



**MINUTES of
FINANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES COMMITTEE
26 JULY 2016**

PRESENT

Chairman	Councillor D M Sismey
Vice-Chairman	Councillor I E Dobson
Councillors	J P F Archer, Mrs H E Elliott, A S Fluker B E Harker, M R Pearlman and Rev A E J Shrimpton

324. CHAIRMAN'S NOTICES

The Chairman drew attention to the list of notices published on the back of the agenda.

325. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTION NOTICE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs B F Acevedo, B S Beale MBE and Miss M R Lewis.

326. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 14 June 2016 be approved and confirmed.

327. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

There was none.

328. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was none.

329. COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN'S GOOD NEWS ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman highlighted a number of good news items which included:

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support

The Council's performance in dealing with Housing Benefit and Council Tax support claims have been good, in particular the processing of new claims well within targets.

Collection of Council Tax and Business Rates

This was currently on track to meet annual performance targets for collection of both Council Tax (98.3%) and Business Rates (97.8%).

Transformation – Revenues and Benefits

Promoting digital by default approach to service delivery, and have achieved the *highest ever levels* of customers:

- Receiving payment of their benefits through BACS (99.7%)
- Paying council tax by direct debit (71.68%)

EU Referendum

Despite the hazardous weather and a number of local areas affected by flooding on the date of the EU Referendum, we had a very high turnout of 79.2%.

Work Experience

The Legal and Democratic Services have recently had a pupil from the Plume School undertaking some work experience in the team and will be hosting two further work experience students over the summer.

330. CORPORATE HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Committee received the report of the Director of Resources on corporate health and safety activity for the first quarter to 30 June 2016. A summary by Directorate and a description of the reported accidents and near misses were set out in the report and Appendix 1 to the report provided progress with the Health and Safety Action Plan for 2016/17.

In reply to a question regarding the reported accidents/incidents and whether there was a generic RAMS as required by Health and Safety Regulations in place, the Director of Resources undertook to revert to Councillor A S Fluker on this.

RESOLVED that the statistics for quarter one and the progress with the Health and Safety Action Plan for 2016/17 be noted.

331. STRATEGIC PLAN FOR WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee received the report of the Director of Resources on progress on the key priorities for 2015/16, development of the new Core Values, and the embedding of the new Core Values into the new competency framework which was a key feature of the new Performance Review. Details were set out in Appendices 1-3 to the report.

It was noted that the 2015/16 work had been completed and details of the developmental work to be carried out in 2016/17 were received, a particular outcome being the finalisation of an updated Absence Management Policy.

RESOLVED that progress on the Strategic Plan for Workforce Development 2015/16 and key priorities for 2016/17 be noted.

332. FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2015 / 16

The Committee received the report of the Director of Resources providing information on the outturn position for the 2015/16 financial year and also movements in relation to the Council's General Fund/Earmarked Reserves and Capital Commitments as at 31 March 2016. Appendix 1 to the report gave details of the salary budgets and actual expenditure at the end of the financial year and Appendix 2 gave details of the Earmarked Reserves and the movements in 2015/16.

There was some discussion on the detailed information provided, particularly on salaries by Directorate which was welcomed. The view was expressed that it had been requested that this be accompanied by previous years' comparators so that a better assessment of spend against performance could be made. With regard to the salaries underspend, clarification was sought as to the impact on this of expenditure on agency/consultancy support. It was noted that agency support was met from a separate budget. It was agreed that the Director of Resources should report back to the Committee with a full report on the implications of this to enable Members to assess resourcing against performance.

In reply to a question the Director of Resources confirmed that in the light of a recent press report the quoted figure of £400k was the true net income figure for car parking income. The figure set out in the report now before the Committee was the gross.

RESOLVED that subject to the need for a further report by the Director of Resources referred to above, the information be noted.

333. BUSINESS RATES RETENTION AND BUSINESS RATES REFORM CONSULTATIONS

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Resources on two consultations published by the DCLG earlier this month.

The two consultation papers were entitled "Self-sufficient local government: 100% Business Rates consultation" and "Business Rates Reform – Fair Funding Review consultation" and views were being sought on the implementation of 100% Business Rates Retention for local government. The deadline for responses was 26 September which was the day before the next scheduled meeting of the Committee. The detailed questions included in each consultation were set in Appendices A and B to the report.

Arising from the discussion that followed, the Director of Resources undertook to write separately to the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the concerns of Members at the level of relief given to agricultural business and those businesses which traded outside the region with no financial contribution towards local infrastructure.

Reference was also made to the need to protect the position of renewables such as wind farms.

RESOLVED that the Director of Resources is authorised to prepare and submit the Council's response to the two documents after consultation with the Chairman of the Committee.

There being no further items of business the Chairman closed the meeting at 7.55 pm

D M SISMEY
CHAIRMAN