

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1) held
at 2.00 pm on Wednesday, 15 November 2017

Present:

Members: Councillor R Singh (Chair)
 Councillor S Bains
 Councillor J Blundell
 Councillor R Brown
 Councillor L Harvard
 Councillor T Sawdon
 Councillor K Taylor
 Councillor R Thay

Employees:

Place: V Castree, P Jennings, C Sinclair, P Ward

Public Business

15. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

16. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 September were signed as a true record.

17. ICT and Digital Update

The Board noted a presentation and briefing note which provided an ICT and digital update.

The topics covered were:

- Our position with Open Data -
 - The aim of the Digital Coventry Strategy was “Supporting open data and innovation”. Progress was regularly reported to the Information Management Strategy Group.
 - Regional approaches to develop a data and intelligence hub across the West Midlands were being explored, there was potential to bring about new markets and economic growth.
 - Cultural transformation to encourage and enable the publishing of service level data
- Staffing: Recruitment, retention and use of agency staff -
 - Staffing data was detailed including opportunities for graduate and apprentice roles and using contractor resources.
 - Working closely with suppliers when implementing new projects or technologies.
- Handling customer feedback for ICT and digital -
 - Information detailed on the delivery manager roles

- Use of user surveys, MyServiceDesk service portal, pop-up service desks and customer test groups
- Information on how we work with/benchmark against peer organisations
- The role of the Council in respect of Cyber Security.

Following discussion, the Board requested an update on the ICT Strategy at a future meeting and asked that the following information to be circulated to them:

- Out of hours telephone number for the IT service desk
- Examples of benchmarking against peer organisations

RESOLVED to note the presentation and requested the additional information as detailed above.

18. **Medium Term Financial Strategy 2018-2021**

The Board considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) which presented the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2018-21. The report would also be presented to Cabinet on 28 November and Council on 5 December 2017.

The Strategy set out the financial planning foundations that supported the Council's vision and priorities and lead to the setting of the Council's revenue and capital budgets.

Indications were that the government was maintaining its commitment to the current 4 year funding settlement for local government. To qualify for this, the Council approved an Efficiency Plan within the previously approved MTFS for 2017-20.

Local authorities continued to face severe financial pressures. Although the previous government policy of targeting a budget surplus by 2020 had been pushed back, uncertainty as a result of Brexit negotiations and over the future of local government finance meant that the pressure on public finances was unlikely to ease significantly in the foreseeable future. The Strategy assumed that reductions in available revenue resources and spending levels were likely to continue.

In introducing the report, the Board noted that the Council's financial position had worsened as a result of shortfalls in delivery of its existing savings plans and growing costs of looked after children and homelessness. The Council's current medium term budget process would need to be applied flexibly and may, for instance, require the adoption of measures which have a more short-term focus or re-evaluate the Council's approach to financial risk. Where this was necessary, the implications would be set out in full as part of the decision making process.

Arising from discussion, the Board agreed to consider the topic of business rates at a future meeting.

RESOLVED to note the report.

19. **Outstanding Issues Report**

There were no outstanding issues.

20. **Work Programme**

The Board noted the Work Programme and that the 'ICT Strategy' and 'Business Rates' would be added as set out in minutes 17 and 18 above.

21. **Any other items of Public Business**

There were no other items of business.

(Meeting closed at 3.35 pm)