

## The Cabinet

**Wednesday 23 September 2020 at 15:30  
at Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

- Present:** Councillor Crompton (Chair);  
Councillors Ali, Allcock, Millard, Padda, Shaeen,  
Singh and Underhill.
- In attendance:** Councillors E M Giles and M Hussain.
- Officers:** David Stevens (Chief Executive), Alan Caddick (Housing and Communities), Neil Cox (Director - Prevention and Protection), Lesley Hagger (Executive Director – Children’s Services), Stephnie Hancock (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Stuart Lackenby (Director – Adult Social Care), Alison Knight (Executive Director - Neighbourhoods), Rebecca Maher (Acting Section 151 Officer), Lisa McNally (Director – Public Health), Elaine Newsome (Service Manager – Democracy), Sue Stanhope (Interim Director – Human Resources), Tammy Stokes (Interim Director – Regeneration and Growth), Suky Suthi-Nagra (Democratic Services Manager), Surjit Tour (Director - Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer) and Chris Ward (Director – Education, Skills and Employment).

### 79/20 **Apologies for Absence**

Members noted the apologies of Councillor Taylor, Cabinet Member for Sustainable Transport; Councillor Moore, Chair of the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board and Councillor Preece, Vice Chair of Children’s Services and Education Scrutiny Board.



## **The Cabinet – 23 September 2020**

### **80/20 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2020 were confirmed as a correct record.

### **81/20 Additional Business**

There were no additional items of business to consider.

### **82/20 Reset and Recovery - Phase One Findings**

Consideration was given to the activity undertaken in Phase One of the reset and recovery framework, the findings from the impact assessment work undertaken on communities, economy, staff and finance and further detail on Phase Two activity.

The priority for Phase One had been to move out of lockdown safely and ensure that the Council retained flexibility to respond to changes in the local infection rate to support the most vulnerable in our communities.

As response activity had been reduced or ceased as appropriate, actions had been closed. Where a response activity continued to be delivered and was required in the longer term, this had been moved to service delivery plans as business as usual. Response activity would be stepped up as necessary, as set out in the Local Outbreak Plan and within the structure of the Incident Management Team.

In order to achieve the required outcomes from Phase One on understanding the impact of COVID-19, on 18 June 2020 the Reset and Recovery Board had established three impact working groups and considered its findings as follows:-

#### **Economic Impact**

- COVID-19 had exacerbated existing weaknesses in Sandwell's community, related to underlying poverty and deprivation
- A different approach was required to address these underlying vulnerabilities.

## **The Cabinet – 23 September 2020**

- To do this well, the Council needed to ensure:
  - a. that engagement was done in the right way and was culturally sensitive;
  - b. changes were made in our own organisation to do things more corporately;
  - c. resources were focussed in areas of most need;
  - d. there were clear measures of success.

### **Community Impact**

The challenges identified for Sandwell were: -

- Disproportionate impact on young people – lack of apprenticeship vacancies, university options, unstable employment.
- Low skills base – Sandwell’s starting point was lower, residents who became unemployed and were less skilled were usually less resilient financially and in finding new employment.
- Impact on those 50 plus – as with other economic crises it was forecast that people aged 50 plus would be disproportionately impacted.
- Skills and employment support demand would be different – higher skilled cohort, more disadvantaged move further away from the labour market.
- Digital exclusion/poverty – still a major barrier for residents to complete training/upskill.
- Mental health – anxiety for those returning to work or accessing the labour market.

It was also recognised that more understanding was needed about the detailed economic impact on Sandwell’s Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities in order to tackle the issues as an organisation.

### **Staff Impact**

- Staff had coped well with adapting quickly to a new working style and maintaining service delivery in adverse circumstances.
- It was recognised that this style of working had not suited everybody equally for a variety of reasons.

## **The Cabinet – 23 September 2020**

- There was now a need to define the new operating model and embed this within the organisation.
- There was a need to balance the needs of staff with the needs of the organisation.
- We would continue to listen to the voice of our staff through regular pulse surveys.
- Augment communications mechanisms in light of remote working, particularly with the frontline and those without remote access.

The intelligence obtained would now be used in impact analysis to inform development of a revised corporate plan to ensure that what we offered as a Council continued to meet the needs of the communities served.

**Agreed** that the findings from the impact assessment work undertaken on communities, economy, staff and finance as part of Phase 1 of the Reset and Recovery Plan be noted.

83/20

### **Development of new Council housing at Reservoir Road, Rowley Regis – Acceptance of Single Tender**

Approval was sought to award the contract for the Construction of 27 new Council Homes at Reservoir Road, Rowley Regis.

The Council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules required at least three tender submissions to ensure value for money, however, following a mini-competition exercise carried out under the provisions of the Homes England Framework Agreement and an invitation to tender being placed on the Homes England website, only one tender had been submitted. The tender had been marked against the quality criteria set out in the tender documents to ensure that it met the quality standards required and that the score was 15.83 out of a possible 20.

#### **Reason for Decision**

The Council had key milestones within its build programme for new Council homes together with obligations to spend grant funding within the agreed programme. As this scheme was part funded by Homes England New Ways of Working Grant for affordable housing there was a danger that any further delay could affect this

## **The Cabinet – 23 September 2020**

funding stream and that grant funding could be repayable through claw back mechanisms.

### **Alternative Options Considered**

Re-tendering the project would create further delays and place the Council at risk of being in breach of the funding agreement with Homes England, by not meeting programme and spend profiles. Additional fees would also be incurred and there was potential for tender prices to rise, resulting in increase in price and cost to the Council, causing the budget for the project to be exceeded.

### **Agreed:-**

- (1) that the Director – Regeneration and Growth be authorised to award the contract for the Construction of 27 new Council Homes at Reservoir Road, Rowley Regis to Seddon Construction Ltd in the sum of £4,498,249.00;
- (2) that, in connection with (1) above, the Director - Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer be authorised to enter into or execute under seal any documentation in relation to award of the contract and/or other agreements as may be deemed necessary;
- (3) that an exemption be made to the Council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules to enable the course of action referred to in (1) above to proceed.

84/20

### **Approval to Modify Contract Value for existing Technology Hardware Contract**

Approval was sought to an increase in value to the Technology Hardware contract to accommodate additional expenditure that had not been provided for within the original contract.

The increase in provision within the existing contract would ensure that the Council could continue to procure a range of technology hardware (e.g. laptops, desktops, tablets, servers, etc.) that remained compatible with current corporate standards.

## **The Cabinet – 23 September 2020**

The existing contract was likely to reach its current expenditure limit of £3m prior to the end date of 30 April 2022 as the Council's requirements for the purchase of new hardware had increased.

The increase was due to the Workplace Vision programme and an increase in mobile working in Neighbourhood Services. An increase in value was therefore required to ensure that suitable arrangements continued to be in place through the existing provider XMA Limited.

### **Reason for Decision**

The Council needed to achieve savings in its operational costs whilst maintaining and improving services for the people of Sandwell. ICT was a key enabler and supported the Council in its endeavours by providing an agile and flexible ICT infrastructure to deliver the systems and services that enabled the workforce to operate efficiently.

To support the delivery of ICT, the council required a single supplier to provide a range of hardware devices such as laptops, desktops, tablets, servers and thin client devices through to other peripherals such as mice, keyboards and memory sticks.

### **Alternative Options Considered**

An alternative approach would be to undertake a new tender process for each requirement and award individual contracts. However, this would be inefficient as this would be required on an almost continuous basis leading to higher costs and increased delivery times for equipment. The Council had built up a strong working relationship with XMA Limited under this contract and XMA already understood the Council's requirements and standards.

### **Agreed:-**

- (1) that the value of the Technology Hardware Contract with XMA Limited be increased by £1.5m, from £3.0m to £4.5m until 30 April 2022;
- (2) that, subject to (1) above, the Director - Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer be authorised to execute a formal variation to the existing contract to increase the contract value from £3m to £4.5m

## **The Cabinet – 23 September 2020**

The meeting ended at 16.09.

[Cabinet 23 September 2020](#)