

# Finance and Audit Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 9 February 2016 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00pm.

**Present:** Councillors Barrott (Chair), Day, Gifford, Harrington, Illingworth, Mann, Quinney, Rhead and Thompson.

**Also present:** Councillors Mobbs, Phillips and Whiting.

## 108. **Apologies and Substitutes**

- (a) apologies for absence were received from Councillors Butler and Heath; and
- (b) there were no substitutes.

## 109. **Declarations of Interest**

### Minute Number 111 – Chief Executive’s Contract Register

Councillor Gifford declared an interest because he was a Warwickshire County Councillor and the report contained details about Legal Services.

### Minute Number 112 – Executive Agenda – Item 7 Treasury Management Strategy Plan for 2016/17

Councillor Gifford declared an interest because his brother was Chairman of one of the companies mentioned in the report.

### Minute Number 112 – Executive Agenda – Item 4 – Budget 2016/17 and Council Tax – General Fund Revenue and Capital

Councillor Rhead declared an interest because the Barford Playing Fields were mentioned in the report and he was the Ward Councillor for Barford.

### Minute Number 112 – Executive Agenda - Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget 2016/17 and Housing Rents

Councillor Barrott declared an interest because he rented a garage from the District Council.

## 110. **Minutes**

The minutes of the Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee of 12 January 2016 were taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**111. Chief Executive's Contract Register**

The Committee received a report from the Chief Executive's department which provided information on all of the contracts held by that department.

In March 2014, the Finance and Audit Scrutiny Committee requested that it review each Service Area's Contracts Register in turn. This process enabled Members to consider its robustness, make appropriate suggestions on how it could be improved and consider the documents within the context of promoting sound procurement practice across the Council.

The Deputy Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer introduced the report and explained the different service areas that made up the Chief Executive's department.

He advised that there were no signed documents for some of the contracts owned by the ICT department because these were licence agreements and covered software installation.

In addition, he explained that some of the entries were legacy contracts, signed in 2010 and were still housed in the relevant service area but he agreed that these could be moved to a central location if Members felt it was necessary.

Members queried the software agreement relating to Northgate where the expiry date had passed. The Deputy Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer explained that this software was no longer in operation and the contract did not exist.

In relation to the office supplies contract, Members again queried the end date which had expired at the end of August 2014. The entry in the register advised that the contract was being reviewed by Procurement. Members were concerned that this meant there was no central office supplies contract and had not been since 2014. The Deputy Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer agreed to speak to the contact officer and email an update the next day.

With regard to the column requesting that a 'Signed Contract Agreement is with DMC (Deed Store)', Members felt that the heading could be amended to remove the reference to the DMC because the aim was to ensure that officers were in possession of signed copies.

However, it was felt that the original requirement of all contracts being held in a central location should remain and the Chairman requested that The Deputy Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer looked at migrating any legacy contracts into the central store.

**Resolved** that the contract register be noted.

**112. Executive Agenda (Non Confidential Items & Reports – Wednesday 10 February 2016)**

Agenda Item 9 – Multi-Storey Car Parks Condition Survey

The Committee supported the report.

Agenda Item 7 – Treasury Management Strategy Plan for 2016/17

The Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee supported the recommendations in the report although Members were concerned that in order to increase return, the level of risk also had to increase.

Agenda Item 5 – Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget 2016/17 and Housing Rents

The Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee supported the recommendations although concerns were raised about the maintenance of safety measures being delayed by the Repairs Service. Whilst Members noted that this work was being brought up to date as quickly as possible, it was felt that the Executive should be aware of the high level of risk this posed to the Council.

Agenda Item 6 – Heating, Lighting and Water Charges 2016/17 – Council Tenants

The Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee supported the recommendations in the report.

Agenda Item 3 – Waste Container Charging

The Finance and Audit Scrutiny Committee supported the recommendations in the report although there were concerns that the introduction of charging might only recover 50% of the costs incurred by the Council. In addition, it was felt that further work was needed to educate the operatives on acceptable service delivery but it was noted that the contractor could also be charged for any damage to the containers.

Agenda Item 4 – Budget 2016/17 and Council Tax – General Fund Revenue and Capital

The Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee supported the recommendations in the report. In addition, having received the late information contained in the addendum, Members agreed that the following recommendation be made:

The Finance and Audit Scrutiny Committee recommended that Warwick District Council should take advantage of the increased ability to raise Council Tax for 2016/17 by £5, to place the Council's finances in a stronger position.

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

### **Agenda Item 3**

The Committee considered its work programme for 2015/16 and the latest published version of the Forward Plan.

The Committee Services Officer circulated a rota of the Risk Registers and Contract Registers for the forthcoming year which had been compiled in conjunction with officers from Finance and Audit.

Members noted that the update on the Section 106 Agreements had not been available for the February meeting and noted the reasons for the omission from the Committee Services Officer. However, Members agreed that an update should be given at the March 2016 meeting.

The Committee Services Officer reminded Members that the work programme only covered March and April 2016 and suggested that they may wish to contact her if there were any other items they wanted to add.

An updated version of the Forward Plan was also circulated because the document supplied with the meeting papers had since been amended.

**Resolved** that the work programme be updated accordingly.

#### **114. Comments from the Executive**

A report from Democratic Services summarised the Executive's responses to comments which the Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee gave on reports submitted to the Executive on 12 January 2016.

**Resolved** that the contents of the report be noted.

(The meeting ended at 8.46 pm)