

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1) held
at 10.00 am on Wednesday, 1 July 2015

Present:

Members: Councillor J Mutton (Chair)
 Councillor S Bains
 Councillor J Blundell
 Councillor D Chater
 Councillor L Harvard
 Councillor R Lakha
 Councillor D Skinner
 Councillor T Skipper
 Councillor D Welsh

Employees:

Chief Executives: J Moynihan

Resources: A Bellingeri
 V Castree
 L Commane
 P Jennings
 C Sinclair
 C West

Apologies: Councillor G Duggins, D Gannon and T Sawdon

Public Business

1. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

2. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2015 were agreed. There were no matters arising.

3. **Outstanding Issues Report**

Outstanding issues have been picked up in the Work Programme.

4. **Update on Customer Journey Programme and Customer Services performance**

Further to Minute 3/14 of the Board at which they had requested a 6-month progress report, Members considered a briefing note which provided an update on the Customer Journey programme and Customer Service performance.

The briefing note set out details of the savings needing to be delivered through the Kickstart and Customer Journey programme by 2017/18 and detailed the on-going work to encourage customers to self-serve online. Progress since the August 2014 report included:

- New payment system
- Redesigned website
- Online self-serve (MyAccount)
- Centralised customer services
- Telephone queuing facility
- Commencement of fundamental redesign of service delivery

The briefing note also set out services challenges:

- Loss of contact centre staff (early retirement/voluntary redundancy programme)
- Changing services can lead to increase in calls
- Unpredictable demand in some areas
- Technology challenges in advance of upgrades and replacement of telephone system
- Legislative changes such as the Care Act placed additional obligations on the Council.

Members questioned officers on a number of issues and discussion ensued specifically in respect of the work being undertaken to encourage customers to transact business online particularly in respect of how vulnerable clients and those who did not have computers could access services.

It was reported that efficiencies would only be possible if the Council is able to reduce the number of expensive forms of contacts such as face to face and by telephone, to self-service. The following initiatives would assist customers:

- Self-serve facilities would be provided at Broadgate house, including a “meet and greet” service to help customers use them.
- In Adult Social Care, a focus on customers being given the right advice and signposting at the first point of contact supported by social workers located in the contact centre.
- Social media to highlight online services.
- Increasing direct debit uptake to pay council tax

A new, reliable telephone system, a review of voice mail messages and a complete review of letters/communications, together with proactive web and twitter messaging would help reduce the number of calls.

Arising from the discussion, Members recommended that the Cabinet Member consider the risk register and requested a breakdown of the type of calls received in order to identify where service improvement was needed. Addressing those areas of improvement would then lead to fewer calls/contacts.

RESOLVED that the Board note actions being taken and progress in respect of the Customer Journey programme and recommend that the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources, consider the risk register related to the Customer Journey programme and Kickstart.

5. Revenue and Capital Outturn Report 2014-2015

The Board noted the 2014/15 Revenue and Capital Outturn report. The report had also been considered by Cabinet on 17 June, Audit and Procurement on 22 June and Council on 23 June.

The report outlined the final revenue and capital outturn position for 2014/15 and reviewed treasury management activity and 2014/15 Prudential Indicators reported under the Prudential Code for Capital Finance.

The overall financial position included the following headline items:

- Revenue overspending of £2.2m which will be balanced to nil after a planned contribution from the General Fund Balance.
- £10.3m of costs due to early retirement and voluntary redundancy. This follows and is consistent with approval of the programme of staffing reductions agreed by Cabinet in August 2014.
- Headline variations including an over-spend of £6.4m within the People Directorate and an under-spend of £5.7m within the Asset Management Revenue Account.
- Capital Programme expenditure of £101m and capital spending of £22m rescheduled into 2015/16.
- Overall reserve balances increasing from £81m to £84.5m

Arising from discussion, a question was asked about an anomaly in the data relating to expenditure in respect of grants covering the Disabled Facilities Grant. It was agreed that this would be looked at by officers and reported to members of the Board by email.

6. Work Programme 2015-16

The Board noted the work programme for the year. Work was ongoing to identify dates for all items currently listed in the “dates to be determined” section of the document. The Chair indicated that, should the amount of business exceed the number of meetings currently scheduled, it may be necessary to convene an additional meeting to ensure all business identified in the work programme is dealt with by the end of the municipal year.

7. Any other items of Public Business

There were no other items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 11.10 am)