

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held at Room 15, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Monday, 28 September 2009

PRESENT

Cllr M Gibson (Chairman)
Cllr R W Johnstone (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs R A Baker
Mrs A Barker
J G Jamieson

Cllrs J Murray
Ms J Nunn

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs J A E Clarke
D J Hopkin

Substitutes: Cllr Mrs J G Lawrence (In place of J A E Clarke)

Members in Attendance: Cllr P N Aldis

BT/09/22 **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

None

BT/09/23 **Minutes**

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Business Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 3 September 2009 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

BT/09/24 **Members' Interests**

(a) **Personal Interests:-**

None.

(b) **Personal and Prejudicial Interests:-**

None.

(c) **Any Political Whip in relation to items on the agenda:-**

None.

BT/09/25 Petitions

The Chairman announced that no petitions had been referred to this meeting.

BT/09/26 Disclosure of Exempt Information

There were no disclosures of exempt information.

BT/09/27 Customer Services Strategy Task Force Report

The Committee received and considered the report of the Assistant Director, Business Transformation & Customer Services which summarised the findings of the Customer Services Strategy Member Task Force established by this Committee to review the draft Customer Services Strategy 2009 – 2011, and requested the Committee to endorse these findings and the draft Strategy itself for onward submission to the Council's Executive.

At the first meeting of the Business Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 6 July 2009, it was agreed that a Member Task Force be established to review the draft Customer Services Strategy and report back to the Committee prior to the Strategy being submitted to the Executive. The Task Force, consisted of Councillors Nigel Aldis, Mike Gibson and Janet Nunn (Chairman). Officer support was provided by the Assistant Director of Business Transformation & Customer Services (Clive Jones), the Head of Customer Services (Hannah Richards) and the Overview & Scrutiny Manager (Bernard Carter). The Task Force met twice on 14 August and 8 September 2009.

Although the Committee were content to endorse the strategy (produced by officers in partnership with the Member Task Force), the Committee debated at some length the customer service vision, which was "to consistently meet and exceed customers expectations through service experience". It was some Members opinion that to attempt to exceed customer expectations would potentially focus resources on activities that the Authority could ill afford, and in practical terms, would be difficult to measure.

With that concern in mind, the Committee agreed to recommend to the Executive a revised vision as follows:-

- Our vision is to deliver an efficient, effective and quality customer service.

The Committee also agreed that the strategy should be amended to reflect the revised vision by replacing the words "exceed" or "exceeding" appearing within the strategy with more appropriate phrases aligned to this revised vision.

Members also requested that in future Officers provide reports in plain English with less acronyms and ensure that the Corporate Implications are clear.

RESOLVED

that the Executive be requested to adopt a revised vision for the Customer Services Strategy as outlined above and ensure that the contents of the strategy are amended to reflect this revised vision.

BT/09/28 **Community Engagement Strategy**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Director of Business Transformation which proposed that the Executive approve the draft Community Engagement Strategy for formal consultation with key partners via the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP).

The Committee received a presentation which highlighted the five key principles of the Community Engagement Strategy as follows:

- Giving more people more opportunities to influence decisions
- Enabling Councillors to be champions for their communities
- Enhancing the role of Town and Parish Councils
- Building the capacity of local people to engage
- Ensuring a joined-up, strategic and coordinated partnership approach

A detailed discussion took place which covered issues included giving more power to the people, surgeries being more effective, budgets for Councillors and ensuring Councillors are kept informed of all key activities in their ward.

The Committee agreed to establish a Member Task Force to work with officers in formulating a robust and practical action plan to deliver principle 2 of the draft strategy, namely “enabling Councillors to be champions for their communities”.

Members were content to support the above five principles and the draft strategy itself, subject to recommendations 4 to 7 below being considered and adopted by the Executive at the same time:-

RESOLVED

1. *that the five key principles of the draft Community Engagement Strategy for submission to the Executive be endorsed, which are to:*

- ***giving more people more opportunities to influence decisions;***
- ***enable Councillors to be champions for their communities***
- ***enhance the role of Town and Parish Councils;***
- ***build the capacity of local people to engage; and***

- ***ensure a joined-up, strategic and coordinated partnership approach.***
2. ***that a formal consultation exercise with key partners and officers will be undertaken by the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Board, during November 2009 – January 2010, to ensure their agreement and support for its implementation.***
 3. ***that the LSP Board will bring a formal recommendation for a comprehensive Community Engagement Strategy for Central Bedfordshire to the Executive meeting on 9 February 2010, in preparation for its implementation from 1 April 2010.***
 4. ***that the Executive endorse the creation of a small centralised team (pooled from existing resources at no additional cost) to support Councillors to fulfil their community leadership role, but additionally, reiterates the need for all officers (particularly those service-based) to support Councillors in that role regardless;***
 5. ***that the Executive reiterates the importance it attaches to ensuring that Councillors are kept informed of all key activities in their wards; and***
 6. ***that the Executive supports the principle of allocating individual Councillor budgets and explores the potential to supplement this with funds currently set aside for discretionary, area-based and grant-based activities (such as Historic Buildings Grant), where appropriate to do so;***
 7. ***that the Executive adopts a principle that community consultation should only be undertaken where there is clear evidence that the Council can respond to, and action, any outcomes flowing from such consultation.***

BT/09/29

Q1 Performance Report

The Committee received and considered the report of the Director of Business Transformation which highlighted Quarter 1 performance for the directorate. The Director of Business Transformation had identified 6 'critical' indicators which were included in Appendix A.

The Committee were informed that Central Bedfordshire was the first of the newly established Unitary Authorities to produce a Quarter 1 Performance Report. Members asked why some indicators did not have information. It was explained that some performance information had not been available but would be in time for the second quarter.

Members requested that Appendix A be made larger as it was difficult to read.

RESOLVED

that the Quarter 1 Performance Report of the Director of Business Transformation be noted.

BT/09/30

Work Programme 2009-2010

The Committee received a report from the Overview and Scrutiny Manager regarding its Work Programme for 2009/2010 and also discussed proposals for considering the following items:

- Equalities Scheme
- Climate Change
- Strategic Plan Refresh
- CAA – Publication
- LAA Review/Refresh
- Completion of Review of Support of Third Sector Organisations
- Sustainable Community Strategy
- Staff Survey

It was noted that the Business Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Committee's 26 October 2009 meeting would cover:-

- Equalities Scheme
- Work Programme 2009/2010

It was agreed that the items listed on the appendix attached to the Chairman's Briefing update would be designated to specific meetings by the Overview and Scrutiny Manager.

RESOLVED

that the contents of the report be noted.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.30 p.m.)

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Customer Service Strategy Task Force

Hannah Richards



Scope

- Task force set up to review the Strategy
- 2 meetings
- Detailed discussion
- Recommendations implemented

Benefits of the task force

- Line by line discussion
- Support of the wide partnership model
- Requirement for robust governance and accountabilities within partnerships
- Specific actions with performance milestones
- Clarification / reduction of jargon
- Member consideration of speech recognition technology options
- Specific inclusion of review of opening hours
- Role of Members clarified and liaison mechanisms included
- Amendments to Risk Analysis appendix



Conclusion

- Officers benefited from detailed discussion in a small group
- Real improvements delivered to the document
- Increased understanding of the Customer Service culture within CBC by Members