



Mr T Hoyle	Assistant Director of Strategic Commissioning
Mr P Meigh	Chief Procurement Officer
Mrs S Tyler	Assistant Director Business and Supporting Services
Mr C Warboys	Director of Resources

Public 5

#### **CROSC/18/57 Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 29 November 2018 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

#### **CROSC/18/58 Members' Interests**

Cllr Duckett declared an interest at item 20 as he lived in close proximity to Houghton Lodge in Ampthill.

#### **CROSC/18/59 Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman announced the completion of the Corporate Resources Task Force work that had looked into the funding of the Voluntary Sector Infrastructure Organisations. It had recommended to the Executive that funding be maintained for a further year in order that a bigger piece of work could be undertaken. This additional work, led by the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Services and the Director of Children's Services, would look at the Council's relationship with all voluntary sector organisations including Citizens Advice.

#### **CROSC/18/60 Petitions**

None.

#### **CROSC/18/61 Questions, Statements or Deputations**

The Chairman invited a member of the public to speak on item 20, Houghton Lodge, Ampthill.

In summary, the Ampthill Baptist Church representatives wished to register their interest to purchase part of the site in order that the Church could expand and deliver additional community activities to the residents in Ampthill.

#### **CROSC/18/62 Call-in**

None.

#### **CROSC/18/63 Requested Items**

None.

## **CROSC/18/64 Executive Members' Update**

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

- The alignment to the new national staff pay scales by April 2019.
- That the Boundary Commission would undertake a new boundary review to be completed by 2023.
- The development of plans for a crematorium in Central Bedfordshire.

The Executive Member for Assets and Housing Delivery updated the Committee on developments that included:-

- The proposed development of Brook House, Houghton Regis that had reached the planning stage.
- Delays in the Wrestlingworth Housing project.
- The development of a Commercial Estates plan.
- The imminent transfer of staff based at Houghton Lodge to Watling House and Priory House.

A Member advised there had been an angry response to the proposed Brook House development. Whilst original concerns had been addressed, there had been new concerns raised by residents. The application would be debated in full at Development Management Committee.

## **CROSC/18/65 Procurement Options in relation to the Agency provision of temporary staff**

The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources introduced a report that included proposals to extend the current Comensura contract to source temporary staff on behalf of the Council. It was considered prudent to award this interim contract and allow work on the tendering process to continue and tie in with the MStar three framework due to be completed in the Autumn.

In response to a question, the Assistant Director Commissioning advised the additional time would allow the development of a considered, meticulous and inclusive contract. Solutions would be sought to resolve the issues that had been experienced by managers and deliver financial benefits to the Council.

### **RECOMMENDED**

1. That the Committee endorse a contract extension of an additional 12 months with Comensura to August 2020.
2. That an update be provided to the Committee in six months on progress regarding re-procurement of the contract.

## **CROSC/18/66 Draft Budgets 2019/20 MTFP, Draft Budget for the Housing Revenue Account (Landlord Business Plan) and Draft Capital Programme.**

The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources introduced the draft 2019/20 Budget report and MTFP. A balanced budget had been produced and a small increase to Council Tax proposed.

Members welcomed the budget proposals and noted that the gradual increase in short term borrowing was due to world wide issues. In response to a question regarding the Council's contingency, the Director of Resources advised the contingency amount met CIPFA guidance requirements and there were no current plans to use it.

The Executive Member advised a small increase in funds had been received for Social Care plus a new grant that would be split between Children's and Adult Services for social care.

In response to a question on what services would receive additional monies if Council Tax was raised to 2%, the Executive Member advised public feedback from the consultation had pointed towards a 0% increase rather than a 2% rise.

Members considered the Capital Budget and noted the Council had continued with its ambitious programme of schemes. The Council, achieved much of its capital spend in 2018/19 and the Assets Team were commended by the Committee.

The Housing Revenue Account continued with its excellent track record and had continued to be an enormous benefit to the Council. Following developments to lift the HRA cap, it too had proposed an ambitious programme. There had been compelling cases to help our residents and provide accommodation for the homeless and affordable homes. The Committee supported and welcomed housing operations proposals and recognised the excellent work in this service area.

### **RECOMMENDED**

1. That the Committee felt confident that the Draft Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan, Capital Programme and Housing Revenue Account were well considered and that they had been prepared in the context of the statutory framework set out in Appendix F. In light of which the Committee endorsed these reports to the Executive.
2. That the Committee endorsed the proposed Council Tax increase of 1% subject to consideration of the outcome of the public consultation.

### **CROSC/18/67 2019/20 Treasury Management Strategy and Policy**

The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources introduced the 2019/20 Treasury Management Strategy and Policy. The report proposed no changes in the current Strategy and Policy and it was reported that the Council compared well with authorities nationally in this area.

Treasury Management Strategy and Policy had a proven and excellent track record and was fully supported by Members.

**RECOMMENDED** that the 2019/20 Treasury Management Strategy and Policy be fully endorsed.

### CROSC/18/68 **2019/20 SCHH Fees & Charges**

The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources introduced the Social Care Health and Housing Fees and Charges report that set out the increased charges set in line with the Council's charging policy. There had been a delay in DWP guidance for some charges, however, most were in line with the inflation rate of 2.4%.

A Member raised a concern that residents and carers would be adversely affected by the proposed increase in fees at Day Care Centres. Travel, attendance and meals fees would rise and may put attendance out of the reach of some residents. In response, the Executive Member advised the Council had worked over time to discontinue the subsidy on meals at day centres. The Assistant Director Commissioning also advised those vulnerable residents on low incomes would not usually pay for travel and attendance costs.

**NOTED** the proposed rise in SCHH fees, which were in line with inflation rate.

**RECOMMENDED** that the Social Care Health and Housing OSC consider the Committee's concern regarding those fees and charges for services over the inflation rate and where it is proposed that subsidies should be stopped.

### CROSC/18/69 **2019/20 Capital Strategy**

The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources introduced the new Capital Strategy that had been produced to fall in line with a new CIPFA requirement and code. The document had reinforced the Council's Capital Budget and was welcomed to help protect the large scale of spend involved with the Capital Budget.

**RECOMMENDED** that the 2019/20 Capital Strategy be fully endorsed.

### CROSC/18/70 **2019/20 Investment Strategy**

The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources introduced the new Investment Strategy that was a new requirement from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

The Investment Strategy sought to give greater transparency to large investments in retail centres and commercial properties by some Councils. It was noted the guidance provided would not impact on the proposed investments by the Council.

**RECOMMENDED** that the 2019/20 Investment Strategy be fully endorsed.

### CROSC/18/71 **Q2 Performance Monitoring 2018/19**

The Head of Knowledge and Insight introduced the Q2 Performance Monitoring report. Of the 46 key indicators, Members attention was drawn to those indicators where targets had not been met.

In light of the report, Members discussed the following in summary:-

- The reasons for a fall (in percentage terms) of Care Leavers who were engaged in education, training and employment. Members also queried why this target had reduced.
- The unprecedented number of residents that needed support to live in their communities and the reduction of the number of volunteers had caused concern. A Member also raised the question of when scheme leaders could expect to be engaged and linked into the social prescribing initiative.
- Disappointment that the number of schools rated good or outstanding had reduced. Members were advised that four school improvement advisers' appointments had been made to help achieve the target of 90% of schools achieving good or outstanding.

Members requested an update be provided at a future meeting that addressed the concerns of the Committee.

**RECOMMENDED** an update be provided on the areas of concern raised on the fall of performance measures outlined.

#### **CROSC/18/72.Q2 Budget Monitoring 2018/19 Revenue/Capital/HRA**

The Director of Resources introduced the Q2 Budget Monitoring report 2018/19 that forecast a small underspend. Members were advised the Q3 figures indicated little change in the forecast outturn despite unexpected costs that had arisen from:-

- The ban of plastic waste in China
- Increased schools transport costs
- Adult Social Care increased costs.

**NOTED** the update.

#### **CROSC/18/73.Work Programme 2018/19 & Executive Forward Plan**

The Committee considered the current Work Programme and Executive Forward Plan. The Work Programme was agreed as set out and the March meeting would be cancelled if not needed.

**NOTED** the meeting in March 2019 would be cancelled.

#### **CROSC/18/74.2019/20 Proposed Charges for Traded Services to Schools and Academies**

The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources introduced the Traded Services to Schools and Academies Report 2019/20 that proposed a general rise in charges of 2.4% in line with inflation.

A Member raised concern where it was recommended that charges rise above the 2.4% inflationary rate that included educational visits and journey.

The Committee requested that Children's Services OSC be requested to examine those charges over the current inflation rate and seek assurances that the increase had been essential and would not cause unnecessary hardship.

## **RECOMMENDED**

1. That the charges for services increasing by the 2.4% inflation rate be endorsed.
2. That the Children's Services OSC be requested to examine in more detail those services where charges have been increased above the inflationary rate and report back on their findings to a future meeting.

### **CROSC/18/75 Housing Development Company**

The Executive Member for Assets and Housing Delivery introduced the Housing Development Company report that set out proposals and rationale for a Central Bedfordshire Housing Development Company. The proposals would enable the Council to influence and provide a supply of new affordable homes for residents of all age groups.

The advantages and disadvantages of all options had been outlined and legal advice had been sought as to the most appropriate model. The preferred option was the wholly owned company proposal that required separate governance arrangements and a ten year business plan. Consideration of new housing development sites would be considered through the normal planning processes.

The Director of Community Services advised it was expected to take approximately nine months to create the Company.

The Committee welcomed the report and discussed the following:-

- The Committee favoured the wholly owned company and the governance model option that would provide limited conflicts of interest for the Director of Resources and Director of Community Services amongst others.
- Sought assurances from the Director of Resources that the set-up fund was adequate. In response it was regarded as an appropriate amount to start up the Company and pay for initial legal fees and salaries. Permission and funding for construction costs and site development would be considered at the appropriate time.
- Whether the Right to Buy scheme rules would be applied to the properties that were constructed. In response the Director of Community Services advised this would depend on the schemes brought forward.

## **RECOMMENDED**

1. That the Committee welcomed and endorsed the recommendations to Executive for the creation of a housing company wholly owned by the Council.
2. That the Committee endorsed the proposed governance arrangements and delegated authorities.
3. That the Committee endorsed the proposal that £250,000 be loaned to the Housing Company by the Council by way of a set-up fund.
4. That the Committee receive an update in six month on the progress to establish the Housing Development Company.

**CROSC/18/76 Future use of the Houghton Lodge site, Ampthill**

Following the declaration at Minute 58 above, the Chairman left the meeting. The Vice-chairman subsequently took the Chair.

The Executive Member for Assets and Housing Delivery introduced a report that set out the revised proposals for the Houghton Lodge site. The Council would retain the site and seek to provide affordable housing to residents, subject to planning.

The Assistant Director Assets advised the report set out evidence to suggest a need for social housing, and evidence of need for accommodation for older people. Provision of 'downsizer' accommodation has a knock-on effect to free up family homes. The site being adjacent to Lavender Court and other factors outlined in the report led to the recommended future use of the site for high quality downsizer accommodation for older people on the site. The current community space and parking pressures in the vicinity would be taken into account and form part of the planning consideration for this site.

In light of the report, Members discussed the following in summary:-

- Supported the principle to retain control of the site
- Proposed that officers seek to consult with the Fire Authority, Ambulance Service and GP Surgeries and take the opportunity to resolve access and car parking issues.
- That consideration be given to the implementation of occupancy nomination rights to the development.

**RECOMMENDED**

1. That the Committee support the principle to develop a Central Bedfordshire scheme on the Houghton Lodge site that would deliver high quality downsizer accommodation for older people.
2. That the Committee request officers seek to consult with the Fire Authority, Ambulance Service and GP practices to improve access and parking in the vicinity.
3. That the Committee request officers give consideration to occupancy nomination rights for the Houghton Lodge scheme.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.30 p.m.)

Chairman.....

Date.....