

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources
held at 10.00 am on Thursday, 26 September 2019

Present:

Members: Councillor J Mutton (Cabinet Member)

Employees:

People: A Durrant, R Grewal, S Griffin, G Haynes, S Newing,
L Sobierski

Place: J Barlow, S Bennett, P Jennings, A West

Apologies: Councillor T Sawdon (Shadow Cabinet Member)

Public Business

7. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

8. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 July, 2019 were agreed and signed as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

9. Final Hospitality Statement and Charity Appeal for the Lord Mayoralty of Councillor John Blundell 2018/19

The Cabinet Member considered the end of year hospitality budget report for the Mayoral Year of Councillor John Blundell 2018/19. The report provided an update on how the budget was allocated during the Mayoral Year which resulted in a total spend of £62,288.79, representing an underspend of £3,307.21 which was returned to corporate reserves.

An Appendix to the report provided details of the individual civic engagements undertaken by Coventry's first citizen and ceremonial head to meet a range of priorities from community engagement to international events. The Lord Mayoralty also provided an opportunity to showcase the City and promote relationships with local businesses.

The Cabinet Member noted that a total of £8,565.47 had been raised for the Lord Mayor's Charity Appeal, the beneficiaries of which were the Haemochromatosis Society and Coventry Enterprise Club for the Disabled.

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

- 1) **Notes the contents of the Appendix to the report which sets out detailed expenditure of £62,288.79 against the hospitality budget; and**
- 2) **Notes the final sum of £8,565.47 raised for the Lord Mayor's Charity Appeal 2018/19**

10. **Policy Contingency Grant - Hope Community Project**

The Cabinet Member considered a report which sought retrospective approval for grant funding of £1,000 to Hope Community Projects, specifically to support a project support for families over the 2019 Easter school holidays in the Hillfields area of Coventry.

The Cabinet Member is responsible for approving the allocation of resources of up to £75,000 each year from on-going Policy Contingency budget. The £1,000 grant had already been funded from with the 2018/19 Policy Contingency budget which had an underspend in 2018/19 of £49,000.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources approves retrospectively a one-off grant of £1,000 to Hope Community Projects.

11. **Apprenticeship Levy Transfer**

The Cabinet Member considered a report which indicated that the City Council, through its Apprenticeship Levy, is able to transfer up to 25% of its £1.1m apprenticeship fund on an annual basis to either one or a number of non-levy paying employers. The report outlined a proposal on how the Council could use its 25% Levy Transfer.

Like many employers, the City Council has been unable to utilise all of its Levy and, to maximise the local impact, has been considering how it could use the 25% transfer option to best effect, including supporting the City of Culture, focusing the funds on LAC/Care Leavers and targeting hard to reach/vulnerable groups. At a recent meeting of the Skills Board, chaired by the Director of Education and Skills, a proposal was put forward that the transfer could be allocated to non-levy employers across the City on a first come first served basis via the work of the Economic Development Service, whose role would be to support non-levy employers to increase their own apprenticeship numbers, increase the skills levels across the City and reduce the numbers of unemployed.

The Skills and Growth (S&G) Team, which sits within the Economic Development Service, can offer support for the Council's transfer of levy work by assisting with activity that would support engagement registration and the levy transfer. The support being offered by the S&G team was outlined in the report, including proposed detailed activities.

If approved, the activity could commence immediately so that the Council could transfer 25% of its levy to multiple employers and would enable processes and a marketing and communication plan to be agreed and put in place with immediate effect. It is possible that a large number of employers who can receive and will

want to receive a levy transfer will be Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs) with less than 50 employees who can only receive transfers for employees who are aged 25 years plus, as the Government currently funds all other apprenticeships for these businesses. The Job Shop will be able to work with employers who qualify to receive a levy transfer and would enable the Job Shop to promote the offer on a first come first serve basis and refer interested employers to the S&G Team to process their expressions of interest.

The Cabinet Member welcomed the proposal and asked officers about other opportunities to maximise the use of the Apprenticeship Levy Fund across the City.

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

- 1) Approves the utilisation of up to 25% of Coventry City Council's annual Apprenticeship Levy transfer as detailed in paragraph 2 of the report**
- 2) Requests officers to investigate ways of working with the larger employers in the City with a view to maximising the use of the Apprenticeship Levy fund across the City and report back to a future meeting.**

12. Agency Workers - Q1 Performance Management Report: 1 April to 30 June, 2019

The Cabinet Member considered a report which provided performance information on the use of agency workers procured for the Quarter 1 period, 1 April to 30 June, 2019.

The report provided Directorate commentary on agency worker spend for Q1, together with comparative expenditure for the Master Vendor contract between Q4 2018/19 and Q1 2019/20, as well as Q1 2018/19 and Q1 2019/20. There has been an increase of £18k in spend between Q4 2018/19 and Q1 2019/20 and a decrease of £41k compared to the same quarter in 2018/19.

The report highlighted the following areas:-

- Children's Services - A continued stable positive downward trajectory of agency staff since December 2018 with a further 15% decrease in agency numbers in comparison to Q4. There has been a 4% increase in filled posts during Q1 of 2019/20 and a 13% increase over the past 12 months. Childrens Services hosted another evening to ensure recruitment and the development of a social work academy is attracting cohorts of 12 newly qualified social workers into a highly supportive and learning environment for the first six months of their career is contributing to increased stability and reduced turnover.
- Adult Services – The number of agency social workers in Adult Services continues to cover posts which are being permanently recruited to and to maintain operational service levels. There has

been a £13k increase from Q4 to Q1, the reasons for which were detailed in the report, including maintaining operational services at optimal levels whilst permanent recruitment is underway.

- Customer Services and Transformation - Agency spend of £138k for Q1 in Customer Services and Business Services represented a 62% increase on Q4 and the report detailed reasons for the continued usage of temporary workers including a review of Business Services; support for Housing Benefit Online Forms; additional agency staff to deal with an increase in work regarding temporary accommodation; and the use of agency staff to assist with the closure of Mitel and migration to Skype.
- Waste Services – Spend in domestic waste related primarily to drivers and refuse collectors which has been used to cover sickness and leave due to insufficient cover in the casual pool. A number of individuals in the casual pool have moved to seasonal and full-time positions in both domestic and commercial waste with recruitment into the pool now due.
- Streetpride – Q1 spend continues to reflect the high number of vacant posts within the service and the seasonal nature of the service. A recent recruitment activity will reduce this spend in the next quarter.
- Planning Services – The team has experienced various vacancies over the last couple of years due to the level of workload in the team and difficulty recruiting to the vacancies.
- Finance and Corporate Services – There are some delays in recruitment posts to support career development opportunities pending qualification
- City Centre and Major Projects – All permanent recruitment has been put on hold while a transformation project is scoped and any change concluded.
- Project Management and Property Services - A full time Building Surveyor position has now been created so previous spend on an agency Building Surveyor has now ceased and outsourcing of building consultancy reduced

The report also detailed comparative expenditure outside of the Reed contract between Q4 2018/19 and Q1 2019/20 as well as Q1 2018/19 and Q4 2019/20. There has been a decrease of £210k in spend outside of the Reed contract between Q4 and Q1 and a decrease of £79.5k in comparison to the same Q1 2018/19. Further details relating to this were contained in the report.

The Cabinet Member indicated that he welcomed the downward trend, particularly in Children's Services.

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

- 1) **Notes the recruitment and retention challenges impacting and affecting the business and strategies in place or working towards to support these**
- 2) **Notes the agency/interim spends for Q1 2019/20**
- 3) **Notes the cumulative spend for both agency workers via the Reed contract and outside the Reed contract**
- 4) **Welcomes the upward trajectory of permanent filled posts in Childrens' Services**

13. **Outstanding Issues**

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources noted a report on outstanding issues on which further reports had been requested.

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

There were no other items of urgent public business.

(Meeting closed at 10.30 am)