

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CUSTOMER AND CENTRAL SERVICES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Room 15, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Monday, 5 September 2011.

PRESENT

Cllr Miss A Sparrow (Vice-Chairman, in the Chair)

Cllrs L Birt
J A E Clarke
Mrs R J Drinkwater

Cllrs Dr R Egan
J Murray

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs P A Duckett
R W Johnstone
Mrs M Mustoe

Substitutes: Cllrs

Members in Attendance: Cllrs M R Jones Deputy Leader and
Executive Member for
Corporate Resources
R C Stay Executive Member for
External Affairs

Officers in Attendance:

Mr P Ball	– Senior Finance Manager
Mr I Brown	– Interim Chief Assets Officer
Mr B Carter	– Corporate Scrutiny & Research Manager
Ms D Clarke	– Interim Assistant Chief Executive (People & Organisation)
Mr C Jones	– Chief IT Officer
Mrs E Malarky	– Head of Programmes & Performance Management
Mr I Melville	– Head of Service Development
Mr J Unsworth	– Interim Assistant Chief Executive - Resources
Mr C Warboys	– Chief Finance Officer

Others in Attendance

CCS/11/29 **Minutes**

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Customer and Central Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 25 July 2011 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CCS/11/30 **Members' Interests**

(a) **Personal Interests:-**

None.

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

None.

(c) **Any political whip in relation to any agenda item:-**

None.

CCS/11/31 **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman informed the Committee that Item 13: Shared Services had been withdrawn from the agenda and would instead be considered at the Committee's 17 October 2011 meeting.

CCS/11/32 **Petitions**

No petitions were received from members of the public in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Part D2 of the Constitution.

CCS/11/33 **Questions, Statements or Deputations**

No questions, statements or deputations were received from members of the public in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Annex 1 of Part A4 of the Constitution.

CCS/11/34 **Call-In**

The Panel was advised that no decisions of the Executive had been referred to the Panel under the Call-in Procedures set out in Appendix "A" to Rule No. S18 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

CCS/11/35 **Requested Items**

No items were referred to the Committee for consideration at the request of a Member under Procedure Rule 3.1 of Part D2 of the Constitution.

CCS/11/36 **Executive Member Update**

The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources provided the Committee with an update on current activities pertaining to his portfolio, which covered the following issues:-

- Changes to staff terms and conditions, which would come into effect on 1 October 2011. According to the latest data he had received at that point, the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources confirmed that of the approximately 2,500 letters sent to staff regarding these changes, 2000 had responded positively, 450 were yet to reply and 50 had declined to accept the changes;
- The need to appoint 2 additional lawyers to manage the increasing caseload in Children's Services; and
- Progress towards meeting the 2011/12 Efficiencies target of £19.2M.

CCS/11/37 **Recovery Programme for Customer & Shared Services Directorate**

The Deputy Leader & Executive Member for Corporate Resources introduced this item, which set out the background, objectives and outcomes of the recovery programme for those work streams contained within the former Directorate of Customer and Shared Services. This introduction was supplemented by an extensive presentation delivered by those senior officers responsible for each of the work streams in question, namely People (Deb Clarke), Finance and Revenues & Benefits (Charles Warboys), ICT (Clive Jones), Assets (Ian Brown) and Procurement (John Unsworth)

During the presentation, Members of the Committee asked a number of detailed questions regarding the programme, all of which were answered by the officers in attendance. These questions centred around:-

- The costs and benefits of delivering the recovery programme;
- Council-wide financial capability and appropriate training and communication;
- Revenues & benefits processing times and the timetable for improvement;
- The issue of Academy Schools and the impact on the Council's asset base;
- The provision of services to schools and full cost recovery thereof;
- Organisation-wide dependencies surrounding successful delivery of ICT projects; and
- The use of local companies when procuring goods & services.

Members praised officers for the informative nature of the presentation and thanked them for their time.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the presentation be noted.

CCS/11/38 **Customer Services Strategy**

The Deputy Leader & Executive Member for Corporate Resources introduced this item, which set out the Council's emerging "Channel Shift" strategy. This introduction was supplemented by a comprehensive presentation from the

Interim Assistant Chief Executive (People & Organisation), which explained what channel shift was, outlined customer preferences regarding how they preferred to interact with the Council and provided statistics regarding the volume (and cost) of telephony and face to face transactions with customers. The presentation also provided an example of the savings to be gained by shifting transactions to cheaper channels and outlined best practice around the country in this emerging area.

During the presentation, Members of the Committee asked a number of detailed questions regarding the strategy, all of which were answered by the officers in attendance. These questions centred around the key obstacles to the Council in achieving savings from channel shift, such as:-

- The need to improve the Council's current website;
- The difficulties in persuading customers to shift channels; and
- The need to change the culture of the organisation so that service areas fully supported, and recognised the benefits of, channel shift;

The Deputy Leader & Executive Member for Corporate Resources thanked Members for their input and informed them that the emerging strategy would come back to a future meeting of this Committee following further development, and prior to Executive consideration.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the presentation be noted.

CCS/11/39 Q1 Budget Monitoring Report 2011/12

The Deputy Leader & Executive Member for Corporate Resources introduced the Budget Monitoring Report for the first quarter of 2011/12, which covered 6 separate elements, namely:-

- The Council's overall Revenue position to the end of June 2011;
- The Council's overall Capital position to the end of June 2011
- The Revenue position of the Office of the Chief Executive to the end of June 2011;
- The Capital position of the Office of the Chief Executive to the end of June 2011;
- The Revenue position of the Customer & Shared Services Directorate to the end of June 2011;
- The Capital position of the Customer & Shared Services Directorate to the end of June 2011;

The Deputy Leader & Executive Member for Corporate Resources informed the Committee that the final 4 reports would in future be reduced to just 2 (one revenue and one capital) following the merger of the Office of the Chief Executive and the Customer & Shared Services Directorate.

During the presentation, Members of the Committee asked a number of specific questions regarding the reports, all of which were answered by the

officers in attendance. One issue in particular however caused Members of the Committee some concern, and this regarded the need for the Council to improve its management of, and capacity to deliver, the Capital Programme.

The Deputy Leader & Executive Member for Corporate Resources noted this concern and agreed to take account of it when undertaking his detailed review of the capital programme, which was due to be reported to the Executive at its meeting on 15 November 2011.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the presentation be noted.

CCS/11/40 Shared Services

The Committee noted that this item had been withdrawn and would instead be considered at the next meeting scheduled for 17 October 2011.

CCS/11/41 Work Programme 2011 - 2012 & Executive Forward Plan

The Committee considered its current work programme and the latest Executive Forward Plan.

RESOLVED

That the Committee's Work Programme be noted.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.45 p.m.)

Chairman.....

Date.....