

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Council held at 2.00 pm on Tuesday, 3 September 2024

Present:

Members: Councillor M Mutton (Chair)

Councillor F Abbott	Councillor R Lakha
Councillor S Agboola	Councillor R Lancaster
Councillor N Akhtar	Councillor M Lapsa
Councillor P Akhtar	Councillor J Lepoidevin
Councillor M Ali	Councillor G Lewis
Councillor R Bailey	Councillor G Lloyd
Councillor L Bigham	Councillor P Male
Councillor J Birdi	Councillor K Maton
Councillor J Blundell	Councillor J McNicholas
Councillor R Brown	Councillor C Miks
Councillor K Caan	Councillor B Mosterman
Councillor B Christopher	Councillor S Nazir
Councillor G Duggins	Councillor J O'Boyle
Councillor J Gardiner	Councillor E M Reeves
Councillor S Gray	Councillor G Ridley
Councillor L Harvard	Councillor E Ruane
Councillor G Hayre	Councillor P Seaman
Councillor A Hopkins	Councillor R Singh
Councillor T Jandu	Councillor R Thay
Councillor A Jobbar	Councillor CE Thomas
Councillor A Kaur	Councillor D Toulson
Councillor L Kelly	Councillor A Tucker
Councillor T Khan	
Councillor AS Khan	

Honorary Alderman J Clifford, M Hammon and D Skinner

Apologies: Councillor M Heaven, P Hetheron, J Innes, K Sandhu,
T Sawdon and B Singh

Public Business

30. Minutes of the Meeting held on 9 July 2024

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 9 July 2024 were agreed and signed as a true record.

31. Correspondence and Announcements of the Lord Mayor

Merchant Navy Day

The Lord Mayor indicated that the flag of the Merchant Navy was flying outside the Council House for Merchant Navy Day, recognising the courage and sacrifice of seafarers from the Merchant Navy past and present.

International Children's Games

The Lord Mayor congratulated all the young athletes who participated in the International Children's Games which took place in León, Mexico from 17 to 20 July. The athletes secured 10 medals marking their best performance for a number of years.

Team GB – Paris Olympics and Paralympics

The Lord Mayor similarly congratulated Team GB for their achievements in the Paris Olympics and Paralympics. A special mention was made to Kare Adenegan, a former Coventry Good Citizen Award Winner, on achieving a Silver Medal in the T34 100m at the Paralympics.

Southport

The Lord Mayor referred to the recent tragic events in Southport on Monday 29 July. A letter of condolence was sent on behalf of the City of Coventry to the Mayor of Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council expressing the City Council's deepest sympathy to all those who have been affected by the tragedy.

Paul Desson-Baxter

The Lord Mayor expressed her sadness at the death of Paul Desson-Baxter, one of the co-founders of Coventry Pride and Chair of the Chairity for 6 years. A letter of condolence was to be sent on behalf of the Council.

Former Councillor David Welsh

Lastly, the Lord Mayor referred to the resignation of Councillor David Welsh. Former Councillor Welsh represented St Michael's Ward for 14 years, having first been elected in 2010 and was recently the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities.

Members shared their memories and appreciation for all of the work undertaken by former Councillor Welsh and wished him well in his new role.

32. **Petitions**

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

- 1. Petition requesting residents only parking and the need for Webster Street to become a one-way street with entry via Broad Street – 43 signatures, presented by Councillor S Nazir.**
- 2. Petition to prevent Coventry City Council from implementing residential parking fees on Farren Road or cancel the scheme – 89 signatures online and 86 written signatures, presented by Councillor F Abbott.**

3. **Petition to scrap the WR zone residents' parking permit zone – 18 signatures online and 190 written signatures, presented by Councillor F Abbott.**
4. **Petition objecting to the enforcement of parking permits on the Gleneagles Road and Nortan Hill Drive Estate (Zone WG) – 39 signatures online and 322 written signatures, presented by Councillor F Abbott.**
5. **Petition requesting the council to install some form of traffic calming measure on Bredon Avenue – 95 signatures, presented by Councillor S Agboola.**
6. **Petition requesting the council to protect the World War 2 artefacts within the developments planned for Keresley – 7 signatures, presented by Councillor B Christopher.**

33. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

34. **Audit and Procurement Committee Annual Report to Council 2023/24**

Further to Minute 15 of the Cabinet, the Council considered the annual report of the Audit and Procurement Committee that provided an overview of its activity during 2023/2024.

The report included an introduction by the Chair, Councillor R Lakha, and indicated that the Audit and Procurement Committee was a key component of the Council's governance framework, supporting good governance and strong public financial management. Over the last year, the Committee had continued to discharge its key responsibility effectively, namely providing independent assurance on the adequacy of the risk management framework, the internal control environment and the integrity of the Council's financial reporting and governance processes. The report demonstrated the vital role carried out by the Committee and the contribution that it made to the Council's overall governance arrangements.

The Committee received a range of routine reports based on the clearly defined expectations of services / functions that reported to it, e.g. internal / external audit and financial management. It also received ad-hoc reports which focussed on either a specific concern or developments that impacted directly on the Committee.

The report detailed the Committee's activity in 2023/24 in the following areas: Governance; Financial Management and Accounting; External Audit; Internal Audit; Fraud and Error; and Procurement. Reports considered during this period which were linked to risk management, internal control and governance, included: Whistleblowing Annual Report 2022/23; Complaints to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman 2022/23; Corporate Risk Register; Information Governance Annual Report 2022/23; and Coventry Municipal Holdings Group Accounts.

The report also detailed priorities for the Committee for 2024/25 which included:

- The Council's risk management, governance, internal control and financial management arrangements continue to operate effectively, especially in light of the financial pressures caused by inflation, increasing service demands and difficult conditions within social care markets.
- Matters relating to the publication of the Council's Statements of Accounts were resolved as soon as practicable, with an objective that outstanding years accounts were published in line with the expectations of the Governments consultation once the outcome of that was known.

RESOLVED that the Council receives and notes the Audit and Procurement Committee Annual Report 2023/24.

35. **Additional HMO Licensing Scheme 2025 - 2030**

The Council considered a report of the Director of Law and Governance which provided the results of a statutory consultation carried out in relation to the future of additional licensing in Coventry and which sought approval to designate the whole of the City as subject to additional licensing under section 56(1)(a) of the Housing Act 2004 in relation to the size and type of Houses in Multiple Occupation specified in the recommendations of this report for a period of 5 years commencing on the 4 May 2025.

The report indicated that HMOs are properties that are occupied by a least 3 people in two or more households who share at least one basic amenity i.e. a kitchen, bathroom or toilet. The definition of a HMO includes bedsits, shared houses, flats, lettings with their own facilities and some types of poorly converted self-contained flats.

The Housing Act 2004 provides a power to the Council to introduce an Additional Licensing Scheme in its area. The power was intended to address the impact of poor-quality HMOs that fall outside of the mandatory licensing HMO definition and address management issues and poor property conditions.

On the 4 May 2020 the Council introduced a citywide Additional Licensing Scheme which required all HMOs in Coventry to be licensed. The scheme runs for a period of 5 years and as such will cease on the 4 May 2025. Within the Act there is a legal requirement to review the scheme "from time to time". To fulfil this requirement a consultation exercise was undertaken between July and October 2023 to seek views from all stakeholders on the progress of the scheme so far.

The review showed that the licensing scheme has made good progress in improving standards in a large number of HMOs, for example, the Council has added around 11,598 conditions to licences that has resulted in approx. £1.6m being invested into improving conditions. This investment would not have happened without the scheme, but there are still a significant number of properties that remain unlicensed and there continues to be issues with non-compliance and poor management.

The Council has been proactive in its approach to enforcement of unlicensed HMOs and non-compliance, so much so that this was recognised by the National Residential Landlord Association (NRLA) in their paper - the Enforcement Lottery: civil penalty usage by local authorities, which acknowledged that Coventry ranked first for issuing the most civil penalties for HMO offences in England.

It is clear however, that more needs to be done as a significant proportion of HMOs in the Council's area are still being managed ineffectively, and unlicensed properties are still present. The focus of this scheme will therefore be to proactively target those unlicensed and non-compliant properties whilst ensuring that those properties that are already licensed continue to provide the standards required under the requirements of the licensing regulatory framework.

Cabinet considered a report on the 13 February 2024 (Minute 69/23 refers) and approved recommendations to proceed with a statutory consultation on the designation of a further scheme from 4 May 2025 to the 4 May 2030. The city-wide consultation, details of which were outlined in the report, ran for 12 weeks from the 26 of February 2024 to 17 of May 2024. The report outlined the results of this statutory consultation, details of which were appended to the report and sought a decision from Cabinet to consider the designation of the whole of Coventry as subject to additional HMO licensing for a further five years following the expiry of the existing scheme.

A further appendix to the report outlined the proposed timetable for implementation. The report indicated that, as any Additional Licensing Scheme can only run for a period of 5 years, this is in effect a new designation and a such the process is being implemented to ensure the continuous delivery of the first scheme. Once this designation comes into force it will also be subject to a statutory review and can only last a maximum of five years.

RESOLVED that the Council:

- 1. Notes the results of the statutory consultation and approves the following:**
 - I. Designates the whole of Coventry City as subject to Additional Licensing under Section 56(1)(a) of the Housing Act 2004 for all Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), irrespective of the number of storeys, that contain three or four occupiers;**
 - II. Designates the whole of Coventry City as subject to Additional Licensing under Section 56(1)(a) of the Housing Act 2004 for all HMOs as defined under Section 257 of that Act where those HMOs are mainly or wholly tenanted, including those with resident landlords, unless if it is either: a. a section 257 HMO consisting solely of two flats where neither of the flats is situated above or below commercial premises; or b. a section 257 HMO where the flats share no internal or external common parts, and which are no more than two storeys high;**
 - III. That the designations in paragraphs I and II above come into force on the 4 May 2025 for a period of 5 years;**

- IV. **Delegates authority to the Director of Law and Governance to sign the Coventry City Council Designation of an Area for Additional Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation 2025 as attached at Appendix 2;**
- V. **Resolves to adopt the HMO Licensing Policy 2025 as attached at Appendix 3 and review fees periodically to ensure they remain reasonable and proportionate and address any issues relating to surpluses or deficits in accordance with case law and the EU Services Directive.**

36. Amendments to Allocation of Executive Functions

The Council received a report of the Director of Law and Governance which detailed an amendment to the allocation of executive functions within Cabinet.

At the Annual General Meeting of the Council on 16 May 2024, the Leader informed Council of the allocation of Executive Functions within Cabinet for the Municipal Year 2024/25. Former Councillor David Welsh was appointed by the Leader as the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities, however following his indication of his intention to resign as a St Michael's Ward Councillor with effect from the end of August 2024, in accordance with the Constitution, the report informed Council of a change to the allocation of Executive Functions made by the Leader of the Council to appoint Councillor Naeem Akhtar as Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities with effect from 2 September 2024.

The Lord Mayor congratulated Councillor N Akhtar on his new appointment.

The Leader also orally reported the following further changes to the allocation of Executive Functions at the meeting, which were effective from 4 September, 2024:-

- a) The appointment of Councillor Shakila Nazir as the Deputy Cabinet Member for City Services
- b) The appointment of Councillor David Toulson as the Deputy Cabinet Member for Adult Services.

37. Amendments to Appointments

Further to Minute 36/24 above, the Council considered a report of the Director of Law and Governance which sought amendments to the appointments to Council bodies 2024/25. The amendments had arisen as a result of the notification by former Councillor David Welsh of his intention to resign as a St Michael's Ward Councillor with effect from the end of August 2024 and the Leader's decision to make changes to the allocation of Executive Functions, by appointing Councillor Naeem Akhtar as the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities with effect from 2 September 2024.

RESOLVED that the Council:

- 1) Notes that, following his appointment as Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing, effective from 2 September 2024, Councillor Naeem Akhtar is no longer Chair of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee or a member of Planning Committee.**
- 2) Approves the appointment of Councillor Gavin Lloyd as the Chair of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee and his appointment to the associated Bodies detailed in paragraph 1.4 of the report with effect from 4 September, 2024.**
- 3) Delegates authority to the Director of Law and Governance to appoint to or amend any remaining Labour Group vacancies on Council bodies following consultation with the Leader of the Council**

38. Question Time

Councillors Hetheron, Brown and N Akhtar provided written answers to the questions set out in the Questions Booklet, together with oral responses to supplementary questions asked 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 Lapsa	Councillor Lloyd	The hand over of Bannerbrook Estate
2	Councillor Lepoidevin	Councillor Lloyd	The adoption of Bannerbrook Estate
3	Councillor Gardiner	Councillor Lloyd	The number of garden waste bins collected before subscription
4	Councillor Gardiner	Councillor Lloyd	The total number of garden waste bins removed from circulation since subscription began
5	Councillor Gardiner	Councillor Lloyd	Possible increases in fly tipping since the garden waste subscription
7	Councillor Blundell	Councillor Lloyd	Reassurance on garden waste bin collection service delivery since the advent of the subscription
8	Councillor Gardiner	Councillor Brown	Customer Services handling more enquiries with the same level of resources
9	Councillor Gardiner	Councillor Lloyd	The fear of a rise of crime following turning

			off street lights at night
10	Councillor Gardiner	Councillor N Akhtar	The steps being taken for reasonable decision making at the Planning Committee
11	Councillor Ridley	Councillor N Akhtar	Possible political voting on the Planning Committee
12	Councillor Lapsa	Councillor N Akhtar	Potential future overspends from Planning Committee decisions
13	Councillor Male	Councillor Brown	The efforts being made to tackle unpaid Council tax
14	Councillor Ridley	Councillor Bigham	How overspends could alternatively be used to fund social workers
15	Councillor Blundell	Councillor O'Boyle	The sale of disposal of land and buildings at Burbages Lane, including Land and Buildings formally known as Rowleys Green Working Men's Club
16	Councillor Male	Councillor Brown	Identification of a new traveller site
17	Councillor Lapsa	Councillor AS Khan	The number of illegal vape sales in the last year

39. **Statements**

The Leader, Councillor G Duggins, made a Statement in respect of a number of matters including the tragic recent events of Southport, Coventry's role as a City of Peace and Reconciliation, improved KS4 and KS5 school results in the City in comparison to the national average, the successful summer holiday activity programmes, and the contributions made to the City by the former Councillor David Welsh.

Councillor G Ridley, Leader of the Conservative Group, and Councillor S Gray Leader of the Green Group, both responded to the Statement.

The Leader made a short reply.

40. **Debate - Make Care Experience a Protected Characteristic**

The following Motion was moved by Councillor P Seaman and seconded by Councillor CE Thomas:

“Coventry City Council resolves to treat care experience as if it were a Protected Characteristic and formally call upon all other bodies it partners

or contracts with to treat care experience as a Protected Characteristic until such time as it may be introduced by legislation.”

RESOLVED that the Motion, as set out above, be unanimously adopted.

41. **Debate - Review the End of Universal Winter Fuel Payments and Other Benefits**

The following Motion was moved by Councillor G Ridley and seconded by Councillor R Bailey:

“This Council regrets the decision by the Labour Government to end universal winter fuel payments which could push up to 45,000 people in the city into fuel poverty.

We call on the Leader of the Council to write to the Chancellor urging a review of the decision to restrict eligibility to those in receipt of pension credits and other benefits.

This is to ensure vulnerable pensioners, particularly those that do not claim pension credits, are protected from financial hardship.

Council notes that many pensioners eligible for credits do not apply for them and will lose winter fuel payments as a result. Therefore, we resolve to undertake an awareness campaign to encourage residents in Coventry to check their eligibility. This includes the use of social media, promotion in the local press and Citivision.”

The following amendment was moved by Councillor A Tucker, seconded by Councillor L Bigham, and carried:

After the words “This Council regrets” delete the rest of that paragraph and insert the following :-

“the £20 billion black hole left in the public finances left by the last Conservative Government. With the Winter Fuel Allowance set to remain in place for the poorest pensioners (those in receipt of Pension Credit), this Council urges all those eligible to apply, as take-up is still far too low.”

Delete paragraphs 2 and 3

In paragraph 4 delete the words “Council notes that many pensioners eligible for credits do not apply for them and will lose winter fuel payments as a result. Therefore, we resolve to undertake an awareness campaign to encourage residents in Coventry to check their eligibility. This includes the use of “and replace with the following words “This Council also commits to continue its work on awareness campaigns to encourage residents to check their eligibility including on” and leave in the rest of that paragraph.

The amended Motion now to read:

“This Council regrets the £20 billion black hole left in the public finances by the last Conservative Government. With the Winter Fuel Allowance set to remain in place for the poorest pensioners (those in receipt of Pension Credit), this Council urges all those eligible to apply, as take-up is still far too low.

This Council also commits to continue its work on awareness campaigns to encourage residents to check their eligibility including on social media, local press promotion and within Citivision.”

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

42. **Debate - Cost of Living Crisis**

The following Motion was moved by Councillor S Gray and seconded by Councillor E Reeves:

“Council notes that the Cost-of-Living crisis is not over.

Between April 2022 and April 2024 the cost of a basic weekly food basket has increased by 25%.

The Ofgem price cap is expected to rise again by around 10% in October, meaning bills stay 50-60% above pre-crisis levels. We further note that bills could have already been lowered through an adequate programme of home insulation in line with net zero commitments.

Rents in the private housing sector, where many of the most vulnerable households live, have continued to increase at a rate above headline inflation.

Council calls on the new Government to:

- Extend and increase the Household Support Fund as an interim measure, enabling councils to help those in the most need this coming winter.
- Give the power to local authorities to control rents if the local rental market is overheated.
- Bring forward a simple and accessible system for homeowners to access property-linked finance to pay for the work needed to decarbonise heating and reduce energy costs.
- Expand available funding for the social housing decarbonisation fund and so all local authorities and social housing providers can maximise their work to shift to cleaner and cheaper energy in homes.
- Integrate these, and schemes to encourage private landlords to insulate their properties to minimise the overall cost by, for example, insulating an entire street at the same time.”

The following amendment was moved by Councillor J O’Boyle, seconded by Councillor N Akhtar and, in accordance with the Constitution, accepted by Councillor Gray:

In paragraph 5, after the words “The Council calls on the new Government to” add the words “follow Coventry City Council’s example and work with us and local authorities to”

Then delete the first bullet point which starts “Extend and increase”

Amend the second bullet point by deleting the words “give the power to local authorities to”

Then add the following final sentence at the end of the Motion :-

“We welcome the announcement that the Household Support Fund will be extended to March 2025”

The amended Motion now to read:

“Council notes that the Cost-of-Living crisis is not over.

Between April 2022 and April 2024 the cost of a basic weekly food basket has increased by 25%.

The Ofgem price cap is expected to rise again by around 10% in October, meaning bills stay 50-60% above pre-crisis levels. We further note that bills could have already been lowered through an adequate programme of home insulation in line with net zero commitments.

Rents in the private housing sector, where many of the most vulnerable households live, have continued to increase at a rate above headline inflation.

Council calls on the new Government to follow Coventry City Council’s example and work with us and local authorities to-

- Control rents if the local rental market is overheated.
- Bring forward a simple and accessible system for homeowners to access property-linked finance to pay for the work needed to decarbonise heating and reduce energy costs.
- Expand available funding for the social housing decarbonisation fund and so all local authorities and social housing providers can maximise their work to shift to cleaner and cheaper energy in homes.
- Integrate these, and schemes to encourage private landlords to insulate their properties to minimise the overall cost by, for example, insulating an entire street at the same time.

We welcome the announcement that the Household Support Fund will be extended to March 2025.”

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

(Meeting closed at 6.00 pm)