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# **Council Meeting**

15 October 2024

**Booklet 1**

Answers to Written Questions

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**QUESTION SUBMITTED BY: Councillor J Blundell**

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

**TEXT OF QUESTION:**

“Could the Cabinet Member please set out the process and what sureties and guarantees are sought when a major contract is placed?”

**Answer:**

The Council ensures that all its procurement activities are undertaken in accordance with the Contract Procedure Rules set out in the Constitution and all applicable legislation. The process undertaken when awarding a major contract is through the use of competitive tendering which is achieved either by way of competitive adverts or use of a framework with the ultimate objective being that the Council's interest is protected. As part of this, officers perform a variety of activities during the procurement process and negotiations with potential suppliers and/or contractors in a similar manner to those undertaken by other public and private organisation across the country such as:

1. Procurement

- Mandatory questions are inserted into the procurement documents when conducting an open market competitive process that sets out the Council's requirements in order to ensure that interested bidders are able to show experience and financial capability to deliver the works or services to the Council. Additionally, where the Council utilises an established framework (e.g., Crown Commercial Services (CCS)), the Framework operator undertakes the mandatory criteria evaluation as outlined above.

2. Finance

- Credit checks on potential bidders alongside a review of their published audited financial statements
- A reasonable amount is accounted for within the overall financial envelope for the project for contingency purposes

3. Legal

- Amendment to Terms and Condition of the contract in order to manage risk and seek to transfer those risks onto the supplier and/or contractor
- Where the contract is being placed with a subsidiary company or a special purpose vehicle, the Council seeks either a Parent Company Guarantee (Step-In) or Bond to provide the Council with additional protections in the event that the supplier and/or contractor is unable to discharge their contractual obligation.
- (To the extent possible), we resist any wording being inserted into Council contracts seeking to limit the liability of the supplier.

- Insertion of wording in favour of the Council to allow for termination of the contract for material or persistent breaches of obligations by the supplier.
- Retention of monies to be paid to a supplier until the supplier's obligations have been performed in full.

Whilst the Council takes all steps available to it in order to de-risk its contracts, we are unable to remove all risks from a contract especially as some of these risks are manifested as a consequence of events outside the Council's control such as:

- Financial implications associated with legacy contracts which are not yet reflected in their published financial statements; and
- Market and economic conditions being experienced in the particular sector.

2. **QUESTION SUBMITTED BY: Councillor P Male**

**TO BE ANSWERED BY: Councillor J O'Boyle, Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change**

**TEXT OF QUESTION:**

"Can the Cabinet Member provide an update on the Assembly Gardens site?"

**Answer:**

The freehold interest in the former Civic Centre 1-4 site (used as the Festival Gardens during the City of Culture) was purchased by Coventry University from the Council in 2015 following a formal Council decision to dispose of the site in February 2015 to help facilitate the development of Friargate. The University achieved planning consent for the redevelopment of the site in 2020. The consent is valid until 30 July 2025.

3. **QUESTION SUBMITTED BY: Councillor P Male**

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

**TEXT OF QUESTION:**

"Can the Cabinet Member confirm how many households in Coventry receive the 25% single person discount for Council Tax, and of those, how many are of pension age?"

**Answer:**

There are 49,282 single person discount awards in Coventry. We do not record a resident's age for council tax purposes and are therefore unable to confirm how many of the single person discount awards are for people of pension age.

4. **QUESTION SUBMITTED BY: Councillor P Male**

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

**TEXT OF QUESTION:**

“Several Local Authorities are planning to provide a local Winter Fuel Allowance from the Household Support Fund. Can the Cabinet Member confirm that Coventry City Council will be supporting residents in a similar manner this winter?”

**Answer:**

The Council does not have any plans to replace the Winter Fuel Allowance using the Household Support Fund. The Council will however continue to use the fund to support the immediate needs of vulnerable households, including pensioners, who are struggling to afford household essentials including energy, food and water costs, and wider essentials.

Specifically, around pensioners, officers are currently exploring approaches to increase awareness and visibility amongst this vulnerable group. Vulnerable pensioner households - and all vulnerable households - are able to apply to the fund by contacting the Community Support Customer Services team, in person at the City Centre Contact Centre, on the phone or on the Council's website.

5. **QUESTION SUBMITTED BY: Councillor J Lepoidevin**

**TO BE ANSWERED BY: Councillor AS Khan, Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities**

**TEXT OF QUESTION:**

“Could the Cabinet Member:

- (a) Tell us what discussions he has held with the West Midlands Police and Crime Board regarding the early release of prisoners into Coventry? and
- (b) Confirm he is satisfied that appropriate arrangements have been put into place to safeguard the community?”

**Answer:**

Thank you for your question. In addressing the matter you have brought before the Council, I would like to provide some context and clarity.

Firstly, it is important to acknowledge the concerns you have raised regarding the early release of prisoners into Coventry. The Council is fully aware of the implications and is dedicated to finding a constructive solution.

Discussions with the West Midlands Police and Crime Board

We have held several discussions with the West Midlands Police and Crime Board regarding this issue. The release of prisoners beyond the usual release numbers have been triaged according to the length of their sentences and their potential risk of reoffending, among other factors. Specific meetings of the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) were held where needed.

## Satisfaction with Community Safeguarding Arrangements

Regarding your request for confirmation on safeguarding arrangements, I can assure you that we are committed to the safety and well-being of our residents. The Council, in collaboration with local law enforcement, social services, and community organisations, has put additional resources into ensuring accommodation is prioritised for any who appeared likely to be without fixed accommodation upon release. Any prisoner released would be subject to attention from both Probation and Police offender managers where appropriate, as only prisoners who served their full term would not be subject to mandatory supervision and oversight upon release.

Cllr Khan has expressed satisfaction with the agency response and reminded agencies to inform him and the board immediately should additional support be required.

Rest assured, we are committed to transparency and will provide regular updates on the progress of these initiatives.