



Coventry City Council

Council Meeting

20th October, 2009

Booklet 1a

Minutes from Cabinet Meeting 22nd
September, 2009

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Cabinet – 22nd September, 2009

CABINET

22 September 2009

Cabinet Members Present:
Councillor Blundell
Councillor Mrs Dixon
Councillor Foster (Chair)
Councillor Mrs Johnson
Councillor Lee
Councillor Noonan
Councillor Ridley
Councillor Sawdon
Councillor Williams

Non-Voting Opposition Representatives present:
Councillor Duggins
Councillor Mutton
Councillor Nellist

Employees Present:
A. Burton (Finance and Legal Services Directorate)
F. Collingham (Chief Executive's Directorate)
D. Cockcroft (City Services and Development Directorate)
M. Fenton (Children, Learning and Young People's Directorate)
R. Garcia (Children, Learning and Young People's Directorate)
B. Hastie (Finance and Legal Services Directorate)
J. Handley (Customer and Workforces Services Directorate)
S. Iannantuoni (Customer and Legal Services Directorate)
P. Jennings (Finance and Legal Services Directorate)
J. McGuigan (Chief Executive's Directorate)
J. Mosey (City Services and Development Directorate)
J. Parry (Assistant Chief Executive)
M. Reeves (Chief Executive)
C. Sinclair (Customer and Workforce Services Directorate)
A. Tipper (City Services and Development)
A. Walmsley (Children, Learning and Young People's Directorate)
B. Walsh (Director of Community Services)
C. West (Director of Finance and Legal Services)
M. Yardley (City Services and Development Directorate)

Apologies:
Councillor Field
Councillor Taylor

RECOMMENDATIONS

57. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Ridley declared a personal interest in the matter referred to in Minute 61 below (Extension of the Contract Term for the Connexions Service). His interest arose as he was a council appointed member of Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Partnership (CSWP). He remained in the meeting for consideration and voting on this matter.

59. **Medium Term Financial Strategy 2010-2013**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Finance and Legal Services presenting a Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for 2010-2013 for adoption by the City Council. The previous strategy was approved in January 2009. The Strategy underpinned the medium term policy and financial planning process that is at the heart of setting our revenue and capital budgets.

The Strategy was put forward at a time of considerable challenges being faced by our national and local economies and when we face a significant reduction in the real level of revenue and capital resources available to local government.

The Council has already begun to implement some of the significant change needed to prepare the financial base to deal with this situation in the form of the Transformation Programme and the bringing forward of the budget setting process.

It was clear from the financial position that the City Council would need to achieve significant revenue savings over the medium term and set a significantly restricted capital programme. At this point, with no Comprehensive Spending Review completed by Government and none expected until after the election, the impact of Government spending on the Council can only be estimated.

The Strategy had three main objectives;

- To provide a stable medium term financial base from which to deliver the Council's priorities and transformation/ABC agenda.
- To move the Council towards a more strategic longer-term approach to delivering our revenue and capital plans.
- To set a sound financial planning framework to underpin the effective financial management of the Council.

The Strategy (which was appended to the report in full) was set within the context of the Council's commitment to delivering the Coventry Sustainable Community Strategy and the Corporate Plan. Although the Council was awarded 4 star status in March 2009 it recognised the need to further improve the quality of its services. This would be particularly challenging at a time when a much lower level of funding would be available to local authorities through Government grant and Council Tax.

In order to deliver better services the Council had embarked on a Transformation Programme that would affect every area of the City Council and all the services we deliver over the next few years. Over the course of the 3 year strategy the ABC programme would incorporate a number of fundamental developments to the way we work including the delivery of more efficient and flexible services, greater collaboration with city and sub-regional partners, taking some difficult decisions and increasing focus on our core business and policy priorities.

The assumptions and principles outlined in the report and the Strategy were consistent with those being applied to the Pre-Budget Report and would be used in setting the 2010/11 budget proposals.

The Cabinet noted that the report would be considered by the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee on 14 October 2009.

RESOLVED that, after due consideration of the options and proposals contained in the report and matters referred to at the meeting, the Cabinet agree the Medium Term Financial Strategy appended to the report and recommend that Council approve the Strategy as the basis of the City Council's medium term financial planning process.

61. Extension of the Contract Term for the Connexions Service

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Children, Learning and Young People asking the Cabinet to consider an extension of the contract with Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Partnership for the delivery of Connexions for a further 12 months, until 31st March 2011.

Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Partnership currently deliver the Connexions Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) Service under contract until 31st March 2010, to both Coventry City Council and Warwickshire County Council. The report was seeking approval to extend the term of the contract to enable completion of work looking at various re-commissioning options for the future delivery of this service.

Connexions provided impartial careers information, advice and guidance for all Coventry young people aged 13-19. In addition Connexions provided support to help young people progress to further and higher education, vocational training or work with training and employment. The service also provided more intensive and targeted support to the most vulnerable young people who were at greater risk of not securing either employment, education or training opportunities. The Connexions Service aimed to remove barriers to learning and progression, and ensure young people made a smooth transition to adulthood and working life.

RESOLVED that, after due consideration of the options and proposals contained in the report and matters referred to at the meeting, the Cabinet recommend that Council approve an extension of the contract with Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Partnership for the delivery of Connexions for a further 12 months, until 31st March 2011 to allow sufficient time for the completion of the joint commissioning work, the decision making process and preparation for implementation of the preferred option.

63. Charging Policy

The Cabinet considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive and the Director of Finance and Legal Services which introduced a new Charging Policy which would impact on the fees and charges levied for all services across the Council.

The Cabinet noted that, with the medium term financial pressures facing the Council, there would be significant challenges to meet in order to deliver a balanced revenue programme over the coming years. Setting the appropriate level for fees and charges was an important element in balancing the Council's revenue budget.

The former Value for Money Partnership Board commissioned a review of income

generation opportunities, a number of which have been taken into account in the 2009-10 budget setting process, and also decided that it would be appropriate to establish a Charging Policy, against which the setting of all fees and charges should be measured in the future. The Policy was contained within the report submitted.

The Cabinet noted that Scrutiny Co-ordination had considered this matter at their meeting held on 22nd September 2009 and had supported the recommendations contained within the report.

RESOLVED that, after due consideration of the options and proposals contained in the report and matters referred to at the meeting, the Cabinet recommended that Council:

- (1) Approve the Charging Policy for implementation across the Council**
- (2) Note that the Corporate Management Team (CMT) was being charged with the task of exercising governance over charging arrangements, and that a working group of CMT was being tasked with reviewing all the Council's fees and charges, and the way in which the concessions policy should be applied across the Council.**