

**Coventry City Council**  
**Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources**  
**held at 10.00 am on Thursday, 12 October 2017**

Present:

Members:                           Councillor J Mutton (Cabinet Member)  
  Councillor Taylor (Shadow Cabinet Member)

Employees (by Directorate):

Ward

Place                               S Bennett, P Helm  
People                               S Ford, G Haynes, P Johnson, L Ward

Apologies:                        There were no apologies

**Public Business**

**45.       Declarations of Interest**

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests declared.

**46.       Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 August, 2017 were agreed and signed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

**47.       Willenhall Community Forum - Financial Support**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) which indicated that Willenhall Community Forum (WCF) had contacted Council officers earlier in the year to indicate that they were in financial difficulty, with cash flow forecasts suggesting that they would not be able to operate beyond June 2017.

WCF was created over 20 year ago to provide services of benefit to the local community and runs the Willenhall Education, Employment and Trading (WEET) centre which offers support to the Council's Adult Education Service and provides courses for adults with learning disabilities. It also provides nursery and child care provision through its trading arm, Eureka.

Council officers from across various services have worked with WCF to help them review their operation and their financial position, providing advice and challenge to help them demonstrate a more sustainable operation. The report detailed a number of changes WCF have made following the review and indicated that WCF now have a balanced annual budget but it is finely balanced and has nil reserves with no room for unexpected costs/income shortfalls. The report therefore proposed financial support to provide immediate comfort and further funding dependent on financial performance during the remainder of 2017/18 to ensure that WCF remain incentivised to continue to manage their finances robustly.

**RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources:-**

- (1) Approves the provision of an initial £10,000 cash flow grant support to Willenhall Community Forum, payable from the Cabinet Member Policy Contingency Fund, to be made payable as soon as possible.**
- (2) Approves further cash flow grant support of up to a maximum of £20,000 from the Cabinet Member Policy Contingency Fund, subject to Willenhall Community Forum's submission of a robust and sustainable financial business plan and cash flow forecast, and confirmation of its operation within that plan to the satisfaction of the Director of Finance and Corporate Services. This further cash flow grant support to be made available for drawdown by Willenhall Community Forum no later than 31 March, 2018.**
- (3) Delegates authority to the Director of Finance and Corporate Services to make the additional £20,000 payment on or before 31 March, 2018, once satisfied that Willenhall Community Forum have demonstrated their ability to operate as set out in their financial business plan and cash flow forecast.**

#### **48. Apprenticeship Levy Progress Report**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (People) which indicated that since April 2017, Coventry City Council had been required to pay the Apprenticeship Levy which is 0.5% of the Council's pay bill and which equated to approximately £1m per year. The Government also tops this up by a further 10%. Levy funding lasts for 24 months and if it is not spent within this period, it is reabsorbed by the Skills Funding Agency. The report detailed progress made since the introduction of the Levy and outlined proposals moving forward to effectively utilise the Council's Levy contribution.

The Apprenticeships and Early Careers Team is exploring the use of the following Apprenticeships Standards to upskill existing staff:-

- Leadership and Management Development
- Project Management for Non-Project Managers
- Human Resources

An analysis of corporate training spend has been undertaken with several areas identified where it may be viable to use apprenticeships to replace current training. A range of information relating to the Apprenticeship Levy has been sent to all schools that contribute to the Council's Levy funds. In addition, quality checks are being undertaken on Training providers that currently deliver Apprenticeships.

The following actions were proposed, details of which were outlined in the report, to continue to maximise the Council's Levy payments and to utilise the opportunities available:-

- Succession planning for new Apprenticeships
- Offering Apprenticeships to existing members of staff
- Offering Apprenticeships to natural “new hires”
- Continuing to work with schools
- Utilising the Employer Incentive
- Process for managing internal Apprentices
- Support for care leavers

The report also detailed timescales in relation to the implementation of the above.

**RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources:-**

- (1) Notes the progress made in utilising the Apprenticeship Levy for the benefit of new recruits, existing staff members and the City Council**
- (2) Endorses the proposed actions detailed in paragraph 3 of the report and requests officers to continue to maximise the Council’s Levy payments and to utilise the opportunities available.**

#### **49. Workforce Strategy Resource**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (People) which sought approval for the use of corporate reserves to enable timely delivery of the Workforce Strategy 2017-2020 to ensure that the Council’s workforce is agile, digitally able and committed to Coventry People.

The report indicated that a key part of the workforce delivery programme includes seeking to improve governance of employment costs, put in place fairer pay, recognition and rewards systems and seeking to adopt modern employment policies.

Officers across the Council have been embarking on a demanding change and improvement programme to realise the benefits outlined in the Workforce Strategy. The programme, which includes significant workforce reform, will support employees to be more confident, digitally capable and skilled in their respective professional and work area. Delivery of the workforce strategy will seek to improve arrangements in regard to employment governance, put in place effective management practices and ensure that employees are fully engaged and committed to the aims of the Council. In addition, the programme will also deliver on the savings target of £5 million per annum by 2019/2020, which is to be achieved by reducing employment costs in line with other public sector organisations.

Following analysis of the plan of work required to deliver the programme, approval was sought to the use of £750,000 from corporate reserves, distributed over the 3-4 year lifeline of the programme. It was anticipated that spend for this financial year would be less than £100k and that larger costs would be incurred in 2018-2020, with some residual costs in 2020-21.

**RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources approves the use of corporate reserves of £750,000 across 3 years as profiled in the report, to support the delivery of the Workforce Strategy Programme.**

50. **Agency Workers and Interim Managers - Performance Management Report Quarter 1**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (People) which provided performance information on the use of agency workers procured for the Quarter 1 period 1 April to 30 June 2017 and which detailed Interim Manager and other agency worker spend for the same period.

In relation to the People Directorate, the report indicated that there was a continuing reduction in spend this quarter and that the service continues to recruit permanent, experienced Children's social workers. However, despite the efforts being made to provide a robust induction and supportive environment, the number of new starters is not keeping pace with the number of leavers.

The cost of Children's Social Workers is being restrained by the West Midlands regional agreement. This involves 14 local authorities and has the effect of capping the rates paid to all newly appointed agency social workers. Q1 spend on Children's social workers is £ 553,387 (54.76% of Corporate Spend with Pertemps) compared with Q4 2016/17 which was £630,876 (50.55%).

The report also detailed spend outside of the Pertemps Contract, which includes workers contracted through other agencies outside of the Pertemps contract or contracted directly.

In relation to the Place Directorate spend, £127,000 was through the Professional Services Contract for infrastructure works which is externally funded. The successful recruitment to a casual pool within Waste Services has reduced the reliance on agency staff although the Service still experiences difficulties in attracting Drivers.

The report detailed alternative solutions to agency staff including a bank of casual workers, which had been expanded in anticipation of increases in workload and a recruitment campaign which had been developed with the objective of recruiting to 20 specialist roles within the Highways, Traffic and Transport Teams.

**RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources:-**

- (1) Notes the agency/interim spend for Quarter 1**
- (2) Notes the work done on providing in-house solutions as an**

**alternative to agency and interim workers**

- (3) Requests that when future reports on this issue are submitted for consideration, appropriate officers attend to enable the Cabinet Member to receive full explanations in relation to spending in their particular service area**

**51. Outstanding Issues**

The Cabinet Member noted a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) that identified an issue on which a further report had been requested.

**52. Any Other Items of Urgent Public Business**

There were no other items of urgent public business.

(Meeting closed at 10.45 am)