

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1) held
at 10.00 am on Monday, 7 October 2013

Present:

Members: Councillor R Sandy (Chair)
Councillor N Akhtar
Councillor R Lakha
Councillor J Mutton (Substitute for Councillor Chater)
Councillor T Sawdon
Councillor H S Sehmi
Councillor T Skipper

Other Members: Councillors D Gannon, Cabinet Member (Strategic Finance and Resources)

Employees (by Directorate):

V Castree, Resources Directorate
N Clews, Place Directorate
L Commane, Resources Directorate
B Hastie, Resources Directorate
P Jennings, Resources Directorate
S Symonds, Resources Directorate
M Vickery, Place Directorate

Apologies: Councillor D Chater, K Foster, M Hammon, C Miks and K Taylor

Public Business

20. Apologies

Members of Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) were invited for consideration of agenda item 4 – Strategic Property Review and Council Move to Friargate. Apologies were received from Councillors Hammon and Taylor.

21. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interests.

22. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 September, 2013 were signed as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

23. Strategic Property Review and Council Move to Friargate (Kickstart)

The Scrutiny Board received a presentation from officers in regard to the governance arrangements concerning the Strategic Property Review and the

Council move to Friargate (Kickstart). The Board sought assurances regarding the accuracy and viability of the financial information included in the planning process..

In discussing the Strategic Property Review, the Board raised a number of issues and concerns, including:

- Questioning whether the Council was utilising the properties already within its ownership to full potential as there were savings to be made from not using external venues for meetings and seminars.
- Challenging how much work had been done on the rationalisation of the use of leased properties in light of the numbers of available properties within Council ownership.
- Questioning what work had been done to ensure the most economical rationalisation and disposal of the numerous small pockets of land owned and being maintained at a cost across the city.

In regard to the governance of the programme to move the Council to Friargate, the Board was wanted to understand the analysis and monitoring of the financial implications for the City Council. They questioned officers about:

- Early soft market testing in respect of buildings to be vacated
- Accuracy of the information in respect of job creation
- What jobs would be created and where
- How the budget for the project was being managed
- The management and monitoring of the repair and maintenance budget
- Comparisons with similar projects
- Availability of a site map illustrating current and proposed buildings

24. **Medium Term Financial Strategy 2014-2017**

The Scrutiny Board received a report of the Executive Director, Resources, which presented a Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for 2014-2017 for adoption by the City Council. The previous strategy had been approved in January 2013. The Strategy underpinned the medium term policy and financial planning process that was fundamental to setting revenue and capital budgets. Following the Strategy's consideration by Council, the subsequent meeting of Cabinet would consider the Pre-Budget report that sets out the work undertaken in preparation for the 2014/15 and future years' revenue budget and capital programme.

The Board was concerned with the management of risks, particularly those at a Directorate level, as it was unclear as to the amount of Member involvement in monitoring those risks not on the Corporate Risk Register.

RECOMMENDED THAT a briefing note be prepared for Cabinet with the following recommendations:

- (i) That Cabinet recommend that the risk register attached to the Medium Term Financial Strategy is updated to reflect the current situation regarding risks, before the report goes to Council.
- (ii) That Cabinet Member (Policy and Leadership) recommends that each Cabinet Member receives and considers a list of weighted risks within their area of responsibility on a half yearly, informal basis and that these lists are available to all Members upon request.

25. **Outstanding Issues Report**

Outstanding issues had been picked up in the Work Programme

26. **Work Programme 2013-14**

The work programme was noted. Members asked that the sale of commercial services to schools be added to the programme.

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

There were no additional items of business.

28. **Meeting Evaluation**

The meeting was viewed as very positive and informative.

(Meeting closed at 11.45 am)