

**Coventry City Council**  
**Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources**  
**held at 10.00 am on Thursday, 14 December 2017**

Present:

Members: Councillor J Mutton (Cabinet Member)

Employees (by Directorate):

Place S Bennett, G Carter, G Cowley, P Helm, K Seager, B Strain,  
A Walster

People B Barrett, L Pardy-McLaughlin

Apologies: Councillor Taylor (Shadow Cabinet Member)

### **Public Business**

#### **53. Declarations of Interest**

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests declared.

#### **54. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 October, 2017 were agreed and signed as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

#### **55. Petition - Council Tax Exemption for Disabled , Including PIP Recipients**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) which indicated that the Council had received a petition, bearing 27 signatures, which suggested exempting certain groups of disabled people from the 15 per cent minimum payment for working age households who receive Council tax support. The lead petitioner had been invited to attend the meeting for consideration of the petition but was unable to attend.

The report indicated that in April 2016 a revised council tax support scheme was implemented following a public consultation and equality analysis. As part of the decision making process the Council considered several options for reducing the cost of the council tax support scheme. The Council considered, based on the findings from the equality analysis and public consultation, that a 15 per cent minimum payment for all working age CTS recipients would be the fairest way of reducing expenditure and would impact most evenly across the various groups with protected characteristics.

A change to the council tax support scheme which exempts certain groups from the minimum payment would result in less revenue to the Council through the council tax collection fund. The Council would be required to increase the

minimum payment for other working age council tax support recipients or reduce expenditure in other service areas.

The Cabinet Member gave careful consideration to the petitioners' request, recognising that changes to the council tax support scheme had only been introduced in response to significant and sustained reductions in Government funding.

**RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources:-**

- a) **Acknowledges receipt of the petition and its contents**
- b) **Maintains, unchanged, the Council's current council tax support scheme.**

56. **Agency Workers and Interim Managers - Performance Management Report Quarter 2**

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (People) which provided performance information on the use of agency workers procured for the Quarter 2 period, 1 July to 31 September, 2017 and Interim Manager and other agency worker spends for the same period.

A table in the report provided comparative expenditure in Q1 2017/18 and Q2 2017/18 and indicated an overall decrease in total spend. There was a continuing reduction in spend within the Pertemps contract in the People Directorate for the Quarter as the service continued to recruit permanent Children's social workers.

The report detailed expenditure outside of the Pertemps contract in the following areas:-

- Children's Services
- Education
- Customer Services
- Place

The report also detailed work undertaken on alternative solutions to agency staff, such as banks of casual workers and the recruitment to specialist roles.

At the request of the Cabinet Member, officers attended from the following service areas and the Cabinet Member questioned them on areas of expenditure and work being done to reduce agency spend:-

- Children's Services
- Highways, Traffic and Transport
- Waste Services

**RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources:-**

- a) **Notes the agency / interim spend for Q2.**

- b) Notes the work done on providing in-house solutions as an alternative to agency and interim workers.**
- c) Requests that senior officers provide the Cabinet Member with a detailed plan on how they intend to reduce agency staff costs in Directorates. These plans to be included in the next quarterly report.**
- d) Requests that officers provide the Cabinet Member with information regarding the agency spend in relation to the Performing Arts Service and measures being undertaken to reduce this spend.**

**57. 6 Month (April-September 2017) Cumulative Sickness Absence 2017-2018**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (People) which detailed levels of sickness absence for the 6 month period April – September 2017 and actions being taken to manage absence and promote health at work across the City Council. The report provided the cumulative sickness absence figures for the Council and individual Directorates.

Annual and bi-annual information is based on full time equivalent (FTE) average days lost per person against the FTE average days per person available for work. This is 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 method for calculating the cost of absence has been revised this year. It now uses real time employee data, which more accurately reflects working hours, rates of pay and employer contributions, rather than using assumed levels. Overall costs are also reduced due to the reduction in employee numbers and therefore the reduction in total days lost to absence.

Appendices to the report provided the following information:-

- A comparison of the last 5 years actual sickness levels against targets
- Corporate/Directorate comparisons against target
- Reasons for absence. The highest cause of time lost is through Stress, Depression and Anxiety, although it is not possible to define the root cause of the condition
- Days lost per FTE
- Breakdown between frequent and long-term absence levels
- Absences by length of days

The report also provided information in relation work undertaken by the HR Support Teams to ensure a consistent approach to sickness absence management and to provide information on sickness absence to support managers in the application of the Council's Promoting Health at Work procedure. Information in relation to the Talking Health, Safety and Wellbeing initiative, which has the primary aim of acting as a source of information, encouraging employees to maintain their safety and health at work, was also detailed in the report.

The Cabinet Member requested that for future year's reports, information be provided regarding the real "costs" of absences, ie the cost of employing agency workers to cover absences.

**RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources:-**

- a) Notes the report which provides sickness absence data for the 6 month period of April to September 2017 and endorses the actions taken to monitor and manage sickness**
- b) Notes the need to revise sickness and absence policies and procedures and invest in sickness absence management training as part of the ongoing workforce reform programme to support the delivery of a revised target of reducing the absence from 8 days to 6 days per fulltime equivalent employee by 2019/20.**

**58. Outstanding Issues**

There were no outstanding issues.

**59. Any Other Items of Urgent Public Business**

There were no other items of urgent public business.

(Meeting closed at 10.50 am)