

Central Bedfordshire Council

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 24 January 2017

Outcomes of Responsive Council enquiry

Report of Cllr Paul Duckett (Chairman of the Enquiry)

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Purpose of this report

To provide Members with the outcomes of the scrutiny enquiry into Council Responsiveness in order to make recommendations to the Executive

RECOMMENDATION:-

That the Committee receive the report of the enquiry at Appendix 1 and agree the recommendations for referral to the Executive.

Background

1. In February 2016 the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee (CROSC) agreed to undertake an enquiry to support the Council to deliver one element of the Five Year Plan relating to being a “responsive Council”.
2. The enquiry involved Cllrs Duckett (Chairman), Chatterley and Kane and throughout the course of the review met with officers from a range of services including Communications, Knowledge & Insight, Customer Services and Partnerships & Community Engagement.
3. The review focused on two specific aspects of council responsiveness as detailed in the attached report. Firstly a review of customer experience when contacting the Council and secondly a review of the extent to which residents could influence council decision-making for which the enquiry commissioned some independent research to be undertaken by Public Perspectives, the outcomes of which have informed this report.
4. The detailed report attached contains a summary of the findings of the enquiry and recommendations that are proposed to be provided to the Executive to enhance performance with regard to council responsiveness.

Council Priorities

5. The recommendations of the enquiry are aimed at support the Council's approach to be a more efficient and responsive Council.

Corporate Implications

Legal Implications

6. The report contains recommendations to the Executive and as such on one level it might be concluded that no legal implications are necessary within this report on the basis that this could be included at a later stage should the list of proposals receive the backing of Executive. However, there is an alternative view which suggests that an early engagement with and awareness of legal issues or their absence is a good thing in helping to direct the project.
7. In the list of recommendations there is reference to expanding the significance of the Joint Committees (JCs). JCs are governed by a complex set of regulations and clarity around the proposed structure will be necessary in any future paper.
8. Constitutional changes such as those to the JC's is a Council function and as such the Executive will need to make recommendations via General Purposes Committee.

Financial and Risk Implications

9. Many of the recommendations of the enquiry, if implemented, can be delivered within existing budgets.
10. There are however some recommendations that propose additional resources to support Members' engagement with the local community and giving further consideration for match funding Joint Committees to stimulate local participation.
11. The exact financial implication of the recommendations would depend upon the extent of their implementation but match funding the Joint Committees would result in an additional cost to be determined.

Equalities Implications

12. Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. This includes identifying opportunities to encourage people with protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is low
13. The recommendations of the enquiry aim to enhance the accessibility of the Councils' decision making process. If implemented it is envisaged that the proposals would provide additional channels through which residents

of Central Bedfordshire could communicate with the Council in both a formal and informal manner.

Conclusion and next Steps

14. The Committee are asked to consider and support the recommendations so that they may be referred to the Executive for further consideration.
15. If the recommendations are supported it is suggested that the Committee requests an update from the Executive on the implementation of the recommendations within 2 months of their consideration.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Detailed report of the enquiry

Background Papers

None