

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Room 14, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Tuesday, 24 June 2014.

PRESENT

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

Cllrs	Mrs C F Chapman MBE	Cllrs	Mrs M Mustoe
	Mrs B Coleman		N Warren
	Dr R Egan		T Woodward
	R W Johnstone		

Members in Attendance:	Cllrs	R D Berry	
		J G Jamieson	Leader of the Council and Chairman of the Executive
		D Jones	
		M R Jones	Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources
		R D Wenham	Deputy Executive Member for Corporate Resources

Officers in Attendance:	Ms D Clarke	–	Director of Improvement and Corporate Services
	Mrs P Everitt	–	Scrutiny Policy Adviser
	Mr M Scott	–	Chief Information Officer
	Mr C Warboys	–	Chief Finance Officer

CR/14/1. **Minutes**

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 8 April 2014, be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CR/14/2. **Members' Interests**

None.

CR/14/3. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman announced the Fees and Charges Task Force would meet on Friday 04 July 2014.

CR/14/4. Petitions

None.

CR/14/5. Questions, Statements or Deputations

None.

CR/14/6. Call-In

None.

CR/14/7. Requested Items

The Chairman announced that Members of the Committee would consider the Welfare Reform Report and Draft Discretionary Housing Payment Policy as two urgent items. The reports had been discussed at the Social Care, Health and Housing Overview and Scrutiny meeting and Members of the Committee had been invited to attend.

Discretionary Housing Payment Policy

Members noted the views and recommendation of the Social Care Health and Housing Committee to fully support the Discretionary Housing Payment Policy.

The Chief Finance Officer introduced the key points of the report and appendices that had seen 75% of claimants successful in their application for a payment. A Member raised a concern regarding the number of appeals and the demand on officer time. The Chief Finance Officer reported that Team Leaders and Supervisors in the Revenues and Benefits Team had successfully dealt with the appeals process and the numbers of successful appeals would be supplied.

The Impact of the Welfare Reform on Central Bedfordshire

The Chief Finance Officer introduced the Welfare Reform report that followed a recent Member Briefing. The report highlighted the work undertaken by the Welfare Reform Board and outlined the impact of the Welfare Reform on residents, key partners and the Council

RECOMMENDED that the new Discretionary Housing Payment Policy be fully supported by the Committee.

Noted the Welfare Reform Report.

CR/14/8. Executive Member Update

The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources provided the Committee with an update regarding the following:-

- The provisional outturn figure of £0.6m underspend would be reported to the Executive at its forthcoming meeting.
- Reserves had been strengthened to a figure of £15m, however, this figure was subject to audit.
- Revenue and Benefits had seen its work load increase by 14% and the Team had absorbed this increase.
- The Customer Services team had completed its staged move to Watling House, Dunstable the project had gone smoothly with little disruption to the service.

A Member raised concerns regarding calls to the number provided to Members to contact the Council, however, difficulties had not be encountered by other Members of the Committee. With more staff working from home, it was agreed that staff would be reminded to forward their phones before logging out.

CR/14/9. **Customer Strategy**

The Director of Improvement and Corporate Services introduced a presentation that outlined an updated version of the Customer Strategy. The key areas of the Strategy had been refreshed and, in partnership with Cranfield University, the Strategy had been fully developed and was inclusive of the Council's aims to provide our customers with the best and most cost effective experience.

A Member raised a concern that the Strategy was too long and residents would not understand the model and how the Council intended to deliver the Strategy. The Director of Improvement and Corporate Services advised the Strategy was not a public facing document, however, officers would prepare a more succinct report and would included a journey of a resident along the improved customer service model.

The Director of Improvement and Corporate Service advised a programme of activities and articles for staff to embed the revised strategy would be rolled out.

RECOMMENDED that subject to the revisions outlined above Customer Strategy be supported.

CR/14/10. **Data Protection**

The Chief Information Officer gave a presentation that outlined the importance of data protection and the Council's obligation to protect personal information from being misused and to share it where it was needed to support functions. It was recognised that poor management had serious repercussions for the Council. Data sharing with NHS colleagues was of paramount importance and improvements in Information Governance to meet compliance with the NHS Information Governance Tool Kit were in hand.

A revised e-learning package would be launched to help staff to learn and understand the key messages and guidance in staff newsletters and team meetings would follow. Further Member training on data protection and information governance would be arranged.

The Chief Information Officer provided an overview of the IG Toolkit, an information compliance framework for Social Care and Public Health, and advised that level two compliance will be required in order to share information with health partners. There is a project in place which will deliver improvements and achieve the required level of compliance by March 2015.

In light of the presentation Members discussed the following concerns:-

- That officers look at the benefits of scanning documents or recording ID numbers of official documentation.
- That officers consider the provision of data protection training to schools as a potential income generator.

Noted the presentation

CR/14/11. Work Programme 2014-15 and Executive Forward Plan

The Committee considered its current Work Programme and the latest Executive Forward Plan. The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources advised of the following additions to the Work Programme.

- The Budget Framework/Medium Term Financial Plan (September meeting)
- Fees and Charges Task Force full report (September meeting)
- The Council Tax Support Scheme (October meeting)
- NNDR Discretionary Relief Policy (July meeting, presentation and full report September meeting).

RECOMMENDED that the Corporate Resources OSC work programme be amended as outlined above.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 11.30 a.m.)

Chairman.....

Date.....