Strategy and Resources Meeting
Tuesday 14th October 2025
The Trinity Centre
7:00pm

Present:

Cllrs S Ward (Chairman), Cooper, Mackey, Parkin, Pears and Raut.

In Attendance:

Olive O'Sullivan – Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Mary Kidner – Head of Finance & Governance.

32 Apologies for Absence

The CEO reported apologies from Cllr Cairns and Puri and apologies for lateness from Cllr Raut.

Resolved to accept the apologies received.

33 Declarations of Interest

No declarations were made.

34 Minutes of the Previous Meetings

Resolved to confirm and sign the minutes of the meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee held on 17th September 2025.

35 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising reported.

36 Questions from Members

No questions were received.

37 Minutes for the Town Centre Regeneration Partnership

In response to a question from Cllr Parkin asking if the consultant for the Royal Sutton Coldfield Gateway had now been appointed, the CEO advised that Jon Lord had been involved in the evaluation of the tender submissions and that Birmingham City Council (BCC) is in the final stages of appointing the consultants to take forward the next steps of the Royal Sutton Coldfield Gateway. The appointed consultants would be attending a future Town Centre Regeneration Partnership meeting.

Resolved to note the minutes of the meeting of the Town Centre Regeneration Partnership held on 12th September 2025.

7:09pm Cllr Raut entered during discussion of this item.

38 Royal Sutton Coldfield Libraries and Community Centres

Cllr Ward said that things were progressing towards the Town Council assuming control of the Library and Community Centre service from the 1st November 2025 and BCC had approved entering into the contractual agreement between BCC and the Town Council at a cabinet meeting earlier today.

Cllr Parkin thanked the Town Council Officers and acknowledged the hard work put in to get to the agreement. He also extended his thanks to Becky Oldham for her design work in rebranding the signage for the Sutton Coldfield libraries and community centres. In response to a question about staffing, the CEO advised that the BCC Senior Service Manager was in post, and the Contract Liaison Manager would be recruited to by BCC.

The CEO advised that she would be meeting the library staff next week, along with Steve Hollingworth.

Cllr Ward requested that libraries and community centres would be a standing item on the Committee agenda going forward.

39 External Audit Report & Certificate 2024/25

In response to questions from Cllr Pears, the CEO responded that the Plan for Neighbourhoods (PfN) funds are kept separately and would be clearly shown on the Statement of Accounts, and should there be additional audit fees payable, that these would be apportioned to PfN. She also confirmed that steps were in place to ensure that emails from the generic address used by audit would be forwarded to the CEO and picked up by another member of staff, in the CEO's absence.

Cllr Ward summed up the comments from the external auditors as presentational, and Committee thanked Mary Kidner for her work.

Resolved to note the External Auditors Report for the financial year 2024/25 and actions taken to address matters brought to the attention of the Town Council.

Resolved to recommend that Full Council note actions taken to address recommendations from the Town Council's External Auditors and that figures in the Accounting Statements in Section two of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for 2024/25 will be restated on the 2025/26 AGAR.

40 Annual Governance Statement 2025/26

The CEO presented the changes to the Annual Governance Statements for 2025/26 and the new assertation relating to digital and data compliance. Committee will be considering an IT Policy later in the agenda, and a review of GDPR and Data Compliance is underway to ensure compliance and best practice is embedded.

Resolved to note the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, Section One, Assertion 10 and future actions to be undertaken to ensure that Council can return a positive response at the end of the financial year.

41 Internal Audit Appointment for 2025/26

The CEO reminded Committee that consideration needed to be given to Public Sector Knowledge, Independence and Competence when appointing an internal auditor. Given the existing relationship, proven experience and limited timeframe for internal audit this year it was recommended that the Town Council continue to Auditing Solutions Limited for the financial year 2025/26.

Councillors spoke in support of the recommendation and asked that alternative arrangements be considered to alternate internal auditors from financial year 2026/27.

Resolved to appoint Auditing Solutions Ltd to carry out the Town Council's internal audit for the 2025/26 financial year.

42 Performance Against Budget

Resolved to note the performance against budget report.

43 Town Council Investments Update

The CEO reported that the second tranche of Plan for neighbourhoods' capacity funding had been received and transferred into the CCLA – PFN account, and the second tranche of Precept received in September will be invested in line with the Investments Policy. The DMADF deposit is currently £1.8m and there are no cash limits on investments for the DMADF in the Town Council's Investment Strategy.

The CEO also reported that CCLA, subject to regulatory approval, have been acquired by Jupiter IM Group and that Unity Trust Bank have received an investment grade of BBB-. The Town Council's Treasury Advisors are aware and have stated that in their view nothing material has changed for Council to be concerned about.

Resolved to note the movement in investments and approve that the DMADF deposit be increased to £2.2m.

44 Budget Planning

Committee noted the Budget Planning Timetable.

45 Policy and Procedures

Councillors raised questions in relation to proposed Microsoft license price increases, cyber insurance and retention policy for emails, the CEO will report back on these items.

Resolved to approve the IT Policy.

46 National Salary Pay Agreement 2025/26

Resolved to note the Local Government Services Pay Agreement applicable to Town Council staff from April 2025.

47 Date of the Next Meeting

The next meeting scheduled is 9th December 2025 at the Trinity Centre.

The meeting ended at 7:59pm

Signed as a true record
8th December 2025