

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1) held
at 2.00 pm on Wednesday, 29 March 2017

Present:

Members: Councillor L Kelly (Chair)
Councillor S Bains
Councillor J Lepoidevin
Councillor J McNicholas
Councillor G Ridley
Councillor T Sawdon
Councillor T Skipper
Councillor R Thay
Councillor S Walsh (substitute for Councillor R Singh)

Other Members: Councillor J Mutton, Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources

Employees by Directorate:

People B Barrett, L Commane, A Durrant, P Ward, J Williams

Place: S Bennett, V Castree

Apologies: Councillor R Singh

Public Business

47. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

48. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 March, 2017 were signed as a true record.

Further to Minute 43 relating to “2016/17 Quarter 3 Capital Programme” the Scrutiny Board noted that information requested in relation to West Midlands Combined Authority projects had been circulated,

RESOLVED that the scheduling of West Midlands Combined Authority capital schemes be included on the Work Programme for the Scrutiny Board in the new Municipal Year.

49. Digital Strategy Task & Finish Update Note

The Scrutiny Board considered a Briefing Note of the Deputy Chief Executive (People) which provide an update on progress made against the Digital Strategy.

At the last meeting of the Digital Strategy Task and Finish Group held on 22 November, 2016, there was an action that the Task and Finish Group hold select committee style meetings with the three main broadband providers however, due to the Council's involvement in the CSW Broadband project, this had had to be put on hold. The meetings will be held after the procurement process is completed in Autumn 2017.

Appendix 1 to the Briefing Note provided an update against each of the recommendations made by the Task and Finish Group in November, 2016.

The Digital Coventry Strategy was approved by Cabinet and Council on 21 February, 2017 and had been published on the Council's website. A communications plan has been developed to support the Strategy and promotion activity started during March. Appendix 2 to the Briefing Note provided an update on some of the key activities that have been taking place in relating to the Digital Strategy.

The Scrutiny Board questioned officers on aspects of the Briefing Note including:-

- Action being taken to address connectivity problems in areas across the City. Officers indicated that they would investigate setting up a process (possibly digital) to enable Councillors to log any areas in their wards that are experiencing connectivity problems.
- The E post project

The Chair, Councillor Kelly, encouraged Member of the Scrutiny Board to register on "my account" on the Council's website and provided any feedback to officers.

RESOLVED that the progress made against the Digital Strategy, as outlined in the Briefing Note, be noted.

50. **Report on the Outcome of the 2016/17 Early Retirement Voluntary Redundancy Programme**

The Scrutiny Board considered a Briefing Note of the Deputy Chief Executive (People) which provided an update on the outcome of the recent Early Voluntary Redundancy (ERVR) scheme. The Briefing Note outlined the current arrangements for exit payments and future proposals based on the impending changes to public sector exit payments that were the subject of a government consultation last year and what the potential future impact of changes on the Council were likely to be.

In a bid to meet the Council's financial challenges following reductions in government funding, the Council has run a number of ERVR programmes and the last one was launched in November, 2016. In total, 307 applications were made of which 91 (86 people) had been approved. This equated to around 30% of applications, which was consistent with previous rounds. All the exit costs were calculated in accordance with the Council's terms and conditions and were detailed in the Briefing Note and in an attached appendix.

The Briefing Note recognised that there were over 200 people who had applied for ERVR who were turned down and that this could cause upset and distraction across the workforce. It was proposed that in future, Council wide programmes should be avoided and instead the Council should appeal for volunteers for redundancy on a localised scale, ahead of structural changes aligned to business needs likely to result in workforce reductions.

Details of redundancy compensation were appended to the Briefing Note, which also detailed the resource implications of the current round of ERVR.

The Briefing Note also detailed proposals by the Government to reduce the costs of redundancy payments, to end six-figure exit payments and to ensure greater consistency between public sector workforces, together with proposed changes to the pension scheme.

The Scrutiny Board questioned officers on aspects of the Briefing Note and noted both the complexities of the Government's proposals in relation to changes to the public sector exit payments and the proposed changes to the pension scheme, together with the uncertainty regarding an implementation date for those changes. Officers indicated that they would circulate a presentation in relation to this to all members of the Scrutiny Board.

RESOLVED that the outcomes of the recent ERVR round, together with the potential changes to the national framework for pensions and redundancy arrangements be noted.

51. **Outstanding Issues Report**

All outstanding issues had been picked up in the Work Programme.

52. **Any other items of Urgent Public Business**

There were no other items of urgent public business.

53. **Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1) Work Programme 2016/17**

The Scrutiny Board noted the Work Programme for 2016/17

(Meeting closed at 2.50pm)