

## Executive response in respect of Council Responsiveness Overview and Scrutiny Enquiry

Date received by Executive: **04/04/17**

Date of response to Executive: **20/06/17**

Executive Member(s) responsible for preparing response:

Cllr R Wenham, Deputy Leader and Executive Member for  
Corporate Resources

Ref	Recommendation	Is rec'n accepted?	Response including proposed action(s)	Lead Director(s)	Deadline
1.	RECOMMENDED that the council invest in a mechanism through which customer intelligence and customer complaints can be recorded centrally and that this mechanism allows Members to follow progress in dealing with complaints. Whilst it was noted that this mechanism was currently being rolled out in some areas it was recommended that this needed to happen more quickly and in as many Council services as possible.	Yes	<p>Agreed. However, this is a longer term development as part of the Council's Digital Strategy. In the short/medium term a review will be undertaken to determine the Council's move to a single view of the customer and the intelligence this can bring.</p> <p>Achieving an overview of complaints across the Council is challenging. In the short term a review of processes will be undertaken to determine the scale of the challenge and with future determination by Executive of resource allocation.</p>	J Ogley	31/03/18

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2.	RECOMMENDED that the Council fully embed a set of customer standards and a customer charter, ensuring that customer contact is logged appropriately and that a consistent approach to call backs and auto-replies was undertaken so as to embed a more responsive culture. This process should enable the council to determine performance standards across the Council so as to address areas that were less responsive.	Yes	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>1. Currently Customer Contact Centre is operating the Customer Charter and standards.</p> <p>2. Following STORM rollout Charter and standards can be reviewed and adjusted if required.</p> <p>3. Adopted and implemented across the Council</p>	J Ogley	31/12/17
3.	RECOMMENDED that the Council continue to provide localised updates to Members on the key matters and complaints underway within their wards and that this be rolled out for other council services where appropriate.	Yes	<p>Agreed and there needs to be consistency across the Council:</p> <p>1. Ward members should be advised of potential service changes in their wards as matter of course. This requirement can be reiterated.</p> <p>2. Ward Members should be kept advised of progress with complaints raised on behalf of constituents noting that there maybe limitations in respect of individual complaints (confidentiality) as compared to group complaints.</p>	J Ogley	30/06/17

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4.	RECOMMENDED that the Council ensure residents are made aware that they can get support to complete online forms in hard copy if needed.	Yes	Agreed:  1. Will review current practice, and  2. Will ensure that future digitisation work takes account of this.	J Ogley	30/06/17
5.	RECOMMENDED that in the future the Council review the accessibility of experts in different departmental areas to customer services, whether that be within the customer services team or in the front-line teams.	Yes	Agreed. This is being addressed as part of the roll out of the STORM technology	J Ogley	31/12/17
6.	RECOMMENDED that the Council develop and consult on a clear set of guides to the Council's decision making and governance structures that can ultimately be shared on the website and with Town and Parish Councils and other existing local publications to promote the role of local members as advocates on behalf of their communities.	Yes	Should be quite straight forward to provide based on the roles and responsibilities for each committee as set out in the Constitution.	C Warboys	31/08/17

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7.	RECOMMENDED that a clearly referenced section titled "influencing council decisions" be added to the website that draws together information on public engagement in the Council's governance arrangements.	Yes	Subject to Member decision making on the full suite of recommendations from this review, the Council's website relating to community engagement will be amended.	R Carr	30/09/17
8.	RECOMMENDED that the Council lead a bottom-up approach to agenda-setting by making use of annual surveys, community intelligence reports and MP/Councillor enquiries and that feedback be provided to those who propose items by updating them on the way in which they have informed the agendas of Council committee.	Existing practice	The Council already seeks views annually from residents on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agendas and this will continue to be made available through the year. Elected members play a key role in communicating between external bodies, residents and the Council. It is an individual Councillors role to channel feedback.	C Warboys	Ongoing
9.	RECOMMENDED that the use of online methods of communication and social media be enhanced as an informal channel to more proactively engaging with local communities on agenda items and matters of local concern.	Existing practice	The Council already has an active programme to increase the proportion of local residents who engage with Central Bedfordshire Council through a range of digital platforms and is committed to continuing to enhance and expand such opportunities. There are opportunities to look at the use of surveys by email etc...	R Carr	Ongoing

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10.	RECOMMENDED that webcasts and social media be used more proactively as a means of engaging with residents in a formal setting.	Existing practice	The Council already proactively promotes formal decision making processes through a range of conventional and digital communication channels. However, the Council will continue to explore and exploit opportunities to increase the reach and quality of such communications, for example through use of video.	R Carr	Ongoing
11.	RECOMMENDED that the Council support Members to be leaders of their community by providing regular briefings that outline decisions to be taken and opportunities for residents to engage in council decision making as a way of sharing this information with the local community.	Existing practice	The Executive Forward Plan outlines the decisions that will be taken in the future and more Member briefings will be provided on issues where an O&S paper would not be appropriate. The Council also provides regular briefings for Members to share with the local community on decisions to be taken and there are opportunities to look at surveys by email etc... .	C Warboys	Ongoing

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12.	RECOMMENDED that council resources be enhanced to support Members' engagement with the local community, including through the use of Joint/Partnership Committees, and to help Members to use online channels (social media, blogs, and online debates/forums) as a way of engaging with the community.	Yes	<p>a) A review of Joint Committee working practice is in progress</p> <p>b) The member training budget is available to support development of online skills, dependent on demand.</p>	S Harrison	Ongoing
13.	RECOMMENDED that the use of social media and online channels be enhanced to encourage a more transparent way of undertaking community engagement.	See 12 above	The Council uses a range of social media and other digital communication channels to raise awareness and understanding of its work. This relates both to service delivery and policy development. We remain committed to this approach and take all opportunities to investigate new channels and techniques to enhance our reach, whilst maintaining the integrity of our consultation and research methods.	R Carr	Ongoing

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14.	RECOMMENDED that a greater number of formal and informal meetings take place within local communities as a way of engaging with residents on decisions that are important to their local area.	Existing practice	This is primarily a member led activity. A considerable number of meetings take place in the community. A recent example has been the community planning meetings. Support is also available to publicise surgeries on behalf of Members.	S Harrison	Ongoing
15.	RECOMMENDED that the Council proactively identify opportunities for local or devolved decision making to stimulate community action and local resilience.	Existing practice	<p>a) Discussions regards Community Boards are continuing and a trial will run in the Ampthill/Flitwick area in 2017</p> <p>b) Town &amp; Parish Councils are being encouraged to develop local initiatives such as Emergency planning.</p>	S Harrison	Ongoing

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16.	RECOMMENDED that the remit of Joint Committees as a focal point for two-way information sharing, sharing ownership of matters and consultation on issues that directly affect the town be enhanced, rolling it out to other parts of Central Bedfordshire, encouraging parishes and smaller towns to collaborate and work together in clusters with clear links to the Council's existing decision making committees and overview and scrutiny.	Existing practice	Planned to include in changes to Joint Committee working (see 12 above) and through the development of Community Boards to include Parishes as well as Towns.	S Harrison	Ongoing
17.	RECOMMENDED that further consideration be given to match funding for Joint Committees to stimulate local participation.	Yes	Is part of review in 12 & 15 above	S Harrison	2017/18



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18.	RECOMMENDED to encourage the use of community planning with the Council supporting Parish/Town Councils to use this as a vehicle to identify their aspirations for their local areas and influence overarching policy (through the use of presentations and provision of officer support) at a parish and a quadrant level.	Yes	<p>This is continuing through the community planning initiative. A further round of meetings will take place after the publication of the first draft of the local plan in July 2017 and prior to the publication of Regulation 19 draft in 2018.</p> <p>Support is also available to parishes wishing to develop Neighbourhood plans.</p>	J Longhurst	Ongoing

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19.	RECOMMENDED to invest in forward planning to identify big change programmes to provide the opportunity for co-production of change in a meaningful and timely way on the principles and direction of change with local communities, including both residents and Parish/Town Councils	Yes	<p>The Forward Plan identifies the most important decisions well in advance of formal debate. This is revised every 4 weeks in line with the Executive Agenda and is freely available.</p> <p>The Council is committed to the Gunning Principles which govern best practice in public consultation. These are embedded in a Consultation Toolkit which influences the way in which the Council engages with stakeholders and communities in the process of change.</p> <p>In response to this recommendation the Toolkit will be reviewed and republished in order to clarify the Council's commitment to more active collaboration.</p>	R Carr	30/09/17
20.	RECOMMENDED that consultations manage the expectations of residents and make it clear the elements that residents can realistically influence.	No	The revision of the Council's Consultation Toolkit (see 19 above) will ensure that guidance is provided to be clear about the opportunities for influence that do or do not exist through the process of public engagement.	R Carr	N/A

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21.	RECOMMENDED the Council more proactively publish decisions and outcomes of its meetings including providing feedback on the reasons for decisions where there is significant public interest.	Existing practice	The Council publishes and promotes information (via news releases) associated with its formal decision making. Its editorial approach will be reviewed to ensure that the rationale for decision making is made explicit as well as the nature of the decisions that have been made.	C Warboys/ R Carr	Ongoing