

Finance and Audit Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 4 November 2014 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00pm.

Present: Councillor Barrott (Chair): Councillors Mrs Bunker, Dhillon, Gifford, Mrs Knight, Heath, MacKay, Rhead, Mrs Syson and Williams.

Also Present: Councillors Cross and Vincett (Portfolio Holders).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Pratt

72. **Substitutes**

Councillor Meath substituted for Councillor Mrs Mellor and Councillor Gifford substituted for Councillor Pittarello.

73. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

74. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2014 were taken as read and, subject to the addition of Councillor Mrs Bunker being recorded as present, were signed by the Chair as a correct record.

75. **Review of Housing & Property Services Contracts Register**

The Committee received a report that set out the process for the review of the Housing and Property Services Contracts Register.

The Housing and Property Services Contract Register was presented as Appendix 1, to the report, for the Committee to consider as part of its role in promoting good procurement practice.

The Head of Housing & Property Services explained that the Service was in recovery mode at present following the recent challenges. He highlighted that his team had undertaken a detailed examination of all paid invoices, contracts and informal arrangements to ensure a comprehensive list was compiled. He was confident that the list before the Committee was a true and accurate reflection of the current position.

There were six unsigned contracts and the aim was to have the high priority ones completed and signed by the end of the quarter.

The end of year accounts for the open book repairs work were still being finalised but will be completed by 21 November 2014. The Head of Service

agreed to inform members of the final costs for the open book repairs costs for both 2012/13 and 2013/14.

In addition the Head of Service explained that all contracts that were in place would be reviewed by June 2015 to allow appropriate recommendations to come forward particularly on if open book contracts were working for the Council.

The Committee were informed that rigorous contract management was happening and example of this was how the team were resolving the issues regarding the cleaning contract. Improved procurement work was now under way and the Asbestos contract letting work was under way with PQQ evaluation and tender document preparation.

Resolved update on the unsigned contracts to the next meeting, reconciliation.

Resolved that

- (1) the report be noted; and
- (2) an update on the unsigned contracts be brought to the next meeting.

(Councillor Dhillon arrived during this item and Councillor Vincett left at the close of this item)

76. Executive Agenda (Non Confidential Items & Reports) – Wednesday 1 October 2014

The Committee considered the following item which would be discussed at the meeting of the Executive on Wednesday 1 October 2014.

Agenda Item 7 - Procurement Action Plan Update

There were concerns from the Committee about how far procurement had been improved within the Council since it was first raised as a concern over 6 years ago. For this reason the Scrutiny Committee asked for the Executive and the Committee to be notified of the agreed actions, regarding procurement, from the SMT away day. The Scrutiny Committee also asked the Executive to consider the Procurement Team resources and if these are sufficient considering the demands placed upon the team in terms of the need for improved procurement within the Council. This potential need for greater resources must be defined by February 2015 to enable any bid to be included budget setting process for 2015/16.

Agenda Item 4 - Sports & Leisure Options

The Committee was in agreement that it is extremely important that this work is carried out so that members are in possession of all the facts when the final decision on options for this service is made next year. The committee fully supported the recommendations in the report.

Agenda Item 5 - Budget Review to 30 September 2014

The Committee was content with the report but it did have concerns about the above budget spend on Legal Services and asked that the Executive look closely at this matter.

Agenda Item 6 - Bishop's Tachbrook Community Centre

The Committee supported the aspirations for a community centre to be built in Bishop's Tachbrook. However, there were significant concerns about the consequences of this request as laid out before the Executive. The amount of funding that the Council is being asked to approve today, albeit with some constraints as outlined within the recommendations, the committee felt very strongly that the Executive do not approve this request this evening.

The Committee have therefore made the following recommendations to the Executive:

- (1) Before any funding is considered for approval a robust and viable business case should be in place and submitted to the District Council;
- (2) That a representative of this council should be appointed to the board for the St Chads Centre to enable input as the key financial supporter of this scheme; and
- (3) A robust and effective process must be in place for assessing how such schemes are assessed and determined before any application is considered.

(Councillor Cross left the meeting at the conclusion of the discussion on this item)

Agenda Item 8 - Future use of the Warwick Limited Liability Partnership

The Committee supported the recommendations in the report.

Agenda Item 9 - Prosperity Agenda

The Committee supported the recommendations in the report.

Agenda Item 10 - Use of Delegated Powers – CSW Broadband

The Executive should be content on why such a large amount of funding is required for such a low (6,000) number of properties.

77. Comments from the Executive

A report from Civic and Committee Services summarised the Executive's responses to comments which the Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee gave on reports submitted to the Executive on 1 October 2014.

Resolved that the contents of the report be noted.

78. **Review of the Work Programme & Forward Plan**

The Committee considered its work programme for 2014/15 and the latest published version of the Forward Plan.

Resolved that

- (1) the work programme for 2014/2015 be noted;
and
- (2) at present, there were no forthcoming Executive decisions which Members wished to have an input into before the Executive make their decision.

79. **Scrutiny of Partnerships**

The Committee considered a list of partnerships to consider if they wanted to look at any of the following partnerships in greater depth as part of its remit considering the effectiveness of the Councils formal partnerships.

Resolved that the officer provide a brief sentence outlining the work of each partnership, the value of partnership and what benefit the District receives.

(The meeting ended at 8.50 pm)