

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1) held
at 10.00 am on Wednesday, 19 January 2022

Present:

Members: Councillor R Singh (Chair)
Councillor J Blundell
Councillor B Gittins
Councillor A Hopkins
Councillor R Lakha
Councillor K Maton
Councillor T Sawdon

Other Members: Councillor Brown, Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources

Employees:

A Bellingeri, Customer and Business Services
V Castree, Law and Governance
P Jennings, Finance
M Reeves, Chief Executive
C Sinclair, Law and Governance
P Ward, ICT and Digital

Apologies: Councillor B Mosterman

Public Business

26. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

27. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2021 were signed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

28. Coventry Connects

The Board considered a briefing note and presentation updating them on customer services, the customer journey and the emerging workstream 'Coventry Connects'.

The presentation introduced Coventry Connects principles, the approach to support the delivery of One Coventry aspirations, highlighted aspects that needed further exploration to deliver the Coventry Connects principles and explained the approach to developing the technology needed to make it work.

The intention was to offer joined up service provision across the organisation and beyond to improve the resident experience and reduce the need for multiple contacts.

Following the presentation, the Board asked questions and received responses from Officers on matters relating to:

- How data was captured and used in line with GDPR requirements
- The Council's website – ensuring information is current and easy to navigate
- Whilst enabling online functions for residents also ensure that there is an option to speak to a person
- That libraries be used to support residents to engage with technology
- Integration of data between partners including voluntary organisations.
- Digitisation of archives
- The importance that employees have an awareness of roles and responsibilities of other teams to assist in directing customers to the appropriate officers.

The Chair expressed his concern that there had been missed opportunities over the last few years to use technology/digital channels to engage with and enable residents to access services, which officers acknowledged. The Chair asked that officers provide dates for actioning the improvements indicated in the presentation and bring a report back to a future meeting.

RESOLVED:

(1) To note the presentation and recommend to the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources:

- a) That all Coventry libraries are enabled to support residents to engage digitally.
- b) That Officers investigate implementation of a system to archive Council documents.
- c) That Officers look at data sharing across organisations, including the voluntary sector.

(2) That the Board receive

- a) A report outlining dates for progress on, and implementation of the technology outlined in the presentation and that a copy of the minutes of this meeting be appended to that report.
- b) The timescale for achieving proactive resident experience elements (automated outbound).

29. CIPFA Financial Management Code

The Board considered a briefing note in respect of the CIPFA Financial Management Code (FM Code). The Code provided guidance for good and sustainable financial management in local authorities. By complying with the

principles and standards within the code, authorities would be able to demonstrate their financial sustainability.

The FM Code provided guidance for effective and sustainable financial management in local authorities, helping to provide assurance that authorities are managing resources effectively.

The Code required authorities to demonstrate that the processes they have in place satisfied the principles of good financial management. It identified risks to financial sustainability and introduced a framework of assurance. Complying with the standards set out in the FM Code was the collective responsibility of elected members, the Chief Finance Officer and their professional colleagues in the leadership team. Complying with the FM Code with help strengthen the framework that surrounds financial decision making.

The broad headings of the CIPFA FM Standards in the Code which local authorities should comply with were:

- Responsibilities of the CFO and Leadership Team
- Governance and Financial Management Style
- Long to Medium Term Financial Management
- The Annual Budget
- Stakeholder Engagement and Business Plans
- Monitoring Financial Performance
- External Financial Reporting

The first full year of compliance to the Code is 2021/22. However, CIPFA had reviewed this in light of the COVID-19 and concluded that 'whilst the first full year of compliance can remain as 2021/2022, it can do so within a more flexible framework where a proportionate approach is encouraged. In practice this is likely to mean that that adherence to some parts of the Code will demonstrate a direction of travel'.

The Council's Senior Leadership Team had assessed the Council's compliance against the Code and given each criteria a risk rating. This was shown in the table at Appendix A of the briefing note. This demonstrated that the Council was already meeting the large majority of the Code standards, with three areas rated as amber. Actions had been identified to address this element as well as some minor actions to improve performance against other areas. Overall, the Council had satisfied CIPFA's requirement to demonstrate a direction of travel towards full compliance of the Code during 2021/22.

It was proposed that the Council's compliance with the FM Code was reviewed annually as part of the Council's annual process to update its Annual Governance Statement.

The Board considered the briefing note and in respect of the three areas rated as amber, agreed to receive a full update on all standards in 12 months' time and, in respect of the Financial Resilience Assessment, to receive an update early in the new year.

RESOLVED that the Board:

- **Note the contents of the assessment of the “direction of travel” compliance with the CIPFA Financial Management Code included in Appendix A.**
- **Agree to receive an update report in January 2023, and an interim update on the Financial Resilience Assessment early in the new municipal year.**

30. Work Programme and Outstanding Issues

The Board noted the Work Programme.

31. Any other items of Public Business

There were no other items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 12.15 pm)