

Central Bedfordshire Council

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date 25 January 2018

Council Responsiveness Enquiry update on progress

Report of: Cllr R Wenham Corporate Resources - Executive Member and Deputy Leader of the Council, (Richard.wenham@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Responsible Director(s): Richard Carr, Chief Executive, Sue Harrison, Director of Children's Services, Jason Longhurst, Director of Regeneration & Business, Julie Ogley, Director of Social Care, Health and Housing and Charles Warboys, Director of Resources

Purpose of this report

1. To receive an update in relation to the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny enquiry into Council responsiveness that were accepted by the Executive in June 2017.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to: -

- 1. Note the progress in relation to the recommendations of the review that were accepted by the Executive.**
- 2. Comment on those areas where progress has not been achieved in line with the timescales proposed by the Executive.**

Background

2. At its meeting on 20 June 2017 the Executive received the recommendations of an Overview and Scrutiny enquiry into Council responsiveness and approved several proposed actions in light of the enquiry.
3. The purpose of the enquiry was to review customer experience when contacting the Council and reviewing the extent to which residents could influence Council decision-making.
4. In summary 12 recommendations were accepted by the Executive, eight recommendations were considered to already be existing practice and one recommendation was rejected.
5. It was subsequently agreed that an update on progress of implementing recommendations, where relevant, be presented to the OSC following a period of 6 months from the Executive meeting.

Summary of progress on implementing the accepted recommendations (Details can be found in Appendix A)

6. In summary, the recommendations fell into three broad categories for which progress has been made as follows: -

a. Focusing on customer experience to enhance intelligence and tailor services accordingly.

The implementation of the Council's digital strategy is underway as is the rollout of the new STORM telephony software across all directorates, which has enabled a richer picture to begin to emerge around customer intelligence. The implementation of the STORM telephony system has taken longer to implement than the original timescale and further proposals are under development to simplify the Council's approach to complaints.

b. Enhancing the accessibility of the Council's decision-making process in addition to creating a focal point with town and parish councils.

The clear set of guidelines to the Council's decision-making process has taken longer to produce than the original timescale due to the desire to ensure they are fully accessible. More information is now available via the Council's website to encourage residents to propose items for consideration by Committees and to enhance transparency of the responses to suggestions.

c. Focusing on community engagement, consultation and co-production.

The Council's consultation toolkit has been updated, republished and promoted and various high-profile issues continue to be advertised through news releases, the website and social media channels, which continues to see an increase in its usage.

Council Priorities

7. The recommendations of the enquiry aim to support the Council's approach to be a more efficient and responsive Council.

Legal Implications

8. The recommendations refer to expanding the significance of the Joint Committees (JCs), which should be completed by April 2018. JCs are governed by a complex set of regulations and clarity around the proposed structure will be necessary in any future paper.
9. Constitutional changes such as those to the JCs is a Council function and as such the Executive will need to make recommendations via

General Purposes Committee to amend the Constitution in order to implement these recommendations.

Financial and Risk Implications

10. Many of the recommendations of the enquiry have been implemented within existing budgets.
11. Proposals are under consideration relating to making available additional resources to support Members' engagement with the local community and match funding Joint Committees to stimulate local participation. If these proposals are implemented there will be a financial implication, the extent of which is yet to be determined.
12. In addition, it was proposed that a review of processes be undertaken to determine the scale of the challenge to provide a central mechanism for recording customer intelligence and complaints. Consideration would need to be given in the future to resource allocation to respond to the outcome of this review.

Equalities Implications

13. 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.
14. The recommendations of the enquiry aimed to enhance the accessibility of the Councils' decision-making process. Once implemented it is envisaged that the agreed proposals will 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

15. The Committee is asked to note the response and comment upon areas of progress as it feels necessary.

Appendices

Appendix A: Update on progress of delivery of recommendations

Background Papers

None

Supporting Papers

- (i) Detailed report of the enquiry

<http://centralbeds.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s69856/App%201%20Full%20enquiry%20report.pdf>

- (ii) Executive Response to the enquiry (20 June 2017)
<http://centralbeds.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s72664/Executive%20Response%20to%20Overview%20and%20Scrutiny%20Enquiry%20on%20Council%20Responsiveness.pdf>

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