

## CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CUSTOMER AND CENTRAL SERVICES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Room 15, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Monday, 17 October 2011.

### PRESENT

Cllr P A Duckett (Chairman)  
Cllr Miss A Sparrow (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs L Birt  
J A E Clarke  
Mrs R J Drinkwater

Cllrs Dr R Egan  
J Murray  
Mrs M Mustoe

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs R W Johnstone

Substitutes: Cllrs

Members in Attendance: Cllrs P N Aldis  
A D Brown  
J G Jamieson

Leader of the Council  
and Chairman of the  
Executive

D Jones

Officers in Attendance: Mr P Ball – Senior Finance Manager  
Mr I Brown – Interim Chief Assets Officer  
Mr B Carter – Corporate Scrutiny & Research  
Manager  
Ms D Clarke – Interim Assistant Chief Executive  
(People & Organisation)  
Mr C Jones – Chief ICT Officer  
Mr J Unsworth – Interim Assistant Chief Executive  
(Resources)  
Mr C Warboys – Chief Finance Officer & Section  
151 Officer

Others in Attendance

CCS/11/42 **Minutes**

### RESOLVED

**that the Minutes of the meeting of the Customer and Central Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 5 September 2011 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.**

CCS/11/43 **Members' Interests**

(a) **Personal Interests:-**

None.

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

None.

CCS/11/44 **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman had no announcements.

CCS/11/45 **Petitions**

No petitions were received from members of the public in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Part D2 of the Constitution.

CCS/11/46 **Questions, Statements or Deputations**

No questions, statements or deputations were received from members of the public in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Annex 1 of Part A4 of the Constitution.

CCS/11/47 **Call-In**

The Panel was advised that no decisions of the Executive had been referred to the Panel under the Call-in Procedures set out in Appendix "A" to Rule No. S18 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

CCS/11/48 **Requested Items**

No items were referred to the Committee for consideration at the request of a Member under Procedure Rule 3.1 of Part D2 of the Constitution.

CCS/11/49 **Executive Member Update**

Due to the absence of the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources, the Assistant Chief Executive (People & Organisation) provided members of the Committee with an update regarding the following issue:-

- Changes to staff terms and conditions, which came into effect on 1 October 2011. The Committee was informed that 6 members of staff had not attended work at the beginning of October 2011 out of a total workforce of approximately 2,500.

Members of the Committee were interested to know the number of staff who had attended work without having signed acceptance of revised terms and conditions. The Assistant Chief Executive (People & Organisation) clarified that these staff were legally now deemed to have accepted the new contracts "by conduct" and undertook to ascertain the number for Members' information.

CCS/11/50 **Quarter 1 Performance Report**

The Assistant Chief Executive (Resources) introduced this report, which highlighted Quarter 1 performance for the financial year 2012/13 recorded by Corporate Services (Resources) and Corporate Services (People & Organisation).

Members of the Committee asked a number of detailed questions regarding the report, which were answered by officers in attendance. These questions centred around:-

- The time taken to process Housing and Council Tax Benefit claims and the Council's ability to stabilise performance in this area by recruiting appropriately experienced staff and training existing officers, thereby reducing reliance upon contractors;
- The impact that rising unemployment was having on claimant numbers. In this respect the Chief Finance Officer agreed to provide Members with statistics regarding this issue via email; and
- The speed of payment of undisputed invoices;

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**That the presentation be noted.**

CCS/11/51 **Base Budget 2012/13 Review**

The Chief Finance Officer introduced this item, which consisted of two separate reports, one outlining the standstill 2012/13 budget for the Corporate Services directorate and one outlining the standstill 2012/13 budget for the whole Council.

Members of the Committee asked a number of detailed questions regarding the item, which were answered by officers in attendance. These questions centred around:-

- The budget pressures within ICT amounting to £921k. In this respect, the Chief ICT Officer explained that these pressures related to 6 additional posts approved since creation of the original 2011/12 budget and the removal of the budgeted vacancy rate;
- The setting, and potential reduction of, senior salary levels;
- The needs led pressures inherent within both children's and adults social services;
- The impact reducing custom was having on the Council's Services to Schools offer and our ability to reduce resources accordingly; and
- The need to make clear how the Council intended to spend the New Homes Bonus grant.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**That the presentation be noted.**

CCS/11/52 **Channel Shift**

The Assistant Chief Executive (People & Organisation) introduced this item, which consisted of a presentation outlining the Council's channel shift strategy, known as "Central Direct". The strategy aimed to improve service delivery to customers through increased use of more cost effective and improved channels, re-engineered back office processes and strategically aligned telephony and face-to-face access.

Members of the Committee asked a number of detailed questions during the presentation, which were answered by officers in attendance. These questions centred around:-

- The work of a previous Member Task Force, which had already recommended improvements to the Council's website. In this respect, the Chief ICT Officer explained that although these improvements would be captured in the re-launched website, they did not go far enough to deliver full channel shift, particularly with regard to back office re-engineering;
- The need to provide Members with training on the new website. In this respect the Assistant Chief Executive (People & Organisation) agreed to deliver such in due course;
- The need to ensure equality of opportunity and continue to provide appropriate channels for the "digitally deprived", particularly older people;
- The future of the Ampthill Points of Presence because of its relatively high cost per transaction. In this respect the Assistant Chief Executive (People & Organisation) confirmed that the facility would in future open only 3 days per week; and
- The performance of the Council in tracking telephone calls to ensure resolution of customer queries;

**During consideration of this item, the Committee resolved to exclude members of the press and public in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 for consideration of an element of business contained within the presentation on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 7 and 12 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act. The Committee discussed the costs of the design phase of the strategy.**

Following this discussion the Committee resolved to readmit members of the press and public.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**That the Committee supports the Council's draft "Central Direct" Channel Shift Strategy.**

CCS/11/53 **IT Stabilisation Programme**

The Chief ICT Officer introduced this item, which consisted of a presentation outlining the Council's ICT Stability Programme, the outcomes of which were to improve; systems availability and speed, ICT response times and planned downtime. The Chief ICT Officer also provided high level detail regarding project schedules and the programme timetable.

Members of the Committee asked a number of detailed questions during the presentation, which were answered by officers in attendance. These questions centred around:-

- Applications licences within a Citrix environment;
- The capital cost of the stability programme; and
- The Council's reducing reliance on Bedford Borough Council's network;

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**That the presentation be noted.**

CCS/11/54 **ICS (Integrated Children's Services) System**

The Chief ICT Officer introduced this item, which consisted of a presentation outlining the Council's project management, governance and key milestones relating to the Children Case Management System (previously known as ICS).

Members of the Committee asked a number of detailed questions during the presentation, which were answered by officers in attendance. These questions centred around the functionality of the system and the improvements it offered over and above the current (SWIFT) system.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**That the presentation be noted.**

CCS/11/55 **Asset Disposal Programme 2012/13**

The Chief Assets Officer introduced this report, which provided Members with specific details regarding the major asset disposal programme for the financial year 2012/13, together with the currently agreed Asset Disposal Protocol.

**During consideration of this item, the Committee resolved to exclude members of the press and public in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 for consideration of the element of business contained within Appendix A on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 7 and 12 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act. The Committee discussed specifically target disposal values of surplus assets.**

Following this discussion the Committee resolved to readmit members of the press and public.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**That the report be noted.**

CCS/11/56

**Shared Services**

The Assistant Chief Executive (Resources) introduced this report, which provided Members with details of the progress made against the recommendations of Internal Audit regarding the rectification of existing control weaknesses and the improvement of arrangements for Service Level Agreements (SLAs) for shared services with Bedford Borough Council.

Members of the Committee were disappointed to note the lack of progress made against many of the recommendations and therefore requested a further progress report to its February or March Committee meeting, this to also include details of the actions proposed with regard to those SLAs coming to an end on 31 March 2012, together with a sample range of SLAs for information.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**That a further progress report be submitted to the February or March Committee meeting, which should also include details of the actions proposed with regard to those SLAs coming to an end on 31 March 2012, together with a sample range of SLAs for information.**

CCS/11/57

**Work Programme 2011 - 2012 & Executive Forward Plan**

The Committee considered its current work programme and the latest Executive Forward Plan.

**RESOLVED**

**That the Committee's Work Programme be noted, with the addition of a further progress report on shared services as agreed at CCS/11/56 above.**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.45 p.m.)

Chairman.....

Date.....