

Citivism

News, features and updates about what's happening in the city

Spring 2024



A personal message from Cllr George Duggins, Leader, Coventry City Council.

Managing effective services

We are all aware of the need to keep a close check on the money we spend as the cost-of-living crisis continues, and the Council is not immune to these pressures either.

On top of being the most under-funded council per head of the population in the West Midlands – we should have an additional £31m a year just to reach the national average – inflationary pressures coupled with unprecedented demand on social care and homelessness services means all councils are facing tough choices to set the balanced budget we need to by law.

In all the time I've been a councillor I have never had to deal with the economic uncertainty we are facing today.

More information about these challenges is detailed in this issue of Citivism that explains how we will deliver a balanced budget for 2024/25.

Despite our financial challenges, we are determined to move forward and work even closer with other organisations in the city to ensure our services make a difference to the lives of local people and businesses.

We are always striving to help people struggling or in crisis, while at the same time working to boost the economic fortunes of the city.

It's always a challenge but something we are determined to continue to meet head on.

Written and designed by Coventry City Council's Communications Team

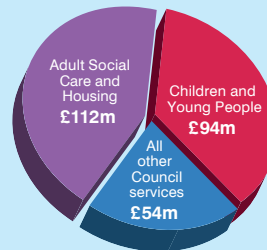
Tough choices to protect key frontline services

Coventry City Council has met its legal duty of setting a balanced budget after finalising plans taking more than 30 steps to either save money or generate extra income.

The Council has a £20million gap for the next financial year. The deficit has been created in part by a continued reduction in funding of the Council which receives more than £100million a year less in government funding than in 2010, meaning it receives the lowest funding per head in the West Midlands region.

If it was funded to the national average, it would receive an additional £31m a year. It's been made harder by sustained levels of increased demand on services. This can be seen by the fact that over the last 12 months,

the Council has had to spend 79 per cent of its entire budget to meet its legal responsibilities in providing services in social care, housing and homelessness, up from 40 per cent in 2010. It means Coventry only has the remaining 21 per cent of its budget to spend on all other council services (see graphic below).



To generate additional income, Coventry will fall into line with neighbouring councils by charging for the collection of garden waste from April this year, and by increasing weekday city centre car parking prices – the first rise since 2017.

After listening to views during a consultation, plans to introduce charging for the first three hours of parking at the War Memorial Park will not happen, while only 70 per cent of streetlights could now be turned off overnight – meaning lights on main roads and busy junctions will remain on.

Tax levels will rise to 4.99%, a figure in line with most other local authorities, made up of 2.9% for the Council's own portion of the bill, plus the 2% precept required nationally to help fund the UK's gap in social care funding.

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Coventry outdoor activity camps

Coventry outdoor activity camps, run by the Outdoor Education Service, get children into the wild, where they will experience an unforgettable adventure, whilst making new friends and having lots of fun.

The camps run over school holidays at Coombe Abbey Park.

- Activities include:
- Combat Archery
 - Laser Tag
 - Bushcraft
 - Survival Skills



For details visit coventry.gov.uk/coventryoutdoors



Worried about the cost of living?

Don't suffer alone. We're here to help you.

Visit: www.coventry.gov.uk/costofliving

or call 08085 834 333 #OneCoventryTogether



The Job Shop is set to relocate



The Job Shop first opened in Hertford Street in March 2012 as part of Coventry City Council's Jobs Strategy to help local people find work, and after proving a huge success it found the need to move to bigger premises in the Bull Yard in 2013.

>>> As part of the City Centre South developments, the Job Shop will now be relocating to a new unit in West Orchards, next to the new Iceland on Smithford Way. The Job Shop is expected to be in its new home in April. Coventry City Council has been able to make the move by securing funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) in agreement with the West Midlands Combined Authority.

Help if you're on a low income

Residents on a low income are being advised that they can get help towards their council tax payments.

The Council wants to ensure that people are aware that there is support available if households on a low income are struggling to make council tax payments.

Council Tax Support is a scheme where working age

households can receive a reduction.

The scheme can also provide up to 100 per cent of the cost of council tax for pension age households.

If you make a claim for Universal Credit, make sure you indicate on your application that you want to claim Council Tax Support otherwise the Department for Work and Pensions will not tell the Council that you want to claim.

For details visit coventry.gov.uk/counciltaxsupport



You're hired

Apprenticeships are a great option for young people looking for the chance to work and learn after finishing school.

Council apprentices, Stephanie, Andrew, Taranveer and Sam (photo above) have been talking about their experiences to encourage other young job seekers in Coventry to find out more.

The young recruits all found out about their current posts through the Council's Apprenticeship Team.

The team provides support to apprentices throughout their apprenticeship and recruit more than 80 new apprentices

undertaking over 20 different types of apprenticeship each year.

More information about Apprenticeships at Coventry City Council and how to apply can be found at coventry.gov.uk/apprenticeships and by following the team on Instagram at [@apprenticeship_ccc](https://www.instagram.com/apprenticeship_ccc)

Check out the National Apprenticeship Week YouTube playlist at coventry.gov.uk/naw2024

Sign up for a broadband saving

If you receive Universal Credit or benefits, then you might be eligible for a social tariff.

Social tariffs are broadband and mobile packages offering you reliable internet speeds at a discounted price.

They're to help reduce your monthly bills. Switching from

your provider's regular tariff to their social tariff will not incur any exit fees.

Some providers offer deals from as low as £10 per month, so switching could lead to a saving of around £202 against the average yearly cost of broadband.

Interested? For details visit coventry.gov.uk/socialtariffs



Cost of living support is available

Across Coventry, we know more and more people are feeling the pressure from the cost of living. If you're struggling financially or concerned about the future, getting help early can make a big difference.

If you're struggling with your finances. From bills, food, school uniform, or other household essentials, to mental health support, please don't hesitate

to ask for help. Lots of support is available from many different organisations to help you manage the cost of living pressures.

For help and support in Coventry, visit: coventry.gov.uk/costofliving or call: 08085 834 333.

Continued from front page >>>
Councillor Richard Brown, Coventry City Council's Cabinet Member Finance and Resources, said:

"At a time when years of underfunding for councils is coming home to roost, we have worked incredibly hard to keep those cuts away from our residents as much as we can.

"But the reality is we can only go so far. Well-run councils such as ours are now struggling and there needs to be a new way of funding local government as the financial distress of councils in England

has its roots in a funding system that is broken. "Coventry is a prudent council and, despite severe challenges, has been able to protect services while working to build a better Coventry for the future, and improve the quality of life for those who live here.

"Here in Coventry, 79p of every £1 in Council Tax we raise is spent on meeting our legal duties on social care or homelessness and housing, but we are facing the same challenges as councils across the country.

"Although the recent national announcement of an additional £600 million to be shared by councils is welcome, recently a group of cross-party MPs that make up the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee said an additional £4 billion is needed.

"That shows how these one-off monies are no more than a sticking plaster and not a lasting solution to the problem.

"If we don't get a more sustainable solution from ministers, we will be facing even harder decisions next year."

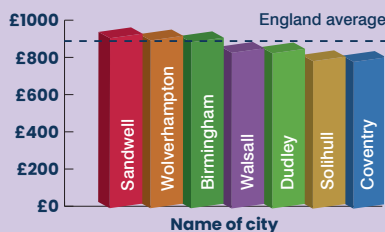


Diagram showing the amount of government funding per head in West Midlands councils. Coventry is the lowest funded.

For more details about how the Council manages its budget visit coventry.gov.uk/budget



Fostering film award highlights need for carers

FOSTER WITH COVENTRY

For more about how you can make a difference by fostering with Coventry, please contact the Fostering Team on 024 7683 2828 or visit www.coventry.gov.uk/foster

Colleagues who helped create and share an award-winning fostering film have been celebrating after receiving their award.

The film 'Any of Us' was put together by a partnership of councils including Coventry. It was recently named as a winner in two categories at a national awards event, which recognise excellence in public sector communications.

The powerful film highlights three characters and spreads the message that "any of us can foster a child or young person, if

we have the capacity to care."

It's available to watch at coventry.gov.uk/anyofus Cllr Pat Seaman, Coventry City Council's Cabinet Member, Children and Young People, said:

"The key message remains the same, please consider if you can offer a home to our most vulnerable children and young people."



Join the line-up for city's half marathon

The Coventry Half Marathon gets up and running on Sunday 28 April.

Runners can sign up and take part. Whether that's raising thousands of pounds for charities to compete or to enjoy a great fun day.

The event welcomes all abilities and age groups and starts at 9am from Gosford Street, finishing at Coventry Cathedral.

Participants begin on historic city centre streets before heading to the nearby countryside and out towards Shakespeare's county of Warwickshire.

To take part visit runforall.com Go CV card holders can get a reduction to enter. For details check go-cv.co.uk

Flooding – We need your help

The Council is looking to hear from residents whose property was damaged by the flooding in January.



We're applying for additional national funding to help better protect homes and need evidence to share as part of those future bids.

So, please send your photos and videos of the flooding to flooding@coventry.gov.uk. We'll also need your name and address for our records.





New funeral service launched

A new service has been launched aiming to provide Coventry residents with a high-quality cost-effective option when choosing their funeral arrangements.

>>> The ambition at Coventry Funeral Service is to keep things simple by streamlining the funeral arrangement process, with fully inclusive funeral packages, clear pricing and providing the necessary information for people to make the best decision for their loved one.

The issue of costs and bereavement poverty is well known, not just in Coventry but right across the UK, and this is a key driver behind why the service is being launched.

Cllr Patricia Hetherington, Cabinet Member, City Services, said:

“The Council is very conscious of the ever-increasing costs associated with funerals, and for many people this cost, can be unplanned, is expensive and may affect a family’s ability to give their loved one a decent funeral.”

For further information visit coventryfuneralservice.co.uk Email info@coventryfuneralservice.co.uk or call 024 7697 7702.

“Led by a very experienced funeral director, the aim is to help people in making the right decisions through clear, transparent pricing. It’s also one of the key reasons why we’ve set up the Coventry Funeral Service.”

A recent national report into funeral costs highlighted the average cost of a basic funeral is now around £4,100. This is a 4.7% increase in a year and reflects a staggering 126% increase in the last 20 years.

LET US KNOW

Adult Social Care experience survey

If you’ve had recent involvement with Adult Social Care, we’d really like to hear from you about your experience. This will help us improve the service.

coventry.gov.uk/ASCexperiencesurvey



A change for the better for shoppers

Coventry City Council is set to open a Changing Places toilet at Tesco Cross Point Business Centre, with government funding and support from the Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities, and Muscular Dystrophy UK.

Changing Places toilets in the city aim to help improve the lives of severely disabled residents. The first round of Changing Places will also see modular Changing Place units installed at The Albany Theatre and ShopMobility.

A Changing Places toilet also operates from the first floor of the Central Library.

Changing Places are toilet facilities for people with profound and multiple disabilities. They are fitted with specialist equipment such as a hoist and changing bench. It means families or carers will not have to worry about whether there are suitable toilet facilities when they go out shopping, plan a day out or travel.

Energy saving help for businesses

Over £1.6m of national external funding is being made available to businesses to achieve sustainability goals.

The Business Energy Advice Service (BEAS) is a programme which will allow businesses across the region to access expert advice and financial support.

Central to the scheme will be energy audits that will help firms pinpoint key areas in which they can improve their energy efficiency and reduce costs.

Grants will be available for use by eligible businesses to help ensure buildings and equipment become more energy efficient and sustainable.



Coventry Dementia Partnership Hub

Getting to know you

The Coventry Dementia Partnership Hub is a space that provides support for people living with dementia and those who care for them.

The hub, located at **Everdon Road, Holbrooks, CV6 4FB** offers a range of different activities, information and advice sessions, traditional day services and

outreach, along with a Dementia Friendly ‘Forget Me Not’ Café and social space, where service users and their families can meet new people.

To find out more about the Hub, go to coventry.gov.uk/DementiaPartnershipHub or call 07957 429324.

International Children's Games 2024 fundraiser

Following on from the success of Team Coventry at last year's International Children's Games, where athletes bought 6 medals home, the team will be competing again this summer in athletics and girls' football.



This year's Games are set to take place in Leon, Mexico, from **Monday 15 – Saturday 20 July**. The team is raising money to help with the cost of taking part, and you can show your support by contributing to the fundraiser which can be accessed by scanning the QR code below. Team sponsorship and partnership opportunities are also available. Contact covsport@coventry.gov.uk to find out more.



Green festival award

Godiva Festival has achieved the Greener Festival Improvers Award 2023 after making sustainability improvements

The award for last year's festival was achieved after checks were carried out on transport, waste, and water use.

Visitors have also contributed to the award by making use of recycling points, and bringing reusable water bottles, to refill at water points. Cargo bikes were also used at last year's event. [More on back page.](#)

City centre scheme boost

A huge part of Coventry City Centre is one step closer to regeneration after an additional **£12.24m** was approved by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA).

The money will be used to unlock the Coventry City Centre South scheme, and help transform outdated areas of the city, including Bull Yard, Shelton Square, City Arcade, and Hertford Street.

It brings the WMCA's total funding for City Centre South to **£113m**. Coventry City Council is contributing **£32m**.

The development, which covers 6.3 hectares of land within the city centre, includes 1,575 new homes. Of the 1,575 homes, at least 20 per cent will be classified as affordable housing.

New retail and leisure spaces, a community health centre and potential for a hotel with 150 rooms in the second phase also make up the regeneration plans.

The project, considered a strategically important housing



scheme, will start in 2024 and complete in stages, with the first homes expected to be occupied from 2027.

The first phase completion is expected to be 2031.

Developers The Hill Group and Shearer Property Group are working in partnership with Coventry City Council and the WMCA as the developers for the regeneration project.

CLLr Jim O'Boyle, Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change for Coventry City Council, said:

"This is great news and the additional funding means that

the developer can now get on site and get cracking.

It will create a thriving, bustling new community that can help to support shops and restaurants and leisure attractions. It will also create jobs and apprenticeships which is good news too."

Andy Hill, Group Chief Executive of The Hill Group, said:

"City Centre South is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to deliver a game-changing project that will rejuvenate the city centre."



Woodlands project on track

A new special school provision in the city is getting closer to completion.

The site, at the former Woodlands School, will rehouse a specialist provision that is currently being delivered by Woodfield School on two separate sites.

Demolition work began in November 2023, and it is expected to be finished soon.

Joe's on the mark at music awards



Joe Cook, who works for the Coventry Music Hub, has won the Unsung Hero at the Music Mark Awards.

Over the last two years, Joe has been working closely with young people excluded from school/or at risk of exclusion.

Thanks to Joe's guidance, the young people involved in the project have been supported

to create an album which showcases their creativity and musical talent.

Joe said:

"It's nice to get recognition because I'm working with kids who have been excluded and this shines a light on them."

The 11-track album, called 'Positive Choices' is available digitally on Apple Music, Spotify and YouTube.

To find out more about the Music Hub visit coventrymusicclub.co.uk



Get ready to have your say!

Local and regional elections will be taking place on Thursday 2 May.

Save time and get ready for the elections by registering to vote now. If you aren't registered, you'll lose your chance to have your say about what goes on in our city come election time.

Beyond allowing you to have your say, registering can also benefit you in other ways. For example, it can help you in any situation where you get a credit check, such as applying for a mortgage, buying a car or even getting a phone contract.

It's quick, simple and easy to register. Just visit gov.uk/register tovote.

Don't forget! If you want to vote in person at a polling station in May, you'll need to take an accepted form of photographic ID. Accepted ID includes a UK driving licence, a UK passport or a Voter Authority Certificate.

To find out more, including the different ways to vote and types of ID accepted, please visit coventry.gov.uk/elections or contact our Elections Team by emailing electoral.services@coventry.gov.uk or calling them on 024 7683 3034.



Coventry helps lead inclusive cities drive

Coventry recently hosted a national programme building on the ways cities join up to support migration and diversity.

The Inclusive Cities programme, is run by the University of Oxford Centre on Migration Policy and Society (COMPAS).

Cities taking part include Belfast, Birmingham, Brighton, Bristol, Cardiff, Coventry, Glasgow, Liverpool, London, Newry, Mourne and Down, and Sheffield.

The partnership of cities has shared plans to support the inclusion of migrants and long-standing residents across all aspects of life in its respective cities. Coventry has a good record of helping refugees and migrants to contribute to the social, civic, and economic wellbeing of the city.

During the event Coventry delegates highlighted the positive contribution that migrants make in the city and reinforced their combined way of working.

For more details visit coventry.gov.uk/welcometocoventry



Raising housing standards

A 12-week consultation has started on proposals to renew the Council's city-wide additional licensing scheme.

The scheme is to improve the management and living conditions for tenants of houses in multiple occupation. The consultation will give landlords, tenants and other residents

the chance to have their say on how the Council plans to improve standards as well as on measures to reduce crime.

A house in multiple occupation, or HMO, is a property, or part of a property, shared by three or more people who are not members of the same family. Tenants usually share at least one facility such as kitchen, sink or toilet. It can also include shared flats within a larger building.

Coventry has among the highest number of this type of property compared to other local authorities in England and Wales - around 6,800 or 26 per

cent in the private rented sector.

Cllr David Welsh, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities, said:

"There are many good landlords in Coventry running private rented HMOs but there are also landlords who don't maintain their properties to the standard we, and local people, would expect."

"I hope people will take some time to have their say on this consultation."

For details visit letstalk.coventry.gov.uk/additional-licensing-consultation

Support if you are at risk of becoming homeless

Our housing and homelessness service deals with almost 200 approaches every week from people facing the prospect of becoming homeless.

Of the people who approach the service, some may just need general advice, but the majority will need an in-depth assessment and may then be entitled to help to prevent or relieve their homelessness.

Cllr David Welsh, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities, is proud of the Council's work on homelessness and said:

"We work hard for families searching for a home or

homeless families and single people all year round. The number of people who find themselves homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless is shocking really and it is a result of woeful underfunding

nationally. We will continue to lobby for more money, while in the meantime working hard to help so many people."

If you are worried someone may be at risk of homelessness, they can self-refer online and the service will make contact with them to provide further advice.

You can access further information on our website at coventry.gov.uk/housingadvice

Family Hubs are 'here to help'

Whether you're a parent with young children, a teenager, or anyone in between, a Coventry Family Hub is the place to go to connect with the right help at the right time with the right people.



The Moat Family Hub recently showcased the range of activities and support available for families (see photos above).

Coventry Family Hubs offer a diverse range of services designed to meet the needs of the entire family, including: Stay and Play sessions for school readiness; Baby and Me sessions for early childhood development and parent networking; support for children

with special educational needs; child and family health activities; and areas such as finance, employment training and relationship support.

CLlr Patricia Seaman, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, said:

"The Hubs have been very popular. I would urge people to take a look. I think they'll be surprised at how much they offer."

Parents' comments include :

"Family Hubs are very friendly and they have helped me a lot to make friends and get help when I need it."

People can drop into any of the eight Family Hubs between **8.30am and 5pm**; call the free number **0800 8870545**; or have someone who is familiar with their situation request help on their behalf. For details visit coventry.gov.uk/familyhubs

Children having their say

Children and young people across Coventry are being given the opportunity to help shape the direction of children's services in the city in a survey being carried out in schools.

They are being encouraged to look at a number of priority areas from feeling safe, having opportunities, and being healthy, the work is part of Child Friendly Cov - a campaign to ensure that Coventry is a child and young person friendly city.

The survey also asks young people questions such as whether there are places for young people to have fun, how likely they are to stay in the city when they are older and what they'd like to see changed in Coventry in 2030.

So far, 45 primary and secondary schools have taken up the survey.

Caring Coventry

The Council has recently published its two year Carers' Action Plan which has been developed with key partners and carers across the city. The plan sets out three priority areas:

- **Supporting carers with flexible respite options.**
- **Delivering the right support, at the right time and in the right place.**
- **Improving the reach of carers assessments to benefit more people.**

The full plan can be seen on coventry.gov.uk/carersactionplan

Helping youngsters in care return home

The Council's Children's Services are helping to lead national work on returning more children home from care.

The Council's Reunification project has been cited in new research by the NSPCC and Action for Children, who are calling for more to be done to help young people.

A national report highlighting the scheme featured the Council

and one of the mums in the city who have been supported through the project.

In Coventry the project has seen 20 children return home from long-term care.

The Reunification Team has been shortlisted for two

national awards. Its work has been showcased to other local authorities who are considering bringing in something similar.

CLlr Patricia Seaman, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, said:

"This an important issue and we are very proud to be able to help lead the way and show the difference returning home from care can make."

An ACE way to adopt

Adoption Central England (ACE) is supporting the drive for more people to consider adoption.

ACE is the regional adoption service that covers Coventry, and is successfully finding families for more than 100 children every year. Adoption is about offering love, support and a lifelong commitment to children of all ages who cannot stay living with their birth families for a variety of reasons.

The Council is encouraging people to consider adoption as it can play a massive and important role in improving many children's lives.

For details visit ACE at aceadoption.com or call **0300 369 0556**. You can also follow them on Facebook.

Measles advice

Parents and carers are being reminded that two doses of the MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccine provide the best protection against measles. If you or your child has not had the two doses of MMR ask at your GP surgery.

Speak to your GP if:

- a child in your family has missed their first or second dose of the MMR vaccine.
- you or someone in your family starts to show symptoms of measles.

For people who do not touch pork products there is a version of the MMR vaccine which does not use porcine in its production.

For details visit: nhs.uk/conditions/measles



Garden waste (brown-lidded bin) collections are changing later this year and will be a paid-for service.

Find out more and sign up at
www.coventry.gov.uk/brownbin



**ST MARY'S
GUILDHALL**

A good old Guildhall wedding

With a rich history of hosting spectacular events spanning over 700 years, St Mary's Guildhall is a great wedding and events venue in the heart of the city.

St Mary's offers a range of new bespoke wedding and event package options to tailor your celebration, ensuring an unforgettable experience.

Select from a variety of historic spaces, each possessing its own distinctive

charm, perfectly suited for civil ceremonies, wedding breakfasts, receptions and celebrations of diverse sizes. St Mary's Guildhall offers an ideal setting for your special occasion.

Find out more at stmarysguildhall.co.uk,
email weddings@noordinaryhospitality.com
or call 024 7645 0450

GODIVA FESTIVAL | 5 - 7 JULY 2024

**Tickets on sale
Friday 1 March**

The highlight of Coventry's summer calendar is back for 2024 with an incredible line-up. Acts for this year's event include pop sensation **Paloma Faith**, Coventry band **The Primitives**, Eurovision's **Sam Ryder** and the legendary **Beverley Knight**.

Taking place from Friday 5 to Sunday 7 July in the War Memorial Park we will be celebrating this year's theme of a **Worldwide Welcome**. Plus, a super concession price will be available for Go CV+ members for the first time ever.

As always, the event will feature big name artists, a wide range of family attractions and the very best of our local musical talent. **You won't want to miss out!**

**See the full line-up and buy tickets at
godivafestival.com**

Keep up to date with the latest news by signing up to our weekly e-newsletter at www.coventry.gov.uk/newsupdates