

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Tuesday, 29 November 2016.

PRESENT

Cllr P A Duckett (Chairman)
Cllr J Chatterley (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs	Mrs C F Chapman MBE	Cllrs	J Kane
	N B Costin		D McVicar
	R W Johnstone		T Swain

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs T Woodward

Substitutes: Cllrs C C Gomm

Members in Attendance:	Cllrs K M Collins	Deputy Executive Member for Corporate Resources
	Cllr S Dixon	Executive Member for Education and Skills
	Mrs T Stock	Deputy Executive Member for Corporate Resources

Officers in Attendance:	Mrs P Everitt	– Scrutiny Policy Adviser
	Mr R Gould	– Head of Financial Control
	Mr G Muskett	– Head of Revenues & Benefits
	Mrs G Stanton	– Chief Communications Officer
	Mr C Warboys	– Director of Resources

Others in Attendance

CROSC/16/13 Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 23 August 2016 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

CROSC/16/14 Members' Interests

None.

CROSC/16/15 Chairman's Announcements and Communications

None.

CROSC/16/16 Petitions

None.

CROSC/16/17 Questions, Statements or Deputations

None.

CROSC/16/18 Call-In

None.

CROSC/16/19 Requested Items

None.

CROSC/16/20 Executive Member Update

The Deputy Executive Member for Corporate Services updated the Committee in relation to the following:-

- A new Coroner would be appointed in January 2017
- A LGSS customer survey had been completed and feedback would be used to inform the service plan for 2017/18.
- A recent Town and Parish Council event saw the attendance of 70 delegates.

The new HR vacancy management procedure had been launched and received positive feedback from staff.

CROSC/16/21 Insurance Arrangements

The Head of Financial Control introduced a report that outlined the Council's insurance arrangements and summarised the claims experience of the Council and legacy authorities since April 2009.

The Council's experience in respect of claims since 2009 was generally good and the vast majority of claims are repudiated. The largest volume of Public Liability claims relate to the Highway's function and a well maintained road network, appropriate inspection and repair regimes supported by good record keeping was important to be able to respond to such claims.

All the Maintained schools participate in the Council's insurance arrangements which include various policies provided by several insurance companies alongside a self insurance reserve that meets the costs of claims below policy deductible levels.

The Council was responsible for the administration of outstanding and new claims relating to the former Bedfordshire County Council. The costs of any legacy claims are shared with Bedford Borough Council. The Head of Financial Control indicated that whilst approximately £1m was set aside for such legacy claims over time there was a risk that this amount may prove to be insufficient. These legacy claims will continue to be closely monitored.

Recommended that any future review of insurance arrangements should consider examples of joined up risk management practices which could reduce overall insurance costs.

CROSC/16/22 Economic Update

The Director of Resources delivered a presentation that outlined an economic update based on the uncertainty following Brexit and the recent US election. The presentation summarised the views from a number of sources including the Bank of England Monetary Policy Committee who had instigated measures known as quantitative easing to support the UK economy.

The impact of any interest rate rise and financial uncertainties surrounding new responsibilities that are expected to be passed to local authorities as part of retention of NNDR were of key concern.

Recommended to note the proper and realistic assumptions outlined in the presentation.

CROSC/16/23 Local Council Tax Support Scheme

Head of Revenues and Benefits introduced a report that outlined the annual Council Tax Support scheme designed with the intention to protect vulnerable adults. Changes in national trends and recommendations to Central Government that might be introduced were outlined.

The service had improved collection rates consistently and this compared well nationally, however, as a growth area it is anticipated that the collection of tax would increase. The Service did not propose any changes to the scheme on this occasion.

Members were advised that current and future welfare reforms would impact the service with the introduction of the reduced level of Benefit Cap. The introduction of Universal Credit, although a small number at present, would also present challenges to the service.

RECOMMENDED

- 1. That the Local Council Tax Support Scheme report to Executive be supported by the Committee.**
- 2. That the Executive be alert to the demand peaks expected in 2017 and the Committee receive an assurance that resources would be available to ensure the reputation of the Council is maintained.**

CROSC/16/24 Residents Survey - Listening to our Customers

The Assistant Director Service Development introduced a report that outlined the latest results from the bi-annual resident survey undertaken by an independent and professional market research company in September 2016.

The results of the survey, outlined in a presentation, showed the Council was making a difference. A comment relating to safety perceptions was raised and whether the figures should be higher in urban towns and lower in rural areas.

The Deputy Executive Member for Education and Skills proposed the more sensitive data results could be ranged and the Assistant Director and Deputy Executive Member for Corporate Resources agreed to investigate the results further.

RECOMMENDED

- 1. Noted the great improvements evident in the survey results.**
- 2. Request that the Assistant Director and Deputy Executive Member look into the range disparity in urban and rural areas.**

CROSC/16/25. Corporate Accommodation Plan

The Executive Member for Education and Skills introduced a report that outlined the Council's approach to its corporate accommodation. The corporate accommodation plan aimed to rationalise and make better use of the office space available, save on capital and revenue costs and provide a more modern, flexible work space for staff.

Priory House would remain as the Head Quarters and changes to accommodation available in Dunstable would be looked into. Road safety concerns on the A507 were raised and the Deputy Executive Member advised safety was of paramount concern and improvements would be investigated.

RECOMMENDED the Committee support the proposals outlined in the Office Accommodation Report to Executive.

CROSC/16/26. Work Programme 2014/15 and Executive Forward Plan

Agreed the work programme as set out in Appendix A of the Agenda.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.38 p.m.)

Chairman.....

Date.....