

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, 28 November 2011.

PRESENT

Cllr P A Duckett (Chairman)
Cllr Miss A Sparrow (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs L Birt
Mrs R J Drinkwater
Dr R Egan

Cllrs R W Johnstone
J Murray
Mrs M Mustoe

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs J A E Clarke

Substitutes: Cllrs J A G Saunders

Members in Attendance: Cllrs J G Jamieson

Leader of the Council
and Chairman of the
Executive

D Jones
M R Jones

Deputy Leader and
Executive Member for
Corporate Resources
Executive Member for
Children's Services

M A G Versallion

Officers in Attendance: Mr B Carter – Corporate Scrutiny & Research
Manager
Mr C Jones – Chief ICT Officer
Mr A King – Head of Financial Strategy
Mrs G Stanton – Chief Communications Officer
Mr J Unsworth – Interim Assistant Chief Executive
(Resources)
Mr C Warboys – Chief Finance Officer & Section
151 Officer

Others in
Attendance

CCS/11/58 **Minutes**

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Customer and Central Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 17 October 2011 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CCS/11/59 **Members' Interests**

(a) **Personal Interests:-**

None.

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

None.

CCS/11/60 **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman referred to the previous meeting, when Members had requested further detail regarding; the payment of invoices, and Revenues & Benefits vacancy rates. He stated that such detail had now been received, which confirmed that; the payment of invoices within 30 days was averaging between 90% and 95% of total in the current financial year, and the vacancy rates (and therefore reliance upon contractors) within the Revenues and Benefits team had reduced.

A Member also referred to the fact that further information had also been requested at the last meeting regarding the number of staff who had attended work following the introduction of revised terms and conditions, who had not signed acceptance thereof. Officers undertook to provide this information to Members via email at the earliest possible opportunity.

CCS/11/61 **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/11/62 **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/11/63 **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/11/64 **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/11/65 **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:-

- The sale of assets, generating capital receipts of circa £500k in the current financial year;
- The appointment of consultants to support the Council's Medium Term Accommodation Plan and restructuring of the Assets Team;
- The new Housing Revenue Account self financing scheme and the consequent additional Council debt of £165.69M;
- The Council's new website, which had been launched recently; and
- The impact strike action would have on the Council and Central Bedfordshire schools.

CCS/11/66 **ICT Framework**

The Chief ICT Officer introduced this item, which consisted of a presentation summarising the Council's Draft ICT Framework, the outcomes of which were to provide:-

- A safe, stable and secure ICT voice and data network infrastructure that provides the accessibility required from any location.
- A value for money ICT infrastructure that meets the demands of the financial pressures.
- A highly transactional self service web environment to deliver the best service at lowest cost.
- Accurate, timely and appropriate management information to enable effective decision making and drive performance improvement.
- A customer centric information architecture that understands and meets the customer's expectations.
- Programme and project management that delivers ICT enhancements to time, cost and quality enabling the service to deliver improvements to its customers.
- Social Media harnessed to deliver efficiencies and service improvements

The Chief ICT Officer also informed the Committee that the Draft Framework would be considered by the Executive at its meeting on 10 January 2012.

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

- Next generation broadband and the ability of the Council to fund broadband in commercially unviable rural areas. In this respect,

Members were informed of the Council's ability to draw down government funding via Broadband UK;

- Cloud Computing and The Public Services Network, and how these initiatives would generate ICT savings in the future;
- The future of the Council's existing Citrix network, the way it had been deployed in Central Bedfordshire and its limitations;
- The use of Video conferencing via the Public Services Network;
- Initial feedback surrounding the launch of the Council's new website. In this respect, officers agreed to provide Members with early data regarding this feedback as soon as possible.
- The need to reflect within the Framework the importance of adequate staff/Member training; and
- Programme slippage and the need to monitor progress carefully. In this respect, officers agreed to submit progress reports to the Committee on a quarterly basis.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. That the draft ICT Framework be endorsed for submission to the Executive, subject to the inclusion of a reference to adequate officer/Member training; and**
- 2. That progress reports be submitted to this Committee on a quarterly basis.**

CCS/11/67 Treasury Management Strategy And Treasury Policy

The Head of Financial Strategy introduced this item, which provided the Committee with details of the proposed changes to the council's Treasury Management Strategy and Treasury Policy.

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

- The advantages and disadvantages of the Housing Revenue Account Self Financing Scheme and the potential to utilise any savings that may accrue as a result for housing interventions;
- The revised credit rating limit; and
- Treasury management performance and the Council's average rate of return, which compared favourably with benchmarked authorities.

Members were informed that the Treasury Management Strategy and Treasury Policy would be submitted to the Executive and full Council for approval in January 2012.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Treasury Management Strategy and Treasury Policy be endorsed for submission to the Executive.

CCS/11/68 **Capital Programme Review**

The Head of Financial Strategy introduced this item, which allowed Members the opportunity to review the Council's revised Capital Programme for 2011/12, presented to Executive on 15 November 2011.

Members of the Committee asked, and requested answers to, a number of scheme specific questions during the presentation, as follows:-

- The status of the Housing Revenue Account Window Replacement scheme, detailing £21k expenditure in the year to date (Page 82);
- An explanation of the General Leisure Enhancement Contingency within Sustainable Communities (Page 72);
- Further detail regarding Various Children's ICT Projects (Page 71);
- Further detail regarding the Grove Theatre Retention payment (Page 72); and
- Further information regarding Children's Services S106 income (Page 71);

It was agreed that officers would provide a response to these questions via email in due course.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Capital Programme Review be noted.

CCS/11/69 **Work Programme 2011 - 2012 & Executive Forward Plan**

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

RESOLVED

- 1. That the Committee's Work Programme be noted;**
- 2. That quarterly progress reports regarding implementation of the ICT Framework be added to the work programme; and**
- 3. That a progress report on the Channel Shift programme be added to the work programme in early Spring.**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.00 p.m.)

Chairman.....

Date.....