
Council Meeting

21 March 2023

Booklet 1

Answers to Written Questions

1.	<p>QUESTION SUBMITTED BY: Cllr M Lapsa</p> <p>TO BE ANSWERED BY: Councillor AS Khan, Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities</p>
<p>TEXT OF QUESTION:</p> <p>“At a meeting some time ago the deputy leader informed the chamber that he was looking at another permanent traveller site. He mentioned he was looking at various sites in Westwood as well as other wards. Please would the Deputy Leader supply the chamber with the list of possible sites that have been looked at in Westwood as well as other wards?”</p> <p>ANSWER:</p> <p>“The Council is in the process of renovating the permanent traveller site at Siskin Drive. When completed this will provide accommodation for 12 caravans and its design will be in accordance with national guidance. There are presently no plans to create any further permanent traveller sites in the city.</p> <p>It is true to say that the Council did consider the provision of a traveller transit site within the city boundaries and a range of sites across the city were considered. However, at this moment in time, there are no plans to create such a site within Coventry.</p> <p>Coventry has a duty under planning policy legislation to consider housing need in the city in its widest sense. Any decisions in this arena will be made as part of that process”.</p>	

2.	<p>QUESTION SUBMITTED BY: Cllr J Lepoidevin</p> <p>TO BE ANSWERED BY: Councillor P Seaman, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People</p>
<p>TEXT OF QUESTION:</p> <p>“Would the Cabinet Member agree with me that the supporting families grant of 10.86M for targeted early years work has led to positive outcomes for 1566 families”?</p> <p>Would the Cabinet Member agree with me that the Start 4 Life funding of 4.1M will improve support for families between pregnancy and age 2? The Best Start Vision that is a critical focus on the first 1001 days will support preschool children and families?”</p>	

ANSWER:

“Over the last three years of the Supporting Families Programme successful claims have been submitted for 1572 families- this is 100% of the claim target given for the last 3 years (529, 552, 485). Over this period the local authority has received £3,739,200.

This funding is given in two parts some upfront at the beginning of the financial year and some as a payment by results funding stream each quarter when claims are submitted. Therefore of the £3,739,200 total funding £1,202,800 relates to payment by results funding for successful family outcomes.

The remaining funding is given to support the development of the Early Help Model and partnership in the city and drive practice improvement and data maturity.

Prior to 2020/21 the programme had a 5 year target of 3160 families (total for 5 years) between 2015- 2020. Coventry achieved just over a 3rd of this target over this period and were on a recovery plan with the then Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government.

The curve turned in 2020 and since Coventry has been able to demonstrate the impact it has on children and families in the city and achieve the sign up commitments of the programme for 3 consecutive years.

Coventry has been awarded £4.3 million for the Family Hub and start for Life programme (2022-2025) and this investment will be used to enhance and extend the support for families between pregnancy and age 2. We welcome the Best Start Vision in supporting the critical focus on the first 1001 days to support preschool children and families”.

3.

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY: Cllr J Lepoidevin

TO BE ANSWERED BY: Councillor R Brown, Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources

TEXT OF QUESTION:

“The 2019/20 accounts that have not been signed off by our auditor’s due to valuation issues. Could the cabinet member provide this council with details of significant discrepancies between the auditors and officers valuation of assets?”.

ANSWER:

“At its meeting on 30th January the Audit and Procurement Committee received a verbal update from the Council’s External Auditor, Grant Thornton, on the position in relation to the submission of the end of year accounts for 2019/20 which have been subject to significant delay. The Committee were provided

with a reminder of the circumstances which had resulted in the delay that had previously been reported to the Committee plus the details of the work that had been undertaken to address the fundamental issues identified to enable the outstanding accounts to be finalised at the earliest opportunity.

Whilst the issues identified had resulted in significant amounts of additional work to ensure that they were appropriately recorded within the statement of accounts the Committee were advised that these were of a technical nature. They would not have changed any decisions that the Council had already made and the Council's fundamental financial position has not been altered by any of the technical changes outlined. These changes included updates in relation to asset valuation, are currently subject to finalisation and will be set out in the forthcoming Audit Findings Report to be brought to Audit and Procurement Committee in the near future. The delay was also in part the result of a national issue relating to the valuation of highways infrastructure assets, one which affected many authorities across the country and was only resolved in January 2023.

It is worth noting that financial reporting delays have affected a large number of councils in recent years and are overwhelmingly the result of systemic weaknesses in the national audit model, a fact recognised by the Government's recent moves to overhaul the system. The issue of property valuations is one that has been an area of challenge at many councils and is far from unique to Coventry. Further, the Redmond Review into local audit highlighted the view that that the extent and nature of asset valuations, very relevant in a commercial setting, have limited significance in local government where assets are more often than not critical to service delivery and "market value" is not a consideration.

In its most recent annual report Grant Thornton reported that the Council continues to perform well with regard to financial sustainability, with a record of stable financial and budgetary management and that the Council has demonstrated a good understanding of its role in securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. The Council's Grant Thornton Audit Partner has reassured the Audit and Procurement Committee on several occasions over this period that he views the Council as being a financially well-run Council. The time consuming and frustrating process to finalise technical entries in the accounts do not detract from the Council's continued good financial performance".

4.

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY: Cllr P Male

**TO BE ANSWERED BY: Councillor J McNicholas, Lead Member,
Birmingham International Airport Holdings Ltd**

TEXT OF QUESTION:

"Can the Council representative for Birmingham Airport confirm the details of pay increases received by the CEO in the period from the start of the pandemic to present?"

ANSWER:

“Executive remuneration is determined by a Remuneration Committee established by the Board and made up of non- executive Directors. The Remuneration Committee independently considers relevant market comparators that are required to attract and retain high calibre people. The remuneration structure is made up of salary and incentive schemes related to individual performance and behaviours which support the delivery of the Airport’s strategy and performance. No individual executive is involved in deliberations in relation to their own remuneration”.

5.

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY: Cllr P Male

TO BE ANSWERED BY: Councillor J O’Boyle, Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change and Cllr Welsh, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities

TEXT OF QUESTION:

“Following comments made by the Cabinet Member, about the Priory Visitor Centre, at the last Full Council meeting, could the current status of the Centre be clarified?”

ANSWER:

“The situation remains as it was in February - Coventry University Students’ Union (CUSU) is the key-holding tenant, and they have full, open access to the facility. They started to move in during December last year.

CUSU will be using the venue for their own training events and advise that they will be publicising availability of the Centre for use by community partners in due course”.