

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Tuesday, 10 September 2013.

PRESENT

Cllr P A Duckett (Chairman)

Cllrs	Mrs A Barker	Cllrs	J Murray
	L Birt		B Saunders
	Mrs C F Chapman MBE		T Woodward
	Dr R Egan		

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs Miss A Sparrow

Substitutes: Cllrs R W Johnstone (In place of Miss A Sparrow)

Members in Attendance:	Cllrs	D Bowater	Vice-Chairman of the Council
		D J Hopkin	Deputy Executive Member for Corporate Resources
		M R Jones	Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources
		R D Wenham	Deputy Executive Member for Corporate Resources

Officers in Attendance:	Ms D Clarke	–	Director of Improvement and Corporate Services
	Mrs P Everitt	–	Research and Business Support Officer
	Mr A Fleming	–	Service Director - Business Services
	Mr M Scott	–	Head of Information Assets
	Mr C Warboys	–	Chief Finance Officer

CR/13/45 Minutes

The Committee queried whether a letter of thanks had been sent from the Chairman to Revenue & Benefits staff to thank them for their outstanding achievement in dealing with the large increase in workload, caused by changes in Government legislation. The Chairman agreed to follow up this action with officers.

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 30 July be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CR/13/46 Members' Interests

There were no declarations of interest or political whip in relation to any agenda items.

CR/13/47 Petitions

No petitions were received.

CR/13/48 Questions, Statements or Deputations

No questions, statements or deputations were received.

CR/13/49 Call-In

The Panel was advised that no decisions of the Executive had been referred to the Panel under the Call-in Procedures.

CR/13/50 Requested Items

No items were referred to the Committee for consideration at the request of a Member.

CR/13/51 Chairman's Announcements and Communications

The Chairman informed the Committee that he had added this urgent item, which had been omitted from the agenda in error.

The Chairman offered his condolences to a Member on the loss of a relative.

The Chairman reminded the Committee that Treasury Management Training had been arranged for Tuesday 22 October, to commence at the conclusion of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting. The Chief Finance Officer commented that the training would give an overview of the role of Members and a guide to the treasury function.

CR/13/52 Executive Member Update

The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources provided the Committee with an update regarding the following:-

- The Council's computer system would be unavailable on Saturday 14 September. The Information Assets team would be conducting a shutdown and restart test in preparation for the planned move to the data centre.
- That the first quarter accounts due to be considered by the Executive at their next meeting were below budget, however, the forecast suggested an overspend of £2.1m.

- The appointment of Melanie Clay as Head of Legal and Democratic Services.

Members of the Committee raised several issues during the presentation, which were addressed by the Executive Member and officers present as follows:-

- The level of reserves had been checked and was currently considered to be adequate and they were not under threat of being taken away by Central Government.
- The Looked after Children service was expected to exceed their budget.
- A review of salaries would be undertaken and overseen by the General Purposes Committee.

NOTED the update

CR/13/53

Central Bedfordshire Next Generation Network

The Deputy Executive Member for Corporate Services introduced a presentation on the Central Bedfordshire Next Generation Network that outlined the proposal to consolidate the provision of all corporate and school data network, mobile and fixed telephony services into a single supply contract. The Head of Information Assets added that these services were either out of contract or nearing the end of contract and that this contract would assist in achieving the MTFP savings for Information Assets, it was proposed the Executive adopt Essex County Council Next Generation Network contract.

The Head of Information Assets outlined the benefits of the Next Generation Network contract, which provided a mechanism to support the upgrade and refresh the data routing technologies. The Council would be able to access a catalogue of technology services and benefit from advancements in innovation and technology driven by Essex and the partnership group.

Members of the Committee discussed the contents of the presentation and raised a number of specific queries, all of which were addressed by the Executive Member, Deputy Executive Member and officers present relating to the following:-

- Concern regarding the level of influence the Council would be able to exert over the contract due to the nature of the partnership arrangement.
- Concerns that a 10 year contract was considered to be too long, a three-year contract period was considered to be more suitable.
- Whether sufficient diligence would be following by the Council in signing such a significant contract.
- Concerns regarding the proposed supplier and whether they were fit for purpose.

In addition the Committee commented that they did not feel they had a sufficient level of detail on which to scrutinise the proposals for the Next

Generation Network and expressed a preference to review the proposals again. The Committee also requested that a briefing for Members of the Committee be arranged to provide further details of the proposal.

RECOMMENDED

That the Executive be made aware of the concerns of the Committee in relation to the following:-

- **Concerns that the Council would not be able to exert a sufficient level of control over the contract due to the nature of the partnership arrangements;**
- **Concerns that a 10-year contract period was considered to be too long, the Council should consider a three -year contract period;**
- **Whether sufficient diligence would be followed by the Council in signing such a significant contract.**

CR/13/54 Budget Strategy and Medium Term Financial Plan

The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources presented a report that set out the medium term financial planning framework for 2014-15 through to 2017-18. The report considered the impact of changes in Local Government financing and how these might be addressed.

The Chief Finance Officer expanded on the areas expected to impact on the plan, which were discussed in detail by the Committee, including:-

- The Chancellors Autumn Statement and the financial settlement announcement.
- The reduction in Education Services Grant in addition to the Departmental Expenditure Limit for DCLG which had been cut by 10%. It was expected the cut would be passed onto Local Government.
- The affect of a Single Local Growth Fund in 2015/16 with significant funding being taken from the New Homes Bonus previously allocated to the Council but now how this is spent would be determined by the Local Enterprise Partnership.

Members of the Committee discussed the content of the report in further detail and raised a number of queries, all of which were addressed by the Executive Member and Officers in attendance.

NOTED the report.

CR/13/55 Work Programme 2013 - 2014 & Executive Forward Plan

The Committee consider the current Work Programme and the latest Executive Forward Plan. A Member requested the following changes in procedure for meetings:-

- presentations to be provided at meetings should be circulated in advance of meetings where possible; and
- the Committee were notified of any delay or changes to work programme items.

NOTED the Corporate Resources OSC Work Programme.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 11.45 a.m.)

Chairman.....

Date.....