

Petitions Relating to the Budget Setting Proposals 2024/25

On 5th February 2024, the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources heard three petitions that had been submitted in relation to the budget setting proposals for 2024/25 to 2026/27. In line with the Council's Petition Scheme, the Petition Organisers and Councillor Sponsor had been invited to attend the meeting to outline their concerns to the Cabinet Member. The comments and issues raised would be considered as part of the consultation process for the Budget Setting proposals for 2024/25 which would be considered by Cabinet and Council at their meetings on 20th February 2024.

A petition had been submitted headed 'Memorial Park Free Parking', bearing 3307 signatures, relating to the proposal to remove the current 3 hours free parking at the War Memorial Park and to standardise parking charges with those at Coombe Abbey Park.

The issues raised were summarised as follows:

- Parents used the War Memorial Park car park to park their cars to walk children to and from Styvechale Primary School.
- The proposed charges would result in additional parking pressures on nearby roads and the café in the park would attract less patronage if people changed their parking habits.
- It was likely that the proposed car parking charges would not achieve the income target of £150k.
- Additional monies had recently been received from Government and those, along with the surplus from the budget proposals, would allow a balanced budget without the inclusion of the proposed parking charges at the park.
- The charges could have an adverse impact on the Earlsdon Liveable Neighbourhood Scheme proposals, due to the likelihood of more cars being parked in nearby streets.
- The proposals did not fit with the promotion of healthier living as part of the One Coventry Plan, if the charges deterred people from using the park.
- The War Memorial Park should not be compared to Coombe Abbey Park as the parks were used for different purposes.

Two petitions had been submitted in relation to the proposal to remove funding that subsidised the provision of non-statutory school transport, affecting 5 dedicated school routes to Bishop Ullathorne Secondary school and an extension to a public transport route serving Blue Coat Secondary school, affecting approximately 400 pupils. The Council had provided funding to subsidise these routes following a commercial provider ceasing to operate during the pandemic in 2020. The Council would continue to provide bus passes for children entitled to statutory support for home to school transport to enable them to utilise the public transport network.

The first petition was headed 'Save Our Buses' and contained 538 signatures.

The second petition was headed 'Removal of Funding Subsidy to Faith School Bus Routes' and contained 250 signatures.

The issues raised were:

- Public transport buses were already full to capacity.
- More buses were needed to ensure all children could be accommodated.
- If the funding was removed and the school buses were stopped, children would not be able to get home safely and reliably.
- Petition organisers had contacted the Mayor for the West Midlands and Transport for West Midlands about the issue but had received little or no response.
- The need for pupils to travel to and from school safely and reliably has not gone away since the pandemic.
- Traffic volumes, due to parents using cars for school drop-offs and pick-ups, would increase and the impact on the environment and the air quality would decrease.
- It was necessary to arrange an additional bus service using the same route with an appropriate provider.
- It was suggested that the City Council, Transport for West Midlands, and the school should work together to find a solution for the future.