

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Thursday, 20 September 2018.

PRESENT

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

Cllrs	Mrs C F Chapman MBE J Kane D McVicar	Cllrs	G Perham T Swain
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Apologies for Absence: Cllrs Mrs A Barker
C C Gomm
T Woodward

Substitutes: Cllrs B Saunders (In place of C C Gomm)

Members in Attendance:	Cllrs	K M Collins	Deputy Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Vice-Chairman of Licensing Committee
		S Dixon	Executive Member for Families, Education and Children and Lead Members for Children's Services
		Mrs A L Dodwell	Deputy Executive Member for Families, Education and Children
		E Ghent	Executive Member for Assets and Housing Delivery
		Mrs S A Goodchild	
		P Hollick	Chairman of Social Care, Health & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee
		P Smith	
		Mrs T Stock	Deputy Executive Member for Health
		R D Wenham	Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources

Officers in Attendance:	Mrs P Everitt	Scrutiny Policy Adviser
	Ms S Hughes	Community Engagement Manager
	Ms S Michael	Head of Corporate Finance
	Mr C Warboys	Director of Resources

Others in Attendance	Tracey Cowan	Chief Executive
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John Gelder
Martin Trinder

Voluntary & Community Action
Chief Officer

Public 1

CROSC/18/28 Minutes

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 26 July 2018 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CROSC/18/29 Members' Interests

Cllr Chapman declared an interest at Item 10 as she was a Trustee of the Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charities.

CROSC/18/30 Chairman's Announcements and Communications

None.

CROSC/18/31 Petitions

None.

CROSC/18/32 Questions, Statements or Deputations

None.

CROSC/18/33 Call-In

None.

CROSC/18/34 Requested Items

None.

CROSC/18/35 Executive Members' Update

The Deputy Executive Member for Corporate Resources updated the Committee on the latest news and developments for the Corporate Resources Portfolio that included:-

- The process for next year's Budget, which was in hand and would culminate in a refreshed MTFP.
- The appointment of three new apprentices in HR with the prospect of permanent employment with the Council.
- In a bid to accelerate improved service arrangements with LGSS some new initiatives had been implemented and budget efficiencies made.
- IT had successfully moved the Children's Services Tribal system into the 'cloud', providing a better and more stable service for users. The development of Box continued, and Adult Social Care had successfully moved their files into a new Box file structure.

In response to a question The Deputy Executive Member for Corporate Resources advised a 'family tree' of staff contacts was in development and would be available to Members.

In response to a query regarding Brexit the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources advised there had been no advice provided to Councils to date by the Government. Officers had actively researched impact papers from the Local Government Association and other 'think tank' organisations. The Director of Resources had considered the effect on staffing, although the impact was not considered to be significant.

CROSC/18/36 Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Organisations; Local Impact Presentation

The Community Engagement Manager and representatives from the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Infrastructure Organisations delivered a presentation on the services provided to various voluntary organisations and residents in Central Bedfordshire. The VCS Infrastructure organisations also provided additional supporting reports to evidence their continued work to inspire and strengthen communities in Central Bedfordshire.

In light of the information provided, a Member queried whether a merger of organisations was feasible. In response, the Executive Member for Adult Social Care advised that services offered by each organisation were diverse and a merger would not provide any savings.

The Chairman proposed a Task Force be established to enhance understanding of the value of the voluntary and community sector and how financial contributions were managed.

RECOMMENDED that:-

- 1. A task force be established to consider future funding for the Infrastructure Organisations and enhance the understanding of the value added by the sector to communities in Central Bedfordshire.**
- 2. That the review be completed in a timely fashion to contribute to the 2019/20 budget setting process.**

CROSC/18/37 Budget Strategy and Medium Term Financial Plan 2019/20 - 2022/23

The Director of Resources introduced the Medium Term Financial Plan 2019/20 – 2022/23 report that outlined the Council's current planning and approach. Key issues were highlighted, and the report included existing figures, areas of concern and significant pressures.

The Council's Corporate Management Team continued to monitor closely each directorate's budget, however, the MTFP Strategy remained the same as last year.

In light of the report Members queried what steps had been taken by officers to ensure services continued to be delivered as the Council entered more

uncertain times. In response the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Resources advised there had been a worrying increased demand for services exacerbated by the possible loss of Government grants. Many services had been working hard to ensure the Council did not experience the same budget pressures as other authorities.

RECOMMENDED that the Budget Strategy and Medium Term Financial Plan 2019/20-2022/23, the approach to the consultation and framework be fully endorsed by the Committee.

CROSC/18/38 Fees and Charges January 2019

The Director of Resources introduced the Fees and Charges report that detailed in full charges and income. There were a small number of increases proposed that were detailed in the analysis. The increases were based on a 2.5% assumption forecast and the volumetric data identified how much would be raised by each fee.

The Committee welcomed the additional data and noted there were no major price increases with the exception of the 18% increase for Land Charges services. In response the Director advised it was now necessary to charge VAT for this service, hence the increase.

In response to a question regarding recovering costs for the Blue Badge scheme, the Director informed Members the services had been successful in detecting fraudulent use.

RECOMMENDED to the Executive that the Fees and Charges 2019 be fully endorsed.

CROSC/18/39 Quarter 1 Budget Monitoring Report – June 2018 Revenue, Capital and Housing Revenue Account.

The Director of Resources introduced the Q1 Revenue Budget Monitoring report. The figures showed an £0.8m overspend, however, a £2.1m contingency fund was available if required. The Council continued to look for savings and there were a number of positive developments that were outlined in the report.

The Committee's attention was drawn to the Q1 Capital Budget and the principal variances forecast along with capital receipts that showed the significant capital investment had been made.

Finally, the Q1 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) revenue forecast was to achieve a balanced budget and enabled the Council to invest and improve its housing stock. A Member raised a question regarding the opportunity to borrow more money against the HRA in order to fund housing schemes. The Executive Member for Assets and Housing Delivery advised the Council would submit a bid for additional funds at the end of September and the Committee would be advised of the outcome.

NOTED the Q1 Budget Monitoring reports.

CROSC/18/40 Housing Development Company

The Director of Community Services delivered a presentation that outlined the current thinking and proposals to create a Housing Development Company and potentially supply the current housing market with an element of affordable houses. The risks to the Council and governance concerns were raised, however, the proposals were welcomed by the Committee.

RECOMMENDED that:-

- 1. The proposals for a Council owned Housing Development Company be supported.**
- 2. the Executive report be considered by the Committee for comment in November 2018.**

CROSC/18/41 Work Programme 2018/19 & Executive Forward Plan

The Committee considered the current work programme and Executive Forward Plan. The work programme was agreed subject to the addition of the Housing Development Report in November.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 1.15 p.m.)

Chairman.....

Date.....