

## **Executive Response to Overview and Scrutiny Enquiry on Council Responsiveness**

Report of: Cllr R Wenham, Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources, richard.wenham@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Responsible Director(s): Richard Carr, Chief Executive, Sue Harrison, Director of Children's Services, Jason Longhurst, Director of Regeneration & Business, Julie Ogle, Director of Social Care, Health and Housing and Charles Warboys, Director of Resources

**This report relates to a decision that is Key**

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### **Purpose of this report**

1. To agree the response of the Executive to the outcomes of a scrutiny enquiry into council responsiveness as received at the previous Executive meeting on 04 April 2017.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The Executive is asked to:-**

1. **agree the response appended to this report including the proposed actions to be taken in light of the recommendations of the enquiry.**

### **Overview and Scrutiny Comments/Recommendations**

2. The recommendations of this review were ratified by the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny at the meeting on 24 January 2017.

### **Background**

3. At their meeting on 4 April 2017 the Executive received the recommendations of an overview and scrutiny enquiry into council responsiveness.
4. The purpose of the enquiry was to review customer experience when contacting the Council and reviewing the extent to which residents could influence council decision-making.

5. The Constitution requires that the Executive consider the report and respond within two months indicating what action, if any is proposed to take and if it decides to take no action the reasons for that decision.

### **Summary of the recommendations and Executive response**

6. Many of the recommendations proposed by the enquiry relate to existing practice and as such progress is already ongoing and will continue to be made.
7. The remaining recommendations fall into three broad categories for which action is proposed as follows:-

- a. **Focusing on customer experience to enhance intelligence and tailor services accordingly.**

During the course of this enquiry several developments have already been implemented by the Council that will address the recommendations in the report. Whilst enhancing customer intelligence is complex it will be supported in the short to long term by ongoing projects that will develop a single view of the customer, the Council's digital strategy and the rollout of new software called 'STORM'.

- b. **Enhancing the accessibility of the Council's decision making process in addition to creating a focal point with town and parish councils.**

In response to the enquiry guidance on the Council's decision making process will be made available on the Council's website subject to Member decision making on the full suite of recommendations of the review. In addition, a review of Joint Committees is already underway that includes a refresh of their terms of reference. At the same time, options relating to the creation of Community Boards and the allocation of additional funds are being explored.

- c. **Focusing on community engagement, consultation and co-production.**

The Council continues to be committed to the Gunning Principles, which govern best practice in public consultation. Community engagement takes place through a number of existing means including the community planning initiative, which will continue to be supported by the Council.

### **Council Priorities**

8. The recommendations of the enquiry aim to support the Council's approach to be a more efficient and responsive Council.

## **Legal Implications**

9. The recommendations refer to expanding the significance of the Joint Committees (JCs). JCs are governed by a complex set of regulations and clarity around the proposed structure will be necessary in any future paper.
10. Constitutional changes such as those to the JCs is a Council function and as such the Executive will need to make recommendations via General Purposes Committee to amend the Constitution in order to implement these recommendations.

## **Financial and Risk Implications**

11. Many of the recommendations of the enquiry, if implemented, can be delivered within existing budgets.
12. There are however some recommendations that propose additional resources to support Members' engagement with the local community and giving further consideration for match funding Joint Committees to stimulate local participation.
13. The exact financial implication of the recommendations would depend upon the extent of their implementation but match funding the Joint Committees would result in an additional cost to be determined.
14. In addition it is proposed that a review of processes be undertaken to determine the scale of the challenge to provide a central mechanism for recording customer intelligence and complaints. Consideration will need to be given in the future to resource allocation to respond to the outcome of this review.

## **Equalities Implications**

15. Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. This includes identifying opportunities to encourage people with protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is low.
16. The recommendations of the enquiry aim to enhance the accessibility of the Councils' decision making process. If implemented it is envisaged that the proposals would provide additional channels through which residents of Central Bedfordshire could communicate with the Council in both a formal and informal manner.

## **Conclusion and Next Steps**

17. The Executive is asked to approve the response so that the recommendations, where applicable can be implemented.
18. It is proposed that an update on progress be received by the Corporate Resources OSC in a period of 6 months.

## **Appendices**

**Appendix A:** Executive response to the overview and scrutiny enquiry

### **Background Papers**

- (i) Detailed report of the enquiry  
<http://centralbeds.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s69856/App%201%20Full%20enquiry%20report.pdf>

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