

Central Bedfordshire
Council
Priory House
Monks Walk
Chicksands,
Shefford SG17 5TQ

**This meeting
will be filmed.***



**Central
Bedfordshire**

please ask for Helen Bell
direct line 0300 300 4040
date 6 November 2015

NOTICE OF MEETING

COUNCIL

Date & Time

Thursday, 19 November 2015 6.30 p.m.

Venue at

Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford

Richard Carr
Chief Executive

To: The Chairman and Members of the COUNCIL

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MEETING**

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AGENDA

Prayers

The Reverend Paul Niemiec, Community Minister, Leighton Buzzard will take prayers.

1. **Apologies**

Apologies for absence to be received.

2. **Minutes**

To approve the minutes of the Council meeting held on 17 September 2015.

(attached pages 7 to14)

3. **Members' Interests**

To receive from Members any declarations of interest.

4. **Questions, Statements and Deputations**

To receive any questions, statements and deputations from members of the public in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Annex 1 of part A4 of the Constitution.

5. **Petitions**

To receive and discuss petitions if any, in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Annex 2 of part A4 of the Constitution.

6. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman to announce any matters of communication.

7. **Leader of the Council's Announcements and Communications**

The Leader of the Council to announce any matters of communication.

8. **Executive Member Presentations**

To receive reports from up to three Executive Members on recent matters of interest and ask questions on matters contained within the reports.

Reports are anticipated from Councillors Hegley and Spurr.

9. **Recommendations from the Executive**

To consider recommendations from the meeting of the Executive, 6 October 2015 and answer questions asked under Rule No. 13.1.

- (1) Central Bedfordshire's Five Year Plan 2015 – 2020.
- (2) Fees and Charges 2016.
- (3) Appointment of Proper Officer under Public Health Legislation.
- (4) Plan-making Programme for Central Bedfordshire.

(attached pages 15 to 23)

10. **Recommendations from the Licensing Committee**

To consider recommendations from a meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 5 November 2015 and ask questions under Rule No 13.1.

- (1) The Gambling Act '2005' Policy.

(attached page 25)

11. **Appointment to Deputy Executive Member Vacancy - Social Care and Housing**

To consider a report of the Leader seeking the appointment of a Deputy Executive Member – Social Care and Housing.

(attached pages 27 to 29)

12. **Treasury Management Outturn Mid Year Report 2015/16**

To consider a report of Councillor Wenham, Executive Member for Corporate Resources on Monitoring Treasury Management.

(attached pages 31 to 48)

13. **Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report 2014/15**

To receive the annual Overview & Scrutiny Committees report.

(attached pages 49 to 61)

14. **Report of the Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority**

To receive and consider a report of the Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority and ask questions under Rule No 13.1.

(attached pages 63 to 69)

15. **Motions (if any)**

To consider motions by Members of the Council, if any, under Rule No. 17 in the order received.

16. **Written Questions**

To answer written questions from Members of the Council, if any, under Rule No. 13.2.

17. **Open Questions**

To answer Open Questions asked by Members of the Council under Rule No. 13.7.

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CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **COUNCIL** held in the Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Thursday, 17 September 2015.

PRESENT

Cllr D Bowater (Chairman)
Cllr Mrs C F Chapman MBE (Vice-Chairman)

<p>Cllrs Mrs A Barker R D Berry L Birt A D Brown J Chatterley K M Collins N B Costin I Dalgarno S Dixon Mrs A L Dodwell P Downing P A Duckett K Ferguson F Firth Mrs J Freeman E Ghent</p>	<p>Cllrs C C Gomm Mrs S A Goodchild Mrs D B Gurney P Hollick J G Jamieson K Janes R W Johnstone J Kane D J Lawrence Mrs J G Lawrence K C Matthews Ms C Maudlin R Morris G Perham A Ryan B Saunders</p>	<p>Cllrs J A G Saunders D Shelvey I Shingler B J Spurr R C Stay T Stock T Swain G Tubb A M Turner M A G Versallion N Warren B Wells R D Wenham T Woodward J N Young A Zerny</p>
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Apologies for Absence

<p>Cllrs M R Jones M C Blair Mrs S Clark</p>	<p>Cllrs Ms A M W Graham C Hegley D McVicar</p>	<p>Cllrs T Nicols P Smith B Walker</p>
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<p>Officers:</p>	<p>Mr R Carr Mr Q Baker</p> <p>Mrs D Broadbent-Clarke</p> <p>Mr M Coiffait Mrs S Harrison Mrs S Hobbs Mr J Longhurst</p> <p>Mrs J Ogley</p> <p>Ms M Peaston Mrs M Scott</p>	<p>– Chief Executive – Assistant Director Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer (Interim) – Director of Improvement and Corporate Services – Director of Community Services – Director of Children's Services – Committee Services Officer – Director of Regeneration and Business – Director of Social Care, Health and Housing – Committee Services Manager – Director of Public Health</p>
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PRAYERS

Prayers were taken by the Reverend Paul Niemiec, Community Minister, Leighton Buzzard.

C/15/29. Minutes

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2015 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

C/15/30. Members' Interests

None were declared.

C/15/31. Questions, Statements and Deputations

The following questions were asked in accordance with the Public Participation Scheme.

1. Refugees being welcomed in Central Bedfordshire

Mrs Denise Smith asked a question about the plans to ensure refugees would be welcomed to Central Bedfordshire and encouraged to integrate with existing communities.

The Leader of the Council explained that there were a number of asylum seekers in Central Bedfordshire, particularly unaccompanied children being looked after by the Council. The Council was considering how Central Bedfordshire could help with the Government's proposal to bring 20,000 Syrian refugees to the United Kingdom over the next five years, including how to care for them and how to integrate them within communities. The Executive Member for Stronger Communities was co-ordinating offers of support.

2. Biggleswade Railway Bridge

Mr Bernard Rix, speaking as a Biggleswade resident, raised concerns about the planned closure of the railway bridge in High Street, Biggleswade for four months to carry out maintenance works. Mr Rix referred to a petition signed by 700 people to request Central Bedfordshire Council to influence Network Rail to reconsider the timescale and he drew attention to the disruption this could cause residents in Biggleswade.

The Executive Member for Community Services explained that the Council had been liaising with Network Rail since April 2013 to negotiate an appropriate timeframe for carrying out essential maintenance on the bridge. The Council could only carry out the repairs as and when advised by Network Rail. Diversions would be in place directing the traffic to use an alternative route during the period of closure to mitigate traffic problems. The Council would be liaising with Biggleswade Town Council and press releases would be issued nearer the time to inform residents.

3. Robert Bloomfield Academy

Mr John Dee drew the Council's attention to the dismissal of the governing body at Robert Bloomfield Academy by the Board of BEMAT, raising serious concerns about the impact this would have on the children's education at the school.

The Executive Member for Children's Services explained that the headteacher and governing body at Robert Bloomfield Academy had changed recently. As Robert Bloomfield was an Academy the Council was not in a position to step in to resolve the problems that had occurred, as this was a role for the Department for Education. The Council was liaising closely with the Academy and BEMAT to offer any assistance.

C/15/32. Petitions

No petitions were received.

C/15/33. Chairman's Announcements and Communications

The Chairman was saddened to report the death of former Councillor Howard Lockey and Members stood in silence for one minute in respect for his memory.

The Chairman also announced that his Civic Reception would be held on 30 October 2015 and he would be taking the opportunity to publicise Central Bedfordshire by encouraging representatives of local businesses to attend.

C/15/34. Leader of the Council's Announcements and Communications

On Friday 31 July the Leader had visited the Tactic Youth Centre in Leighton Buzzard and had attended the topping out ceremony for the Greenfields Independent Living Scheme. He was also pleased to announce that the show flats at Priory View, Dunstable were now open and the accommodation there was proving very popular. Further independent living schemes were being proposed for Houghton Regis, Biggleswade and in other parts of Central Bedfordshire.

The Leader had also visited Lincolnshire County Council to learn from their practice.

The Leader had joined the Board of Aragon Housing Association. He had also been involved in the appointment process for the new Chief Constable for Bedfordshire.

The Leader spoke about the Government's devolution proposals in response to which a number of councils had submitted bids. The Government was mainly focused on City bids in the first wave. Central Bedfordshire Council was working with neighbouring authorities and SEMLEP, however, the Leader clarified that he did not consider a mayoral model or combined authority to be appropriate for Central Bedfordshire.

C/15/35. **Executive Member Presentations**

Councillor Young, Executive Member for Regeneration reported on the work within his portfolio area, including:

- an increasing number of jobs created in the area;
- a new distribution centre in Dunstable creating 800 jobs with even more during peak times. Work on a second facility was already underway;
- the Council was working closely with Amazon and an Amazon job centre would be opened in Dunstable to recruit local people to the company;
- a Food Enterprise Zone was being established at Stratton Business Park, Biggleswade and the Executive would be receiving a report at its meeting on 6 October proposing the adoption of a Local Development Order;
- the Secretary of State had approved the East of Leighton Buzzard Plan for houses, schools, employment and community facilities;
- the A5-M1 link road and the Woodside Link were being built and would benefit residents and businesses in Leighton Buzzard and Dunstable including cutting journey times to the M1;
- planning permission had been granted for land in Millbrook for B1 use creating further jobs in that area;
- Prologis had been granted planning permission for two additional buildings at Marston Gate;

- 1,522 houses had been completed in Central Bedfordshire in the year ending May 2015, since then 500 more houses had been completed; and
- a new website had been launched www.becentralbedfordshire.co.uk to support businesses and help them relocate to Central Bedfordshire. The website was already receiving 1,000 visitors a month since its recent launch.

In response to a question, the Executive Member for Regeneration confirmed that existing sites allocated for commercial development would only be released for housing development if a marketing campaign had indicated that the site was not attracting business in that area.

Councillor Turner, Executive Member for Stronger Communities reported on the work within his portfolio area, including:

- working with town and parish councils to support their needs and encourage them to look at what services they could provide;
- 69 out of 79 parish councils were delivering services such as street cleaning and grass cutting;
- Central Bedfordshire was the first local authority to overcome the issue of insurance for local communities who wished to take on gritting responsibilities, enabling three parish councils to provide gritting on non-priority roads;
- a Town and Parish Council Conference was held on 1 July 2015 and the next conferences were due to take place on 23 September 2015 and in November 2015;
- the Volunteering Strategy would be refreshed in 2016. Central Bedfordshire had over 800 volunteers working for the Council and further work was being carried out to encourage young people to become volunteers;
- a Cheering Volunteering event was held in 2015 and a second event was being programmed for 2016;
- consultation had revealed that 40% of residents felt that they couldn't influence the Council's decision making which was an issue that needed to be addressed; and
- Members were encouraged to complete the survey on Member Development before 21 September 2015.

C/15/36. **Recommendation from the Executive**

(1) Reducing Reliance on Bed and Breakfast Accommodation Use

The Council considered a recommendation from the Executive concerning the financial pressures resulting from a sustained increase in the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation on a temporary basis by homeless families.

In response to a question, the Leader explained the distribution of temporary accommodation across the area and indicated that evidence had shown that there was a need for alternative accommodation in the north of Central Bedfordshire.

RESOLVED

that the expenditure of £2m of Housing Revenue Account resources for the acquisition of a portfolio of around 7-9 properties and potentially land (for development) be approved.

C/15/37. **Motions (if any)**

No motions were received.

C/15/38. **Written Questions**

No written questions were received.

C/15/39. **Treasury Management Outturn 2014/15**

The Council considered a report from the Executive Member for Corporate Resources that provided a review of Treasury Management activities for the year ended 31 March 2015, in compliance with relevant codes of practice adopted by Central Bedfordshire Council.

RESOLVED

that the Treasury Management and the Prudential Indicators' performance for the year ended 31 March 2015 be noted.

C/15/40. **Urgent Item of Business**

By virtue of the authority vested in him in accordance with Section 100 (b)(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chairman agreed to allow an additional item to be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency.

The reason for urgency was a number of resignations from Ridgmont Parish Council earlier in the month, rendering the Parish Council inquorate and unable to meet. Until the Order was in place, business could not be transacted and this matter therefore needed to be considered as a matter of urgency.

C/15/41. **Local Government Act 1972 - Section 91 - Inquorate Council**

The Council considered a report from the Executive Member for Corporate Resources seeking approval to make an Order under Section 91 of the Local Government Act 1972 to enable the Council to appoint a sufficient number of Parish Councillors on a temporary basis, to enable the work of the Parish Council to continue until it had co-opted or elected sufficient Councillors to be quorate. Four parish councillors had resigned from Ridgmont Parish Council making the Parish Council inquorate.

RESOLVED

1. **that an Order be made, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report, to appoint Parish Councillors at Ridgmont Parish Council to ensure that the Parish Council was quorate and could continue to act.**

C/15/42. **Open Questions**

The Chairman invited the Minority Group Leaders to ask a question each prior to the consideration of questions that had been placed in the Open Questions receptacle.

1. Councillor Zerny had submitted a question for the Executive Member for Social Care and Housing regarding the sale of council housing. As the Executive Member for Social Care and Housing was absent the question would be forwarded to her to respond to in writing.
2. Councillor Downing asked the Chairman of the Police and Crime Panel about the appointment of a new Chief Constable.

Councillor Mrs Chapman, explained that the Panel had made an unanimous decision to support the appointment of Jon Boutcher as the new Chief Constable.

3. Councillor Mrs Chapman enquired if the cutting of grass verges could be co-ordinated with litter picking.

The Deputy Executive Member for Community Services explained that the grass verges outside the 30 mph speed limit were cut three times a year and that litter picking was continuous throughout the year. He was investigating the option of not cutting the grass verges outside the 30 mph speed limit where possible, to promote local ecology, including benefiting the pollinating insects, and it was anticipated that this would also make savings to the Council's budget.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 6.30 p.m. and concluded at 7.29 p.m.)

Chairman

Dated

COUNCIL MEETING – 19 November 2015

**Recommendation to Council from the Executive meeting
held on 6 October 2015**

E/15/41. Central Bedfordshire's Five Year Plan 2015-2020

The Executive considered a report from the Leader of the Council that set out the proposed Five Year Plan 2015 – 2020 following, engagement with the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and stakeholders.

The proposed priorities for the next five years were:-

- Enhancing Central Bedfordshire
- Great resident services
- Improving education and skills
- Protecting the vulnerable; improving wellbeing
- Creating stronger communities
- A more efficient and responsive Council.

The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Health moved the following amendment to the second paragraph on page 9 of the Plan, which was duly seconded:-

“Key components of this will be providing appropriate housing, particularly for the elderly and moving care to focus more on prevention rather than cure, with services and support provided in the right place at the right time. This will require working closely with the National Health Service, to provide services locally seven days a week. Social care will continue to be developed to help people to live independently for as long as possible, either in their own homes with support or in specialist accommodation.”

Reason for decision: To enable the Council to have a refreshed Five Year Plan to support the vision of making Central Bedfordshire a great place to live and work.

RECOMMENDED to Council

that the Five Year Plan 2015 – 2020 for Central Bedfordshire be approved, subject to the above amendment to the second paragraph on page 9 of the Plan.

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COUNCIL MEETING – 19 November 2015

**Recommendation to Council from the Executive meeting
held on 6 October 2015**

E/15/43. Fees and Charges 2016

The Executive considered a report from the Executive Member for Corporate Resources that proposed revised fees and charges for 2016, identified new services for which it was proposed that fees or charges would be levied and identified those charges where proposed increases were significantly different from the 1% advisory increase as per the 2016/17 budget strategy.

The Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committees would consider the proposed fees and charges during the October cycle of meetings. A request was made that the statutory charges be summarised and a list of charges where there is flexibility for them to be increased be provided to the O&S Committees.

This would enable the Sustainable Communities O&S Committee to consider the proposed increase in car parking charges. In response to a question, the Executive Member for Corporate Resources explained that the proposed increase in car parking charges would allow the Council to invest in improving the technology and customer experience at the Council's busiest car parks.

Reason for decision: To enable the Council to agree the fees and charges prices for 2016 as part of delivering a balanced budget for 2016/17 and identify resource requirements for the Medium Term.

RECOMMENDED to Council

that subject to any recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny (as set out at Appendix A) and the amendments set out in the Executive Chairman's Briefing Note:-

- 1. that the Fees and Charges prices for 2016 be agreed;***
- 2. that the new Fees and Charges proposed to be introduced for 2016 be agreed;***
- 3. that Fairer Charging be brought in line with Residential Care charging, and that charging commence when the care started with effect from 1 January 2016, as set out in paragraphs 11 and 12 in the Executive report;***
- 4. to confirm that whilst some statutory charges have been left at the 2015 rate currently, these would be amended to the new charges once the Council had been advised of the rates applicable to 2016; and***

5. *the progress of the Fees and Charges cyclical review process, as set out at Appendix D to the Executive report, be noted.*

Appendix A

Subject: Overview and Scrutiny Committee comments on the Fees and Charges 2016

Summary: This briefing provides Members with the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees (OSCs) during their consideration of the Fees and Charges during October 2015. These Minutes are draft until they are agreed by the Committees in December.

Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

RECOMMENDED that the Committee support the 1% increase for the School Transport Service and no increase for the Music Service.

In addition it was agreed:-

- That all Children's Services fees and charges be submitted to the Committee for consideration in the future.
- That the School Charging Brochure 2015/16 be circulated to the Committee for information.
- That a report be included on the work programme regarding evaluation of the impact of the work of the Teaching School.

Social Care, Health and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

NOTED the generally modest increase in charges in line with inflation.

Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee

RECOMMENDED that the Directorate fees and charges be endorsed but that Sustainable Communities OSC consider the detail within their Directorate as there were concerns regarding car parking charges in Dunstable.

Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

RECOMMENDED

1. That car parking charges in Dunstable be subject to an increase to no more than £1 for up to 2 hours from 1 January 2016 and that there would be no further increase once the new pay on exit technology was in place.
2. That the Committee support the overall proposed Fees and Charges but recommend flexibility for the Directorate to reconsider areas which have a 0% or very low increase, thus mitigating the impact of lower car parking charges than those proposed so as to offset the loss in revenue.

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COUNCIL MEETING – 19 November 2015

**Recommendation to Council from the Executive meeting
held on 6 October 2015**

E/15/52. Appointment of Proper Officer under Public Health Legislation

The Executive considered a report from the Executive Member for Community Services that set out proposals for the appointment of all Medical Consultants in Communicable Disease Control and other suitably medically qualified deputising officers in the Public Health East of England area as Proper Officers as required by Public Health legislation.

Reason for decision: To meet a legal requirement to appoint a Proper Officer under Public Health legislation.

RECOMMENDED to Council that the following appointments be approved:-

- 1. all the Medical Consultants in Communicable Disease Control (CCDCs) and other equivalently medically qualified deputising officers** in Public Health East of England (the Public Health England centre responsible for the East of England area) as Proper Officers under the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984 (as amended)*;***
- 2. Central Bedfordshire Council's Director of Public Health, or successor titles, employed by Central Bedfordshire Council with the duty to safeguard public health as a Proper Officer under the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984 (as amended)*;***
- 3. Central Bedfordshire Council's Director of Community Services, being the lead officer for Environmental Health employed by Central Bedfordshire Council with the duty to safeguard public health as a Proper Officer under the 1984 Act (as amended)*; and***
- 4. to allow the Directors identified in 2 and 3 above, to authorise officers to carry out particular functions or exercise particular powers for the purpose of safeguarding public health.***

**** Act amended by the Health and Social Care Act 2008 and regulations made under it and the Public Health Acts of 1936 and 1961.***

***** Defined as a person suitably qualified in the field of health protection and registered with an appropriate body such as the Faculty of Public Health, and the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health and/or the Nursing and Midwifery Council or the General Medical Council.***

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COUNCIL MEETING – 19 November 2015

**Recommendation to Council from the Executive meeting
held on 6 October 2015**

E/15/47. Plan-making Programme for Central Bedfordshire

The Executive considered a report from the Executive Member for Regeneration that proposed that the Council withdraw the Development Strategy and discontinue legal proceedings. The local planning situation had changed following a report from the Office for National Statistics which had published new population projections. This had led to the Development Strategy and the subsequent Allocations Local Plan being out of date.

The Secretary of State had confirmed that he would not call-in the Houghton Regis North 2 application, leaving the Council free to grant planning permission for this proposal. This meant that together with the East Leighton Linslade and Houghton Regis North 1 developments, the majority of the large scale developments that had been proposed in the Development Strategy would be implemented, helping the Council's five year housing land supply position.

Reason for decision: To ensure that the Council retained control of growth and the provision of associated infrastructure.

RECOMMENDED to Council

that the Development Strategy be withdrawn and the legal proceedings be discontinued.

RESOLVED

- 1. that work commence immediately on a new plan-making process; and**
- 2. to authorise the Director of Regeneration and Business and the Executive Member for Regeneration to approve the Local Development Scheme and any consequent amendments.**

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COUNCIL MEETING – 19 November 2015

**Recommendation to Council from the Licensing Committee meeting
held on 5 November 2015**

L/15/13 Review of Gambling Act '2005' Policy

The Licensing Committee considered the report from Marcel Coiffait, Director of Community Services that presented the proposed Central Bedfordshire Gambling Policy.

The policy sets out the approach Central Bedfordshire Council will take towards any application for a gambling licence, and will last, subject to revisions, for a period of 3 years.

Members noted the report, and attached policy, which is largely the same as the previous gambling policy adopted by the Council, and moved and approved the recommendations of the report.

The Committee highlighted to Officers the need to review the Council's position relating to licences for Casinos which had not been included in the Gambling Policy.

RECOMMENDED to Council

- 1. that the draft Gambling Policy, attached at Appendix A to the report, be adopted; and**
- 2. that the Head of Public Protection & Interim Head of Passenger Transport, in consultation with the Executive Member for Community Services, be given delegated authority to undertake any necessary minor amendments to the policy prior to publication**

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Central Bedfordshire Council

COUNCIL

19 November 2015

Appointment to Deputy Executive Member Vacancy – Social Care and Housing

Report of Cllr James Jamieson, Leader of the Council
James.Jamieson@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Advising Officer: Deb Broadbent-Clarke, Director of Improvement and Corporate Services
Debb.Broadbent-Clarke@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Drafting Officer: Mel Peaston, Committee Services Manager
Mel.peaston@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Purpose of this report

1. This report informs Council of the appointment by the Leader of the Council to the vacancy of Deputy Executive Member for Social Care and Housing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Council is asked to note:

1. the appointment by the Leader of the Council of Cllr Eugene Ghent to the vacancy of Deputy Executive Member for Social Care and Housing;
2. that in view of Cllr Ghent previously having been the Vice-Chairman of the Social Care, Health and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, a new Vice-Chairman will be appointed by the Committee.

Overview and Scrutiny Comments/Recommendations

1. This matter does not fall within the overview and scrutiny remit.

Appointment to the vacant role

2. The Leader of the Council reported his appointments to the Executive, and to the Deputy Executive Member roles, at the annual meeting of Council on 21 May 2015.
3. At that meeting the Leader reported a vacancy for the role of Deputy Executive Member for Social Care and Housing.
4. The Leader has now appointed Cllr Eugene Ghent as Deputy Executive Member for Social Care and Housing, with effect from 1 November 2015.
5. In this role Cllr Ghent will support Cllr Carole Hegley, Executive Member for Social Care and Housing.

Council Priorities

6. This appointment will support the delivery of the following Council objective:
 - Promote health and wellbeing and protect the vulnerable.

Legal Implications

7. Making this appointment falls within the remit of the Leader of the Council.

Financial Implications

8. The appointment includes an allowance of £6,267.48 per annum which is already included within the current budget.

Equalities Implications

9. Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
10. When decisions are made, decision makers must have the relevant data, including the results of equality impact assessment, and of consultation and involvement, to ensure they reach an informed decision.

11. The appointment of a Deputy Executive Member to support the Executive Member for Social Care and Housing will assist in the delivery of Council services, in line with the Council's priorities, to residents including vulnerable adults and their carers.

Conclusion and next Steps

12. The Deputy Executive Member will offer support and assistance to the Executive Member for Social Care and Housing who has a wide and demanding portfolio area.
13. As Cllr Ghent was previously the Vice-Chairman of the Social Care, Health and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee and cannot continue in this role whilst a Deputy Executive Member, the Committee will appoint a new Vice-Chairman at its next meeting.

Appendices

None

Background Papers

14. The following background papers, not previously available to the public, were taken into account and are available on the Council's website:

None

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Central Bedfordshire Council

COUNCIL

19 November 2015

Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2015/16

Report of Richard Wenham, Executive Member for Corporate Resources
(richard.wenham@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Advising Officer: Charles Warboys, Chief Finance Officer and Section 151
Officer

(charles.warboys@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Contact Officer: Ralph Gould, Head of Financial Control

(ralph.gould@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

This report relates to a non-Key Decision

The purpose of this report is to provide a review of the performance of the Treasury Management activities for the six month period ending 30th September 2015 in compliance with relevant codes of practice adopted by Central Bedfordshire Council.

1. The Council's treasury management activities are underpinned by the adoption of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) *Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice (2011 Edition)*, which includes the requirement for the Council to receive two treasury and prudential indicator performance reports in respect of each financial year, addressing the first six months and the outturn position. This mid-year report explains performance for the six months to 30th September 2015 and ensures that Central Bedfordshire Council has adopted best practice in accordance with CIPFA's recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Council is asked to:

1. Acknowledge the satisfactory performance on treasury management and prudential indicators for the 6-month period ending 30th September 2015.

Overview and Scrutiny Comments/Recommendations

1. Local arrangements require the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee to receive, on a quarterly basis, treasury management performance reports as part of the ongoing budget monitoring process and every year to scrutinise the revised strategy. This activity is scheduled for the Committee's meeting on 2nd February 2016.

Background

2. Treasury management is defined by the CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Services as:
"The management of the local authority's investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks."
3. The Council's Treasury Management Strategy has been underpinned by the adoption of the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management (2011 Edition), which includes the requirement for determining a treasury strategy on the likely financing and investment activity for the forthcoming year.
4. The Code also recommends that all Members are informed of treasury management activities at least twice a year. This report therefore ensures this Authority has adopted best practice in accordance with CIPFA's recommendations. Local arrangements require the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee to receive, on a quarterly basis, treasury management performance reports and every year to scrutinise the proposed revised strategy.
5. Overall responsibility for treasury management remains with the Council. No treasury management activity is without risk; the effective identification and management of risk are integral to the Council's treasury management objectives.
6. This report provides Members with a summary of the treasury management activity during the six months ending 30th September 2015. The Council has complied with its prudential indicators and a prudent approach has been taken in relation to investment activity with priority being given to security and liquidity over yield.

Treasury Activities for the period 1st April 2015 to 30th September 2015

Borrowing

7. The Council's underlying need to borrow as measured by its Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) was £446.9m. At 30th September 2015 £317.9m had been externally borrowed, with the remainder borrowed internally from the Council's own cash balances. In line with the approved treasury strategy, the Council used internal resources in lieu of borrowing to the full extent as this has continued to be the most cost effective means of funding capital expenditure.
8. At 30th September 2015, the Council had £19.4m of short term borrowing from other local authorities obtained at an "all in" fixed rate (inclusive of brokerage fees) of 0.40%. This source of finance is preferential to the traditional route of borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB), where the lowest rate it offers is currently around 1.2% in respect of a 1-year fixed interest rate.
9. The amount of borrowing required will be dependent on the actual cash flows experienced and it is currently estimated that around £60m short term borrowing will be required as at 31st March 2016.
10. The Council has £165m of borrowing relating to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) which was arranged as part of HRA Self Financing, introduced by Central Government in the 2011/12 financial year.
11. Most of the Council's long term borrowing (95%) is from the PWLB, a borrowing facility provided to local authorities by Central Government. This borrowing was taken out by predecessor authorities. The rate at which local authorities can borrow from this facility is determined by the market rate of interest on UK Gilts. An economic summary for the period 1st April – 30th September 2015 is included in Appendix A.
12. Over the next two quarters the Council plans to maintain minimal cash levels for operational purposes to minimise investment counterparty risk and source its borrowing needs from other local authorities on a short term rolling basis. This strategy is expected to achieve significant revenue cost savings over the more traditional route of long term fixed rate borrowing from the PWLB. This borrowing strategy assumes that interest rates will continue to remain low for longer than previously envisaged, in line with advice from the Council's treasury advisers, Arlingclose Ltd. However, the Council will continue to monitor long term rates with a view to fixing a portion of its borrowing if rates are favourable.
13. As anticipated, no opportunities for debt rescheduling (early repayment of existing debts) materialised during the six-month period ending 30th September 2015 given that present discount rates make the costs involved unattractive.

14. Debt management activities for the period are outlined in Appendix B.

Investments

15. The Council only places funds with counterparties of high creditworthiness and restricts time periods for investments. Priority is given to security and liquidity over yield.
16. At 30th September 2015, the Council held £11.6m in investments. Forecast investment income is £0.3m for the current financial year, with short term money market rates very low and forecast to remain low over the medium term.
17. Criteria to determine suitable investment counterparties for the Council are approved annually by Council as part of the Treasury Management Strategy. Investment activities for the period are detailed in Appendix C.

Prudential Indicators

18. The CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities requires performance against specified key indicators to be measured and reported. The purpose of these indicators is to demonstrate prudence, affordability and sustainability.
19. The Council has complied with its prudential indicators for the period 1st April 2015 to 30th September 2015. Explanations of the prudential indicators and performance against these is included in Appendix D. Key points include:
 - The Council has remained within its authorised and operational borrowing limits;
 - Borrowing is less than the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), demonstrating that all long term borrowing has been undertaken for capital purposes in line with the Prudential Code;
 - The Council is within its limits regarding the maturity profile of its fixed rate borrowing, ensuring that debt maturities are spread over many years in order to control the Council's exposure to refinancing risk;
 - The Council is within its limits regarding its exposure to variable interest rates and thus its exposure to interest rate fluctuations.
20. In the six months to 30th September 2015, there were no breaches in the Council's prudential indicators.

Council Priorities

21. The effective management of the combined activities of debt and investments and the associated risks contribute to the Council's financial resources and is a cornerstone to the delivery of the Council's priorities.

Corporate Implications

Legal Implications

22. The Council's treasury management activities are regulated by statute, professional codes and official guidance. The Local Government Act 2003 (the Act) provides the powers to borrow and invest as well as providing controls and limits. Under the Act, Communities and Local Government has issued Guidance on Local Government Investments (revised March 2010) to structure and regulate the Council's investment activities. The Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) Regulations 2003 – Statutory Instrument (SI) 3146 (plus subsequent amendments), develops the controls and powers within the Act. The SI requires the Council to undertake any borrowing activity with regard to the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities. The SI also requires the Council to operate the overall treasury function with regard to the CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Services (the Code of Practice).
23. CIPFA revised the Code of Practice in November 2011 following developments in financial markets and the introduction of the Localism Act for English local authorities. The revised Code was adopted by Council on 29th November 2012.

Financial Implications

24. The Council's Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Indicators underpin the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). Performance against the strategy and the prudential indicators is explained within the body of this report.
25. The full year forecast for interest payable in 2015/16 is £5.4m, £0.5m lower than the 2015/16 budget of £5.9m. This is due to a combination of interest rates continuing to remain at historically low levels, a lower level of borrowing than assumed in the 2015/16 budget due to Capital Programme slippage, and new borrowing being taken out at short-term fixed rates from other public bodies at rates below the current base rate.

Risk Management

26. The approved strategy aims to manage the risks to the Council's finances from instability in financial markets. The effective identification and management of risk are integral to the Council's treasury management activities, as detailed throughout this report.

Equalities Implications

27. There are no equalities implications to this report.

Conclusion and next Steps

28. Overall responsibility for treasury management remains with the Council.
29. This report provides Members with a summary of the treasury management performance for the six months to 30th September 2015.
30. The Council can confirm a prudent approach has been taken in relation to its borrowing activities, which were based on market interest rate forecasts, and its investment activities with priority being given to security and liquidity over yield.
31. The Council has duly applied its Treasury Management Strategy for 2015/16 and there were no breaches in its prudential indicators.

Appendices

Appendix A – Economic Background
Appendix B – Debt Management Activities
Appendix C – Investment Activities
Appendix D – Compliance with Prudential Indicators

Background Papers

The following background paper is available on the Council's website:

'Treasury Management Strategy and Treasury Policy for 2015/16'

(Agenda item 11 of Executive meeting of 10th February 2015)

<http://centralbeds.moderngov.co.uk/documents/g4646/Public%20reports%20pack%20Tuesday%2010-Feb-2015%2009.30%20EXECUTIVE.pdf?T=10>

Appendix A

Economic Background 1st April 2015 to 30th September 2015

The UK economy has remained resilient over the last six months. Growth in the UK continues at a relatively healthy year-on-year rate of 2.4% (as at the end of June 2015). Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth has now increased for ten consecutive quarters, breaking a pattern of slow and erratic growth from 2009. The annual Consumer Price Index (CPI) measure of inflation turned negative at -0.1% as at the end of September 2015, which is well below the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) target of 2% p.a. However, the Bank of England's projections for inflation continue to expect a gradual increase to around 2% over the next 18 months and then remain there in the near future. Further improvements in the labour market saw the unemployment rate for the three months to 31st August 2015 fall to 5.4%, a seven-year low.

The movement in rates at which local authorities can borrow from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) is set out in the table below.

Period	1 April 2015	30 September 2015
1 year	1.1%	1.2%
3 year	1.5%	1.6%
5 year	1.9%	2.0%
10 year	2.5%	2.6%

* These borrowing rates are at the 'Certainty Rate' (0.20% below the PWLB standard rate).

The outlook for the 6-month period ending 31st March 2016 continues to remain muted as nothing is really driving interest rate expectations higher. The lack of inflationary pressure is expected to allow policymakers to hold off monetary tightening for longer than the market currently expects. In particular, longer dated yields are expected to be held down by strong demand.

The Council's treasury advisers, Arlingclose Ltd, do not expect the Bank of England to raise its Base Rate until June 2016 and the short term return on cash investments will continue to remain at very low levels.

The focus is now on the rate of increase in the Base Rate and its medium-term peak, with expectations that rates will rise slowly and to a lower level than in the past.

Appendix B

Debt Management Activities from 1st April 2015 to 30th September 2015

	Balance on 01/04/2015 £m	Debt Maturing £m	New Borrowing £m	Balance on 30/09/2015 £m
Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)	446.9			
Short Term Borrowing ¹	30.4	45.5	34.5	19.4
Long Term Borrowing	282.2	0.0	0.0	282.2
TOTAL BORROWING	312.6	45.5	34.5	301.6
Other Long Term Liabilities	16.3	0.0	0.0	16.3
TOTAL EXTERNAL DEBT	328.9	45.5	34.5	317.9

At 30th September 2015, the Council had in place £317.9m of external borrowing to finance its previous years' capital programmes. With short term interest rates being much lower than long term rates, it continues to be more cost effective in the short term to use a combination of internal resources and short term borrowing, rather than undertake further long term borrowing. By doing so, the Council is able to minimise net borrowing costs and reduce overall treasury risk.

No debt rescheduling has been undertaken during the financial year as present discount rates make the costs involved unattractive.

Budgeted Expenditure and Outturn

There is a forecast underspend of £0.5m on the Council's £5.9m Interest Payable expenditure budget for the year. This mainly reflects interest rates remaining lower than originally estimated.

¹ Loans with maturities less than 1 year.

Appendix C

Investment Activities from 1st April 2015 to 30th September 2015

The Council gives priority to security and liquidity and aims is to achieve a yield commensurate with these principles.

	Balance on 01/04/2015 £m	Investments Made / Capital Appreciation £m	Investments Repaid / Capital Depreciation £m	Balance on 30/09/2015 £m
Short Term Investments	8.3	64.2	68.9	3.6
UK Government – DMADF	0.0	6.0	6.0	0.0
Money Market Funds	5.5	127.3	129.9	2.9
Investments in Pooled Funds (Lime Fund)	5.0	0.1	0.0	5.1
TOTAL INVESTMENTS	18.8	197.6	204.8	11.6

Security of capital has been maintained by following the Council's counterparty policy as set out in its Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2015/16. New investments were made with the following classes of institutions:

- BBB+ rated banks and building societies;
- AAA rated Money Market Funds.

Counterparty credit quality was assessed and monitored with reference to credit ratings (the Council's minimum long-term counterparty rating of BBB+ or equivalent across rating agencies Fitch, Standard & Poors and Moody's), share prices, credit default swap prices, financial statements, information on potential government support and reports in the quality financial press.

The average cash balance the Council held was £22.7m over the 6-month period to 30th September 2015. Currently, the Council has money market deposits placed on varying interest rates ranging between 0.4% and 0.8%.

The Council continues to adhere to its long-standing strategy of holding low cash balances to reduce investment counterparty risk and contain its borrowing costs by utilising cash balances in lieu of borrowing externally.

The Council may invest its surplus funds with any of the counterparties in the table below:

Approved Investment Counterparties

Counterparty	
Banks and other organisations and securities whose lowest published long-term credit rating from Fitch, Moody's and Standard & Poor's is:	AAA
	AA+
	AA
	AA-
	A+
	A
	A-
	BBB+
UK Central Government (irrespective of credit rating)	
UK Local Authorities (irrespective of credit rating)	
Money market funds and other pooled funds	

In addition, the Council may invest with organisations and pooled funds without credit ratings, following an external credit assessment and advice from its treasury management advisers, Arlingclose Ltd.

Counterparty Investment Limits

The cash limit for any single organisation or any group of organisations under the same ownership is outlined in the following table.

	Cash limit
Any single organisation, except the UK Central Government	£7m each
UK Central Government	unlimited
UK Local Authorities	unlimited
Any group of organisations under the same ownership	£7m per group
Any group of pooled funds under the same management	£10m per manager
Negotiable instruments held in a broker's nominee account	£10m per broker
Foreign countries	£10m per country
Registered Providers	£10m in total
Unsecured investments with Building Societies	£10m in total
Loans to small businesses	£10m in total
Money Market Funds	70% in total

Budgeted Income and Outturn

The investment interest receivable in the year is forecast to be in line with the budget at -£0.3m.

Appendix D

Compliance with Prudential Indicators

The Council has complied with its prudential indicators from 1st April – 30th September 2015, set in February 2015 as part of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy Statement.

Borrowing in Comparison to the Capital Financing Requirement

Estimates of the Council's cumulative maximum external borrowing requirement for 2015/16 to 2017/18 are shown in the table below.

	31/03/2015 Actual £m	31/03/2016 Estimate £m	31/03/2017 Estimate £m	31/03/2018 Estimate £m
Gross CFR	446.9	495.9	537.4	564.1
Less: PFI liabilities	(16.3)	(15.7)	(15.3)	(14.6)
Borrowing CFR	430.6	480.2	522.1	549.5
Less: Existing profile of long term borrowing	(312.6)	(282.2)	(275.6)	(274.6)
Gross Borrowing Requirement/Internal Borrowing	118.0	198.0	246.5	274.9

These forecast borrowing figures are based on the full Capital Programme being achieved.

(a) Estimates of Capital Expenditure

This indicator is set to ensure that the level of capital expenditure remains within sustainable limits. The Council's planned capital expenditure and financing, as approved by Council in February 2015, can be summarised as follows.

Capital Expenditure and Financing	2014/15 Actual £m	2015/16 Estimate £m	2016/17 Estimate £m	2017/18 Estimate £m
General Fund	91.1	113.8	117.2	85.0
HRA	13.4	16.9	24.9	20.5
Total Expenditure	104.5	130.7	142.1	105.5
Capital receipts	(1.6)	(16.7)	(15.2)	(14.1)
Government Grants	(52.4)	(58.6)	(57.0)	(38.3)
Major Repairs Reserve (HRA)	(3.6)	-	-	-
Revenue contributions	(10.9)	(13.3)	(19.9)	(16.0)
Borrowing	(36.0)	(42.1)	(50.0)	(37.1)
Total Financing	(104.5)	(130.7)	(142.1)	(105.5)

(b) Estimates of Capital Financing Requirement

The Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) measures the Council's underlying need to borrow for a capital purpose.

Capital Financing Requirement	31/03/2015 Actual £m	31/03/2016 Estimate £m	31/03/2017 Estimate £m	31/03/2018 Estimate £m
General Fund	281.9	330.9	372.4	400.1
HRA	165.0	165.0	165.0	164.0
Total CFR	446.9	495.9	537.4	564.1

The CFR is forecast to rise by £117.2m over the next three years as capital expenditure financed by debt outweighs resources put aside for debt repayment.

(c) Gross Debt and the Capital Financing Requirement

This is a key indicator of prudence. In order to ensure that over the medium term debt will only be for a capital purpose, the Council should ensure that debt does not, except in the short term, exceed the total of Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional CFR for the current and next two financial years.

The Council has had no difficulty meeting this requirement nor are any difficulties envisaged for future years. This view takes into account current commitments, existing plans and the proposals in the approved budget.

	31/03/2015 Actual £m	31/03/2016 Estimate £m	31/03/2017 Estimate £m	31/03/2018 Estimate £m
CFR	446.9	495.9	537.4	564.1
Borrowing	312.6	363.7	413.7	449.8
PFI liabilities	16.3	15.7	15.3	14.6
Gross Debt	328.9	379.4	429.0	464.4
Difference	118.0	116.5	108.4	99.7
Borrowed in excess of CFR? (Yes/No)	No	No	No	No

(d) Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary for External Debt

The Local Government Act 2003 requires the Council to set an affordable borrowing limit, irrespective of their indebted status, referred to as the Authorised Limit. It is the maximum amount of debt that the Council can legally owe. This is a statutory limit which should not be breached.

The Operational Boundary is based on the same estimates as the Authorised Limit but reflects the most likely, prudent but not worst case scenario without the additional headroom included within the Authorised Limit for unusual cash movements.

The Council confirms that there were no breaches in either the Authorised Limit or the Operational Boundary during the first six months of 2015/16, where the maximum extent of external borrowing was £328.9m (as at 1st April 2015).

	Authorised Limit for 2015/16 £m	Operational Boundary for 2015/16 £m	Actual External Debt as at 30/09/2015 £m
Borrowing	512.2	502.2	301.6
Other long-term liabilities	21.2	18.7	16.3
Total	533.4	520.9	317.9

(e) Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream:

This is an indicator of affordability and highlights the revenue implications of existing and proposed capital expenditure by identifying the proportion of the revenue budget required to meet financing costs, net of investment income.

Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream	2014/15 Actual %	2015/16 Estimate %	2016/17 Estimate %	2017/18 Estimate %
General Fund	6.4	7.1	8.2	9.1
HRA	12.5	12.2	11.8	11.4

(f) Incremental Impact of Capital Investment Decisions:

This is an indicator of affordability that shows the incremental impact of new capital investment decisions included in the current approved capital programme on Council Tax and housing rent levels.

Incremental Impact of Capital Investment Decisions	2015/16 Estimate £	2016/17 Estimate £	2017/18 Estimate £
General Fund – increase in annual band D Council Tax	15.78	18.76	14.85
HRA – increase in average weekly rents	0.25	0.32	0.49

(g) Adoption of the CIPFA Treasury Management Code

This indicator demonstrates that the Council has adopted the principles of best practice.

Adoption of the CIPFA Treasury Management Code
The Council adopted the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's <i>Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice 2011 Edition</i> at its Full Council meeting on 29 th November 2012.

(h) Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Debt

The purpose of this limit is to report the level of debt imposed on the Council at the time of the implementation of self-financing by the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG).

	31/03/2015 Actual £m	31/03/2016 Estimate £m	31/03/2017 Estimate £m	31/03/2018 Estimate £m
HRA Debt Cap (as prescribed by the DCLG)	165.0	165.0	165.0	165.0
HRA CFR	165.0	165.0	165.0	164.0
Difference	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0

(i) Interest Rate Exposures

This indicator is set to control the Council's exposure to interest rate risk. The upper limits on fixed and variable rate interest rate exposures, expressed as the proportion of net principal borrowed, are outlined in the table below.

The Council confirms that there were no breaches to either of the upper limits during the first six months of 2015/16.

	2015/16 %	2016/17 %	2017/18 %
Upper limit on fixed rate exposure	100	100	100
Actual exposure as at 30/09/2015	80		
Upper limit for variable rate exposure	40	40	40
Actual exposure as at 30/09/2015	20		

(j) Maturity Structure of Fixed Rate Borrowing

This indicator is to limit large concentrations of fixed rate debt needing to be replaced at times of uncertainty over interest rates.

Maturity Structure of Fixed Rate Borrowing	Upper Limit %	Lower Limit %	Actual Fixed Rate Borrowing as at 30/9/2015 %	Compliance with Set Limits?
Under 12 months	30	0	10	Yes
12 months - 24 months	20	0	0	Yes
24 months - 5 years	60	0	0	Yes
5 years - 10 years	100	0	12	Yes
10 years - 20 years	100	0	52	Yes
20 years - 30 years	100	0	0	Yes
30 years - 40 years	100	0	17	Yes
40 years - 50 years	100	0	9	Yes
50 years and above	100	0	0	Yes

(The 2011 revision to the CIPFA Treasury Management Code requires the Prudential Indicator relating to Maturity of Fixed Rate Borrowing to reference the maturity of LOBO loans to the earliest date on which the lender can require payment, i.e., the next call date).

(k) Principal sums invested for periods longer than 364 days

The purpose of this indicator is to control the Council's exposure to the risk of incurring losses by seeking early repayment of its investments. The limits on the total principal sum invested to final maturities beyond the period end are outlined in the table below.

The Council confirms that there was no breach in the £10m limit during the first six months of 2015/16, given that no investments for a period of longer than 364 days were entered into.

	2015/16 £m	2016/17 £m	2017/18 £m
Upper limit for total principal sums invested over 364 days	10	10	10
Actual as at 30 th September 2015	0		

* The Council holds an investment in Aviva Investors' Lime Property Fund Unit Trust (valued at £5.1m as at 30 September 2015). This investment has delivered a reasonably stable income return of around 5% p.a. over recent years and the Council intends to retain this investment for the long term. However, it does not feature in the above Actual column on the basis that it does not have a specified maturity date and could be liquidated within an estimated 3-month timescale if necessary.

Central Bedfordshire Council

COUNCIL - 19 November 2015

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report (2014/15)

Report of: Cllr McVicar, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Coordination Panel

Advising Officers: Deb Broadbent-Clarke, Director of Improvement and Corporate Services (deb.broadbent-clarke@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk); and Jonathon Partridge, Head of Governance (Jonathon.partridge@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

This report relates to a non-Key Decision

Purpose of this report

1. The report provides an overview of the activity undertaken by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees throughout 2014/15.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Council is asked to note the contents of the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for the municipal year 2014/15.

Overview and Scrutiny Comments/Recommendations

1. This report has been agreed via consultation with the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Issues

2. Part D1 (paragraph 6.1.2) of the Council's Constitution requires that the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordination Panel (OSCP) report annually to full Council on the workings of the overview and scrutiny function and make recommendations for future work programme and amended working methods if appropriate.
3. The attached report provides an overview of the activity undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees (OSCs) throughout the 2014/15 municipal year. It also reflects on some revised ways of working to be undertaken by the function throughout the 2015/16 municipal year.

Reason/s for decision

4. The Council's Constitution requires that an annual report be prepared for Council on the workings of the overview and scrutiny function.

Council Priorities

5. The activities of the overview and scrutiny function, its committees and task forces contribute directly to the achievement of each of the Council's priorities.

Corporate Implications

6. There are no corporate implications directly arising from this report.

Legal Implications

7. There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

Financial Implications

8. There are no financial implications arising from this report. The objectives for 2015/16 the overview and scrutiny function outlined in the report can be met within existing budgets.

Equalities Implications

9. There are no equalities implications arising directly from this report. The overview and scrutiny function provides a forum to engage residents from across Central Bedfordshire and from a range of different cultural backgrounds. Proposals to proactively engage with local communities will take into account the importance of engaging with a range of communities in a proportionate manner.

Conclusion and next Steps

10. Council is asked to note the report following which the OSCP.

Appendices

Appendix A – Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report (2014/15)

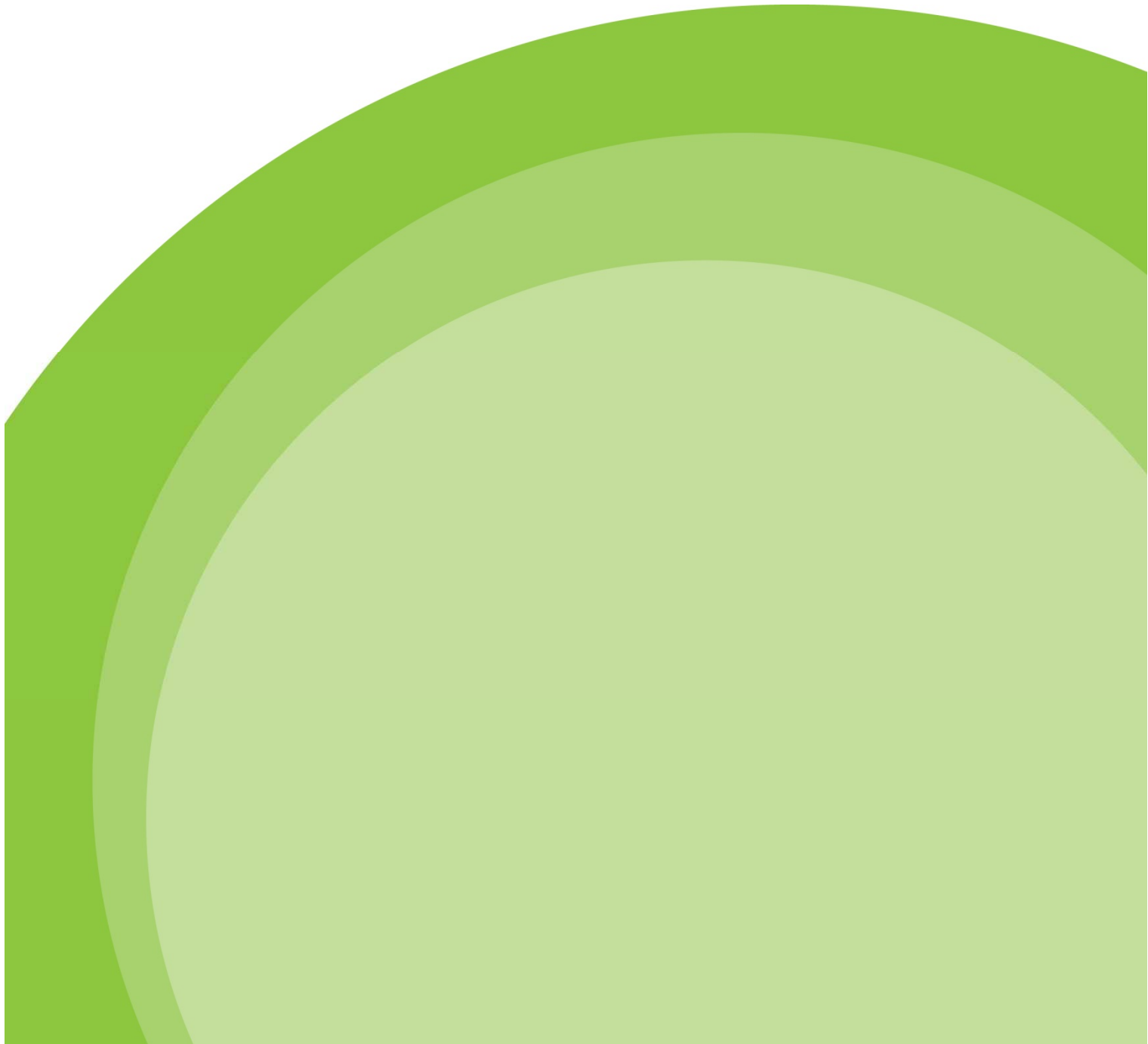
Background Papers

None



Overview and Scrutiny annual report

The Central Bedfordshire Overview and Scrutiny Committee annual report for 01 May 2014 to 30 April 2015



Introduction

Foreword

During 2014/15 as chairmen of the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committees we have encouraged OSCs to provide a critical friend challenge and use overview sessions as an alternative means of briefing Members on information items and other topics of interest. This approach has enabled a wider group of Members than just those on one single OSC to discuss a topic. More and more of the items that we receive cut across several areas of work and require the engagement of a range of staff from different services. The challenge for us as Members is to recognise the cross-cutting nature of these items and encourage the collaboration that is necessary to achieve our objectives. We have made a good start at reducing the number of information items received by the Committees and the number of items that are noted and in the future this needs to go further.

Like many local authorities Central Bedfordshire finds itself concerned by the implications of national reviews such as those of Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham, which have referred to the importance of the role of scrutiny in holding people to account and providing residents with a voice. In the coming years the OSCs must enhance their role by providing an open forum for residents to engage with the Council on major issues.



Councillor David McVicar
Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Coordination Panel

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Ways of working	9
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If you have any comments on this report, or would like to see any of the papers that are referred to, please contact Jonathon Partridge, Head of Governance on **0300 300 4634** or jonathon.partridge@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

What is Overview and Scrutiny?

Overview and Scrutiny provides an opportunity for elected Councillors and residents to discuss and comment on the Council’s policies, plans and strategies before they are implemented. Meetings are normally held in public and residents are encouraged to attend to ask questions and make comments on the reports on the agenda. Overview and Scrutiny Committees (OSCs), made up of non-Executive Councillors and co-opted parent governor representatives and diocesan representatives are held throughout the year to consider proposals and whilst they do not make decisions they provide recommendations to the Executive or full Council. These recommendations will be considered before the Council makes any final decisions.

OSCs can also undertake in-depth reviews of particular topics. These reviews involve a small number of committee members who will review the issue in more detail and consider evidence from various sources to provide a report and recommendations.

If committee members feel it is necessary they can also “call-in” decisions of the Executive. During a call-in a committee will re-consider a decision that has been made to determine whether the decision should be implemented straight away or referred back to the decision maker to be reconsidered.

Scrutiny committees can consider a wide range of issues but they also have statutory responsibilities in relation to scrutiny of health and crime and disorder matters. Issues relating to Crime and disorder will be considered at least once a year and any substantial changes to health services within Central Bedfordshire must be reviewed by the scrutiny committees before they are implemented.

Overview and scrutiny adds value in the following ways:-

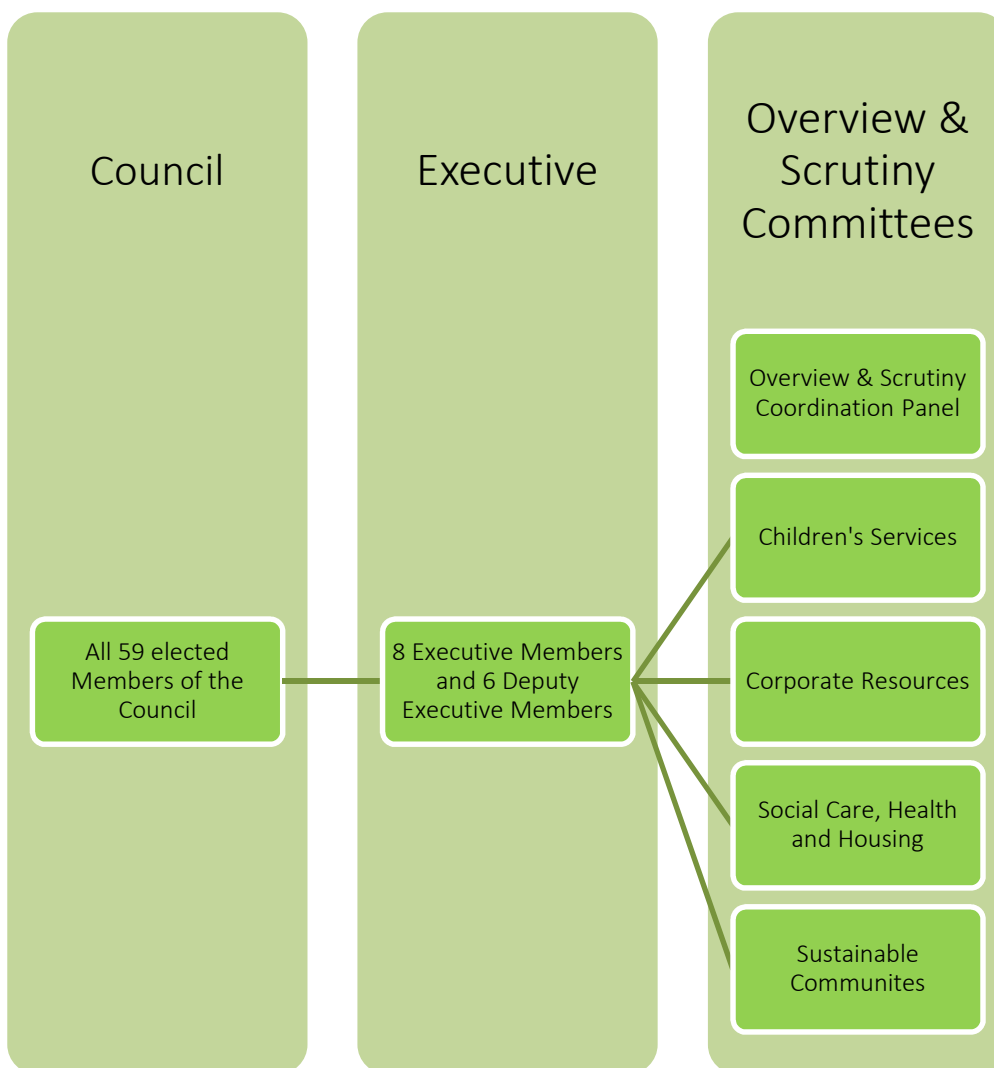
1	2
Overview	‘Critical Friend’ challenge by non-Execs
Providing briefings and quarterly updates on matters relating to finance and performance	Engaging non-Executive Councillors and co-opted members in the process of developing plans and strategies or reviewing the outcomes of decisions and undertaking call-ins.
3	4
Engaging public and partners	Drive improvement
Providing a forum for discussion in which the public and partners can ask questions and contribute to the decision making process	Reviewing performance and tracking the progress of recommendations as well as encouraging the use of best practice and research from elsewhere

The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees

There are four OSCs in Central Bedfordshire, each of which meet approximately 8-weekly and are aligned to the Council's services. There is also a Co-ordination Panel (OSCP) consisting of the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the OSCs, which meets as required to discuss the scrutiny function or matters that are relevant to more than one OSC.

In addition to the elected Members appointed to the OSCs, there are three parent governors and two diocesan representatives, one for each of the Church of England and Roman Catholic churches, appointed to the Children's Services OSC. A representative of Central Bedfordshire Healthwatch also attends meetings of the Social Care, Health and Housing OSC as an observer.

The remainder of this annual report sets out more detailed information regarding the activity of the OSCs during 02 May 2014 to 30 April 2015.



OSC activity 2014/15

Items received by the Committees

There were 29 OSC meetings during 2014/15, the best attended of which was a meeting at the Grove Theatre in Dunstable in May 2014 to consider the outcomes of statutory proposals to close three schools in Dunstable (where 150 residents attended). The Committee recommended to the Executive that the Council progress with the statutory notice to close but also requested that a further opportunity be provided for schools, either individually or in conjunction with another or other schools to bring forward viable business plans with any appropriate assistance being provided by Council officers, which could be scrutinised at the May 2014 Executive if possible or August 2014 at the latest. These business cases were presented to the OSC in July 2014 whereby the detail was scrutinised before being presented to Executive in August 2014.

The OSCs have fulfilled their statutory obligations by receiving statutory reports relating to substantial changes in health services and significant annual reports from the Children's Trust (Children and Young People's Plan, Local Safeguarding Children's Board, Schools Resilience Board, Adoption and Fostering Service). In light of major national reports the Committees have also received reports considering the implications of the independent inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham, the Better Care Fund and the Care Act.

In September 2014 the OSCs also trialled a co-convened Committee to review the Council's Fees and Charges. There were several challenges relating to the meeting that meant it did not operate as effectively as it could and if this approach were used again in the future the process would need to be updated. However, the principal of collaborative scrutiny sessions and meetings involving a range of OSCs was supported by a large number of Members.

In addition to these items the OSCs have also considered a wide range of issues including the following:-

- Aragon Housing investment plan
- BCCG's financial recovery plan
- Budget proposals and fees and charges
- Climate Change Strategy and energy efficiency
- Community infrastructure levy (CIL)
- Councillor code of conduct
- Development Strategy
- Discretionary Housing Payments Policy
- Dunstable Leisure Centre
- East & North Hertfordshire NHS Trust Performance
- Quality accounts for health providers
- Homelessness Duty Policy
- Housing allocations
- Mental health service procurement
- Plan making programme
- School places and School's curriculum
- South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership programme delivery
- Stroke Services
- Youth audit action plan

Overview activity

Items received by the Committees are grouped into categories providing an indication of whether they are for information or guidance only (overview), whether they are required by the Constitution to be considered by the OSC as they are listed in the budget and policy framework (statutory) or if they are being considered primarily because of public interest, performance concerns or because they are critical to the operation of the Council (Other).

During the period 01 July to 31 December 2013 a total of 32% of the items received by the OSCs were considered to be overview items for information. As a result the Chairmen of the OSCs agreed to reduce the numbers of overview items considered in meetings so that they could focus on those items where they could add a greater level of value and where it would be of benefit to engage the public. During 2014/15 the number of items considered by the OSCs were as follows:-

Item	2013-14 *		2014-15	
	No.	%	No.	%
Overview	38	32%	32	30%
Statutory	27	23%	28	26%
Other (such as critical report, performance concerns or requested item)	54	45%	47	44%

Figure for 2013-14 includes items received during 01 July to 31 December 2013.

Throughout the year the OSCs have been able to request overview sessions for those items that would typically have been delivered at OSCs for information. These sessions are in addition to the quarterly reports on performance and budget information that each OSC receives in relation to each of the directorates and allows Members to spend more time in an informal environment discussing these matters. Specifically the event on the Care Act/health review was delivered in partnership with Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire and Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group and provided the opportunity to brief a significant number of representatives of the voluntary sector and elected Members on the Care Act 2014 and the Review of Health Services in Bedfordshire. During 2014/15 overview sessions have been arranged as follows:-

Subject	Attendees
Review of healthcare services in Bedfordshire	18
Reforms of welfare, the discretionary housing payment policy and specialist fertility treatment local criteria	14
Mental health and domiciliary care	10
Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group	25
Housing allocation policy	21
Visit to the Chiltern Hub	9
Care Act/Health Review	72
Total:	169

These sessions in addition to the visits that have been undertaken by one of the Committees have enabled Members to see first hand the work underway within Central Bedfordshire to deliver services to residents and to meet service users and support workers.

Outcomes and recommendations

OSCs facilitate the engagement of non-Executive Councillors and co-opted members in the process of developing plans and strategies or reviewing the outcomes of decisions and undertaking call-ins. In addition to reducing the number of overview items the Chairmen of the OSCs agreed to focus throughout 2014/15 on reducing the number of items that are noted. During 2014/15 the outcomes of the OSC meetings were as follows:-

Outcome	2013-14 *		2014-15	
	No.	%	No.	%
Noted	66	65%	33	31%
Endorsed	4	4%	28	26%
Comment/recommendation	31	30%	43	40%
Deferred	1	1%	3	3%

Call-ins

In addition to the regular items the Sustainable Communities OSC also received a call-in relating to traffic calming in Barford Road and High Street, Blunham. In fulfilling their statutory role the Committee referred the decision back to the Executive Member for it to be reconsidered.

Engaging the public and partners

Each OSC agenda has a standing item for “questions, statements and deputations” and residents are encouraged attend meetings to ask questions and contribute to discussions during the meeting. In summary this year the OSCs engaged with the public and partners in the following ways:-

195 residents attended meetings mainly relating to proposals for schools in Dunstable.

1 petition submitted by a Councillor on behalf of residents relating to safety issues on Sunderland road, which was referred to a Traffic Management Meeting.

20 questions, statements and deputations, by registering to speak residents can ask questions at OSC meetings regarding any of the items on the agenda. During 2014/15 questions were raised in relation to the following:-

- statutory consultation regarding schools in Dunstable
- school places in Leighton Buzzard and Cranfield
- Housing Revenue Account
- provision for mental health and learning difficulties
- traffic issues in Potton
- housing numbers in Central Bedfordshire
- superfast broadband; and
- Anglian Water

15 organisations attended meetings, the OSCs can also invite specific witnesses and professionals to attend meetings where they feel it would be helpful to receive additional information. During 2014/15 representatives of the following attended meetings:-

- Aragon Housing Association
- Bedford Hospital
- Bedfordshire & Luton (Community Service)
- Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group
- Bedfordshire Fire Service
- Bedfordshire Police
- East & North Hertfordshire NHS Trust
- Grand Union Housing Group
- Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire
- Luton & Dunstable NHS Foundation Trust
- Mental Health Central Bedfordshire
- Police and Crime Commissioner
- SEPT integrated services
- South East Midlands Local Economic Partnership
- Tenant Scrutiny Panel

Ways of working

In addition to continuing the work that has already commenced during 2014/15 the OSCs will continue to encourage improvements in the way O&S operates in Central Bedfordshire. These objectives will be informed by any national reviews of the process, and the good practice and guidance that is published for scrutiny committees throughout the year:-

Outcome focus

Significant progress has been made this year by reducing the number of noted and endorsed items. Throughout 2015/16 the OSCs will focus on keeping this figure down whilst at the same time ensure that the purpose of items is more clearly defined and the expected outcomes of scrutinising a report are understood at the outset. This will support the Committees to deliver a critical friend challenge and agree recommendations that add value.

Information sharing

Whilst the Committees have made progress in reducing the numbers of overview items this year more emphasis will be placed during 2015/16 on the use of overview sessions as a means of delivering information items and briefings to Members on key information topics. This includes making sure the processes for Members to request items and briefings are as open as possible. Building consensus and sharing information are a key part of helping Members understand complex subjects, but this does not necessarily need to happen at the OSC. Scrutiny briefings and Member Development sessions provide an opportunity to discuss information in more informal settings outside of OSC meetings.

Enhance engagement

Attendance at OSC meetings usually occurs only at those meetings that consider particularly contentious items such as the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan or proposals to close schools. Residents and partners will be encouraged to engage more regularly in selecting work programme items, providing information for Members to consider at meetings or by attending meetings or watching online. This will also involve making sure that Members are aware of the opportunity to engage experts on topics where external input would be useful.

Encourage collaboration

In order to drive improvement many items require the involvement of a range of services and partners, for example our approach to community resilience. Whilst the OSCs undertook a co-convened OSC during 2014/15 the nature of the priorities detailed in the 5-year plan and the cross-cutting nature of the Executive portfolios will require a more collaborative approach when reviewing those items that cut across more than one OSC.

Getting involved

The residents of Central Bedfordshire are Overview and Scrutiny's most useful resource for finding out what the key issues are. Residents, community groups, local businesses and others that live or work in the area can make valuable contributions to much of the work Overview and Scrutiny does.

The work programme of Overview and Scrutiny can be flexible, so if there is an issue that you would like to see tackled or if you would just like to find out more about Overview and Scrutiny at Central Bedfordshire Council please contact the Overview and Scrutiny team:-

Overview and Scrutiny
Central Bedfordshire Council
Priory House
Monks Walk
Chicksands
Shefford
SG17 5TQ

0300 300 4634

scrutiny@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Details regarding forthcoming meetings, including copies of the reports and a list of future meeting dates can be obtained from the Overview and Scrutiny website at the following link:

<http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/committees-and-decision-making/overview-and-scrutiny.aspx>

All OSC meetings are open to the public and a list of future meeting dates is available from the Council's website. Residents are also welcome to come and speak and provide their views at meetings. If you would like to attend a meeting and speak please contact us in advance.



A great place to live and work

Contact us...

by telephone: 0300 300 8301

by email: scrutiny@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

on the web: www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Write to Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House,
Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, Bedfordshire SG17 5TQ

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BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

REPORT OF BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY FROM ITS MEETING ON 21 OCTOBER 2015 TO CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) held a meeting on 21 October 2015 at Dunstable Community Fire Station. The major issues discussed at the meeting are summarised below:

1. COMMUNICATIONS

Government Consultation

Both the Authority and Service had received the Government consultation document "Enabling closer working between the Emergency Services". This would be discussed later in the meeting.

Chairman's Communications

The Chairman reported on the Awards Evening which had been held on 20 October 2015.

The Chairman advised that the Service had been awarded "Fire Service of the Year" at the Spirit of Fire Awards. Two firefighters, Greg Magill and Matt Blanchard, had been nominated for Firefighter of the Year and the Service had received a further nomination, jointly with Cambridgeshire, for the work of the team behind the ladies driving challenge, a successful annual fundraiser for the Firefighter's Charity.

Campaign for Tougher Fire Safety Standards for Children's Fancy Dress Costumes

The Chief Fire Officer briefed Members on the Service's involvement in the campaign for children's fancy dress costumes to comply with fire standards for children's nightwear and to raise awareness of fire safety. ITN was trying to arrange filming on Friday and the Trading Standards Departments of the constituent councils would be filming at Fire and Rescue Headquarters on Thursday to develop their own material to be posted on the Council websites warning the public of the flammability of children's fancy dress costumes.

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills have empowered Trading Standards Officers to conduct spot checks of children's fancy dress clothing at the point of supply to ensure that they were compliant with the relevant regulations.

Positive Action Campaign

Two recent positive action events had targeted women and individuals from Black and Minority Ethnic groups. These had attracted approximately 40 individuals and these individuals would be tracked through the process to identify if the campaign was resulting in successful recruitment.

Fire Leadership Skills Course

Councillors Atkins and Downing updated Members on the Fire Leadership Skills course run by the Fire Commission that they recently attended. This included sessions on the roles and responsibilities of Fire Authority Members and media skills.

In relation to the media, Members noted that the amount of positive press coverage that had been generated by the Service's press officer had greatly improved and helped them in their role of promoting and raising the profile of the Service.

2. RESIGNATION OF FRA MEMBER

The Authority made a number of appointments to fill vacancies which had arisen following the resignation of Councillor Castleman from the Fire and Rescue Authority.

Councillor Mingay was elected as Chair of the Service Delivery Policy and Challenge Group.

Councillor Waheed was appointed as the Fire and Rescue Authority's reporting Member to Luton Borough Council.

The Secretary and Monitoring Officer was given delegated authority to appoint the Member confirmed by Luton Borough Council as Councillor Castleman's replacement at its meeting on 10 November 2015 to the Corporate Services and Human Resources Policy and Challenge Groups.

The appointment as the Fire and Rescue Authority's representative on the Local Strategic Partnership for Luton for 2015/16 was deferred to the next meeting of the Authority.

3. CORPORATE SERVICES POLICY AND CHALLENGE GROUP 16 SEPTEMBER 2015

Councillor Brown submitted the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Services Policy and Challenge Group held on 16 September 2015.

At the meeting, the Group had recommended that the forecast outturn be noted and that £48,000 be added to the Capital Programme to enable the purchase of three fire appliances from lease.

Councillor Brown reported on the positive performance report that had been

presented to the Group and suggested that the targets may be revised upwards during the Group's annual target-setting meeting.

The Group had also received reports on utility usage and procurement which had highlighted a number of anomalies that would have to be investigated further. The installation of Automatic Meter Readers would also assist the Service in identifying exceptions more quickly to ensure that they could be investigated and resolved.

The Group continued to trial paperless meetings and it was noted that this issue would be explored further on the Members' Development Day on 4 November 2015. During this session, both the training and equipment needs of Members would be identified.

Members noted the forecast outturn as at 31 August 2015 and approved the addition to the Capital Programme.

4. SERVICE DELIVERY POLICY AND CHALLENGE GROUP 17 SEPTEMBER 2015

Councillor Mingay submitted the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Service Delivery Policy and Challenge Group held on 17 September 2015.

Service Operational Commander Roberts provided an update on the Replacement Mobilising System (RMS). The latest version of the software had been released and was currently being tested by Essex Fire and Rescue Service. A network specialist had been engaged to resolve issues with the network and a new solution was being tested. It was anticipated that Essex would cut over to the new RMS at the end of January 2016, with this Service following two weeks later to enable any teething issues to be resolved.

Councillor Mingay reported on a number of indicators that demonstrated the high level of performance achieved by the Service. Primary fires had decreased by 22%, with deliberate (arson) fires reducing by 24%. He drew Members' attention to the reduction in accidental dwelling fires that had been achieved as a result of preventative action targeted in hot spots of urban areas of Bedford and Luton following a spike in incidents in 2014/15.

The Service continued to achieve high levels of both customer satisfaction, with 97% of respondents being very or fairly satisfied with the Service during 2014/15, and response rates, ranging from 60-79%. These high levels had also continued into the 2015/16 reporting year.

Over 3,500 smoke detectors received from Government had been distributed to private sector landlords in Bedfordshire following the recent change in legislation. The number of fire alarms installed exceeded this number.

5. AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE 24 SEPTEMBER 2015

Councillor Headley submitted the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Standards Committee held on 24 September 2015.

The Committee had considered and approved the Statement of Accounts and discussed the annual review of the Fire and Rescue Authority's effectiveness. It had been agreed that the questionnaire used in previous years be used for this year's review as there were a number of new Members on the Authority, although this may need to be reviewed in future years.

Members would be asked to complete the questionnaire prior to the discussion at the relevant Policy and Challenge Group/Committee meeting.

6. HUMAN RESOURCES POLICY AND CHALLENGE GROUP 29 SEPTEMBER 2015

Councillor Downing submitted the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Human Resources Policy and Challenge Group held on 23 June 2015.

He reported that, following a number of coffee mornings held at fire stations, six women had applied for roles within the Retained Duty System and were at various stages within the recruitment process.

The Chair commented that there were also a number of young women who had joined the Cadets and that this offered another route into the Service.

Councillor Downing advised that a number of performance targets had been impacted by small numbers. An example of this was one accident that had resulted in 46 days lost.

Members' attention was drawn to the percentage of working time lost to sickness. This was currently 3.21% which was out-performing the stretch target of 3.6%.

The Employee Survey results had improved from the previous survey in almost every survey area. It had also been noted during the meeting that the working environment for women in the Service had improved considerably over the years.

7. PENSION BOARD UPDATE

Members received an update on the establishment of the Authority's Local Pension Board. This had been established with effect from 1 April 2015 and had met three times since then.

A training needs analysis had been undertaken and additional training for members of the Pension Board would be provided.

8. REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING 2015/16

Members received the revenue and capital programme monitoring report which set out the forecast year end budget monitoring position as at 31 August 2015.

The forecast non –salary underspend was £11,000 and the forecast salary underspend was £255,000. This comprised the lower than budgeted pay award for firefighters (£120,000), vacancies (£35,000) and an underspend on the Retained Duty System (£100,000).

Additional funding of £74,000 was being sought to support the HR System project. Capital funding of £100,000 had already been approved for this project and it had originally been envisaged that the project could be resourced internally. However, given the workload pressures on the HR Team, this internal resource could no longer be allocated to the project.

Possible opportunities for collaboration on the project were being explored and the system was able to expand to include other databases, subject to compliance with procurement rules.

Members acknowledged the forecast outturn and approved the additional funding relating to the HR system for inclusion in the Capital Programme.

9. INSURANCE ARRANGEMENTS

Members received an update on the establishment of insurance pooling arrangements with eight other Fire and Rescue Authorities that would commence on 1 November 2015. These arrangements could potentially result in an annual surplus of £500,000 across the nine authorities. There would also be the potential for further savings and efficiencies.

Traditional insurance arrangements were being maintained to provide cover for high-value claims.

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service was responsible for developing the website for the insurance pool and further information on this would be circulated to Members of the Authority when it was available.

10. FIRE HYDRANT PLANNING

Members received a report on the provision of and funding for fire hydrants which had arisen from a request made by a Member of the Service Delivery Policy and Challenge Group.

At the meeting of the Policy and Challenge Group, reference had been made to a legal case where the use of Section 106 funding to provide fire hydrants on a development had been challenged successfully in court. Research into this had identified that there appeared to be no such case involving a Fire and Rescue Service, although there was the potential for challenge in using this method to obtain funding for fire hydrant provision.

It was acknowledged that the Fire and Rescue Service had a legal duty under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 to secure an adequate supply of water; however, a number of other Fire and Rescue Services had been successful in working with the local planning authority to introduce planning conditions requiring the developer to fund the cost of fire hydrants on new development, thus transferring the cost from the local taxpayer to private developers.

The report proposed that Members of the Authority liaise with the local planning authorities in Bedfordshire to adopt a similar approach locally.

A letter to the Fire Minister requesting the development of legislation to standardise processes for the provision of fire hydrants was attached as an Appendix to the report at the request of Members of the Service Delivery Policy and Challenge Group. It was agreed the letter would not be sent at this time, pending the outcome of negotiations with the local planning authority.

The view was expressed that Officers of the Authority were better placed to approach the planning authorities in the three constituent Councils, as there were already links through the planning process and, as such, the Service Operational Commander, Head of Operational Support, was authorised to approach the local planning authorities in Bedfordshire with a view to agreeing a new policy for developers to fund fire hydrants as part of planning conditions.

Members requested an update on the outcome of the discussions authorised above to be provided to the next meeting of the Authority.

11. CONSULTATION – ENABLING CLOSER WORKING BETWEEN THE EMERGENCY SERVICES

The Chairman advised that the consultation on Enabling closer working between the Emergency Services concluded on Friday, 23 October 2015 and a response from the Authority needed to be submitted by that date. A draft response had been produced following a meeting of the Authority's Executive Members and was tabled for consideration.

Members also received the Local Government Association's response, which had been endorsed by the Fire Commission. Members wished to refer to the LGA's response in the Authority's response. It was suggested that a form of wording be adopted to state that the consultation response was specifically from the Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority but that it should be read in conjunction with the LGA's response as the Authority fully supports the LGA's proposals. Members also wished to highlight that the response had unanimous, cross-party support.

The Chief Fire Officer advised that the Service may submit an additional Officer response. This would focus on the practical issues and it was noted that some of the responses may differ from those agreed by the Authority.

With the changes made at the meeting, the consultation response was unanimously approved.

12. INFORMATION BULLETIN

Members received the information bulletin.

Members' attention was drawn to the flat fire in Richbell Court, Queen Street, Bedford on 28 September 2015 as an example of the flexible mobilisation arrangements operated by the Service. The first pump to respond to the incident was from Dunstable, as it had been covering Bedford Community Fire Station whilst that crew was receiving water responder training in Hertfordshire. The Aerial Platform from Luton had also attended, as it had been at Service Headquarters in Kempston for an oil change.

**COUNCILLOR McVICAR
CHAIRMAN OF BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

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