

# Finance and Audit Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 3 January 2018 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00pm.

**Present:** Councillor Barrott (Chair), Councillors Ashford, Cain, Davies, Gifford, Howe, Illingworth, Margrave, Noone, Quinney and Wright.

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

## 98. Apologies and Substitutes

- (a) There were no apologies for absence; and
- (b) Councillor Ashford substituted for Councillor Gallagher.

## 99. Declarations of Interest

### Executive Item 5 – Procurement Partnership and Staffing

Having taken advice from the Monitoring Officer, Councillor Gifford declared an interest because he was a Warwickshire County Councillor. However, he was entitled to remain in the room and take part in the debate.

## 100. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2017 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

## 101. Chief Executive's Office Contracts Register

The Committee received a report from the Chief Executive's department which enabled Members to review the Contracts Register pertaining to the Chief Executive's department.

The Terms of Reference for the Finance and Audit Scrutiny included "Promote value for money and good procurement practice". This was a role that the Committee actively pursued. In carrying out this role the Committee appointed three of its members to act as Procurement Champions to assist and advise the Procurement Manager. Without doubt, partly as a result of these actions, the status and knowledge of procurement had increased substantially across the organisation in recent years.

The review of Chief Executive's Office Contracts Register enabled members of the Finance and Audit Scrutiny Committee to consider its robustness, make appropriate suggestions on how it could be improved, and consider the document within the context of promoting sound procurement practice across the Council.

A copy of the current contract register was attached as appendix 1 to the report although an updated version was also circulated at the meeting.

The Deputy Chief Executive (AJ) introduced the report and explained the different service areas that made up the Chief Executive's department. These included ICT Services, Democratic Services, Human Resources, Media and Communications, Website Management, Corporate Support Team and Asset Management.

He advised that all but one contract had a written or electronic contract stored in the deeds store and the review dates were under continuous monitoring.

In response to questions from Members, the Deputy Chief Executive (AJ) advised that:

- The budget for the Minor Works Engineering would be called on as and when required, dependant on the work needed. A breakdown of the scale of overspend would be requested from officers.
- The Senior Committee Services Officer would provide Members with the information that had not printed correctly in the table.
- The contract end dates were provided to prompt the relevant contract manager to ensure that measures were in place – speed of movement on this would be dependent on the officer's work programme.
- A reference could be provided for each row for easier identification.
- With regard to the potential saving identified in the Electricity contract, an answer would be requested from the Deputy Chief Executive (BH).
- Following the incident of a leak of kerosene at Jubilee House, Kenilworth, Members would be updated as to whether the cost had fallen to the Council.

The Committee thanked the Deputy Chief Executive for attending, and

**Resolved** that the report be noted.

102. **Executive Agenda (Non-Confidential Items & Reports – Thursday 4 January 2018)**

The Committee considered the following non-confidential item which would be discussed at the meeting of the Executive on Thursday 4 January 2018.

Item 5 – Procurement Partnership and Staffing

The Committee supported the recommendations in the report.

103. **Public & Press**

Resolved that under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 that the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item by reason of the likely disclosure of exempt information within paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.



**104. Executive Agenda (Confidential Items & Reports – Thursday 4 January 2018)**

The Committee considered the following confidential item which would be discussed at the meeting of the Executive on Thursday 4 January 2018.

**Urgent Item – Newbold Comyn Golf Course**

The Committee supported the recommendations in the report but raised a number of concerns about the lessons that needed to be learnt from this.

(The meeting resumed in public session.)

**105. Executive Agenda (Non-Confidential Items & Reports – Thursday 4 January 2018)**

The Committee considered the following non-confidential items which would be discussed at the meeting of the Executive on Thursday 4 January 2018.

**Item 6 – Homelessness Initiatives and the New Legislation**

The Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee supported the recommendations in the report with the following amendment to the wording of recommendation 2.4:

“...the earmarking of an initial £10,000 from the FSHG...”

**106. Comments from the Executive**

The Committee received a report from Democratic Services which summarised the Executive’s response to comments given by the Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee on reports submitted to the Executive on 29 November 2017.

As part of the scrutiny process, the Committee no longer considered the whole of the Executive agenda.

Councillors were emailed at the time of the publication of the Executive and Scrutiny Committee agendas, asking them to contact Committee Services by 9.00 am on the day of the Scrutiny Committee, to advise which Executive items they wished the Scrutiny Committee to pass comment on and the reasons why.

The responses which the Executive gave to those items considered by the Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee on 28 November 2017 were detailed in the appendix to the report.

**Resolved** that the responses made by the Executive, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be noted.



## 107. **Review of the Work Programme and Forward Plan**

The Committee received a report from Democratic Services which informed the Committee of its work programme for 2018 and the current Forward Plan. Both of these documents were attached as appendices to the report.

The five main roles of overview and scrutiny in local government were: holding to account; performance management; policy review; policy development; and external scrutiny.

The pre-decision scrutiny of Executive decisions fell within the role of 'holding to account'. To feed into the pre-decision scrutiny of Executive decisions, the Committee needed to examine the Council's Forward Plan and identify items upon which it would like to have an impact.

The Council's Forward Plan was published on a monthly basis and set out the key decisions to be taken by the Council in the next twelve months. The Council only had a statutory duty to publish key decisions to be taken in the next four months. However, the Forward Plan was expanded to a twelve month period to give a clearer picture of how and when the Council would be making important decisions.

The Committee was mindful that any work it wished to undertake would need to be undertaken without the need to change the timescales as set out within the Forward Plan. The Committee may wish to give greater consideration to the reports in Section 2 of Appendix 1, to maximise the time available for Members to input into the process.

### **Resolved that**

- (1) the Forward Plan be noted; and
- (2) Finance will be the first service area to produce service area budget reviews alongside the Risk Registers and Contract Registers.

(The meeting ended at 7.48 pm)

6/2/18