

**Minutes of the Budget and Corporate  
Scrutiny Management Board**

**7<sup>th</sup> July, 2017 at 3.00pm**  
**at Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

**Present:** Councillor P Hughes (Chair);  
Councillors Edis and E M Giles.

**In Attendance:** J Smith (Interim Head of Finance);  
C Davey (Business Partner – Adults);  
C Sandland (Business Partner – Children);  
J Russell (Senior Accountant).

3/17 **Consideration of the Council's Financial Outturn 2016/2017**

Further to Minute No. 2/17 (22<sup>nd</sup> June, 2017) the Board discussed the remainder of the Directorate outturn reports for 2016/17 that it had not concluded its consideration of at the meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 2017.

From the comments and questions by members of the Board, the following responses were made and issues highlighted:-

- The impact of schools choosing not to visit museums placed pressures on the budget for Leisure and Culture. It was suggested that this could be further investigated by the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board.
- The arrangement of internal recharges in relation to Fleet Management had been reviewed and amended with internal fleet payments only required for damages and fuel. This would allow the service manager to better manage the finances for the Council's fleet in future years.
- The ongoing recruitment issues affecting various Housing Management functions may be compounded by the Council's current policies and procedures relating to recruitment. The Board agreed to review these policies to ensure they continue to effectively meet the staffing needs of the Council.

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- The Board requested further information on the financial impact of any required improvements to the Council's multi-storey flatted accommodation in light of the tragic events at Grenfell Tower, London and any subsequent changes in fire safety regulations.
- Members requested further information on the way in which the management fee paid to Riverside is processed in the Council's accounts and whether the revenue contribution to the capital programme is utilised in the area local to the estates managed as part of that contract.
- The Board asked for a briefing note on the anticipated impact of the introduction of Universal Credit in Sandwell.
- The Council was in the process of establishing a Children's Trust. The authority was an active member of a virtual network of Trust Finance Officers to share practice and experiences.
- It was noted that key budget pressures in Children's Services were the costs of external placements (foster or residential care) and the costs associated with employing agency workers. The Board acknowledged that this was an issue within children's social care across the country, however given recent developments such as the regional cap on agency pay, the City of Wolverhampton Council Children's Services receiving a 'Good' rating from Ofsted and the forthcoming establishment of the regional Adoption Agency it was suggested that this issue could be raised with the West Midlands Combined Authority Overview & Scrutiny Committee as a topic of regional importance.
- It was reported that the status of a Children's Trust for Corporation Tax and Value Added Tax was currently unclear. The Board recommended that the Cabinet lobby Her Majesty's Revenues and Custom to request that such Trusts had the same liabilities as local authorities.
- The Board placed on record its appreciation to all officers involved with establishing the Children's Trust for their hard work during the difficult and complex process.

The Board thanked officers for attending the meeting and contributing to the discussion on the Council's financial outturns for 2016/17.

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### Resolved:-

- (1) that the proposals for the use of outturn surpluses for the following General Fund Services be endorsed:  
Neighbourhoods;  
Children's Services;
- (2) that the proposals for the use of outturn surplus for the Housing Revenue Account be endorsed;
- (3) that a report on the financial implications of any required improvements to the Council's multi-storey flatted accommodation in light of the tragic events at Grenfell Tower, London and any subsequent changes in fire safety regulations be submitted to the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board;
- (4) that the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board be requested to review the Council's approach to generating income from the museums and libraries service;
- (5) that the Cabinet Member for Leisure be requested to meet with the Chair of the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board about plans for service improvements at Sandwell Valley;
- (6) that the Interim Director – Neighbourhoods provide clarification on the nature of the savings on staffing costs in relation to Estate Services and Maintenance;
- (7) that the appreciation of the Board be sent to all officers involved with the establishment of the Children's Trust for their hard work during this difficult and complex process;
- (8) that the Cabinet be requested to consider lobbying Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs to request that Children's Trusts should have the same liabilities as local authorities in relation to Corporation Tax and Value Added Tax;

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- (9) that recruitment and retention of children’s social workers and foster carers be referred to the West Midlands Combined Authority Overview & Scrutiny Committee as a potential item for review on a regional basis;
- (10) that the Council’s processes and policies in relation to recruitment be included on the work programme for the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board in 2017/18;
- (11) that briefing notes on the following items be provided to the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board:-
  - (a) the financial arrangements relating to the Riverside management fee;
  - (b) the anticipated impact of the introduction of Universal Credit in Sandwell;
  - (c) the Council’s rented premises in Lyng, West Bromwich used by the Adult Social Care directorate;
  - (d) the impact of increasing National Living Wage levels on domiciliary care;

(Meeting ended at 5.06pm)

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