

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1) held
at 2.00 pm on Wednesday, 30 November 2016

Present:

Members: Councillor L Kelly (Chair)
Councillor S Bains
Councillor J Lepoidevin
Councillor J McNicholas
Councillor T Sawdon
Councillor R Singh
Councillor T Skipper
Councillor R Thay

Other Members: Councillors J Mutton

In attendance: Mr E Hodson (Coventry Citizens Advice Bureau)

Employees:

Resources: B. Hastie, C. Sinclair, B. Strain, L. Welton

Public Business

26. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

27. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2016 were signed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

28. Impact of changes to Local Council Tax Support Scheme - 6 month review

The Board considered a briefing note which provided an update on the changes to the Council's Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme, six months after implementation.

In April 2016 the Council's revised Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme came into effect. The revised scheme required all working age households to pay a minimum 15% of their council tax liability regardless of financial circumstance. There were approximately 20,000 working age households receiving some level of council tax support – prior to the implementation of the revised scheme in 2016 approximately 16,000 working age households had no council tax charge. The change required the average band 'A' household to contribute approximately £3 to £4 per week towards their council tax liability.

The document detailed an overview of collection and recovery rates in the first two quarters of 2016/17 for all households in the city and the impact on customers. In summary, it was noted that the vast majority of people had paid and were paying their council tax. The council had adopted a measured approach to collect from households that had fallen into arrears – not applying for court costs and delayed sending accounts to enforcement agents as would normally happen. Enforcement officers had been instructed to take a more pragmatic approach to payment arrangements for CTS cases and to consider each case on its merit. Mr Ed Hodson from Coventry Citizen’s Advice Bureau attended the meeting and presented feedback from the Bureau which had commended the approach taken by the City Council in the roll out of the reformed CTS scheme and the recovery of Council Tax arrears however there were ongoing concerns relating to some aspects including the affordability of repayment plans and the user-friendliness of online accounts in conjunction with lack of digital skills or confidence of some customers.

The Board questioned officers on aspects of the report including the ease of use of ‘My Account’ and how other authorities were dealing with the changes.

Following discussion it was agreed that it would be beneficial to consider a progress report after one year of implementation of the Scheme – in June 2017. Mr Hodson was then thanked for his attendance and contribution, and an invitation was extended to him to attend the June 2017 meeting.

RESOLVED that the Board note the document and receive a further report in June 2017 to allow a full year analysis to be presented.

29. **Progress report on delivery of the Social Value Policy and Procurement Strategy**

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director of Resources on the delivery of the Procurement Strategy through the Procurement Board. It was a constitutional requirement that this be reported to the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources, and he would be receiving the report at his meeting on 15 December 2016.

The Sub Regional Procurement Strategy 2015-2020 was adopted by the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources on 7 December 2015. The Social Value Policy was adopted by Full Cabinet on the 11 February 2014 and incorporated the Public Service (Social Value) Act 2012 that came into force on 31 January 2013. The report detailed how the delivery of the Social Value Policy had been incorporated into the delivery of the Procurement Strategy and the outcomes that have been achieved.

The Board discussed aspects of the report in particular the skills and employment plan which had provided a number of apprenticeships on major local developments.

RESOLVED that the Board welcome the report.

30. **Outstanding Issues Report**

There were no outstanding to report.

31. **Work Programme**

The Board noted the work programme.

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

There were no other items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 3.00 pm)