

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources
held at 2.00 pm on Monday, 7 December 2015

Present:

Members: Councillor D Gannon (Cabinet Member)
Councillor T Sawdon (Shadow Cabinet Member)

Employees by Directorate:

Chief Executive's D Ford

Resources: J Barlow, J Bilen, G Haynes, P Johnson, S Lal, U Patel, L Welton

In Attendance: D Cairns – UNITE
S Feeney – UNISON
P Richings – NASUWT
G Sands – UNISON
M Shortland - UNITE

Public Business

16. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

17. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources meeting held on 12 October 2015 were signed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

18. Coventry and District Credit Union - Grant Aid Agreement Year 1 Progress Report

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Public Health which provided a progress report following year 1 of the Coventry and District Credit Union Grant Aid Agreement. The report was the first annual report of a three year Grant Aid Agreement.

Coventry and District Union Limited signed a Grant Aid Agreement with Coventry City Council on 15 September 2014. The purpose of the grant was to support and enhance the provision of credit union services to Coventry Residents.

With the residual impacts of the last recession and on-going cuts to welfare spending, more and more people were turning to so called pay day loans. There has been a proliferation in the number of payday lenders operating in Coventry and nationally. The Council is supporting credit unions to provide a sustainable and effective alternative to the high interest borrowing typical of pay day loan companies. More generally credit unions provide an ethical and community-based

approach to personal finance which, it was hoped, would benefit residents and the city over the longer term.

One of the key elements in promoting membership of credit unions in the city was to ensure exposure for the credit unions and ensure they had suitable commercial premises from which to operate. This grant helped to sustain Coventry and District Credit Union in an office at 144 Walsgrave Road, Coventry. Prior to this the credit union did not have a commercial property from which to operate.

The expectation was that the credit union utilise the initial three year grant to build their business and loan book in order to generate increased revenue which would therefore enable them to sustain the property in the future without dependence on a council grant.

Isabelle Osborne, manager of the Credit Union attended the meeting and reported on progress so far. The new location was working well, membership and footfall had increased and an induction course had been developed for volunteers. However, she expressed concern that if funding was to be withdrawn during the period of the grant aid agreement, then the organisation would have to meet any shortfall in their obligations on the new premises which would have an adverse impact on the rest of the programme.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources:

- 1. Notes the progress made by Coventry and District Credit Union Limited during the first year of the Grant Aid Agreement.**
- 2. Endorses the proposals set out by Coventry and District Credit Union for 2015-2016.**

19. Sub Regional Procurement Strategy 2015-2020

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Executive Director of Resources which provided information on the proposals for the revised Sub-Regional Strategy 2015-2020.

Through the shared procurement service, Coventry CC, Solihull MBC and Warwickshire CC agreed the first Sub-Regional Procurement Strategy in June 2010 which ran for 5 years expiring in June 2015.

In July 2014, the LGA published the National Procurement Strategy (NPS) giving local authorities a structure for the outcomes that need to be achieved to deliver procurement good practice, based around the following four themes; Making Savings, Supporting Local Economies, Demonstrating Leadership and Modernisation.

The revised Sub Regional Strategy 2015-2020 has been based around the NPS themes and priorities for local government. Across the three upper tier authorities within the Coventry, Solihull, Warwickshire (CSW) sub-region, the Council's spend approximately £883m each year on bought in goods, services and works. Spending this money well through effective procurement is fundamental to

achieving organisations success for the three authorities and supporting prosperity across the sub-region.

The Audit and Procurement Committee considered the report on 26 October 2015 and were fully supportive of the proposals (their Minute 33 refers).

The Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1) considered the report on 11 November 2015 and expressed concern about the length of the strategy given the developments and timescales around the Combined Authority and recommended to the Cabinet Member that the Sub-regional Procurement Strategy be managed flexibly to recognise evolving working arrangements between Authorities and Partners over the five year span of the Strategy (their Minute 20 refers).

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources notes comments from the Audit and Procurement Committee and from the Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1) and approves the Sub Regional Procurement Strategy 2015-2020.

20. **Coventry City Council's 2014-2015 Report on Workforce Profile Information**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Executive Director of Resources which provided information on the Council's workforce profile for 2014-2015. This information would be used to inform the equality action plan. The report would enable the City Council to fulfil its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 as set out within the Council's Equality Strategy.

The report provided a detailed analysis of core Council employees only. The headline workforce data for the year 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015 was taken from a snapshot of data on 31 March 2015 and was attached at Appendix 1 of the report.

The report excluded schools as Governing Bodies were responsible for their own recruitment and employment practices which in turn would affect their equalities data. Furthermore, casual workers were also excluded on the basis that they were not considered 'employees' by law and hence not considered to be part of the Council's workforce.

The report provided a summary of Core Council equality data and based on the information, an action plan had been developed for 2014/2015 with the purpose of improving the diversity of the workforce. Headline actions were detailed at Appendix 2 of the report.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources notes the workforce profile information for 2014/2015 as included in Appendix 1 of the report and approves the Action Plan as set out in Appendix 2 of the report.

21. **Agency Workers and Interim Managers - Performance Management Report Q2 (1 July to 30 September 2015)**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Executive Director of Resources which provided performance information on the use of agency workers procured through the Master Vendor Contract for the Quarter 2 period 1 July to 30 September 2015; to compare Quarter 1 2015/2016 with Quarter 2 2015/2016 expenditure. The report also provided information on the Interim Manager spends for the same periods which were now procured through National Framework Agreement RM692 along with any additional off contract spends across the authority.

The Master Vendor contract requires all agency workers to be ordered through the Master Vendor, Pertemps and came into force on 2 December 2013. The Master Vendor would supply all suitable agency workers through their own agency or through a second tier arrangement with other agencies on behalf of the Council, using rates of pay based on an agreed pay policy and a negotiated mark-up rate with the Master Vendor. The information supplied by the Master Vendor on the agency gives detailed information on agency worker usage and spends.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources:

1. **Approves monitoring processes to continue for both Agency workers and Interim managers.**
2. **Endorses compliance with the corporate policy on the recruitment of Temporary Agency Workers through the Master Vendor, Pertemps.**
3. **Instructs officers to continue to work towards reducing expenditure on the use of agency workers.**

22. **6 month (April-September 2015) Cumulative Sickness Absence 2015-2016**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Executive Director of Resources which provided information on the 6 month (April-September 2015) cumulative sickness absence 2015-2016. The information would enable the Cabinet Member to monitor the levels of sickness for the 6 month period April to September 2015 and the actions being taken to manage absence and promote health at work across the City Council.

Annual and quarterly information was based on full time equivalent (FTE) average days lost per person against the FTE average days per person available for work. This is the method that was previously required by the Audit Commission for annual Best Value Performance Indicator reporting. The City Council would continue to use this method to ensure consistency with previously published data.

The report provided the cumulative sickness figures for the Council and individual Directorates.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources notes the report providing sickness absence data for the 6 month period of

April to September 2015 and endorses the actions being taken to manage absence and promote health at work across the City Council.

23. Supporting Workforce Mental Wellbeing

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Executive Director of Resources which provided information on the actions being taken in relation to sickness absence attributed to stress, depression and anxiety and promoting mental well-being across the City Council. This information was requested by the Cabinet Member during the consideration of the “3 month April-June 2015 Cumulative Sickness Absence 2015-2016” report on 12 October 2015 (Minute 13 refers).

The report stated that the Council recognises that it had a duty of care to look after the mental well-being of its staff whilst they were at work and to ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, that work places and working environments were safe. The Council, for some time, has been promoting a comprehensive approach to addressing sickness absence attributed to stress, depression and anxiety that impact upon an individual’s mental well-being through prevention, management and support, whether these issues have arisen in the workplace due to personal circumstances. The Council has in place a variety of different measures/mechanisms to advise managers how to support employees who are reporting sickness absence or health concerns that are attributed to stress, depression and anxiety. Similarly, the Council also provides advice and guidance to managers to support an individual diagnosed with a major mental health condition.

Trade Union representatives were invited to the meeting for the consideration of this item. A number of representatives attended the meeting and the following issues were raised:

- The Trade Unions welcomed the toolkit for managers
- E-learning was not considered to be the best way to engage staff with stress/mental health problems
- Trade Unions would like to see the re-introduction of self-referrals, especially if the problem is with the line manager.
- Lots of staff are attending work with these problems – i.e. the impact of reduced staff levels through ER/VR on those remaining at work and anxiety around the move to Friargate, hot desking etc.
- Would like to see more information which service areas were experiencing the most stress.
- Concerns over how some managers were dealing with stress, more often or not, the problems were attributed to capability issues.
- Support needs to be tailored to the individual and occupational health has a role to play in this.
- For social workers – the debrief following cases is crucial; managers need to build this into feedback. Clinical supervision is also very important.
- No support for staff in schools, lots of teachers and support staff are also suffering.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources:

1. **Notes the report detailing the actions being taken in relation to sickness absence attributed to Stress, Depression and Anxiety and endorses the actions taken to monitor, manage and promote mental well-being.**
2. **Requests that a further report be submitted in 6 month's time to allow the Cabinet Member to monitor the situation. The report to include details of how managers are dealing with staff with stress and whether there are particular service areas that are affected more than others.**

24. **Update on Hospitality Budget of the Lord Mayoralty of Councillor Michael Hammon 2015-2016**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Executive Director of Resources which provided an interim report on the hospitality budget of the Lord Mayoralty of Councillor Michael Hammon, 2015-2016. The report updated the Cabinet Member on how the budget had been spent up to 30 September 2015 and provided estimated expenditure until the end of the Mayoral year.

Information on the actual expenditure for events from 21 May to 30 September 2015 was detailed in Appendix 1 of the report and the estimated expenditure from 1 November until the end of the mayoral Year on 18 May 2016 was attached as Appendix 2 of the report.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources considered the contents of the report which described how the hospitality budget had been spent on an event by event basis and had no further recommendations to make.

25. **Outstanding Issues Report**

The Cabinet Member noted a report of the Executive Director of Resources that identified those issues on which further reports had been requested and were outstanding, so that progress could be monitored.

26. **Any other items of public business which the Cabinet Member decides to take as matters of urgency because of the special circumstances involved.**

There were no urgent items of business to consider.

(Meeting closed at 3.15 pm)