

## CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Thursday, 31 May 2018.

### PRESENT

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

Cllrs	Mrs A Barker	Cllrs	J Kane
	Mrs C F Chapman MBE		D McVicar
	C C Gomm		

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs T Swain  
T Woodward

Members in Attendance:	Cllrs	I Dalgarno	Executive Member for Community Services
		S Dixon	Executive Member for Families, Education and Children and Lead Members for Children's Services
		K Ferguson	Chairman of Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee
		Mrs S A Goodchild	
		Cllr A B Saunders	
		Mrs T Stock	Deputy Executive Member for Health

Officers in Attendance:	Mr I Berry	–	Assistant Director of Assets
	Mrs P Everitt	–	Scrutiny Policy Adviser
	Mr D Galvin	–	Assistant Director of Finance
	Mr A Gordon	–	Head of Estate Management
	Mr N Murley	–	Assistant Director Resources
	Mr T Stephenson	–	Programme Manager

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### CROSC/18/1. Minutes

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 22 March 2018 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### CROSC/18/2. Members' Interests

None.

**CROSC/18/3. Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

None.

**CROSC/18/4. Petitions**

None.

**CROSC/18/5. Questions, Statements or Deputations**

None.

**CROSC/18/6. Call-In**

None.

**CROSC/18/7. Requested Items**

Cllr Chapman, supported by Cllr Gomm and Cllr Duckett requested that an internal investigation be undertaken in regard to the Community Transport Tender in the Mid Bedfordshire area.

**CROSC/18/8. Executive Members' Update**

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

- An awareness campaign and training for staff and members regarding the GDPR regulations on Data Protection Act implemented on 25 May 2018.
- Digitalisation of travel claims had been rolled out to staff by HR.
- Support by the Procurement Service on high value projects including Houghton Regis Central and Flitwick Station.
- An end of year service review informed by User Forum feedback, had been carried out by LGSS Law and a service improvement plan would be published in due course.

Following a recent IT training session, Members referred to a number of technical difficulties with the Box application. The Executive Member for Children's Services advised Communications would investigate the use of three-dimensional training and communications including U-tube.

The Executive Member for Assets and Housing Delivery updated the Committee on news and developments for his directorate that included: -

- full payment of an outstanding debt for land sold has been received and enabled the MTFP annual target of £8m to be achieved in the first quarter.
- Planning permission for Chase Farm in Arlesey had been approved and would enable housing development, extra care unit, school, doctor surgeries amongst other facilities.

### CROSC/18/9. Q3 2017/18 Performance Monitoring Report

The Head of Knowledge and Insight introduced the 2017/18 Q3 Performance Report that detailed performance for the Council's Medium Term Financial plan (MTFP) indicator set. Members discussed the following, in summary:-

- Concern that the speed of processing benefits had fallen behind target. In response the Assistant Director of Finance advised the Head of Revenues & Benefits was closely monitoring the situation to ensure adequate resource was in place. Members would be provided with an update on the current position and were advised Human Resources had prioritised this service area and the trend had improved.
- Proposal to promote volunteering in libraries. The Executive Member for Adult Social Care would look into the idea, however, there had been no evaluation of take up.
- A plea that police presence in Leighton Linlade be reinstated to ensure residents felt safe. The Head of Knowledge and Insight advised the performance data referred to data collected in 2016 and a new Residents' survey would be undertaken in 2018 and presented to Members of this Committee.
- Concern that school readiness and attainment 8 measures remained low. The Executive Member for Children's Services advised much work had been done to improve relationships and support schools. Although above the national average, there was a desire to improve performance. HMI had advised it would monitor and target progress rather than attainment.

**RECOMMENDED** the Head of Revenues and Benefits circulate the current position regarding the speed of processing time for benefits.

### CROSC/18/10.Q3 2017/18 Budget Monitoring Reports

The Deputy Executive Member introduced the Q3 Revenue Budget Monitoring report that forecast a £2.2m overspend. At that time delegated authority was agreed to make any adjustments necessary to manage the closure position. The Assistant Director of Finance advised that since that report was produced, we have concluded the outturn position which is an underspend of £78K. Members discussed the following in summary:-

- Concern regarding vacant posts within the Children's Safeguarding service. The Assistant Director advised much work had been undertaken and the service was now back up to full strength.
- What steps had been taken to mitigate high education transport costs. In response, the Executive Member for Children's Service advised a joint working group with representatives from Children's and Community Services had been set up and was working towards independent travel training for SEND users as one element to reduce costs. The planning of school places for the future would look to plan a better balance of special provision throughout the district and so elevate the need to travel. However, it was appreciated this approach was a sensitive area. With regards to mainstream transport the Council sat in the middle of the performance table.

In consideration of the Capital Budget, the Deputy Executive Member advised £46m of capital receipts received had seen the Council achieve zero borrowing on its capital projects. Slippage of major schemes was based on the time constraints of projects or reasons beyond the Council's Control.

The Executive Member introduced the HRA that was again on budget and was confirmed in the recently published outturn figures. The HRA continued to deliver excellent projects and was well managed.

**Noted** the Q3 Budget Monitoring reports.

#### **CROSC/18/11 Draft Quadrant Accommodation Plan**

The Executive Member for Assets and Housing Delivery introduced the Draft Quadrant Accommodation Plan which forms part of the Asset Strategy. The Plan, to be updated each year, gave the Assets team a strategic approach to ensure the Council had a healthy building stock.

A Member enquired what order of priority would be given to the projects outlined in the plan and if the Committee would be given the opportunity to consider them. In response the Assistant Director Assets advised that Members receive an overview of all priorities and individual schemes would be submitted to the appropriate committees. In response to the proposal to put in a mezzanine floor at Priory House, Members were advised there was no longer a need for this as the previous plan had not taken health and care hubs into account. There was, however, a plea for officers not to overlook facilities in Dunstable.

**Endorsed the strategic Draft Quadrant Accommodation Plan report and commended it to the Executive.**

#### **CROSC/18/12 Draft Farms Estate Plan**

The Executive Member for Assets and Housing Delivery introduced the draft Farms Estate Plan that also formed part of the overarching Asset Management Plan. The Plan outlined how the Council would manage and develop its farms estate and details its ambition over a 10-year period and more.

In response to the request from a Member to share the Plan with Town and Parish Councils, the Committee was reminded that the draft plan would be open to public consultation. The Executive Member requested Members lend their support to Natural England and lobby their local MP in support of farming in the future.

**Endorsed the Draft Farms Estate Plan and supported the strategic drive for the future.**

#### **CROSC/18/13 Technology, Transformation and Customer Services**

The Assistant Director Resources delivered a presentation that outlined the use of web-based technology and the new telephony system in Customer Services

and throughout the Council and gave examples of its success. Members discussed the following in summary:-

- That 52% of the workforce had moved to new roles within the Council since April 2017, leaving the service under resources, although it had proved to be a successful training ground for the Council. The Assistant Director advised, with the support of HR, that retention proposals would be devised to help retain staff.
- Difficulties reported by residents using the Highways web portal. The Assistant Director advised an upgraded Highways portal was due to be launched shortly.
- Feedback from residents following the move of the Customer Service desk at Priory House, Chicksands to Shefford Library. In response, the Assistant Director advised that positive feedback had been received in general from residents. Confidentiality concerns were being addressed and the Library had reported greater use of their services. Customer Services desks would be rolled out to Sandy, Biggleswade, Leighton Buzzard and Flitwick libraries.

**Noted the update.**

**CROSC/18/14.Work Programme 2018/19 and Executive Forward Plan**

The Committee considered the current work programme and Executive Forward Plan. The work programme was agreed subject to the addition of a presentation from the Citizens Advice Bureau at the meeting scheduled on Thursday 26 July.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 1.00 p.m.)

Chairman.....

Date.....