

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources
held at 10.00 am on Thursday, 27 September 2018

Present:

Members: Councillor J Mutton (Cabinet Member)

Councillor K Taylor (Shadow Cabinet Member)

Employees (by Directorate):

Place S Bennett, R Parkes, M Rennie

People D Ashmore, J Gregg, P Johnson

Public Business

9. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

10. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 July, 2018 were agreed and signed as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

11. Coventry Loop Line Public Space Financing

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive, Place which indicated that, as part of the plans to develop the Heritage Park around the Charterhouse off London Road, the Historic Coventry Trust (HCT) aims to create a woodland walk into the City Centre. Integral to the project will be the transformation of part of the former Coventry freight railway loop line which was fully closed over 35 years ago. The planned two mile circular walking route will link Gosford Green, Charterhouse and the Sherbourne viaduct to the City Centre and provide the potential for developing cycle routes, providing an amenity of great social value in an area important for local wildlife.

In order for the project to proceed, HCT has to secure the site and provide the route for public access. To this end it has negotiated the purchase of land which is made up of three linked areas, located in between Gosford Green and the Lower Stoke area, about a mile to the south-east of the City Centre. The total area of the land extends to circa 8.4 acres, the majority of which is currently overgrown with mature woodland and vegetation. The HCT is striving to raise money to cover the cost of the purchase. It was therefore proposed that a loan of £150,000 is provided by the Council to the HCT, repayable over 5 years, on terms to be negotiated by

the Director of Finance and Corporate Services and approved under Financial Procedure Rules.

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

- (1) Approves the provision of a loan facility up to the sum of £150,000 to Historic Coventry Trust to meet the capital requirement of acquiring the Coventry freight railway loop line site and the provision of the route for public access.**
- (2) Delegates authority to the Director of Finance and Corporate Services, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources, to:-**
 - a) Negotiate the detailed terms of the loan arrangement and appropriate security, ensuring state aid compliance; and**
 - b) Make such amendments and variations to the loan agreements as is deemed necessary over the lifetime of the loan subject to the overall capital amount not exceeding the sum of £150,000.**

12. Agency Workers and Interim Managers - Performance Management Q1 - 1st April to 30 June, 2018 (to 24 June for Master Vendor Supply)

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 (Q)1 period and Interim Manager and other agency worker spends for the same period.

The report indicated that during this quarter, the supply contract with Pertemps ended on 24 June, 2018 with the new supplier, Reed, starting on Monday 25 June, 2018. As the new supplier has only supplied for one week during this quarter, the report related only to the agency worker spend with Pertemps during the period up to 24 June. Reported spend with other suppliers is for the full quarter. The Q2 report of spend within the agency worker contract will therefore include an additional week of spend, commencing 25 June, 2018.

A table in the report shows comparative expenditure in Q1 2018/19 and Q4 2017/18 and indicated an overall decrease in total spend although this did include the reduction in one week in the period. The Master Vendor Contract covers all agency workers required by the core Council as the Pertemps contract does not cover agency workers in schools.

The report provided detailed information on the following service areas:-

Children's Services:- John Gregg, Director of Children's Services, attended the meeting and provided the Cabinet Member with a comprehensive update on work currently being undertaken to minimise agency spend on social workers, including recruitment and retention work and the establishment of a Social Worker Academy. The Cabinet Member recognised the challenges relating to the recruitment of social workers,

which was a national issue, and indicated that he would be monitoring this issue to see the impact of the work done in this regard.

Adults Services – The number of agency social workers in adults is unchanged and are required to cover vacancies to ensure statutory duties are met and to meet the increased demand during the winter period in order to minimise the need for hospital admissions and to facilitate hospital discharge.

Streetscene and Regulatory Services – Waste Services use of agency staff has significantly reduced and Streetpride spend is expected to reduce as the service has been actively and successfully recruiting to a number of vacancies.

Finance and Corporate Services – Cover was required for maternity and long-term sickness absence.

Planning – Due to a significant increase in workload, a business case has been approved for 2 additional planning officers so agency officers are required to fill the gap until recruitment.

The report also provided a comparison of expenditure outside of the Pertemps contracts Q1 2018/19 with Q4 2017/18 and highlighted the following areas:-

Children's Services
Education
Customer Services

The report highlighted work undertaken to find alternative solutions to agency staff, particularly in relation to specialist recruitment in Highways, Traffic and Transport.

In response to concerns raised by the Cabinet Member at a previous meeting regarding the need for managers to ensure that the process of filling vacancies was undertaken at the earliest opportunity, the report confirmed that this message had been communicated to senior management teams and that this had been reflected in the process to be used for the new contract, together with the requirement that all engagement of agency staff be approved by senior management. In response to questions at the meeting, officers provided information in relation work undertaken to target recruitment and to encourage people to work for the City Council.

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

(1) Notes the agency/interim spend for Q1 and the corresponding numbers of agency workers

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

13. **Outstanding Issues**

There were no outstanding issues.

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

There were no items of urgent public business.

(Meeting closed at 10.45pm)