

**TTF LEGACY REPORT - CORPORATE RESOURCES**

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**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Corporate Resources Transitional Task Force (TTF) was established by Central Bedfordshire's Shadow Council to provide overview and advice on policy development regarding the Corporate Resources directorate, including challenge of issues, costed options and policy proposals in respect of major service functions in transition, thereby complementing policy formulation by the Shadow Executive.
- 1.2 The TTF's priorities were the: review of risk and risk mitigation; review of project plans for activities within the directorate and the monitoring of progress thereof; strategic development of business plans and provision of handover information to help inform future Central Bedfordshire priority setting. This legacy report therefore fulfils the final TTF priority and comprises of three sections detailing respectively; the work of the TTF, the key issues of concern before vesting day and a strategic overview of key medium term issues.
- 1.3 The TTF met on 13 occasions throughout 2008/09 and was chaired by Cllr Steve Male. He was supported by Cllrs Maurice Jones (Portfolio Holder), John Machin (Deputy Chairman), Susan Goodchild, David Lawrence, David Jones and Paul Record.

**2. Summary of Work**

- 2.1 This section outlines the work of the TTF including topics which have been discussed and recommendations made to the Shadow Executive. The section is organised by service area within the directorate, covering Financial Services (including Audit, Risk and Health & Safety), ICT, HR, Legal & Governance and Property & Asset Management. Also included is a paragraph on the TTF's work covering Shared Services.

***Financial Services***

- 2.2 The TTF's concerns within this service area centred around the financial challenges Central Bedfordshire would face in terms of meeting the annual savings target of £11.5M outlined within the original bid and keeping transitional costs in check. These concerns were heightened by the current economic climate, the affect of this upon available resources and service pressures generally.

**TTF LEGACY REPORT - CORPORATE RESOURCES**

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- 2.3 The TTF therefore received regular progress reports regarding these issues and tasked the Portfolio Holder on numerous occasions to ensure Shadow Executive was aware of them and understood the TTF's desire for it to meet in full the financial commitments outlined in the original bid. Despite this, the TTF was disappointed to note the lack of sufficient options around Council Tax levels for final Shadow Council consideration.

***ICT***

- 2.4 Whilst the work of the TTF regarding this service area essentially covered the monitoring of progress against the high level ICT plan for delivering the Core Infrastructure and Application Software required by the new Council, it nonetheless considered detailed options regarding individual applications as the need arose.
- 2.5 One such option the TTF considered related to the use of SAP (against any other system) as Central Bedfordshire's preferred Financial, HR, Procurement and Payroll software, and its installation at the new Council. Whilst the TTF reluctantly agreed to recommend that Shadow Executive implement SAP on the basis that it was a proven system and there was no time to implement any other solution, in general terms, the TTF was disappointed in the way in which both the selection and installation of this system was managed and communicated.

***HR***

- 2.6 The TTF's interest in this service area centred on the need to recommend a senior management structure early in the process and the new Council's redundancy provisions, pay strategy and job evaluation process.
- 2.7 In June 2008 the TTF considered an options paper regarding the new Council's senior management structure and proposals around salary bands and the recruitment process. Its observations were submitted to Shadow Executive in the same month and to a large extent were endorsed, albeit with some minor modification. At the same time, the TTF also recommended a Head of Service structure for the Corporate Resources directorate.
- 2.8 The TTF monitored progress during the senior management recruitment process to ensure consistency of approach, external competition where appropriate and full Member involvement throughout proceedings.
- 2.9 Following consideration of a detailed report on the matter, the TTF also agreed in October 2008 to recommend to Shadow Executive the use of the County Council's pay and job evaluation process for Central Bedfordshire, which was duly adopted.

**TTF LEGACY REPORT - CORPORATE RESOURCES**

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- 2.10 In December 2008, the TTF considered the redundancy policy of the new Council and whilst no consensus was reached, Members requested the Portfolio Holder to communicate to Shadow Executive 3 options, one of which was subsequently endorsed.

***Legal & Governance***

- 2.11 The TTF's attention within this service area centred on the key issue of the preparation of a fit for purpose Constitution and at an early stage in proceedings therefore agreed to establish a Member Working Group to lead officers in its production.
- 2.12 This Working Group spent considerable time thoroughly reviewing every element of the Constitution and has consulted widely (on 5 occasions to all Shadow Councillors) on the principles agreed at each stage of the process. A final draft will be presented to Shadow Council on 26 February 2009.
- 2.13 The TTF also received for consideration the findings of the Independent Remuneration Panel into Members allowances and noted their submission to Shadow Council.

***Property & Asset Management***

- 2.14 The TTF's attention within this service area centred on 2 key areas: County asset disaggregation and Central Bedfordshire's medium term Accommodation Strategy and Day 1 Plan.
- 2.15 At an early stage in proceedings the TTF recommended a number of important principles regarding the Day 1 Plan, which centred around full use of existing accommodation, minimum staff relocation and the use of additional accommodation in exceptional circumstances only and when it complemented the new Council's medium term Accommodation Strategy. These principles were fully endorsed by Shadow Executive and have allowed officers to concentrate their efforts on producing a fit for purpose medium term Accommodation Strategy for Central Bedfordshire.
- 2.16 As far as the medium term Strategy was concerned, the TTF recommended that staff should be located within the geographical area of Central Bedfordshire within 3 to 5 years and Shadow Executive endorsed this principle.
- 2.17 During the year the TTF has received regular reports regarding progress concerning the disaggregation of County assets but to date this issue remains unresolved. Further comment is provided in section 3.

**TTF LEGACY REPORT - CORPORATE RESOURCES**

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***Shared Services***

2.18 In May 2008 the TTF considered an options paper regarding the potential for sharing Corporate Resources services with Bedford Borough Council as part of a council wide shared service options programme. The TTF's observations regarding the sharing of the directorate's services formed the basis of recommendations approved by Shadow Executive in June 2008.

**3. Key Issues of Concern Before Vesting Day**

3.1 This section outlines in bullet point the key issues of concern for the directorate before vesting day and focuses in particular on those Day 1 imperatives which need to be in place if Central Bedfordshire is to be fit for purpose from inception.

- Ensuring a balanced and prudent 2009/10 budget (supported by a robust medium term financial strategy), which meets DCLG requirements and addresses the commitments outlined in the original bid, is approved by Shadow Council on 26 February 2009.
- Ensuring that IT core systems and applications software is stable and fully operational on Day 1. Whilst the TTF has monitored progress in these areas, business readiness is not at all apparent and this position is a major cause for concern, particularly around fundamental systems such as SAP, SWIFT and TRIBAL and the provision of an effective customer contact centre. Also of concern is the readiness of the payroll function within SAP – it is imperative that Central Bedfordshire pays staff on time and correctly in April 2009.
- Ensuring that the mapping of staff from legacy councils to Central Bedfordshire's organisational structure is complete and all staff are aware of their future within the new Council. The TTF is conscious that the mapping process has taken considerably longer than anticipated and much work still remains to be done before vesting day. Shadow Executive must therefore urgently ensure that the mapping, assimilation, recruitment and appointment process and timetable is made absolutely clear to all staff affected. This issue is critical to the success of Central Bedfordshire not only at inception but also in the medium and long term and if not addressed quickly, transparently and fairly, will adversely affect morale, recruitment and retention going forward.
- Ensuring that a fit for purpose Constitution is adopted by Shadow Council on 26 February 2009, which not only addresses constitutional matters following elections in June, but forms the basis of interim governance arrangements in the transitional period between April and June.

**TTF LEGACY REPORT - CORPORATE RESOURCES**

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- Ensuring that suitable caretaking arrangements have been established should the disaggregation of County Council assets not be resolved before vesting day.

**4. Strategic Overview of Key Medium Term Issues**

4.1 This section outlines in bullet form the TTF's strategic overview of key medium term issues within the directorate, which will assist the new Council focus its activities on those priority areas fundamental to the long term success of Central Bedfordshire.

- Financial stability, prudence and efficiency in the use of resources. Over the next 5 years and beyond, and as part of an organisation-wide shared responsibility, the Corporate Resources directorate has a key role to play in ensuring the new Council achieves the efficiency savings promised in the original bid. Close liaison with the Business Transformation directorate is crucial in order to help Central Bedfordshire deliver value for money but effective services across all directorates. The principle of invest to save is paramount.
- Transformation and prudent investment in ICT systems will be critical to the success of the new Council and effective partnership arrangements must be fully explored to realise the benefit of economies of scale. A properly governed ICT review which embraces partnership and the principle of invest to save, whilst complementing the new Council's Customer Service Strategy, will provide a solid platform for the delivery of excellent but value driven customer services.
- Staff are our most valuable resource and Central Bedfordshire must make clear every employees future at the new Council, bring clarity of purpose to each role and establish stability, backed up by a strong team culture, if it is to create the right environment to deliver best value services and fulfil its promise to become a flagship authority.
- The provision of suitable office accommodation for all staff and Members within the geographical area of Central Bedfordshire in the medium term will be a significant challenge but must be attained if the new Council is to effectively establish its own identity and culture. Central Bedfordshire must be prepared to devote sufficient resources to achieve this goal as soon as reasonably practicable.
- Effective democratic representation is fundamental to the success of any Council and must be wholeheartedly embraced by Central Bedfordshire. Likewise, sufficient resources, training and development must be made available to all Councillors if they are to fulfil their role as community champions.