

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member (Strategic Finance and Resources)
held at 2.00 pm on Monday, 2 December 2013

Present:

Members: Councillor D Gannon (Cabinet Member)

Employees:

J Barlow, Resources Directorate
J Bilen, Resources Directorate
J Crawley, Resources Directorate
T Savill, Resources Directorate
D Skinner, Resources Directorate
N Sutaria, Resources Directorate
S Symonds, Resources Directorate
L Welton, Resources Directorate
C West, Executive Director, Resources

Apologies: Councillor T Sawdon (Shadow Cabinet Member)

Public Business

32. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

33. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2013 were agreed and signed as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

34. Progress against the Procurement Strategy 2010 - 2015

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Executive Director, Resources, which was a summary of progress against the strategy with recommendations for further development of the strategy that had been approved by the Cabinet Member at his meeting in June 2010. The same strategy had also been adopted by Solihull and Warwickshire Councils with a view to working as a shared procurement service with the resultant benefits of reduction in duplication of effort, economies of scale and increased purchasing power. Cabinet Member also received a briefing note from Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1), which had considered the report at its meeting on 25 November 2015. There were no additional recommendations from the Board.

RESOLVED that after due consideration of the report and the matters raised at the meeting the Cabinet Member:

- (1) Considered the comments from Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board**
- (2) Endorsed the progress against the procurement strategy.**

35. **Holiday Purchase Scheme**

Cabinet Member received a report of the Executive Director, Resources, which gave information relating to the potential introduction of a holiday purchase scheme, through which employees could purchase up to a defined number of additional days leave dependent upon service delivery requirements.

A Holiday Purchase Scheme allowed employees to buy additional annual leave and pay for it through deductions from salary over the course of the annual leave year. This made the purchase of additional annual leave more affordable from the employee's perspective.

The Holiday Purchase Scheme would be opened up to employees on 1 February 2014 for a four week period to enable them to purchase additional annual leave for the 2014/15 leave year

RESOLVED that after due consideration of the report and matters raised at the meeting, the Cabinet Member approved the introduction of a holiday purchase scheme as set out within the report in order for the organisation to trial the holiday purchase scheme in 2014/15. A review of the scheme would take place in January 2015.

36. **First Quarter Hospitality Budget report for Lord Mayor (Crookes) 2013/14**

The Cabinet Member received a report of the Executive Director, Resources, which was the first hospitality report for the mayoral year of Councillor Gary Crookes. It updated the Cabinet Member on how the budget had been spent during the first quarter of the mayoral year 2013/14 and estimated expenditure for the second quarter. The annual hospitality budget for the mayoral year was £65,596.

RESOLVED that after due consideration of the report and matters raised at the meeting, the Cabinet Member endorsed the contents of the report which described how the hospitality budget had been spent on an event by event basis.

37. **6 month (April - September 2013) Cumulative Sickness Absence 2013/2014**

Cabinet Member received a report of the Executive Director, Resources, which contained the cumulative sickness absence figures for the Council and individual directorates.

Annual and quarterly information was based on full time equivalent (FTE) average days lost per person against the FTE average days per person available to work. This was the method previously required by the Audit Commission for annual Best Value performance indicator reporting. The City Council continued to use this method to ensure consistency with previously published data.

RESOLVED that after due consideration of the report and the matters raised at the meeting, the Cabinet Member received the report providing sickness absence data for the six-month period of April-September 2013 and endorsed the actions taken to monitor and manage sickness.

38. Agency Workers and Interim Managers - Performance Management Report Q2 (1 July to 30 September 2013).

Cabinet Member received a report of the Executive Director, Resources, which contained performance information on the use of agency workers procured through the Master Vendor Contract for quarter two period 1 July to 30 September 2013 and compared quarter one 2013/14 with quarter two 2013/14 expenditure. It also detailed the interim manager spends for the same period.

The Master Vendor contract required all agency workers to be ordered through Reed Recruitment and came into force on 2 May 2011. Reed would supply all suitable agency workers through their own agency or through a second tier arrangement with other agencies on behalf of the Council using rates of pay based on an agreed pay policy and a negotiated mark-up rate with Reed. The information supplied by Reed on the agency spends gave detailed information on agency worker usage and spends.

RESOLVED that after due consideration of the report and matters raised at the meeting, the Cabinet Member

- (1) Approved monitoring processes to continue for both agency workers and interim managers**
- (2) Endorsed compliance with the corporate policy on the recruitment of temporary agency workers through the Master Vendor, Reed Recruitment, and interim managers through the Preferred Suppliers list**
- (3) Instructed officers to continue to work towards reducing expenditure on the use of agency workers**
- (4) Approved that future orders were not accepted if no reason was given for the need for the agency worker.**

39. Performance within the Revenues Service for the period April 2013 - September 2013

Cabinet Member received a report of the Executive Director, Resources, which updated on performance and developments within the revenues service during the period April 2013 to September. The revenues service was responsible for the collection of more than £111 million of Council Tax from 136,000 domestic properties, more than £120 million of non-domestic rates from 8,000 properties and more than £90 million of corporate income. The service was forecasting to collect 96.0 per cent of Council Tax and 98.5 per cent of Business Rates in 2013/14. The service had reduced council tax arrears by 21 per cent between April and September.

The service has also expected the level of corporate debt outstanding for more than six months to reduce to below the £0.8 million operational target by the end of March 2014.

Compared with the first six months of 2012/13, the Council had collected an additional £2.4 million of council tax and an additional £2.3 million of business rates.

RESOLVED that after due consideration of the report and matters raised at the meeting, the Cabinet Member

- (1) Endorsed the performance of the revenues service for the period 1 April 2013 to 30 September 2013**
- (2) Agreed to receive a further report at the first meeting of the 2014/15 municipal calendar year to provide an update for the period April 2013 to March 2014**

40. Performance within the Benefits Service for the period April 2013 - September 2013

Cabinet Member received a report of the Executive Director, Resources, which updated on performance and developments within the benefits service during the financial year 2013/14. The benefits service in Coventry administered more than £160 million (paying Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support) to more than 40,000 households. The service processed the average new claim for benefit in 24.8 days and processed the average notification of a change in circumstances in 19.7 days. During the first six months of 2013-14, the Service had dealt with a number of additional pressures through the Government's significant programme of Welfare Reforms.

RESOLVED that after due consideration of the report and the matters raised at the meeting, the Cabinet Member

- (1) Endorsed the performance of the benefits service for the period 1 April to 30 September 2013**
- (2) Agreed to receive a further report at the first meeting of the 2014/15 municipal calendar to provide an update for the financial year 2013-14.**

41. Outstanding Issues

There were no outstanding issues.

42. Any other items of public business which the Cabinet Member decides to take as matters of urgency because of the special circumstances involved.

There were no other items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 2.50 pm)