

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Thursday, 21 September 2017.

PRESENT

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

Cllrs Mrs A Barker
Mrs C F Chapman MBE

Cllrs D McVicar
T Swain

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs N B Costin
J Kane
T Woodward

Substitutes: Cllrs C C Gomm

Members in Attendance: Cllrs Cllr S Dixon Executive Member for
Education and Skills

Mrs S A Goodchild
Mrs C Hegley Executive Member for Social
Care and Housing and Lead
Member for Children's Services

P Hollick Chairman of Social Care,
Health & Housing Overview &
Scrutiny Committee

B J Spurr Executive Member for Health
and Chairman of the Health
and Wellbeing Board

J N Young Executive Member for
Regeneration

Officers in Attendance: Mrs V Chapman Assistant Director People
Mr M Coiffait Director of Community Services
Mr S Conaway Chief Information Officer
Mrs P Everitt Scrutiny Policy Adviser
Mr D Galvin Head of Financial Performance
Mrs C Jones Chief People Officer
Mr P Keates Head of Development and Regulation
Mr N Murley Assistant Director Resources
Mr T Stephenson Programme Manager
Mr C Warboys Director of Resources

CROSC/17/28Minutes

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 27 July 2017 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CROSC/17/29 Members' Interests

None.

CROSC/17/30 Chairman's Announcements and Communications

None.

CROSC/17/31 Petitions

None.

CROSC/17/32 Questions, Statements or Deputations

None.

CROSC/17/33 Call-In

None.

CROSC/17/34 Requested Items

None.

CROSC/17/35 Executive Members' Update

The Executive Member for Education and Skills advised the Committee of the latest news and events, on behalf of Cllr Wenham, including:-

- Council's website was awarded four stars in the recent Socitm Better Connected review.
- LGSS had completed its first year in service and had appointed a new business partner.
- A study facilitated by Deloitte for the replacement of the existing SAP Finance/Procurement System onto a new upgraded version of SAP, known as S4HANA. The outcome of the study will result in the development of the implementation plan and tender documentation. The delivery partner for the actual implementation phase will be subject to a procurement tender exercise.
- The Assets Team had reached its capital receipts target of £12m in this Financial Year.
- The Facilities Team had overseen repairs for a major water leak in Bedford Square, Houghton Regis and had provided regular updates to the Town Council.

In response to the update Cllr Goodchild requested that Ward Members in Houghton Regis be kept updated on developments in Bedford Square.

CROSC/17/36 Human Resources Project Update

The Assistant Director People delivered a presentation that gave an overview of the major HR projects due to be delivered by the Service. The projects

ranged from the implementation of the SAP Success Factors, HM Revenue and Customs IR35 to Project Simplify that aimed to review the current workforce and roles within the Council and finally the development of the apprenticeship scheme in conjunction with the 38 apprentices already in post.

In light of the presentation Members queried whether the implementation of IR35 had caused a shortage of contracted specialist workers. In response, the Assistant Director advised the majority of specialist workers worked directly for the Council and it had not been adversely affected by the changes.

Members also queried whether all apprentices received a job offer from the Council at the end of a scheme. In response, the Assistant Director advised job offers did not always follow however opportunities were available elsewhere within the authority.

NOTED the update.

CROSC/17/37.Customer Services Technology Project Update

The Assistant Director Resources (Social Care Health and Housing) delivered a presentation that outlined the implementation of new Customer Services technology that included:

- STORM telephony system and performance data
- Teleopti Work Force Management tool and
- Scorebuddy - call monitoring

A Member reported the continued frustration felt by some residents when they tried to contact the Highways team. The Assistant Director acknowledged there had been some difficulties and work was underway to resolve the issues.

Members supported the introduction of the new telephony technology and requested a further update in six months time.

NOTED the presentation and welcomed an update in May 2018.

CROSC/17/38.The Council's Discretionary Rate Relief Scheme

The Head of Revenues and Benefits introduced a report that advised of the revaluation of business rates and revised Discretionary Rate Relief Scheme announced in the Spring Budget Statement that addresses the impact of some of the changes. For the 2017 rating list an overall increase in Rateable Values of 3% has been calculated by the Valuation Office Agency for Central Bedfordshire leading to a total Rateable Value of £215m. Some businesses, schools, pubs, doctors' surgeries and restaurants faced significant increases in rates whilst rates had been reduced in other areas.

The three rate relief funds were funded by Government and administered by the Revenues and Benefits Team. It was noted that the Government grant to administer the scheme did not fully cover the additional costs. The proposed distribution of the rate reliefs closely followed the methodology Government had used in determining the funding allocations.

RECOMMENDED TO EXECUTIVE

- 1. That the new Discretionary Rate Relief scheme be approved as set out in the report.**
- 2. Noting the very small value available for distribution in the final year of the scheme, the Committee further recommended that the Director of Resources, in consultation with the Executive Member for Corporate Resources, be given delegated authority to decide how best to distribute the available funds in that year, and to amend the scheme to that end.**

CROSC/17/39 Quarter 1 Performance Monitoring

The Head of Knowledge and Insight introduced the Quarter1 2017/18 performance report that continued to show good overall performance. The Committee's attention was drawn to new commentary in the data sets that explained progress that had been made against some measures.

In light of the report Members discussed the following: -

- Concerns regarding the target on school readiness, on which the Executive Member for Education and Skills advised a piece of work was underway to investigate this in detail. New data would be available at the end of September 2017.
- The growing use of the virtual Library service and a drop in footfall overall. It was noted that this pattern was not apparent in all areas, additional usage data on the Houghton Regis library would be provided to the Member for that ward.
- Concerns regards non-elective admissions to hospital, on which the Executive Member for Social Care and Housing responded that a piece of work to understand the reoccurring issues and to get a better understanding to inform and identify solutions in this area was underway.

In light of the discussion Members requested that previous data also be included on the score cards in order to draw a comparison in performance.

NOTED the update and agreed further details on those items outlined above would be circulated to Members of the Committee and other Members in attendance.

CROSC/17/40 Fees & Charges Policy 2018-2021 and proposed Fees and Charges 2018

The Assistant Director Finance delivered a report that detailed proposed changes to Fees and Charges from January 2018, the rationale behind the pricing options available and the advisory 2.3% price increase in line with the current inflation figure. Members were informed the fees and charges were based on figures to recover costs incurred and did not generate a profit. Any increase over and above the advisory 2.3% would be considered and would need to be agreed by the Executive and ratified by full Council. Proposed increases outside of the framework had been identified in the report along with charges that reflected a zero increase, confirmed as cost reflective and at the maximum level of charge.

A Member queried the frequency of use of some charges against the costs for those services and was advised that a project had been arranged to look at this area and to subsequently introduce a major overhaul of fees and charges over the next two years.

The Committee considered whether 2.3% was an appropriate increase when 2.9% was the new inflation figure. The majority of Members supported a figure of 2.9%..

RECOMMENDED

- **To Executive that an inflationary increase of 2.9% be applied to fees and charges**
- **Details of the fees and charges project be provided to the Committee in March 2018.**

CLlr Barker requested that her disapproval of the 2.9% increase be recorded.

CROSC/17/41 Work Programme 2017/18 & Executive Forward Plan

The Committee considered the work programme and agreed to include the following items:-

- Fees and Charges project - March 2018
- Customer Service Update - May 2018

AGREED the work programme as set out in Appendix A subject to the addition the two items outlined above.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 1.20 p.m.)

Chairman.....

Date.....