

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held at Room 15, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Monday, 2 November 2009

PRESENT

Cllr J G Jamieson (Chairman)
Cllr J A E Clarke (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs I Dalgarno
D J Hopkin
R W Johnstone

Cllrs D Jones
Mrs J G Lawrence
J Street

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs P A Duckett

Members in Attendance: Cllrs A Fahn
D J Lawrence

Officers in Attendance: Mr R Gregan
Mr C Heaphy
Mr N Murley
Ms M Peaston
Miss C Powell

Head of Procurement
Director of Corporate Resources
Assistant Director Audit & Risk
Senior Democratic Services Officer
Overview and Scrutiny Officer

CR/09/054 **Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

CR/09/055 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CR/09/056 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

CR/09/057 **Chairman's Announcements and Matters of Communication**

The Chairman brought to the attention of the Director of Corporate Resources items set out in the minutes of the last meeting which had been identified either as a matter to be brought to this meeting or as a matter on which the Committee would be provided with further information. Members were concerned that information which was to have been brought to this meeting was not available.

RESOLVED to note that the missing information, except for information on interim and agency staff which was undergoing a data cleanse exercise, would be provided to members of the Committee by the end of this week.

CR/09/058 **Petitions**

There were no petitions.

CR/09/059 **Public Questions, Statements and Deputations**

There were no public questions, statements or deputations.

CR/09/060 **Disclosure of Exempt Information**

No matters containing exempt information were anticipated.

CR/09/061 **Call-in**

There had been no matters of call-in.

CR/09/062 **Requested Items**

There were no requested items.

CR/09/063 **Directorate Overview: Audit and Risk**

The Committee received a presentation by the Assistant Director of Audit and Risk providing an overview of the operation of the Audit and Risk Department within the Corporate Resources Directorate. The slides are attached at **Appendix A**.

In response to a question seeking assurance that proper mechanisms were in place for participants in joint authority or partnership meetings to claim expenses, to ensure that allegations of improper claims could be checked and refuted, Members noted that these were in place. It was noted that although separate bank accounts were not usually set up for such groups or partnerships, accounting control systems were used.

Discussions ensued regarding the position of schools in relation to Financial Management Standards in Schools (FMSiS). It was noted that Internal Audit strove to add value through its activities and that at times, particularly when a school was achieving well, the FMSiS full accreditation added little more to the school. It was noted that a review of the current audit approach would be undertaken during 2009/10 as it was felt the self-assessment approach for FMSiS could be more appropriate in some cases.

Members discussed the need for financial awareness among school governors. It was noted that training courses were provided to school governors but were not compulsory, and following discussion consensus was reached that requiring this would be impractical. Some school governors came from a financial background and were already well equipped in their financial awareness and knowledge of systems. Members concurred that at least one

person on the finance committee of each school should be competent in financial matters. It was considered important that training schemes should be available and responsive to need.

The Committee noted that participation in the bursary scheme had been considered by some schools as too expensive. The Director of Corporate Resources advised that the bursary scheme was currently under review. Members hoped that it could be made more affordable for schools to use.

A comment was made that particularly for small schools, making use of partnerships to combine resources could be helpful.

Members noted that a programme of events had been set up for Risk Management week, which started on 9 November 2009. Comments were made that some activities seemed more appropriate as a response to stress rather than ameliorating risk. It was noted that information on the events would be provided to members after the meeting.

In response to a question it was noted that the Risk team was working with Directors to ensure that risk registers were up to date and that directorates were equipped to manage risk.

RESOLVED to note the presentation.

CR/09/064 **Procurement Strategy**

The Committee considered a report presenting the draft Corporate Commissioning and Procurement Strategy to enable the Committee's views to be made to the Executive when it considered adoption of the Strategy at its meeting on 10 November 2009.

Members were minded to endorse the strategy subject to some comments and amendments as detailed below.

It was noted that the Council recognised the need to achieve value for money in all procurement and commissioning through use of best practice. Consequently there was a responsibility on all officers to achieve this. The Committee agreed therefore to recommend to the Executive that a sentence be inserted into the introduction to the Strategy after the first sentence as follows: *"It is the responsibility of all officers to support and adhere to the Strategy."*

Members also considered that an effective Procurement Steering Group was key, particularly in the first year. This should meet regularly and stand apart from other Committees or Steering Groups. In view of this, the last sentence in the Procurement Governance section, that is *"However, it should be limited in size and frequency of meetings and consideration will be given to merging the function with another corporate group"*, should be removed.

Members commented that the implementation of the Strategy should be monitored through the quarterly reports submitted to CBMT being brought to the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee also considered that there should be an interim review of the Strategy in April 2010 to update its action plan and target setting following the category review.

The Committee considered that the Executive should be aware that there were significant potential savings to be made from use of best practice set out in the Corporate Commissioning and Procurement Strategy. The Committee therefore recommended that the target of £2.8 million stated in the Strategy should be seen as a minimum of the £11.5 million annual revenue savings.

RECOMMENDED to Executive:-

1. **that the Corporate Commissioning and Procurement Strategy be recommended for approval and implementation subject to the following:-**
 - **that a sentence be inserted into the introduction to the Strategy after the first sentence as follows: *“It is the responsibility of all officers to support and adhere to the Strategy.”***
 - **the last sentence in the Procurement Governance section, that is *“However, it should be limited in size and frequency of meetings and consideration will be given to merging the function with another corporate group.”* be removed;**
 - **that the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee continue to monitor the implementation of the Strategy through receiving the quarterly reports provided to CBMT;**
 - **that an interim review of the Strategy take place in April 2010 to update the action plan and target setting following the category review.**
2. **that the target of £2.8 million stated in the Strategy should be seen as a minimum of the £11.5 million annual revenue savings.**

CR/09/065 **Work Programme**

The Chairman tabled a sheet setting out matters which in his view needed to be considered in connection with the Council's budget for 2010/11. Whilst Members welcomed the proposal it was noted that addressing these would take a considerable period of time at the Committee's December meeting. Members agreed that it would be appropriate to start an hour earlier than usual, at 9.00am, and that lunch should be provided.

A discussion also ensued regarding the Chairman's suggestion that a work group be established to pre-screen the budget prior to the Committee's meeting on 10 December 2009 so as to establish those areas which might need further scrutiny. In view of the Director's comments that he would be

unable to provide detailed answers in relation to other Directorates, this would also enable either the Directors to be present at the meeting or to provide the relevant information in advance to the Director of Corporate Resources. Several Members volunteered to be part of the group to undertake this and in view of the pressure on diaries, it was agreed that if three of the six Members were available the meeting would go ahead. The volunteers were:-

- Councillor Jon Clarke
- Councillor Roy Johnstone
- Councillor David Hopkin
- Councillor James Jamieson
- Councillor David Jones.

Members noted that the Department Overview for ICT, Property and Assets scheduled for 10 December should be an update rather than an overview as the Committee had previously received information about these matters. It was noted that the possible Task Force detailed at item 10 on the Work Programme should be deleted.

RESOLVED:-

1. that a work group would meet in advance of the Committee meeting on 10 December to pre-screen the budget, enabling information to be identified which would be needed at the Committee meeting and Directors to be asked to attend the meeting or provide the information to it; the work group to comprise at least 3 of the following: Councillors Clarke, Johnstone, Hopkin, Jamieson and Jones; and to be supported by the Director of Corporate Resources;
2. that the meeting of the Committee on 10 December 2009 should start at 09.00am and that lunch should be provided;
3. that item 10 on the Work Programme, Possible Task Force, be deleted;
4. that the remainder of the Work Programme be noted.

CR/09/066 **Date of Next Meeting**

RESOLVED to note that the next meeting would be held on 10 December 2009 at Priory House, Chicksands, starting at 09.00am and that a light sandwich lunch would be available in view of the anticipated duration of the meeting.

Chairman

Date

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.05 p.m.)