

## CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Room 14, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Tuesday, 15 December 2015.

### PRESENT

Cllr P A Duckett (Chairman)  
Cllr J Chatterley (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs	Mrs C F Chapman MBE K Ferguson D McVicar	Cllrs	T Swain N Warren
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Apologies for Absence: Cllrs R W Johnstone  
J Kane

Members in Attendance:	Cllrs	C Hegley	Executive Member for Social Care and Housing
		J G Jamieson	Leader of the Council and Chairman of the Executive
		M A G Versallion	Executive Member for Education and skills
		R D Wenham	Executive Member for Corporate Resources
		J N Young	Executive Member for Regeneration

Officers in Attendance:	Mrs D Broadbent- Clarke	–	Director of Improvement and Corporate Services
	Mr S Conaway	–	Chief Information Officer
	Mr S Girling	–	AD Assets
	Mr J Partridge	–	Head of Governance
	Mrs R Preen	–	Scrutiny Policy Adviser
	Mrs G Stanton	–	Chief Communications Officer
	Ms H Stokes	–	Consultation and Intelligence Manager
	Mr C Warboys	–	Chief Finance Officer

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CR/15/37. **Minutes**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 27 October 2015 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

CR/15/38. **Members' Interests**

None.

CR/15/39. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

None.

CR/15/40. **Petitions**

None.

CR/15/41. **Questions, Statements or Deputations**

None.

CR/15/42. **Call-In**

None.

CR/15/43. **Requested Items**

None.

CR/15/44. **Executive Member Update**

The Executive Member for Corporate Resources informed the Committee that progress was continuing on the Working Smarter project which would increase efficiency drives towards an improved way of working across the organisation. The Council were benchmarking against large industry in order to gather information with regards to best practice, there would be a trial of virtual meetings, an IT refresh of infrastructure, with a continuation of the Digital Transformation agenda. Opportunities for Member development were ongoing with recent training courses covering Scrutiny and Community Leadership.

The Chairman expressed concerns regarding the legality and ability to vote remotely and whether virtual meeting would become mandatory. In response the Executive Member confirmed that initially only informal, internal meetings would be trialled with a more detailed discussion required for more formal meetings in order to identify any obstacles.

CR/15/45. **5 Year Plan Performance Monitoring**

The Leader of the Council delivered a presentation outlining the proposed approach to delivery and performance management of the 5 Year Plan. The Committee were asked to consider whether the proposals, drivers and KPI's behind the data were appropriate.

In light of the presentation Members expressed the view that communication was a key element of customer satisfaction and that it was important the Council address this when shaping models for performance outcomes. Members felt it was vital that customers understood processes which in turn

would improve customer perception of the Council. Members agreed the importance of understanding the barriers which prevented improved community cohesion.

The Committee agreed that the volunteering strategy was crucial in its aims to create stronger communities and prevent isolation. A discussion arose around the need to ensure the Council focussed on the most appropriate form of housing for the local area.

**NOTED the presentation and agreed the ongoing approach with regards to delivery and performance monitoring of the 5 Year Plan.**

CR/15/46. **Partnering Legal Services Bid**

The Director of Improvement and Corporate Services delivered a presentation regarding proposals to partner legal services, providing the Committee with details regarding the current status of the project, next steps and a proposed contract start date. Members were provided with details of bidders, all of which were administered by other local authorities. The Director explained that the proposal would be considered by the Executive at their next meeting, after which a public paper would be brought forward.

In response to a Member query the Executive Member for Corporate Resources confirmed that as part of the process the Council would be recruiting a client officer within the legal department who would be responsive to customer and Member queries.

Members queried the cost saving projection and the Director explained that by having a wider pool of staff availability, the Council would no longer have to buy in external expertise. Due to the nature of the proposed structure it would be possible to access the most cost effective option which would be reciprocated on the part of the member councils.

Members requested details of how performance monitoring would be measured and suggested that the CR OSC could be responsible for overseeing this. Members felt it was important to ensure that performance data would be presented on the same basis as the bidding model which was based on a formula of 40% cost, 40% quality and 20% staff welfare.

**RECOMMENDED that the proposal be considered by the Executive and that quarterly performance reviews were conducted with regards to purchasing criteria, using the 40/40/20% modelling structure.**

CR/15/47. **Update on IT Strategy**

The Chief Information Officer delivered a presentation regarding the Council's IT Strategy, which detailed updates including lessons learned, Voicedial figures and the aims and objectives until December 2017, enabling access to full digital services online and a whole Council transformation. Members were provided with details of the back office systems available to customers, the Council's investment strategy with regards to funding of IT services and the impact of government legislation changes to Council operations.

In light of the presentation Members queried process with regards to customers who did not have access to or did not wish to utilise online services. In response the Executive Member acknowledged that there would always be a core customer base who preferred traditional methods of communication and access to services and in those instances they would be supported appropriately.

Members expressed a desire to ensure security and cost savings were a focus for the Directorate and the Executive Member confirmed that cost saving details were listed in the budget report.

**RECOMMENDED that the positive direction of the IT Strategy be acknowledged and that an update be brought to the Committee in Spring 2016 with a focus on IT security and cost saving measures.**

CR/15/48. **Scrutiny of Responsive Council**

The Head of Governance delivered a presentation to the Committee outlining a project regarding a collaborative working model for the Council and set the context behind the initiative. The Committee were asked to consider key lines of enquiry in order to help shape a range of recommendations, with a focus on improving the outcomes in residents' surveys.

Members expressed a desire to see the quality of questionnaires sent to residents as it was agreed that processes were often unclear which sometimes resulted in a poor perception as to the remit of the Council.

**RECOMMENDED that information be circulated to Members of the Committee and to arrange a meeting for Members to discuss the delivery of an improvement programme.**

CR/15/49. **Public Opinion - how our residents see Central Bedfordshire and the Council**

The Chief Communications Officer delivered a presentation which outlined key issues with regards to resident satisfaction and perception of the Council.

Members agreed that it was important to focus on areas where feedback was poor in order to improve outcomes and to target efficiently.

**NOTED the presentation.**

CR/15/50. **Council Assets**

The Assistant Director (AD) for Assets delivered a presentation outlining the key deliverables in relation to optimising capital receipts and income and measures to reduce revenue costs.

In light of the presentation Members agreed the positive approach of the Council with regards to asset management and endorsed the sale of key assets in order to generate income. Members queried the possibility of the

Council embarking on a building programme and expressed a desire to see a quickening of processes. In response the AD for Assets explained that processes had recently become more efficient and improvements had been made in this regard. It was important for the Council to ensure their ability to deliver on capital receipts and to ensure that processes were robust before embarking on complex initiatives such as building projects, but this would be considered for the future.

Members welcomed the new approach but expressed concerns that there was a lack of clarity around Council owned assets. Several Members expressed a desire to see a comprehensive register of Council owned assets and the AD confirmed that a compendium of assets was managed by a team within the organisation.

Members agreed that it was important to focus on areas which could be regenerated for the benefit of the local area and for the Committee to consider measures to replace land or property sold.

**RECOMMENDED that the Committee support the approach with regards to asset management and that a report be delivered at a future meeting, detailing measures to replace land and property sold by the Council.**

CR/15/51. **Q2 Revenue, Capital and HRA Budget Monitoring**

The Chief Finance Officer delivered a presentation detailing the financial position of the Council at the end of Quarter 2, highlighting areas of underspend, overspend and Capital budget monitoring.

**NOTED the presentation.**

CR/15/52. **Work Programme 2014/15 & Executive Forward Plan**

**RECOMMENDED that the Corporate Resources OSC Work Programme be agreed subject to the following amendments:-**

- **The removal of Digital Transformation in February 2016.**
- **Scrutiny of Responsive Council in February 2016.**
- **Assets Capital Replacement Strategy in February 2016.**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 1.55 p.m.)

Chairman.....

Date.....

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