

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1) held
at 10.00 am on Wednesday, 18 September 2019

Present:

Members: Councillor R Singh (Chair)
Councillor R Auluck
Councillor J Blundell
Councillor R Brown
Councillor J Clifford (Substitute for Councillor Abbott)
Councillor B Gittins
Councillor R Lakha

Employees:

Place: V Castree, P Jennings, C Sinclair, H Williamson,

Apologies: Councillor F Abbott, S Bains and T Sawdon

Public Business

7. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

8. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2017 were signed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

9. 2018-19 Capital Programme

The Board noted the 2018/19 Capital Programme which included an analysis of:

- Outturn expenditure for prior years
- The quarter 1 estimates of expenditure for 2019/20
- The budgeted estimates expenditure for 20/21 and future years
- Brief description of each scheme
- Option to expand the subtotal to the individual schemes.

Arising from discussion it was noted that there was an error in the report in respect of the Public Realm Refresh – the report indicated that a grant figure of 184,689,000 had been inputted as opposed to the correct figure of 2,700,000.

The Board questioned officers on aspects of the report and following discussion requested further information on the following:

- S106: New Century Park, Allard Way – current plans
- Data on spending in respect of cycling initiatives.

- Next steps for the relocation of the Coventry Cross

10. Reserve Balances

The Board considered a briefing note which set out the position in relation to the Council's reserve balances. The Appendix to the report showed balances for each individual reserve areas over a three-year period. These were listed in or of the size of balance in April 2019 (largest first). In addition, a brief description had been provided for each balance.

The Council's total level of non-schools revenue reserves stood at £81.8m at 31st March 2019 and capital reserve were £23.3m. The Council was also required to account for £26.4m of reserve balances that belong to the city's schools or were funded from Dedicated Schools Grant and were therefore ring-fenced for schools' usage.

There were several reserve balances that warrant initial coverage due to their value:

- Reserve to fund Early Retirement and Voluntary redundancy costs resulting from programmes to deliver the staffing savings required to balance the budget. This stands at £10m currently.
- A further £10.2m of reserves were held to manage the cashflow requirements of the financial models for the Council's 3 Private Finance Initiative schemes.
- Capital receipts (proceeds from the sale of capital assets) have been generated in recent years and these amounted to £21.4m at the end of 2018/19. These receipts have been programmed to fund several developments over the coming period include the Council's investment in the Friargate Joint Venture, and the capital investment for the City of Culture programme
- There was a reserve to manage Business Rates volatility under the existing Business Rates Retention which was currently in place.

Members asked a number of questions on aspect of the report and, arising from the discussion, the Board asked for further information on the following non-grant funded revenue:

- Funding set for Holy Trinity roof repairs
- Recover of overpaid salaries
- Business services

In respect of the Business Services reserve allocation, discussion arose regarding having good contract management processes to show the Council's commitment to holding responsible persons to account.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and that the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources be asked to look at ensuring good governance processes are in place in respect of in contract management to enable accountability.

11. Work Programme and Outstanding Issues

The Work Programme was noted.

There were no outstanding issues.

12. **Any other items of Public Business**

2018-19 Capital Programme: Public Realm Refresh

The Board expressed concern that the data error referred to in Minute 9 above had not been brought to their attention as soon as it became apparent and agreed that a note be sent to the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources to notify him of this matter and ask that any future errors identified should be reported to the Board at earliest opportunity.

(Meeting closed at 11.25 am)