

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1) held
at 2.00 pm on Wednesday, 12 December 2018

Present:

Members: Councillor R Singh (Chair)
Councillor R Brown
Councillor J Clifford (substitute for Cllr S Bains)
Councillor L Harvard
Councillor K Sandhu
Councillor T Sawdon
Councillor K Taylor
Councillor R Thay

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

Employees:

People: D Ashmore, A Bellingeri
Place: V Castree, P Jennings, C Sinclair

Apologies: Councillor S Bains

Public Business

18. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

19. Income Generation

The Board considered a Briefing Note which set out details of the City Council's income generating activity and provided an opportunity for Members to look at opportunities to maximise income and make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources.

Income generation had become an increasingly important part of the financial make-up of councils. Some relaxation of what councils were allowed to do over the past 15 years had provided greater opportunity in this area and the reducing level of Government funding more recently had provided an imperative for such activity.

The Council had been keen to support its own financial position through greater commercial approaches and members have affirmed this approach through the Medium Term Financial Strategy. In 2018/19 it had budgeted to receive £84m through fees, charges, fines, sales, rents, interest and dividends. Although much of this was the result of broadly historic income sources, an increasing amount of income was resulting from relatively new activities. The briefing note provided members information on existing income budgets and commentary on some of the areas of development in relation to income and commercial activity.

The Board questioned officers and sought further clarification on aspects of the document including initiatives for expanding the City Council's trading base, having been successful in providing a payroll services for other organisations and collaborative working with Nuneaton and Bedworth to deliver their domestic recycling service. However, it was noted that there were limits to the extent that the model could be rolled out and should not be seen as a solution to the wider financial problems. Notwithstanding this, the Board considered that officers should look at ways to expand the trading base by promoting services, collaborative working and benchmarking.

The Board also discussed the income earning property assets and potential risks, early payments of pension contributions and treasury investments. Arising from discussions, the Board asked that, where possible, future reports contain details of costs and comparative data.

Following a discussion on pension fund investments and the potential restriction of assets to geographical areas, the Board agreed to consider this matter further at a future meeting.

RESOLVED:

(a) To note the contents of the briefing note

(b) To add an item on Pension Fund Investments/Council assets to the Work Programme

20. Customer Services Update

The Board considered a briefing note which set out actions being taken to improve Customer Service which included an analysis of performance across the area from January to October 2018, benchmarking, staff turnover, customer feedback and initiatives being progressed in respect of the digital agenda.

The document showed that customer service performance had improved since January 2018 in the number of calls answered, capture rates and reduced call wait times. The Board noted there was now a clearer focus on individual performance and on activities around the services.

There was a recognition of the need to drive the digital agenda to support organisational efficiencies and to keep pace with the increasing demand for self-serve options. A Board had been convened to prioritise work which aligned to the One Coventry agenda and the document set out the initiatives being progressed including migration to Skype for Business and E-post solutions.

The Board questioned officers on aspects of the data set out in the briefing note including staff turnover, vacancy rates and customer feedback from analysis of the telephony and online service requests. Arising from discussion, the Board sought to ensure that all service areas would be asked for feedback on Customer Services and, in addition, Customer Services would be asked for feedback on service areas.

RESOLVED that the Board:

- (a) Noted the contents of the briefing note and actions being taken to improve the performance of Customer Services.**
- (b) Request that officers arrange for service areas to provide feedback on the Customer Service Centre and that the Customer Service Centre is asked for feedback on service areas as internal customers.**
- (c) Request that officers look to increase the use of digital in order to improve performance in the Customer Service Centre and look to continuously improve by learning from market leaders in customer services.**

21. Work Programme and Outstanding Issues

The Work Programme was noted.

22. Any other items of Public Business

There were no other items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 3.45 pm)