

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources
held at 10.00 am on Thursday, 21 July 2016

Present:

Members: Councillor J Mutton (Cabinet Member)
Councillor T Sawdon (Shadow Cabinet Member)

Other Members: Councillor K Maton

Employees: J Barlow, G Haynes, P Johnson, G Paddan, R Parkes,
Resources: S McGinty, E White, A West

People: M McGinty

Public Business

1. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

2. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2016 were noted and signed.

3. **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

4. **12 month (April 2015 - March 2016) Cumulative Sickness Absence 2015/2016**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Executive Director of Resources which provided information on the 12 month (April 2016 – March 2016) Cumulative sickness absence levels. The report enabled the Cabinet Member to monitor the levels of sickness absence for that period and the actions being taken to manage absence and promote health at work across the City Council.

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

The report provided the cumulative sickness absence figures for the Council and individual directorates. Appendix 3 attached to the report illustrated that on most occasions of sickness the absence across the City Council in April 2015-March 2016 was Infections, Colds and Flu accounting for 3,112 occasions. The amount of time lost due to infections was 7260.24 days. The time lost through Stress, Depression and Anxiety was 16,174.52 and the second, third and fourth most prevalent reason for time lost was due to Other Musculo-Skeletal Problems

14,261.97 days (1090 occasions); Stomach, Liver and Gastroenteritis 7370.85 days (2916 occasions).

The data provided within Appendices 2 and 4 reflected the new Directorates and establishment (the implementation of the Resources, People and Place Directorates). Appendix 5 provided the breakdown between frequent and long-term absence levels during 2015-16.

The report noted that training has allowed Managers the opportunity to refresh their knowledge and understanding of the promoting Health at Work process. Members considered the 'Talking Health, Safety and Wellbeing' article which is published weekly; the activities during Quarter 4 from the Occupational Health Team together with targets for 2016-17. A breakdown of the key findings of the audit was detailed in the report.

The Cabinet Member requested a briefing note on stress related illnesses and the information to be shared with the Leader of the Council.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources notes the report providing sickness absence data for the 12 month period of 1 April 2015 – 31 March 2016 and endorse the actions taken to monitor and manage sickness.

5. **Agency Workers and Interim Managers - Performance Management Report Q4 (1 January to 31 March 2016) with a final summary of 2015/16 compared with 2014/15**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Executive Director of Resources which provided performance information on the use of agency workers procured through the Master Vendor Contract for the Q4 period 1 January to 31 March 2016; to compare Q4 2015/16 with Q3 2015/16 expenditure. To also compare the final figures on agency workers for 2015/16 with the previous year 2014/15. The report also provided information on interim manager spends for the same periods.

The Master Vendor contract required all agency workers to be ordered through the Master Vendor, Pertemps and came into force on the 2 December 2013. The report showed the comparison for Q3 for 2015/16 with Q4 2015/16 on the spend and increase/decreases. The Master Vendor Contract covered all agency workers with the exception of interim managers for HAY Graded posts and agency works in schools.

The information provided showed a small increase in spend this quarter of £14,806 (0.88%). Data was provided for three main Directorates; People, Place and Resources. It was noted that there had been an increase in off-contract spend for both People and Resources Directorates.

The report provided the results of a consultation which has been undertaken and set out the steps the Council was taking to reduce expenditure on agency works, particularly in those areas where they were used most intensively.

The quarterly monitoring of expenditure on agency workers would continue throughout the contract. The cost of agency workers for the current reporting

period from Pertemps system was £1,888,837 which equates to 4.8% of the overall wage bill for this quarter (excluding schools).

The Cabinet Member noted that there had been an increase in agency workers in certain service areas within the Council and invited reassurance on the use of expensive interim staff for any length of time together with appropriate briefing of Members. Furthermore, a draft policy to be drawn up on approval for agency spends with suitable record of the justification.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources:

- 1. Approves monitoring processes to continue for both Agency workers and Interim Managers.**
- 2. Endorses compliance with the corporate policy on the recruitment of Temporary Agency Workers through the Master Vendor, Pertemps.**
- 3. Instructs officers to continue to work towards reducing expenditure on the use of agency workers.**
- 4. Requests that the Deputy Leader speaks to the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner in respect of the time taken in carrying out Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks for social worker appointments. Also to hold conversations with neighbouring Police and Crime Commissioners on this issue.**

6. Apprenticeship Strategy

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Executive Director of Resources, which showed that the Council has been committed to Apprenticeships for many years and introduced its first Apprenticeship Strategy in 2011. The new three year Apprenticeship strategy has been produced which focuses on the Council's long term commitment to continue to develop its apprenticeship programme, ensuring high quality at every level across all pathways.

The Council remains firmly committed to developing its workforce and increasing the number of young people working for it. The report noted that the Apprenticeship Strategy outlined what the Council wants to achieve over the next three years. Work was underway with a range of organisations and services both internal and external to the Council promoting the benefits of apprenticeship to all.

Councillor Maton spoke at the meeting on the need for an apprenticeship strategy for the City as well as one for the Council. Consideration was given to the Apprenticeship Levy which will be driven by targets and would place a burden on local authorities at a time of reduction in funding. One way of meeting the targets within the period is for all public and private contributions to be pooled locally, enabling local partners to commission provision based on local employer demand.

Members and Officers present discussed the Apprenticeship Levy, which has been introduced and applies to local authorities with 250 staff or more, an apprenticeship recruitment target of 2.3 percent of the workforce headcount per year. It was noted that such a levy would be a financial burden at a time of

reduction to funding. It was suggested that public and private contribution to be pooled locally, enabling local partners to commission provision based on local employer demand. It was noted that the Levy should not replace national apprenticeship funding streams funding. Rather, national funds should be matched with it and devolved locally. The Cabinet Member proposed that each directorate be requested to create apprenticeships and the Strategy to be amended accordingly.

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

- 1. The implementation of the Apprenticeship Strategy as detailed in Appendix 1**
- 2. The continuation of the £263K funding per annum subject to budget process.**
- 3. A City Apprenticeship Strategy to be drawn up to promote partnership working.**

7. Transition Fund Awards

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Executive Director of Resources on the Transition Fund Award. As part of the 2015/16 budget setting process the Council agreed to establish a one-off £500k Transition Fund to support work with residents and communities in developing new approaches to delivering Council services. Following a merger of this fund with the Community Grant Fund, the Transition Fund was increased to £525k.

The Transition Fund was a key enabler for delivery of the Connecting Communities approach. Connecting Communities was an ambitious and wide reaching approach to radically redesign services through co-production and collaboration with local communities. The approach focused on how service might be delivered directly in the future in the communities and neighbourhoods where there was most need and within the resources available.

The criteria for final award of Transition Funding included the need for a clear plan for the proposal to deliver long-term cost savings to the Council as well as being required to fit with the principles of the Connecting Communities programme approach. Initial expression of interest in the Transition Fund was sought during the consultation process on Phase One of Connecting Communities.

Following expression of interest and business case evaluation processes, officers sought approval for one award from the Transition Fund to the total value of a maximum of £20,000. This award will enable the delivery of one proposal that formed a part of Phase One of Connecting Communities as agreed by Cabinet on 23 February 2016.

The award supports Willenhall Community Forum Limited to accommodate alternative library provision following Cabinet decisions to end delivery of library services at Willenhall Library.

The report noted the Cabinet decision of 26 November 2015, which gave delegated authority to the Executive Director of Resources in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources to take decisions on Transition Fund awards, where the matter is urgent or where lower risk/value opportunities have been identified.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources; notes the decision that the Executive Director for Resources has already made in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources, under delegated authority, to make an award from the Transition Fund to Willenhall Community Forum Limited up to the value of £20,000.

8. Final Hospitality Statement and Charity Appeal for the Lord Mayoralty of Councillor Michael Hammon 2015/2016

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Executive Director of Resources which provide the end of year hospitality budget report for the Mayoral Year of Councillor Michael Hammon 2015/2016. The report updates the Cabinet Member on how the budget was allocated during the Mayoral Year. The total spent was £64,764.51; this was £831.49 less than the budget and this balance was return to corporate reserves.

The Lord Mayor's Annual Report was attached at Appendix 1 of the report and provided background information to the civic engagements which were undertaken to meet a range of priorities from community engagement to international events.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources:

- 1. Notes the contents of Appendix 1 which sets out detailed expenditure of £64,764.51 against the hospitality budget**
- 2. Notes the final sum of £20,250 raised for the Lord Mayor's Charity Appeal 2015/2016**

9. Outstanding Issues Report

The Cabinet Member noted a report of the Executive Director of Resources that identified those issues on which further reports had been requested and were outstanding, so that progress could be monitored.

10. 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 urgent items of business.

(Meeting closed at 11.20am)

