

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, 27 February 2012.

PRESENT

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

Cllrs J A E Clarke
Mrs R J Drinkwater
Dr R Egan

Cllrs J Murray
Mrs M Mustoe

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs L Birt
R W Johnstone

Substitutes: Cllrs

Members in Attendance: Cllrs P N Aldis
D Bowater
D J Hopkin
M R Jones
M A G Versallion

Chairman of Audit Committee
Deputy Executive Member for Corporate Resources
Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources
Executive Member for Children's Services

Officers in Attendance: Mr B Carter – Corporate Policy & Scrutiny Manager
Ms D Clarke – Interim Assistant Chief Executive (People & Organisation)
Mr R Edwards – Interim Head of Procurement
Mr P Fraser – Head of Partnerships & Community Engagement
Mr C Warboys – Chief Finance Officer & Section 151 Officer

CCS/11/96 **Minutes**

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Customer and Central Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 27 February 2012 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CCS/11/97 **Members' Interests**

(a) **Personal Interests:-**

None.

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

None.

CCS/11/98 **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman had no announcements.

CCS/11/99 **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/11/100 **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/11/101 **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/11/102 **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/11/103 **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 plain English guide to the Localism Bill, which had recently been circulated to all Members;
- Approval of the Council's 2012/13 Budget at full Council;
- The current forecast regarding the 2011/12 budget;
- The commencement of two major projects, Channel Shift and SAP Optimisation, both of which would be subject to progress reports to future meetings; and

- The Council's continuing work with Town & Parish Councils with regard to the devolution of services, where appetite existed.

CCS/11/104 **Procurement Review & Priorities**

The Interim Head of Procurement delivered a presentation, which provided the Committee with details of the Council's procurement review and priorities. Specifically, the presentation covered:-

- A summary of the current position;
- Data and analysis regarding addressable spend;
- A snapshot of high value suppliers;
- Agreed objectives going forward;
- Recommendations regarding the Target Operating Model;
- An analysis of the category cycle;
- Category management;
- Supplier relationship management;
- Procedures and compliance;
- Structure, resources and capability;
- Use of systems and management information; and
- Procurement priorities going forward.

Members of the Committee raised a number of queries during the presentation regarding the following issues, which were addressed by the Executive Member and officers in attendance:-

- The Procurement Team's visibility of all procurement activity within the Council and the structure of accountability with regard to procurement practice within service directorates;
- The need to ensure ICT contracts in particular delivered value for money and were supported by robust business cases;
- The possibility of researching different models of procurement to include independent review of contract management;
- The need to tailor the procurement process to accommodate localism and the potential increasing prevalence/use of social enterprises and the voluntary and community sector in the delivery of services in the future; and
- The extent of any "use it or lose it" culture within the Council. In this regard, the Interim Head of Procurement assured Members that he had not encountered any such culture since the start of his tenure.

In conclusion, the Committee thanked the Interim Head of Procurement for an informative presentation, and requested that an electronic copy be circulated to Members, and that a progress report be received in six months. Cllr D Bowater (Chairman of the Audit Committee), who was in also attendance for the meeting, requested that a similar presentation be made to his Audit Committee in the near future.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the presentation be noted and that a progress report be submitted to the Committee in 6 months.

CCS/11/105 **Let's Talk Together Review**

The Deputy Executive Member for Corporate Resources presented his report, which summarised the Member Task Force review of the Let's Talk Together (LTT) meetings, run by the Central Bedfordshire Together Partnership. The report looked at actual delivery, attendance levels and outcomes to date and analysed the role of the meetings in the context of local and national policy, as well as feedback from partners. The report concluded with a number of options as well as a specific recommendation for future delivery frequency and format for consideration by the Committee.

Members of the Committee discussed the contents of the report in detail and made a number of comments and observations regarding the following issues:

- The poor attendance by members of the public;
- The fact that members of the public have many other opportunities to meet with ward councillors (e.g. at Town Committees & Councillor Surgeries) and that the Council regularly engages with its residents regarding specific consultations (e.g. the budget);
- An acknowledgement that issue based meetings were more popular than the non-specific LTT format;
- The need to consider LTT participation at Town & Parish Council Annual General Meetings (AGMs) in addition to attendance at major events such as festivals, fairs and fetes, etc;
- The need for the Police and other partners to take a lead on face to face engagement;
- The importance of the Council actively seeking out the public (i.e. at major events) rather than expecting the public to come to it (i.e. at LTT meetings); and
- The fact that the Council is actively encouraging residents to help themselves via for instance website self service, which perhaps reduces the need for LTT meetings.

At the end of the debate, the Committee stated a preference for LTT meetings to "piggyback" existing major community events and Town & Parish Council AGMs, supplemented by a "rapid response" team to deliver ad hoc meetings when important and topical local issues arose.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Central Bedfordshire Together partnership be advised that this Committee would prefer future LTT meetings to "piggyback" existing major community events and Town & Parish Council AGMs,

supplemented by a “rapid response” team to deliver ad hoc meetings when important and topical local issues arose.

CCS/11/106 **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; and**
- 2. That the reports relating to the ICT Framework and Housing & Council Tax Benefit Processing be rescheduled for the 19 June meeting.**

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

Chairman.....

Date.....