

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Thursday, 27 July 2017.

PRESENT

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

Cllrs Mrs C F Chapman MBE
N B Costin

Cllrs J Kane
T Swain

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs Mrs A Barker
D McVicar
T Woodward

Substitutes: Cllrs C C Gomm
A M Turner

Members in Attendance: Cllrs R D Berry Vice-Chairman of Development
Management Committee
S Dixon Executive Member for
Education and Skills
E Ghent Deputy Executive Member for
Social Care and Housing
Mrs S A Goodchild
Mrs C Hegley Executive Member for Social
Care and Housing
B J Spurr Executive Member for Health
and Chairman of the Health
and Wellbeing Board
R D Wenham Deputy Leader and Executive
Member for Corporate
Resources

Officers in Attendance: Mr I Berry – Assistant Director of Assets
Mr M Coiffait – Director of Community Services
Mrs P Everitt – Scrutiny Policy Adviser
Mr A Gordon – Head of Estate Management
Mr N Murley – Assistant Director Resources
Mr T Stephenson – Programme Manager
Mr C Warboys – Director of Resources

CROSC/17/14Minutes

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 01 June 2017 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CROSC/17/15 Members' Interests

Cllr Costin declared an interest at item 10 as a farm owner.

CROSC/17/16 Chairman's Announcements and Communications

The Chairman advised that a programme of financial scrutiny training had been created and the first event would take place at 2pm on Monday 18 September, 2017.

The Audit Committee had received the financial accounts that would be Audited and further advice for Members would be requested from the Chief Information Officer on IT equipment.

CROSC/17/17 Petitions

None.

CROSC/17/18 Questions, Statements or Deputations

None.

CROSC/17/19 Call-In

None.

CROSC/17/20 Requested Items

None.

CROSC/17/21 Executive Member Update

The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources updated the Committee on the following:-

- The completion of the first stage of implementation of Success Factors by The Human Resources team.
- The development of an Apprenticeship Strategy by HR to help the Council deliver the apprenticeship scheme.
- Communications and roll out of consultation events for the Local Plan.

The Executive Member for Education and Skills also updated the Committee that the Assets Team were close to hitting their target on Capital receipts for the year 2016/17.

A Member raised a concern regarding the delay in redeveloping the old Flitwick Leisure Centre site. The Director for Community Services advised the site had originally been identified for additional housing, however, the plan was now to use this site for a care home or extra care home for older people. Ward Members would be kept informed of developments.

The Executive Member for Health and Social Care requested that offices and staff based outside of Chicksands were not forgotten in future office redesigns.

The Director of Community Services advised a long term strategy for office building assets would be undertaken by the newly appointed Facilities Manager.

CROSC/17/22 Farming Strategy Update

The Executive Member for Education and Skills introduced an update on the development of a Farming Strategy. The Head of Estate Management outlined the purpose of the Farming Strategy, which would provide a robust, defensible planning document for adoption under the Asset Strategy. It would direct Estate Services' work in delivering viable farm holdings, preservation of landscape and access to the countryside together with making land available for housing and employment to support the Council's Visions. Bidwells had been commissioned to help develop the Strategy and consultation would be carried out in the autumn to get a balanced view and inform the work.

A Member requested that officers look at opportunities to merge some farms that were no longer economically viable. In response the Executive Member advised the future Strategy would be more commercially orientated and carefully considered. Officers were asked to consider the possible displacement of families in any redesign. The Executive Member advised the new Farm Strategy would focus on rural businesses rather than agricultural businesses.

Noted the update and agreed the Committee be provided with details of the Farming Strategy consultation in November 2017.

CROSC/17/23 Ivel Valley Quadrant Accommodation Plan Update

The Assistant Director Assets introduced a presentation that outlined proposals for the Ivel Valley Quadrant Accommodation Plan. The Plan brought the quadrant approach into line with Social Care, Children's Services and Health plans. In order that the Council's assets were fit for purpose and met the service and customer need, the Asset Group would define a cross council strategic approach to meet service specific objectives.

Noted the update and completion of the Quadrant Accommodation Plan in Spring 2018.

CROSC/17/24 2016/17 Q4 Performance Report

The Head of Knowledge and Insight informed the Committee that recommendations for further investigations on Q3 performance and budgetary items had been considered by each Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Responses to performance concerns included:-

Sustainable Communities OSC would carry out a review of the highways contract and performance in September and would ensure the following areas were included:-

- Highways maintenance communications
- Road network signage
- Drainage and ditches

Children's Services OSC was due to commence a taskforce in September 2017 on Pupil Attainment and would include:-

- School Readiness
- Attainment ranking and
- The percentage of schools rated good and outstanding

No change was reported in the Q4 performance on this occasion. A Member raised a concern about poor performance of the village care schemes to which the committee agreed to seek a response from the Director. A concern was also raised as to whether the advice available to potential care home residents or self funders was sufficient. The Executive Member for Social Care and Housing advised information was available to residents from a number of sources, including the Council. The Assistant Director Resources (SCHH) advised it was important to understand the resources available to residents before deciding what care was needed for them.

RECOMMENDED that the Director for Social Care, Health and Housing respond to the query regarding the performance of village care schemes.

CROSC/17/25 Provisional Outturn Budget Monitoring Report - March 2017 Revenue, Capital and Housing Revenue Account (subject to audit)

In light of their previous recommendations, the Head of Knowledge and Insight advised the Committee that :-

- Social Care Health and Housing OSC had received a report on Homelessness at their June meeting. Regular reports on the implementation of proposals and budgetary implications to deal with the rising number of homelessness cases would be considered by the Committee.
- Budget pressures relating to the Schools Capital Budget had been considered by Children's Services OSC who recommended that the Executive increase the pupil yield factor so to secure additional funding for education from developers.

The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources reported a good Budget outturn. It was also reported that a further unused contingency of £2.1m would be invested in Highways and the Digitisation of Council Services.

A good outturn had also been achieved on the Capital Budget and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and the Committee extended its thanks to the Director and his staff.

Noted the update and agreed that Members be advised of the date for considering the All Age Skills Strategy in the future.

CROSC/17/26 Work Programme 2014/15 & Executive Forward Plan

The Committee considered the work programme and agreed to include an update on the Procurement Service. The Director of Community Services

confirmed the report on the future of Houghton Lodge Amphill would be presented to the next meeting.

AGREED the work programme as set out in Appendix A subject to the addition of a Procurement Service update.

CROSC/17/27 Budget Strategy and Medium Term Financial Plan (including the Capital Programme and Housing Revenue Account)

The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources introduced the Budget Strategy and MTFP due to be discussed by The Executive in August. The Strategy took into consideration national uncertainties that included Brexit, the new Government, the future of non-domestic rates and Local Government funding. With this in mind, the financial assumptions had been developed. The Director of Resources advised the Council had ambitious growth targets and these would be revisited as well as the continued monitoring of national economic prospects and interests rates.

Members raised queries regarding the following:-

- Whether the External Auditors had raised any areas of concern regards the final accounts. The Director advised the majority of the audit was backward looking and an accuracy check. To date no concerns had been raised by the auditors.
- Whether sufficient funds were available to the Directorate given the pressures on homelessness. In response, the Deputy Leader and Executive Member advised earmarked funding was available to the service and although the pressure still remained, the Council was in a good funding position.
- The Executive Member for Health and Social Care advised that the Empty Homes Officer had undertaken a role in town centre regeneration and wished to raise a concern that the excellent work undertaken to bring empty homes back into use might fall behind. In response the Deputy Leader and Executive Member would consider the case to boost resources at the appropriate time.

RECOMMENDED that the Committee fully endorse the Budget Strategy, mindful of the risks attached on a national economic scale and are confident these risks would be addressed by adopting this process.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.23 p.m.)

Chairman.....

Date.....