

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1) held
at 10.00 am on Wednesday, 14 October 2020

Present:

Members: Councillor R Singh (Chair)
Councillor F Abbott
Councillor J Blundell
Councillor B Gittins
Councillor G Hayre
Councillor R Lakha
Councillor T Sawdon

Other Members: Councillor R Brown, Cabinet Member for Finance and
Corporate Services
Councillor P Hetherton, Cabinet Member for City Services

Employees:
D Ashmore, Director of Housing and Transformation
V Castree, Law and Governance
B Hastie, Director of Finance and Corporate Resources
P Jennings, Finance and Corporate Resources
R Moon, Director of Property Services and Development
J Newman, Director of Law and Governance
C Sinclair, Law and Governance

Apologies: Councillor R Auluck

Public Business

6. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

7. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2020 were agreed as a true record.

Matter Arising:

Further to Minute 3 (New ways of working), the Board received an update on the re-opening of Friargate. Friargate was now open to staff who wished to return to the office. Current use was low. The situation would be kept under review and any changes would be reported to the Board.

8. Financial Position as a Result of COVID-19

The Board received a detailed presentation together with a briefing note which reviewed the financial position of the Council as a result of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Key aspects included:

- Some elements of the financial impact would not crystallise for some time (e.g. the impact on Business Rates).
- It was difficult to separate some of the Covid impacts from the Council's underlying position (e.g. the number and cost of looked after children).
- The world continued to be affected markedly significantly by COVID-19 and the financial affects remain fluid and subject to future events.

The briefing note covered the following areas

- The 2019/20 Outturn position.
- 2020/21 Quarter 1 financial reporting.
- Latest Covid Impact within the September return to Government.
- Business Grants
- Impact of the national funding position.
- 2021/22 Financial Issues and Strategy

Following consideration of the presentation and briefing note, the Board asked questions and received a response on a number of issues including:

- Potential consequences of a Section 114 Notice
- How lost income could be managed (for example car park revenue)
- Assurances that grants had been distributed fairly and could be easily accessed by users
- Savings in relation to digitalisation
- A breakdown of expenditure in respect of the £300k spend on culture.

RESOLVED that the Board note the update on the current financial position as a result of COVID-19 and requested that Officers provide an update on digitalisation and place-based working in due course.

9. Feedback from Member Survey (New Ways of Working)

The Board received a presentation which summarised the data from the Survey of Elected Members.

There had been a 57% response rate to the survey and the analysis was currently being evaluated to consider possible packages of support. The data indicated a varied and diverse set of requirements.

The presentation also included details of the Digital First Programme which provided support to accelerate the delivery of the Digital Strategy, which included supporting Members in their role.

The digital offer for members included a tailored mobile phone offer and support including enabling Members support to remote control/assist members using PCs, training, a Member hotline for ICT issues and virtual meetings. The future offer included a Member App and casework tools.

Arising from a discussion on Member training and in the context of an increasing use of online data, the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources referred to the importance of focusing on GDPR training for Members.

RESOLVED that the Board note the content of the presentation and request Officers to provide the Board with details of the timeline for Member 1:1 training at the earliest opportunity.

10. Work Programme and Outstanding Issues

The Board noted the Work Programme noted with the following updates:

- There would be a change to the date of the November meeting to allow consideration of the MTFS as the timetable for this had been delayed due to COVID-19.
- Reserves would be considered at the January 2021 meeting.

11. Any other items of Public Business

There were no other items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 12.00 pm)