

**Coventry City Council**  
**Minutes of the Meeting of Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1) held**  
**at 10.00 am on Monday, 13 January 2014**

Present:

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

Other Members:           Councillors J Clifford

Employees:

B Black, Resources Directorate  
L Commane, Resources Directorate  
J Crawley, Resources Directorate  
L Knight, Resources Directorate  
A Pepper, People Directorate  
A Walster, Place Directorate  
A West, Resources Directorate

Apologies:                Councillor C Miks

**Public Business**

**37.     Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**38.     Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> November, 2013 were signed as a true record. Further to Minute 31 headed 'Procurement Strategy', the Board were informed that this report had been endorsed by the Cabinet Member (Strategic Finance and Resources) at his meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 2013 and that he had received a briefing note outlining issues discussed at the Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board. In relation to Minute 32 headed 'Social Value Act – Consultation', the Board noted that the consultation on the draft policy had concluded just before Christmas and the Board would receive updates in due course.

**39.     Agency Workers and Interim Managers - 6 Month Performance Report**

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director, Resources which detailed performance information on the use of agency workers procured through the Master Vendor Contract for the quarter two period from 1<sup>st</sup> July to 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2013. The report also compared expenditure for the first two quarters of 2013/14 and considered Interim Manager spends for the same periods. The report had previously been considered by the Cabinet Member (Strategic Finance and Resources) at his meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 2013 (Minute 38/13 refers). It was submitted to the Board in light of recommendations about compliance with policies and governance; the increase in spend since the previous quarter; and the change of Master Vendor provider.

The Master Vendor contract covering the first two quarters required all agency workers to be ordered through Reed Recruitment. They supplied 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 across the different Council Directorates. These details were set out in appendices attached to the report.

The Board were informed that this contract with the Master Vendor provider ended on 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2013. The contract, which was a joint contract with Warwickshire and Solihull, transferred to Pertemps UK on 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 2013. The new contract was for a hybrid Master Vendor arrangement and provided the Council with additional advantages to the previous contract.

Members of the Board questioned the officers and responses were provided. Matters raised included:

- Details about the transition between Master Vendor providers
- Specific issues in parts of the Place Directorate and Children's Social Care identified in the report
- The approaches being taken corporately and within services to put effective recruitment arrangements in place to address posts that had been vacant for a long time, rather than placing continual reliance on agency workers filling the gaps
- Information about working hours of the bank staff used by the Council
- The measures being taken to address the spend on replacing leavers and the arrangements in place for short and long term succession planning in order to reduce this
- The lack of in depth analysis of sickness cover and how better information could be used to target reductions in spend
- The suggestion that, in future, members be provided with the performance data information at an earlier stage
- What was being done to improve the quality of diversity monitoring with the new contract provider
- The position in relation to off contract spend and particularly the extent to which some of this was unauthorised
- Areas of concern and the actions being taken to address the issues of compliance and governance that were the subject of recommendations to the Cabinet Member.

The Board also questioned how the decision to change the master vendor contract following a tendering process from Reed Recruitment to Pertemps had been authorised and it was agreed that this would be reported back at the next meeting.

**RESOLVED that:**

**(i) The six month performance report be accepted.**

**(ii) A more comprehensive analysis of sickness absence and a more detailed analysis of off contract spend which identified the unauthorised spends to be included in future performance reports.**

#### 40. **Customer Journey - Vision and Strategy**

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director, Resources which reconfirmed the vision and strategy for the way the Council delivered customer services, which would underpin the changes required prior to the opening of the single Customer Services Centre in Broadgate House by 2015. The programme to deliver the changes to customers facing property, ICT and the Council's ways of working was called 'Customer Journey' and this covered every aspect of the Council's interactions Coventry citizens. The report was also to be considered by the Cabinet Member (Strategic Finance and Resources) at his meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> January, 2014.

The way many residents wished to interact with the Council had changed, which was aligned to the way they interacted with their bank and the Council needed to respond to this need.

The current financial climate meant that the Council needed to ensure that services were as efficient as possible. The focus was on the practical aspects of good customer services – how people wanted to make contact and making this simpler and more cost effective and using new technology to benefit everyone. Part of the planned move to Friargate involved investing in improved customer services which would deliver savings and continue to provide services to the most vulnerable.

The Board questioned the officers on a number of issues and responses were provided. Matters raised included:

- The importance of effective engagement with citizens in designing and testing out new approaches in order to ensure that they would be easy to use
- The current low level of on-line transactions
- The support available to help people move from the current to new ways of accessing services and the timing of this to make sure that people were not left stranded
- The importance of effective management information in designing and developing new approaches and ensuring that managers had the skills to use this effectively
- The measures being put in place to address the significant culture change required for citizens, front line staff and services

- The equality impacts of the changes, both in relation to the physical Customer Services Centre at Broadgate House and other channel of access.
- The requirement to have an equality impact assessment carried out as soon as possible to support the customer journey work
- In light of the aspiration for Coventry to be a dementia friendly city, the inclusion of dementia in the equality impact analysis
- The involvement of Members in the customer journey work, using their experiences of working with their constituents.

The Board were informed of the establishment of a Member Reference Group to support this work of the Council.

**RESOLVED that:**

**(i) The Cabinet Member (Strategic Finance and Resources) be requested to: (1) ensure that an equality impact analysis is carried out as soon as possible and (2) ensure that the equality impact analysis addresses the needs of people with dementia.**

**(ii) That six monthly progress reports on the Customer Journey be submitted to future meetings of the Board.**

**41. Transformation Programme Progress Report**

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director, Resources which set out what had been achieved in 2013/14 to date with the Transformation Programme and how the Programme was contributing to the significant challenges facing the City Council. The report was also to be considered by the Cabinet Member (Strategic Finance and Resources) at his meeting on 20th January, 2014.

The Transformation Programme was launched in June 2009 and its delivery remained a key element of the Council's response to continuing cuts in local government resources. The emphasis on abc (A Bolder Coventry) was to move towards challenging the things the Council needed to consider stopping doing or doing in partnership with others, in particular in high spend areas. Services would be focused on supporting the most vulnerable. The importance and benefits of Kickstarting the Friargate business district by relocating the Council's office estate into the first office building were also outlined.

The financial savings required to be made over the next three years were highlighted. An appendix to the report showed the forecast and budgeted savings for recently completed and live reviews and provided an explanation for variances.

The Board questioned the officer on a number of issues and responses were provided. Matters raised included:

- The reason for the shortfall against the commercial waste review and the opportunities for marketing
- How effectively the Council used the network of services to promote each other, for example through communications on business rates, or how intelligence gathered by Environmental Health could be used to promote commercial waste services where problems were identified

- The reasons for the shortfall against the savings target in the Children, Learning and Young People Review, the impact of this on the medium term financial strategy and the role of and fees paid to external consultants.

**RESOLVED that the progress that has been made in delivering specific reviews in the Transformation Programme be noted.**

**42. Work Programme 2013-14**

The Board noted the work programme for 2013-14

**43. Outstanding Issues Report**

All outstanding issues had been included in the Work Programme, Minute 42 above refers.

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

There were no additional items of public business.

**45. Meeting Evaluation**

The Board evaluated the meeting which was viewed as very useful.

(Meeting closed at 11.50 am)