

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **EXECUTIVE** held in the Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Tuesday, 2 November 2010.

PRESENT

Cllr Mrs P E Turner MBE (Chairman)
Cllr R C Stay (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs Mrs R J Drinkwater
Mrs C Hegley
M R Jones
Mrs A M Lewis

Cllrs S F Male
K C Matthews
D McVicar
T Nicols

Members in Attendance:

Cllrs P N Aldis
Mrs A Barker
A R Bastable
P A Blaine
D Bowater
Dr R Egan
P Hollick
J Murray

Cllrs P Rawcliffe
P Snelling
B J Spurr
J Street
Mrs C Turner
A M Turner
B Wells
J N Young

Officers in Attendance

Mr J Atkinson	Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Mr M Bowmer	Assistant Director, Financial Services/Chief Finance Officer
Mr R Ellis	Director of Customer and Shared Services
Mrs E Grant	Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services
Ms D Lester	Senior Democratic Services Officer
Mrs J Ogley	Director of Social Care, Health and Housing
Mr T Saunders	Assistant Director, Planning

E/10/77 **Minutes**

RESOLVED

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2010 were confirmed as a correct record.

E/10/78 **Members' Interests**

(a) **Personal Interests:-**

As LuDun Trustees, non Executive Councillors Rita Egan, Peter Hollick and Nigel Young declared a personal interest in Minute E/10/90 – LuDun Industries.

(b) **Personal and Prejudicial Interests:-**

None.

E/10/79 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman announced that in the public interest, Agenda Item EX1 – LuDun Industries, published as a report that would be considered as an exempt item of business, would be taken in the public part of the meeting. Members were advised that consideration of the item would be restricted to the main report as Appendices A & B contained exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 3 & 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

E/10/80 **Petitions**

There were no petitions received in accordance with the Scheme of Public Participation.

E/10/81 **Public Participation**

The following statement was received under the Public Participation Scheme:

Mrs Rebecca Stannard – Statement in support of the provision of the Early Years Learning Support Service

Mrs Stannard expressed concern about proposals to reduce the Early Years Learning Support Service. She referred to the excellent work that was carried out by the team and urged the Council find a solution to keep the valued service together.

Response from Councillor Anita Lewis, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services

Councillor Mrs Lewis thanked Mrs Stannard for her presentation and acknowledged the excellent work carried out by the Early Years Learning Support service. She explained it was currently a shared service with Bedford Borough and it was that authority which had decided to make cuts to the service, with effect from December 2010, not Central Bedfordshire. As a shared service, TUPE regulations would apply and a proportionate number of staff would transfer to Central Bedfordshire Council and the service would continue to operate in Central Bedfordshire. However, because of financial constraints a Special Education Needs (SEN) review was scheduled to be carried out and therefore no guarantee could be given to the future level of service provision.

E/10/82

Capital Programme Review

The Executive considered a report from Councillor Maurice Jones, Portfolio Holder for Finance Governance and People proposing a revised Capital Programme for 2010/11.

(NOTE: A copy of the report had been circulated with the Executive agenda to all Councillors.)

The Portfolio Holder reminded Members that Council in February 2010 approved the 2010/11 Capital Programme subject to an in year review to reduce the commitment to new borrowing. The outturn for the 2009/10 Capital Programme spend was £0.609M greater than planned and gave rise to an immediate pressure.

Members were advised that £1.53M of new capital receipts had since been forecast, which more than covered the 2009/10 shortfall. £0.938M had also been identified through external funding for Housing Assistance, along with a reduced requirement for temporary school accommodation which equated to 17% less borrowing than planned. However, meeting a £0.468M pressure on Disabled Facilities Grants produced a net reduction in overall borrowing of 11%.

The review also recommended £0.170M be spent implementing the Council's Web Strategy although the additional capital financing costs would be met from revenue efficiencies in 2011/12. It was noted that more detailed profiling of spend for individual schemes had also been undertaken which would improve in year reporting of the Capital Programme.

The Portfolio Holder in moving his recommendations, which were duly seconded, withdrew exempt Appendix D as it detailed work in progress and had no impact on the recommendations. As a result of Appendix D being withdrawn, the last sentence of paragraph 27 was deleted. The Portfolio Holder then proposed an amendment to recommendation 5 (resolution 4 below), which was duly seconded:

‘That no future additional commitments be entered into in advance of the Local Government Finance Settlement and Budget Report to Council in February 2011.’

During the ensuing debate the Portfolio Holder responded to comments and questions raised by the Executive and non-Executive Members in attendance.

Reason for decision: To reduce the Authority's new borrowing requirement in line with the request by Council in February 2010.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

that the updated Capital Programme of £30.717M for 2010/11, as set out in columns 10 to 12 of the summary in Appendix A of the submitted report, be approved.

RESOLVED

1. **that slippage of £2.832M to the 2011/12 Capital Programme, as set out in columns 19 to 21 of the summary in Appendix A of the submitted report, be noted.**
2. **that, subject to the recommendation above, the 11% reduction in the borrowing requirement for 2010/11 Capital schemes, be noted.**
3. **that the potential pressures on the Capital Programme for 2012/13, as detailed in the submitted report, be noted.**
4. **that no future additional commitments be entered into in advance of the Local Government Finance Settlement and Budget Report to Council in February 2011.**

E/10/83

Corporate Budget Strategy

The Executive considered a report from Councillor Maurice Jones, Portfolio Holder for People, Finance and Governance setting out a proposed response to the Coalition Government's emerging policies and proposals for managing expenditure to address funding reductions, together with revised recommendations that were tabled at the meeting.

Councillor Jones acknowledged that the spending reductions and constraints as a result of the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review announcement provided a challenge for the Council. However, the proposed Strategy and proposals for managing expenditure would provide the basis for the Council to move forward with a stable budget for 2011/12.

It was noted that the Service Reconfiguration and Reduction saving proposals detailed at Appendix B to the submitted report would be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The Portfolio Holder explained that proposals OCE1, HT1, CSS2 and CSS9 were service reconfiguration and reduction proposals, not efficiency proposals and for this reason were being moved from Appendix A to Appendix B and would also be looked at by Overview and Scrutiny.

Members were advised that in order to achieve savings at the earliest opportunity, delegated authority was being sought for the Portfolio Holder for People, Finance and Governance, in consultation with the appropriate Portfolio Holder and officers, to implement individual efficiency saving proposals, outlined at Appendix A, that were ready for implementation in this financial year. It was noted that proposal CSS13 had been double counted and would be removed from Appendix A.

Attention was drawn to the financial benchmarking data now available for 2010/11, as set out on page 46 of the report. The chart showed that Central Bedfordshire was spending below the median level of its statistical neighbours, achieved in light of the savings and efficiencies that the Council had made over the last two years. The Council was also performing well in the delivery of key services when compared both nationally and against its statistical neighbours.

However, the national financial constraints meant the Council would have difficult decisions to make about future level of service delivery.

During the ensuing debate the Portfolio Holder responded to comments and questions raised by the Executive and non-Executive Members in attendance.

Reason for decision: So that the Council is prepared to introduce and implement a budget for 2011/12, through the active engagement of Members, Staff, Customers and Stakeholders.

RESOLVED

that the Executive:-

- 1. acknowledge the considerable challenges facing the Council in view of the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review announcement and the expected reduction in funding for local authorities;**
- 2. endorse the strategic response, proposed outcomes and direction of travel, as set out in paragraphs 21 to 40 of the submitted report;**
- 3. agree to move the following proposals, OCE1, HT1, CSS2 and CSS9, from Appendix A (efficiencies for consultation) to Appendix B (service reconfigurations and reductions for consultations);**
- 4. note the efficiency proposals outlined in Appendix A of the submitted report, subject to the deletion of proposal CSS13, authorise officers to commence any consultations needed in connection with these proposals, including consultation with employee representatives under the Trade Union & Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992, and delegate to the Portfolio Holder for People, Finance and Governance authority to implement appropriate individual savings proposals for the 2010/11 financial year in consultation with the Portfolio Holders and Directors for the relevant service areas and the Chief Finance Officer;**
- 5. invite Overview & Scrutiny and other stakeholders to comment on the Service Reconfiguration and Reduction saving proposals detailed in Appendix B of the submitted report;**
- 6. note the announcement by the Government in its Comprehensive Spending Review of a 28% reduction in Local Authority grants and request officers to bring forward further saving options;**
- 7. approve the communications and engagement process detailed in the submitted report;**
- 8. agree the timetable for setting the 2011/12 Budget, as set out in paragraph 50 of the submitted report.**

E/10/84

Carbon Management Plan

The Executive considered a report from Councillor Tom Nicols, Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Development proposing a Carbon Management Plan (CMP) which proposed specific actions to reduce the Council's own carbon footprint. An addendum to the report was also tabled setting out the implications of the Comprehensive Spending Review on the CMP.

The Portfolio Holder reminded Members that Council in June 2010 adopted the Climate Change Strategy. The CMP was the first of the three action plans that would oversee implementation of the Strategy. The report detailed the key elements of the plan, how it would be used to drive forward improved performance in relation to carbon reduction and climate change.

In response to comments the Portfolio Holder clarified that the Government was now planning for all revenue raised from the Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC) Energy Efficient Scheme to be used to support the public finances. Prior to the Comprehensive Spending Review, the CRC was to be operated on a 'revenue neutral' basis. The revenue implications for the Council would therefore need to be picked up in the 2013/14 budget when the Council enters phase 2 of the scheme.

Reason for decision: So that the Council realises the potential efficiency savings from taking action to reduce its carbon footprint, takes measures to protect itself from the future impact of energy price increases over the next ten years and fulfils the legislative requirements placed on it in the Climate Change Act (2008) and is in a position to perform well in the CRC energy efficiency scheme.

RESOLVED

that the Carbon Management Plan, attached as Appendix A to the submitted report, be approved.

E/10/85

Central Bedfordshire Housing Strategy 2010 - 2015

The Executive considered a report from Councillor Tom Nicols, Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Development proposing a draft Housing Strategy for Central Bedfordshire for public consultation.

The Portfolio Holder explained that whilst there was no statutory duty to develop an overarching Housing Strategy, it was an important tool in:-

- a) providing a point of reference for all external stakeholders, including the health service, the Homes and Communities Agency, housing associations, developers and local community groups and associations;
- b) describing all the Council's activities around delivering housing services and formed the basis for engagement with all external partners and communities; and

- c) providing the context for the statutory Homeless Strategy and Private Sector Renewal Strategy, which were key operational housing service policy documents.

Reason for decision: To enable public consultation to take place on the draft Housing Strategy before being submitted to Council for approval.

RESOLVED

- 1. that the draft Housing Strategy 2010-2015, attached as Appendix A to the submitted report, be approved as the basis for public consultation.**
- 2. that public consultation take place in accordance with the proposals set out in the submitted report.**
- 3. that following public consultation, the draft Strategy be referred direct to the Council for approval, subject to any amendments that may be appropriate in the light of the consultation, and that the Director of Sustainable Communities be authorised to report direct to the Council on this matter following consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Sustainable Development and Housing.**

E/10/86

Local Investment Plan bid to the Homes and Communities Agency

The Executive considered a report from Councillor Ken Matthews, Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, Skills and Regeneration which sought approval to submit the a Local Investment Plan (LIP) to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA).

The Portfolio Holder advised Members that the LIP was in effect a bid to the HCA for funds to support housing and related infrastructure and regeneration needs. The draft LIP was closely aligned to the Council's priorities in relation to delivering sustainable growth, and in particular the Draft Housing Strategy.

Reason for decision: To enable a bid for funding to the Homes and Communities Agency to be made.

RESOLVED

- 1. that the Local investment Plan be approved for submission to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA).**
- 2. that, modifications to the Local investment Plan required to respond to any changes in emphasis at the HCA arising from the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review and forthcoming reforms, be delegated to the Director of Sustainable Communities, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth Skills and Regeneration.**

- 3. that the signing of a Local Investment Agreement between the Council and the HCA, based on the Local Investment Plan submission, be delegated to the Director of Sustainable Communities in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth Skills and Regeneration.**

E/10/87

Empty Homes Strategy

The Executive considered a report from Councillor Mrs Rita Drinkwater, Portfolio Holder for Housing proposing a draft Empty Homes Strategy for Central Bedfordshire.

The Portfolio Holder presented her report which outlined the outcome of the consultation process that had been undertaken and highlighted the main issues that had arisen during preparation of the strategy.

As part of the deliberations the Portfolio Holder drew attention to the comments and recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee including the harmonisation of a 10% Council Tax discount for the whole of Central Bedfordshire which had been incorporated into the proposed strategy.

Reason for decision: So that the proposals within the strategy can be fully implemented in order to reduce the number of long term empty homes within Central Bedfordshire.

RESOLVED

- 1. that the comments and recommendations of Overview and Scrutiny Committee including the harmonisation of a 10% Council Tax discount for the whole of Central Bedfordshire, and responses of the consultation, be noted.**
- 2. that the Empty Homes Strategy for Central Bedfordshire, attached as Appendix A to the submitted report, be approved.**

E/10/88

Gas Maintenance and Service Contract 2011 - 2014

The Executive considered a report from Councillor Rita Drinkwater, Portfolio Holder for Housing proposing the award of the Gas Maintenance and Service Contract 2011 - 2014.

The report outlined the outcome of the tendering process for the contract which should provide improved value for money for the Council in times of financial constraint and also deliver good quality and customer care for the Council's Tenants.

Reason for decision: So that the Executive can award the Gas Maintenance and Service Contract 2011 – 2014 .

RESOLVED

that the Gas Maintenance and Service Contract 2011 – 2014 be awarded to Contractor E, as detailed in Exempt Appendix A of the submitted report.

E/10/89 Forward Plan of Key Decisions

The Forward Plan for the period 1 November 2010 to 31 October 2011 was received.

E/10/90 LuDun Industries

The Executive considered a report from Councillor Carole Hegley, Portfolio Holder for Social Care and Health on a review of current and future business opportunities at LuDun Industries carried out by a joint working group. The outcome of the review led to a decision being made by the Trustees to give notice to the Council that they proposed to close the factory. Taking this into account, the report recommended that formal consultation be carried out with employees on the proposed closure of LuDun Industries.

The Portfolio Holder introducing her report commended the Trustees for the significant amount of time they had invested in exploring the options for the future of LuDun. After consideration of the factors outlined in the report the Trustees concluded that the LuDun Trust was not meeting its objectives under the terms of its Deed which led to the decision that the factory should be closed.

Councillor Hegley advised Members that as a result of the LuDun Trustees decision, the Council, as the employer of the staff working at LuDun Industries, had a duty to consider the future of the employees based there. The recommendation was being made in light of the business of LuDun not being within the core business of the Council, changes in models of supported employment and the need for efficiency savings. The Portfolio Holder acknowledged the uncertainty that the decision would have on the employees and stressed that support would be provided during the consultation and redundancy period and alternative employment and training opportunities would be explored.

Reason for decision: As a result of the LuDun Trustees decision to give notice to Central Bedfordshire that they intend to close the current factory, the Council have a duty to consider the future of the employees based there. The

recommendation is being made in light of this not being within the core business of the Council, changes in models of supported employment and the need for efficiency savings.

RESOLVED

- 1. that the decision by the Trustees of LuDun to give the Council notice that they intend to close the factory in 12 months, or earlier if a date can be mutually agreed, be noted.**
- 2. that the Council co-operate with the Trustees of LuDun to achieve the objective to close the factory referred to in resolution 1 above.**
- 3. that the Director of Social Care, Health & Housing be authorised to enter into formal consultation with employees on the proposed closure of LuDun Industries.**

[NOTE: As LuDun Trustees, non Executive Councillors Dr Rita Egan, Peter Hollick and Nigel Young declared a personal interest.]

(Note: The meeting commenced at 9.30 a.m. and concluded at 11.33 a.m.)

Chairman

Dated