Central Bedfordshire Council
www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Central Bedfordshire

Executive update in respect of those recommendations of the Council Responsiveness Overview and Scrutiny Enquiry that were accepted

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

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

Date of update to OSC: **25/01/18**

Executive Member(s) responsible for providing update: Cllr R Wenham

Ref	Recommendation	Update on proposed actions	Response provided in June 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.	Whilst the work on the development of the Coucil's Digital Strategy continues, the implementation of the Storm telephone system and the ability to extract the customer interactions on the Councils's website has enabled a richer picture to begin to emerge around customer intelligence.

A proposal is being put together to simplify the Council's approach to complaints. The proposal will determine the scale of the challenge and resource implications. | 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.

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. | J Ogley | 31/03/18 |

Ref	Recommendation	Update on proposed actions	Response provided in June including proposed action(s)	Lead Director(s)	Deadline
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.	The Storm telephone system has been implemented across all directorates and performance management information is now being produced to measure the response to customers. This will enable the Council to consider the charter and standards to be introduced alongside the current Customer Contact Centre customer framework. This has taken longer to implement than the original timescale and further progress will be provided at the next update. New functionality such as 'ring back' and text messaging have been introduced in some service areas to improve the customer experience.	Agreed. 1. Currently Customer Contact Centre is operating the Customer Charter and standards. 2. Following STORM rollout Charter and standards can be reviewed and adjusted if required. 3. Adopted and implemented across the Council	J Ogley	31/12/17

Ref	Recommendation	Update on proposed actions	Response provided in June including proposed action(s)	Lead Director(s)	Deadline
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.	1. Existing processes such as the Member Information Bulletin provide details of Ward specific activity. Briefings continue to be provided to Members on at least a monthly basis pertaining to topics identified by both Members and officers. 2. System reports are being tested to support the provision of information to Members around specific Ward complaints. We have to respect and recognise customer confidentiality in this process and hence the delay.	Agreed and there needs to be consistency across the Council: 1. Ward members should be advised of potential service changes in their wards as matter of course. This requirement can be reiterated. 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.	J Ogley	30/06/17

Ref	Recommendation	Update on proposed actions	Response provided in June including proposed action(s)	Lead Director(s)	Deadline
4.	RECOMMENDED that the Council ensure residents are made aware that they can get support to complete online forms in hard copy if needed.	Management information is now available setting out the customer interactions on the Council website. It includes the numbers of customers accessessing and completing online forms. This information will support a more structured focus on the development in this area. Further digitisation will be required to achieve this in full and will be captured in the Council's Digital Strategy.	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.	The Storm telephone system has been implemented across all directorates. This is providing more information on the nature and who is best placed to deal with the calls. Work is on-going to reshape the Council response.	Agreed. This is being addressed as part of the roll out of the STORM technology	J Ogley	31/12/17

Ref	Recommendation	Update on proposed actions	Response provided in June including proposed action(s)	Lead Director(s)	Deadline
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.	A clear set of guides is under development that will consist of a guide to the Council's decision-making process and a more interactive visual of the Council's committee structures. This has taken longer to produce than the original timescale in order to ensure it is meaningful and clear for residents but it is envisaged it will be completed before the end of the municipal year.	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
7.	RECOMMDENDED 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.	Completed	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

Ref	Recommendation	Update on proposed actions	Response provided in June including proposed action(s)	Lead Director(s)	Deadline
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.	A schedule of those items proposed by the public and Members will be published on the website before April 2018. This will detail either the actions proposed to be taken and where the item will be considered or the actions that have already been taken if the item is not to be considered. The schedule will be updated throughout the year and residents and Members will be able to recommend items throughout the year on an ongoing basis.	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 bodes, residents and the Council.	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.	The Council now engages with a community of on line followers and subscribers which totalled more than 71,000 in November 2017. The growth in this community grows monthly with the target increase of 1% often being exceeded.	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

Ref	Recommendation	Update on proposed actions	Response provided in June including proposed action(s)	Lead Director(s)	Deadline
10.	RECOMMENDED that webcasts and social media be used more proactively as a means of engaging with residents in a formal setting.	Webcast meetings continue to be actively promoted on social media for significant high interest debates. Further discussions are underway in light of a General Purposes meeting in December 2017 to review how we can maximise the use of webcasting in the future. Social media has also been effectively deployed to promote and encourage participation in other engagement activities, such as Community Planning events.	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.	Briefings continue to be provided to Members on at least a monthly basis pertaining to topics identified by both Members and officers.	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.	C Warboys	Ongoing

Ref	Recommendation	Update on proposed actions	Response provided in June including proposed action(s)	Lead Director(s)	Deadline
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.	a) A review of the terms of reference for the 4 Joint Committees is in progress and should be completed by April 2018. b) Learning and development opportunities continue to be provided for Members, Member development on partnership working is scheduled for 20 April 2018.	a) A review of Joint Committee working practice is in progress b) The member training budget is available to support development of online skills, dependent on demand.	S Harrison	Ongoing

Ref	Recommendation	Update on proposed actions	Response provided in June including proposed action(s)	Lead Director(s)	Deadline
13.	RECOMMENDED that the use of social media and online channels be enhanced to encourage a more transparent way of undertaking community engagement.	The use of social media and online channels is continuing to grow and the Council seeks to maximise the benefits of this for community intelligence gathering and community engagement on high profile issues. For example, during the Reg 18 Draft Local Plan consultation exercise, the Council used social media to engage in real time conversations with residents on the key issues and exploited the reach of channels such as Facebook to promote video and infographics about the plan.	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
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.	Work is underway to establish a baseline to enable progress/performance on resident engagement to be monitored and measured.	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

Ref	Recommendation	Update on proposed actions	Response provided in June including proposed action(s)	Lead Director(s)	Deadline
15.	RECOMMENDED that the Council proactively identify opportunities for local or devolved decision making to stimulate community action and local resilience.	a) Discussions regarding Community Boards are continuing with parish councils in the Ampthill/Flitwick area who have agreed to participate in a pilot. Discussions are also now taking place with parish councils in the Ivel Valley area as part of the engagement on quadrants. b) Town & Parish Councils are being supported to develop local initiatives such as Emergency Plans.	a) Discussions regards Area Boards are continuing and a trial will run in the Ampthill/Flitwick area in 2017 b) Town & Parish Councils are being encouraged to develop local initiatives such as Emergency planning.	S Harrison	2017/18

Ref	Recommendation	Update on proposed actions	Response provided in June including proposed action(s)	Lead Director(s)	Deadline
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.	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.	Planned to include in changes to Joint Committee working (see 12 above) and through the development of Area Boards to include Parishes as well as Towns.	S Harrison	2017/18
17.	RECOMMENDED that further consideration be given to match funding for Joint Committees to stimulate local participation.	See above	Is part of review in 12 & 15 above	S Harrison	2017/18

Ref	Recommendation	Update on proposed actions	Response provided in June including proposed action(s)	Lead Director(s)	Deadline
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.		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. Support is also available to parishes wishing to develop Neighbourhood plans.	J Longhurst	Ongoing

Ref	Recommendation	Update on proposed actions	Response provided in June including proposed action(s)	Lead Director(s)	Deadline
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	Our consultation toolkit has been updated, republished and promoted. This provides advice and support to officers on how to anticipate, plan and deliver effective engagement with communities to encourage best practice in this important area of our work.	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. 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. In response to this recommendation the Toolkit will be reviewed and republished in order to clarify the Council's commitment to more active collaboration.	R Carr	30/09/17

Ref	Recommendation	Update on proposed actions	Response provided in June including proposed action(s)	Lead Director(s)	Deadline
20.	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.	Significant decisions on high profile issues are published via news releases, the website and social media channels. A monthly series of briefings is now provided to Town and Parish Council via the regular update for Members to publish the decisions that were considered in the previous month and the decisions that will be taken in the next month. Additional information is also provided on how to access the Council's meetings and agendas.	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