

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Thursday, 25 January 2018.

PRESENT

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

Cllrs Mrs C F Chapman MBE
J Kane

Cllrs D McVicar
T Swain

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs Mrs A Barker
N B Costin
T Woodward

Substitutes: Cllrs C C Gomm

Members in Attendance: Cllrs A D Brown Deputy Executive Member for
Regeneration
K Ferguson Chairman of Children's
Services Overview and
Scrutiny Committee
Mrs S A Goodchild
Mrs C Hegley Executive Member for Adults,
Social Care and Housing
Operations (HRA)
P Hollick Chairman of Social Care,
Health & Housing Overview &
Scrutiny Committee
Mrs T Stock Deputy Executive Member for
Health
B Wells Deputy Executive Member for
Community Services
R D Wenham Deputy Leader and Executive
Member for Corporate
Resources

Officers in Attendance: Mrs P Everitt Scrutiny Policy Adviser
Mr D Galvin Head of Financial Performance
Mrs S Harrison Director of Children's Services
Mr C Warboys Director of Resources

CROSC/17/56 Minutes

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 30 November 2017 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CROSC/17/57 Members' Interests

None.

CROSC/17/58 Chairman's Announcements and Communications

The Chairman advised the item on Pensions and ethical investment be deferred to the March meeting.

Members attention was drawn to Appendix F of the Budget papers and that full attention be given to proposed efficiencies.

CROSC/17/59 Petitions

None.

CROSC/17/60 Questions, Statements or Deputations

None.

CROSC/17/61 Call-In

None.

CROSC/17/62 Requested Items

None.

CROSC/17/63 Executive Members' Update

The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources updated the Committee on the latest news and developments that included: -

- The digitisation of services in Human Resources continued to be rolled out and included the recent implementation of the Fiori system to staff.
- Thanks were extended to the Assets Team who had exceeded their target for capital receipts and had contributed towards managing down the Council debt on behalf of residents.
- The Procurement Team had introduced a social value element to our supply base.
- The IT Service continue to work towards the reduction of the private network by 2018 and achieve efficiencies for the Council.

CROSC/17/64 Draft Budgets 2018/19 MTFP, Housing Revenue Account and Draft Capital Programme

The Executive Member introduced the MTFP and draft Budgets reports and explained the Local Government Settlement had not yet been finalised and the budgets may require some minor tailoring once the settlement figure was known. It was proposed to increase Council Tax by 1.5% and the Adult Social Care precept to continue at the rate of 3%. The outcome of the Budget

consultation was awaited and would be taken into account by the Executive at their meeting in February.

The Director of Resources referred to the efficiencies programme and the savings needed to achieve the proposed Budget. Reductions in Council grant funding and additional pressures were of concern and the target of £14m savings was required in 18/19.

The efficiencies proposed were in line with savings achieved in the past and amount to £120m in total since the Council was formed. A caution was raised with regards to the budgeted pay offer, following a Union's call to ballot its Members to reject the pay award.

In light of the report, Members discussed the following in summary: -

- Concern on pressures to Housing Services by the Homelessness legislation to be introduced in April 2018.
- Pressure caused by the Special Educational Needs transport costs in Community Services.

The Director of Resources advised the Council had a duty to house a homeless person for 56 days and this was not to be confused with the Council's Housing Allocations policy. The Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Housing Operations (HRA) informed the Committee that a Member Briefing would be held to advise on the demands placed on the service and strategic approach being taken to managing a local system.

The Director of Children's Services advised of the joint work being done with the Director of Community Services to bring the transport budget under control. Procurement was part of a Board set up to look at the transport framework and look at the opportunities to drive costs down.

The Committee commended the work undertaken on the Capital Budget which had been well managed and supported by the excellent work undertaken by the Assets Team.

The Director of Resources advised repayment of capital borrowing on the Housing Revenue Account would be delayed in order to release funds to support the Homelessness service. It was envisaged this would positively impact the supply of tenancies and fund the number of additional staff required to run the service.

RECOMMENDED

(a) Draft Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan 2018/19 - 21/22

- That the Committee recognises the financial challenges and proposed efficiencies presented in the Draft Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan in the context of the statutory framework set out in Appendix F.
- The Committee endorses the Draft Budget to Executive.
- The Committee endorses the proposed Council Tax increase of 1.5% subject to consideration of the outcome of the public consultation and the Adult Social Care precept of 3%.

(b) Draft Capital Programme

The Committee endorses to the Executive in full the draft Capital Programme 2018/19 – 2021/22

(c) Draft Budget for the Housing Revenue Account (Landlord Services) 2018/19 – 2021/22 and Business Plan

That the Committee endorses the Draft HRA 2018/19– 2020/21 and Business Plan to Executive.

CROSC/17/65.Traded Services to Schools and Academies 2018/19

The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources introduced the Traded Services to Schools and Academies Report 2018/19 that outlined a renewed focus on the services provided. There was a general increase of 2.9% in fees charged and there was a better understanding of the income the Council received.

RECOMMENDED

That the Committee endorses proposed charges for Traded Services to Schools and Academies for 2018/19 to the Executive.

CROSC/17/66Fees and Charges Social Care Health and Housing 2018

The Executive Member for Corporate Resources introduced a report that outlined the proposed fees and charges 2018/19 for the Social Care Health and Housing (SCHH) Directorate. Members supported the proposed new charges set out in paragraph 5 that included the housing lettings fees, set up to trial the new service.

The Committee was assured the process used was sound and robust.

RECOMMENDED

The Committee endorses to the Executive, the Social Care Health and Housing Fees and Charges for 2018/19.

CROSC/17/67.Quarter 2 - 2017/18 Revenue/Capital/HRA Budget Monitoring reports

The Director of Resources introduced the Q2 revenue budget monitoring report that forecast an overspend of £3.3m at the end of September 2017. However, there is an unused contingency of £2.2m to partially offset this. The predominant issue related to the Special Educational Needs transport costs that had been addressed in the Budget for 2018/19. The budget had been reviewed and would close the year much closer to target. In response to a question regarding the 880 approaches for council housing advice, the Executive Member for Corporate Resources advised this was not an indication of need and the pressure was outlined in the budget proposals above. The Committee were reassured that the budget had been formatted for the coming year based on the budget monitoring process.

RECOMMENDED

Noted and endorsed the Q2 budget monitoring reports 2017/18 update.

CROSC/17/68 2017/18 Quarter 2 Performance Monitoring Report

The Executive Member for Corporate Resources introduced the Q2 Performance Monitoring report for 2018/19. In essence performance remained good and Members were shown the public on-line performance data page that showed historic and the latest information on the indicators that are measured. Commentary set out in the report explained the reasons for any negative direction of travel.

A Member asked if volunteering display material placed at Priory House and Watling House had led to residents volunteering.

RECOMMENDED

1. The Director of Children's Services be requested to respond to Cllr Goodchild with regard to a question on the numbers of residents that had responded to the call for volunteers displayed at Priory House and Watling House.
2. The Q2 performance be noted.

CROSC/17/69 Council Responsiveness Enquiry update on progress

The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources introduced an update on the progress made on the Council's Responsiveness Enquiry. Progress had been achieved on the majority of recommendations accepted by the Executive.

With regards to Joint Committees, work was in hand and would be reported to Members when completed.

Despite changes made to the online complaints and compliments site for Highways, responsiveness was still causing concern in some areas and the Director of Community Services confirmed the trend was improving with less complaints and more compliments being received by the service.

Noted the update.

CROSC/17/70 Work Programme 2017/18 & Executive Forward Plan

The Committee considered the current work programme and Executive Forward Plan.

Noted the work programme as set out in Appendix A.

CROSC/17/71 Treasury Management Strategy and Treasury Policy 2018-2019

The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources introduced the triannual review of Treasury Management Policy, the Treasury Management Statement, Prudential Indicators and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy for 2018/19. Members' attention was drawn to a substantive change proposed to introduce a facility to allow the Council to make loans to companies in which it has a significant shareholding or substantial financial

stake. Specifically, the change would allow the Council to optimise a working capital arrangement with LGSS Law Ltd in which the Council holds shares.

The introduction of an annuity approach had been successful in the management of the Council Debt and the Committee were reassured that the proposals outlined in the report were based on sound and prudent judgement to enable effective good financial management and planning.

RECOMMENDED

The Committee endorse the Treasury Management Strategy and Treasury Policy 2018-2019 to Executive.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 1.04 p.m.)

Chairman.....

Date.....