

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources
held at 10.00 am on Thursday, 13 December 2018

Present:

Members: Councillor J Mutton (Cabinet Member)
Councillor K Taylor (Shadow Cabinet Member)

Employees:

People: A Durrant, A Miles,

Place: J Carter, G Cowley, P Jennings, U Patel

Public Business

15. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

16. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 September, 2018 were agreed and signed as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

17. Policy Contingency Funding Requests - Winter Night Shelter and Cyrenians Christmas Day Dinner

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) which detailed two requests for funding from the Policy Contingency Fund, which is set aside to cover any ad hoc one-off requests for funding that are deemed to be in line with Council's policy priorities.

The first request was from the HOPE Coventry charity, which supports initiatives that connects churches and projects together that meet the needs of the vulnerable. The Coventry Winter Night Shelter is one such project and provides rough sleepers with support, a hot meal, a safe and warm bed for the night and breakfast for the next day. The Cabinet Member had already informally agreed to provide a £5,000 donation to the HOPE charity as a contribution towards replacing their 5 year old beds and sleeping bags for the Winter Night Shelter and formal retrospective approval of this was sought.

The other request was from Coventry Cyrenians to help to provide Christmas Day meals to the homeless and vulnerable in the City at the Methodist Central Hall. The Cabinet Member had already informally agreed to provide a £2,500 donation for this project.

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

(1) Approves, retrospectively, a decision to provide one-off grant funding of £5,000 to support the HOPE Coventry charity's Winter Night Shelter project.

(2) Approves, retrospectively, a decision to provide one-off grant funding of £2,500 to support the Coventry Cyrenians Christmas Day dinner project.

18. Policy Contingency Funding Request - Coventry Cathedral Donation in Memorial to Late Councillor Alison Gingell

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) which detailed a request for funding from the Policy Contingency Fund, which is set aside to cover any ad hoc one-off requests for funding that are deemed to be in line with Council's policy priorities.

The request was for a donation of £2,500 to Coventry Cathedral for the late Councillor Alison Gingell to be added to the Millennium screen in tribute and in recognition of her work in health and social care in Coventry and Warwickshire for more than 40 years where she campaigned tirelessly on issues that promoted the rights and health of women and children. The Cabinet Member had already indicated his support for this proposal as a fitting tribute to Alison Gingell's services to the City.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources approves, retrospectively, the donation of £2,500 for a memorial to be added to the Millennium screen at Coventry Cathedral as a tribute to the late Councillor Alison Gingell.

19. Community Support Grant Expenditure

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) which requested that additional funding be provided to enable the Council's Community Support Grant Scheme to continue supporting vulnerable residents to the end of the financial year. An increase in the demand for support would exhaust the current budget of £375,000 by mid December 2018.

The Council introduced the Community Support Grant Scheme (CSG) in April 2013 when the responsibility for local welfare was transferred from the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP).

The scheme provided assistance for the most vulnerable residents of Coventry. There are two types of award, crisis and support. A crisis award is usually the same day award to provide help for food and utilities where there is a risk to health and safety. Vouchers/spend cards are issued for these awards where appropriate. A support award comprises of white goods, furniture and essential household items to enable those leaving temporary accommodation, care, prison etc. to enable them to resettle into the community. Items were ordered directly from the suppliers.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources:

1. Approves the funding of up to £135,000.
2. Requests Officers to exercise discretion in genuine emergencies when giving money to buy food. Vouchers/spend cards to be issued in all other instances.

20. **Agency Workers - Performance Management Report Q2: 1 July to 30 September, 2018**

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 Q2 period 2018.

Coventry City Council has a Master Vendor Contract with Reed for the supply of agency workers. The contract came into effect on 25th June, 2018. Through the contract, Reed would supply all suitable agency workers either through their own agency or via a 2nd tier arrangement with other agencies, using rates of pay based on an agreed pay policy and a negotiated mark-up rate with the Master Vendor. The information supplied by Reed gave detailed information on agency worker usage and expenditure. Spend was based on timesheets paid during the quarter and is in essence the same process reported from Pertemps previously.

Reed is not always able to supply the required agency workers and where this is the case, service areas would use other suppliers.

Due to the implementation of the new Reed contract during Q1, Pertemps spend covered 12 weeks (out of 13 weeks) up until and including 24th June 2018. The Q2 report provided the full quarter data for Reed spend; 1 July to 30 September 2018.

A table in the report provided comparative expenditure between Q1 2018/19 and Q2 2018/19 as well as Q2 2017/18 and Q2 2018/19. There was an overall increase of £69,396 in spend between Q1 and Q2 2018/19 as well as a £294,330 increase compared with the same quarter last year. The Master Vendor Contract covered all agency workers required by the core Council, the Reed contract did not cover agency workers in schools.

The report detailed expenditure outside of the Reed Contract in the following areas:-

- Education
- Customer Services
- Place – Professional Services Contract
- Place – City Centre & Major Projects

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

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources:

1. Notes the agency/interim spend for Q2.

2. Notes the work done on providing in-house solutions as an alternative to agency and interim workers.

21. Sickness Absence to Year Ending 30 September 2018

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (People) that reported on the sickness absence to year ending 30th September 2018.

The purpose of the report was to enable the Cabinet Member to monitor the levels of sickness absence for the year ending 30th September 2018 and note the actions being taken to manage absence and promote health at work across the City Council.

The reporting methodology for 2018/19 was based on the following to enable a more consistent and effective reporting system: -

- A rolling 12 month period
- The removal of schools workforce data (schools data is inconsistent with the data of the workforce as a whole)
- Sickness absence as days lost per Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employee as the main measure.

The main reasons for absence remained Stress, Depression and Anxiety. However, at present it was difficult to determine to what extent this was work related or for other reasons.

The other main reasons for days lost is due to sickness absence were Other Muscolo-Skeletal Problems and Infections, Colds and Flu.

The report also provided information on the short term and long term absence and the costs of sickness absence (excluding schools).

The Cabinet Member expressed concern that the sickness absence figures remained high and that sickness levels appeared to go up during certain times of the year and the impact of the salary going down to half pay after six months off. The Cabinet Member requested that consideration be given to ways of reducing the sickness levels as sickness not only costs the Council in monetary terms but it also affects work colleagues left to pick up the work.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources:

- 1. Notes the report providing sickness absence data for the year ending 30th September 2018 and endorses the actions taken to monitor and manage sickness.**
- 2. Notes the need to review the Council's sickness and absence policies and procedures and invest in sickness absence management training in order to deliver a sustained reduction of absence levels.**

3. Requests that a briefing note be submitted before the next Cabinet Member meeting outlining proposals that can be explored further to reduce sickness levels.

22. Outstanding Issues

There were no outstanding issues.

23. Any Other Items of Urgent Public Business

There were no items of urgent public business.

(Meeting closed at 10.50 am)