

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1) held
at 2.00 pm on Wednesday, 12 July 2017

Present:

Members: Councillor R Singh (Chair)
Councillor S Bains
Councillor J Blundell
Councillor R Brown
Councillor L Harvard
Councillor T Sawdon
Councillor K Taylor
Councillor R Thay

Other Members: Councillor Clifford
Councillor J Mutton (Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources)

In attendance: E Hodson, Citizens Advice Bureau

Employees:
People: L Commane, P Jackson, D O'Shaughnessy, A Simmonds, P Ward
Place: V Castree, C Sinclair, B Strain

Public Business

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 29 March 2017 were signed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

3. Impact of Changes to Local Council Tax Support Scheme - 12 Month Review

The Board received a briefing note which provided an update on the impact of the Council's revised council tax support (CTS) scheme 12 months after implementation.

The revised scheme which came into effect in April 2016, required all working age households to pay a minimum 15% of their council tax liability regardless of financial circumstances.

In April 2016 there were approximately 20,000 working age households receiving some level of council tax support – prior to the implementation of the revised scheme in April 2016 approximately 16,000 working age households had no

council tax charge. The change required the average band A household to contribute approximately £3.00 per week towards their council tax liability.

Coventry was one of only 96 English Councils not to require a minimum payment during the first year of the devolved local schemes – 2013/14. The number of Councils requiring a minimum payment has increased year on year. In 2017/18 159 Councils would require a minimum payment in excess of 20 per cent and only 62 Councils would require no minimum payment.

The briefing note set out data in respect of collection rates and a summary of impact on customers.

Mr Edward Hodson from the Coventry Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) was in attendance to report on key findings in respect of client contacts.

Members asked questions on a number of issues including:

- Publicising the discretionary reduction scheme set up for those facing extreme financial hardship.
- Continuation of mitigation efforts for vulnerable clients.
- Breakdown of council tax support claims by property band (this information was not available at the meeting and would be provided to members by email)

Arising from the discussion and questions, the Board noted that all future council tax bills would also include information on the discretionary reduction scheme. In addition, the Board asked that Officers look at the possibility of the producing documents in 'easy read' format.

RESOLVED that the Board note the update and request a further presentation on the ongoing impact of the scheme in 6 months' time (January 2018).

4. **Outstanding Issues Report**

There were no outstanding issues.

5. **Work Programme**

The Board noted the Work Programme and agreed the following:

- To receive an update report on the impact of changes to the Local Council Tax Support Scheme in 6 months' time (January 2018) (Minute 7 above refers).
- To consider the Workforce Strategy report in advance of its submission to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources.

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

There were no other items of public business.

7. **Cyber Security and Resilience**

The Board received a presentation on cyber security and resilience including:

- Types of common attacks
- Possible impact to the City Council
- Extent of cyber threats - including examples of recent attacks
- Measures being taken to protect from cyber attacks
- Future planning
- The role that elected members can play

The Board questioned officers on aspects of the presentation and sought to understand how they could protect themselves and the City Council on a practical day-to-day basis.

Following discussion, it was agreed that further work be undertaken to explore how best to communicate 'top tips' to members as an ongoing reminder of good practice.

(Meeting closed at 3.45 pm)