Communities, the Director of Finance and Resources, the Director of Property Services and Development, the Director of City Services and the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change to develop a policy, procedure and process for the use of Council owned land for Community Growing Sites.**
- (3) Notes the commitment for £0.1m annually to support the community growing initiative as outlined in the 2026/27 Budget Setting Report.**
- (4) Agrees that that Community Growing Sites is added to the Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4) Work Programme to provide a progress report 1 year after implementation, as recommended by Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee.**
- (5) Delegates authority to the Director of Economic Growth, following consultation with the Director of Law, Governance and Safer Communities to complete the necessary legal documentation with successful applicants for the community growing sites**

27. Any Other Items of Urgent Public Business

There are no other items of urgent public business.

(Meeting closed at 2.10pm)