



Cabinet (Resources) Panel

Minutes - 11 November 2014

Attendance

Members of the Cabinet (Resources) Panel

Cllr Andrew Johnson (Chair)
Cllr Roger Lawrence (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Peter Bilson
Cllr Steve Evans
Cllr Phil Page
Cllr John Reynolds
Cllr Paul Sweet

Employees

Emma Bennett	Assistant Director - Children, Young People and Families
Andrew Harvey	Graduate Management Trainee
Keith Ireland	Managing Director
Kevin O'Keefe	Chief Legal Officer
Martyn Sargeant	Head of Democratic Services
Mark Taylor	Assistant Director, Finance

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 **Apologies for absence**
There were no apologies for absence.

- 2 **Declarations of interest**
Keith Ireland declared a non-pecuniary interest as chair of the interim executive board at New Park School.

- 3 **Minutes of the previous meeting**
Resolved:
 That the minutes of the meeting on 21 October be approved as a correct record

- 4 **Matters arising**
There were no matters arising.

- 5 **Revenue Budget Monitoring 2014/15 - Quarter Two**
Councillor Johnson introduced the report. The report outlined that there had been a net overspend of £3 million in the Community budget. Councillors expressed concerns that the biggest impact on this overspend in budget came from the spend on agency staff, above the allocated budget.

Emma Bennett explained that pressures around looked-after children and safeguarding had been the main causes of overspends on agency staff, as there was a need to cover key positions.

Some Councillors commented that there was currently a big push within the Community directorate to recruit social workers, in order to prevent dependency on agency staff. Emma Bennett informed Councillors that there was an action plan in place on this issue and a clear message sent out that only agency staff hours accounted for in the budget will be allowed; anything over budget will be refused. However this was countered with the message that safeguarding is the primary concern.

As part of the action plan there is a shift in emphasis to growing the Council's own social workers and also using higher level social workers in a training capacity as consultants.

Resolved:

- (1) To approve the use of £100,000 from the Efficiency Reserve to fund the final costs associated with the creation of the temporary staffing agency (£25,000), and to undertake a review of empty homes (£25,000).
- (2) To approve the use of £733,000 from the Regeneration Reserve to fund various regeneration priorities.
- (3) To approve the use of £400,000 from the Transformation Reserve to help achieve the reduction in the subsidy to Leisure Services.
- (4) To approve the establishment of expenditure headings within the 2014/15 approved budget for grant funding streams obtained within the year.
- (5) To approve the write off of one Housing Benefit overpayment that exceeds £5,000.
- (6) To approve virements totalling £30,000.

6 **Technical Reforms of Council Tax - Review of Charges for Empty Properties and Second Homes**

Councillor Johnson introduced the report, which outlined the criteria under which the Council can grant exemptions for empty properties and second homes. He explained that legislation grants the Council discretion on whether to implement charges for empty properties or second homes that have been empty for a period of time.

Resolved:

To approve the revised local policy covering council tax charges levied on empty properties and second homes.

7 **Council Tax- Introduction of Penalties for Non Return of Information**

Cllr Johnson explained that, under legislation, there are two classes of information where failure to provide details can result in a penalty being levied. These are: liability for council tax and income details.

Mark Taylor stated that the proposals detailed in the report should generate about £5,000 for the 2015/16 budget, but will save more than this through the recuperation of officer time, as the system will run more smoothly and be less congested than it is currently.

Resolved:

To approve the introduction of penalty charges for non-return of information to support the assessment of council tax liabilities and recovery of council tax debt.

8 **Schedule of Individual Executive decisions**

Resolved:

To note the summary of open and exempt individual executive decision notices approved by the appropriate Cabinet Members following consultation with the relevant designated employees.

9 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

Resolved:

That in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business as they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information falling within the paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Act set out below:]

Item No.	Title	Applicable Paragraph
10	Strategic Procurement: Award of Contracts for Goods, Services and Works	3
11	Improving Support for the Education Of Gypsy, Roma, Traveller (GRT) And Newly Arriving Eastern European Roma (EER) Children.	3
12	Review of the Feasibility of a Public Wi-Fi Service	3

10 **Strategic Procurement - Award of Contracts for Goods, Services and Works.**

Councillor Johnson presented the report on the award of contracts for works, goods and services.

Resolved:

- (1) The use of the Eastern Shires Framework Agreement for Washroom Services for provision of all washroom services, and to approve the direct call-off approach with PHS Limited and Initial Washroom Solutions.
- (2) The spot purchase of foster care placements for 12 months whilst alternative options are appraised and developed.
- (3) The award of a contract for the provision of bill payment card services to Co-op bank as a call-off from the sole supplier framework agreement operated by Procurement for Housing.
- (4) The formalisation of contract arrangements for Independent Day Education Provision provided by PACE Education Ltd.
- (5) To authorise the award of a contract for provision of the Young Carers Service to Spurgeons.
- (6) The award of a contract for the provision of fresh meat and meat products to Midland Foods Ltd of Bromsgrove, Worcestershire as a call-off against Dudley MBC's framework agreement.
- (7) To delegate authority to the Cabinet Member for Adults Services, supported by in consultation with the Strategic Director for Communities Community, to approve the award of a contract for Lord Street Very Sheltered Housing Service once the evaluation process is complete.
- (8) To waive the contract procedure rules for the award of a contract for maintenance and development of the West Midlands Traffic Information Gateway.
- (9) To delegate authority to the Chief Legal Officer to execute contracts in respect of the above as required.

11 **Improving Support for the Education of Gypsy, Roma, Traveller (GRT) and Newly Arriving Eastern European Roma (EER) Children**

Councillor Gibson introduced the report, which highlighted that the West Midlands Consortium, led by Birmingham, will stop providing services for children from traveller families. Emma Bennett informed Councillors that Wolverhampton would be providing its own service for the local area and will integrate existing services.

It was also brought to Councillors' attention that the ethnicity of the majority of the City's traveller children had changed.

The report also informed Councillors that Council services were continuing to work closely with schools, providing support and also working on integrating children both in school and within the community.

Resolved:

- (1) To approve the proposal to improve the way in which the education and related needs of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) and Eastern European

Roma (EER) children are met following the ending of the 'West Midlands Consortium Services to Travelling Children, Schools and Families'.

- (2) To authorise the Strategic Director for Community to proceed with the restructure process so that the new service offer can begin as the current consortium arrangements end.

12 **Review of the Feasibility of a Public WiFi Service**

Councillor Johnson introduced the report. Keith Ireland informed Councillors that he had been hopeful that this project could be delivered after an offer from a substantial telecoms provider. However after providers changed the model for implementation this project was no longer viable. Unfortunately other potential providers cannot provide the same level of service and will take time to develop appropriate systems.

Resolved:

- (1) To endorse the proposal to carry out further investigation into the implications for the Council of letting concessions to mount microwave and "small cell" equipment on Council-owned street furniture and buildings.
- (2) To bring a future report on the SmartCity project to Cabinet (Resources) Panel in February.