

## 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, 16 April 2012.

### PRESENT

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

Cllrs L Birt  
J A E Clarke  
Mrs R J Drinkwater

Cllrs Dr R Egan  
J Murray  
Mrs M Mustoe

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs R W Johnstone

Substitutes: Cllrs

Members in Attendance: Cllrs P N Aldis  
D Jones  
M R Jones

Deputy Leader and  
Executive Member for  
Corporate Resources

Officers in Attendance: Mr B Carter – Corporate Policy & Scrutiny  
Manager  
Ms D Clarke – Interim Assistant Chief Executive  
(People & Organisation)  
Mr A Fleming – Project Director - Business  
Services  
Mr C Warboys – Chief Finance Officer & Section  
151 Officer

Others in Attendance

CCS/11/107 **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/11/108 **Members' Interests**

(a) **Personal Interests:-**

None.

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

None.

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

None.

CCS/11/109 **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman had no announcements.

CCS/11/110 **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/11/111 **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/11/112 **Call-In**

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

CCS/11/113 **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/11/114 **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 current forecast regarding the 2011/12 budget, which remained on target; and
- The need for the organisation to draft a local policy for consideration by the Executive at its meeting of 3 July 2012 regarding Council Tax support. This draft policy would then be the subject of a 12 week consultation process following which a final draft would be considered by the Executive and full Council in October/November 2012. Members of the Committee expressed concern about the significant impact such a policy would have on the most vulnerable in society and therefore urged that the consultation be full and meaningful, and provide every opportunity for

public participation. The Committee also requested sight of the draft for consideration at the earliest possible opportunity.

## CCS/11/115 **Medium Term Plan Consultation**

The Deputy Leader & Executive Member for Corporate Resources presented his report, which afforded Members of the Committee the opportunity to consider the emerging Medium Term Plan prior to its adoption by full Council on 21 June 2012. The plan set out the Council's proposed priorities for the next 4 years and had been informed by a survey of residents in Autumn 2011.

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

- The Woodside Link should be included in the list of schemes identified under "Better Infrastructure – Improved roads, broadband reach and transport";
- References to the "Luton – Dunstable Guided Bus Way" should be amended to state "Luton – Dunstable – Houghton Regis Guided Bus Way"; and
- References to the Council endeavouring to freeze council tax should be clarified to make it clear whether this target covers the next three or four years.

At the end of the debate, the Committee agreed to the approach for adopting the Plan by full Council barring one abstention from Councillor J Murray.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

**That the Customer and Central Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee agrees to the approach for adopting the Medium Term Plan 2012-16, subject to consideration of the above observations by the Executive at its meeting on 15 May 2012.**

## CCS/11/116 **Your Space 2**

The Project Director delivered a presentation, which provided the Committee with details of the Your Space 2 programme (previously called the Medium Term Accommodation Plan asset rationalisation programme). Specifically, the presentation covered:-

- Programme objectives;
- Background;
- Details of the agreed plan over 3 phases;
- Quick wins over the next 18 months;
- Work station requirements;
- Programme timescales;
- Proposed high level strategic options;
- Consultation with service areas; and

- Next steps;

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 need to undertake robust (full) cost v benefit analyses when assessing options;
- The need to ensure full compliance with all relevant health and safety regulations, etc when reducing office space, desk sizes, etc;
- The limited public transport options available at Priory House, Chicksands and the insufficient car parking;
- The need to make full use of the Council's libraries resource;
- The need to ensure surplus furniture was appropriately disposed of (recycled);
- The potential development of a dedicated conference and training facility; and
- The potential use of video conferencing and the need to revisit our assumptions regarding its economic viability, which the Executive Member agreed to do.

In conclusion, the Committee thanked the Project Director for an informative presentation, and requested that an electronic copy be circulated to Members.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

**That the presentation be noted.**

#### **CCS/11/117 Customer First**

The Interim Assistant Chief Executive (People & Organisation) delivered a presentation, which provided the Committee with an update regarding the Customer First programme. Specifically, the presentation covered:-

- The vision and importance of Customer First;
- Listening to our customers, focus groups and telephone surveys;
- Listening to our colleagues and high level design workshops;
- Our ambitions (current state, future state and "do-ability");
- Current ICT limitations (gap analysis);
- The detailed design phase; and
- Next steps including a full business case to Executive on 3 July;

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 budget implications of the programme. In this regard, the Interim Assistant Chief Executive confirmed that the necessary investment had already been set aside within the Council's capital programme;
- There was some concern from Members regarding the gap in ICT provision, particularly as this was the third major review of ICT since the

Council was created, and the need to address this gap before the Customer First programme could be realised. The Project Director, who had now assumed responsibility for ICT, assured Members that a fundamental review (fully aligned with the Customer First programme) was underway, which would identify clearly why systems were not currently working effectively, drive significant improvement over the next 6 – 8 months and strengthen the ICT team; and

- Anecdotal evidence that the Council's current customer service experience wasn't as good as it could be, which needed to be addressed regardless of the Customer First programme. Members were also concerned to ensure that those customers who did not have access to, or were not able to use, ICT were able to contact the Council using other channels. The Interim Assistant Chief Executive assured Members that the Customer First programme was very much about providing services in a way in which customers prefer including face to face and telephone contact.

In conclusion, the Committee thanked the Interim Assistant Chief Executive for an informative presentation and requested a further update in October 2012.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**That the presentation be noted and a further update be provided in October 2012.**

CCS/11/118 **Quarter 3 Budget Monitoring (Revenue)**

The Deputy Leader & Executive Member for Corporate Resources introduced the Council's Revenue Budget Monitoring Report for the third quarter of 2011/12.

During presentation of the report, Members of the Committee asked a number of specific questions, all of which were answered by the Executive Member and officers in attendance. In particular Members questioned and received answers on; the staff opt out rate from the superannuation scheme within the Sustainable Communities Directorate; cross cutting efficiencies and debt recovery.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**That the report be noted.**

CCS/11/119 **Quarter 3 Budget Monitoring (Capital)**

The Deputy Leader & Executive Member for Corporate Resources introduced the Council's Capital Budget Monitoring Report for the third quarter of 2011/12.

During presentation of the report, Members of the Committee asked a number of specific questions, all of which were answered by the Executive Member and officers in attendance.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**That the report be noted.**

**CCS/11/120 Quarter 3 Corporate Services Budget Monitoring (Revenue)**

The Deputy Leader & Executive Member for Corporate Resources introduced the Revenue Budget Monitoring Report for the third quarter of 2011/12, which covered those services contained within Corporate Services.

During presentation of the report, Members of the Committee asked a number of specific questions, all of which were answered by the Executive Member and officers in attendance.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**That the report be noted.**

**CCS/11/121 Quarter 3 Corporate Services Budget Monitoring (Capital)**

The Deputy Leader & Executive Member for Corporate Resources introduced the Capital Budget Monitoring Report for the third quarter of 2011/12, which covered those schemes contained within Corporate Services.

During presentation of the report, Members of the Committee asked a number of specific questions, all of which were answered by the Executive Member and officers in attendance. In particular Members questioned and received answers on the impact of the revenue and capital receipt foregone regarding the University Technical College.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**That the report be noted.**

**CCS/11/122 Quarter 3 Performance Monitoring**

The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources presented the third quarterly performance report for Corporate Services, which provided an overview of performance in 2011/12 for the period to 31 December 2011 for those corporate health indicators presented to this Committee.

Members of the Committee discussed the contents of the report in detail and raised a number of queries, which were addressed by the Executive Member and officers in attendance. These queries centred around the following issues:

- The total number of agency staff currently used by the Council and the extent of monitoring undertaken to manage the issue, including use of the Council's redeployment pool where appropriate;
- The increase in the time taken to process housing and Council Tax benefit claims and the action being taken to address the situation; and

- The average number of sick days lost per employee, which had increased in Q3. In this regard, the Interim Assistant Chief Executive confirmed that early data relating to Q4 suggested that this figure had now reduced in line with previous quarters.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**That the report be noted.**

**CCS/11/123 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, with the addition of the following items:-**

- **ICT Framework progress reports on a quarterly basis;**
- **Draft policy on Council Tax support – 31 July meeting;**
- **Customer First progress report – 23 October meeting; and**
- **2013/14 Draft Budget – 18 December & 22 January meetings.**

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

Chairman.....

Date.....