

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources
held at 10.00 am on Thursday, 21 February 2019

Present:

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

Employees:

People: R Grewal, G Haynes, A Miles

Place: U Patel

Public Business

24. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

25. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 December, 2018 were agreed and signed as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

26. Apprenticeship Update

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (People) which provided an overview of the current number and make-up of apprentices at the Council and at Coventry schools that work with the Apprenticeships and Early Careers team. The report also provided an update on the progress made regarding the Apprenticeship Levy spend across the Council.

The Apprenticeships and Early Careers team is responsible for managing the council's apprenticeship scheme and delivering the actions set out in the Council's Apprenticeship Strategy 2016-19.

The team engages with managers across services to identify posts suitable for placing apprentices and providing support with recruitment, identifying and sourcing apprenticeship training along with providing advice and guidance to managers and apprentices to ensure the quality of apprenticeship placements.

This service is also available to Coventry schools who wish to participate and currently the team were working with 28 schools.

The Levy is paid at 0.5% of the pay bill minus a Levy allowance of £5k for each tax year. The Levy is collected monthly by HMRC via the PAYE system and converted into digital vouchers accessed via the digital apprenticeship service account. Levy funding can only be spent on apprenticeship training.

The yearly cost of the Levy to the City Council is in the region of £1m which is made up of approximately £600K from the corporate wage bill and £400k from maintained schools. The government would top this up by a further 10%, making the total amount of funding available to circa £1.1m.

As of 22nd January 2019 there were currently 120 apprentices in post and of these, 10 are Looked after Children (LAC), this being the highest number appointed by the Council. Of the 120 apprenticeships, 38 are appointed by the Council and 82 by schools. The report provided further breakdown by vocational areas and as well as levels.

The report provided information on the level of levy spend and the procurements that were being undertaken for a number of apprenticeship standards. It was noted that the portfolio of Apprenticeship training was expanding in line with any as new standards that were being released.

The Cabinet Member suggested that efforts should be concentrated on those area where the agency spend is high as there was clearly a need there. He commented that there needed to be a programme that promotes the opportunities available at the Council. Furthermore, events should be held in Council buildings, providing young people with an opportunity to get a feel for a real working environment. Senior officers and elected members could also get involved.

The Cabinet Member enquired whether officers had investigated the possibility of providing help and advice to private firms and organisations to utilise their apprenticeship Levy which in the long term would prove to be beneficial to both parties as well creating more opportunities for apprenticeships.

Following consideration of the report and discussions at the meeting, Members requested that a briefing note showing a breakdown of apprentices by male/female to be emailed to them.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources:

- 1. Notes the progress made in utilising the Apprenticeship Levy for the benefit of new recruits, existing staff members and the City Council.**
- 2. Requests that a report be submitted to the first Cabinet Member meeting in the New Municipal Year outlining how the Council can help other companies utilise their Apprenticeship Levy.**

27. Agency Workers - Performance Management Report Q3: 1 October to 31 December, 2018

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (People) which provided information on the use of agency workers procured for the Q3 period 2018/2019.

Coventry City Council has a Master Vendor Contract with Reed for the supply of agency workers which 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 second 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 gives detailed information on agency worker usage and expenditure. Spend is based on timesheets paid during the quarter and is in essence the same process reported by Pertemps previously

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

The report showed that overall cumulative spend on agency workers with both Reed and outside Reed had decreased by just over £81,000.

The comparative expenditure figures for the Master Vendor Contract between Q2 2018/2019 and Q3 2019/19 as well as Q3 2017/18 and Q2 2018/19 were detailed in table 2.2 of the report. These indicated that there had been an overall decrease of £77,085 in spend between Q2 and Q3 2018/19 and an increase of £150,428 compared to the same quarter in 2017/18. The Master Vendor Contract covered all agency workers required by the Council, the Reed contract does not cover agency workers in schools.

With regard to spend outside of the Reed contract, the report showed that there has been an overall decrease in spend of £4,455 between Q2 and Q3 2018/19 as well a decrease of £634,397 compared to the same quarter Q3 2017/18.

The report provided information on the main areas that contributed to the agency spend within the directorates, noting that some of it was to cover statutory duties and some was to cover vacancies that were in the process of being recruited to. A breakdown of spend within each Directorate was detailed in the report.

With regard to Waste Services, the report stated that during the Christmas and New Year period, the need for additional operatives was greater than the casual pool could supply, therefore, collectors and HGV drivers were sourced through the agency.

The Cabinet Member reiterated his commitment to reducing the need for agency staff. He expressed disappointment with the problems that occurred with waste operatives over the Christmas period and requested that a briefing note explaining the situation be emailed to him at the earliest opportunity.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources:

- 1. Notes the agency/interim spend for Q3 2018/19.**
- 2. Notes the cumulative spend for both agency workers via Reed and outside Reed (Table 2.1)**
- 3. Notes the upward trajectory of permanent filled jobs in Children Services (Appendix 1)**
- 4. Requests Directors to submit a report to the first Cabinet Member meeting in the New Municipal Year outlining what steps are being taken to reduce the need for agency spend within their Directorates.**

28. **Outstanding Issues**

There were no other items of business.

29. **Any other items of public business which the Cabinet Member decides to take as matters of urgency because of the special circumstances involved.**

The Cabinet Member reported that he had awarded a discretionary one off grant of £15,000 from the Policy Contingency Budget to the Jesus Centre to tackle repeat homelessness.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources retrospectively approves a one off grant of £15,000 to be awarded to the Jesus Centre to tackle repeat homelessness.

(Meeting closed at 10.45 am)