At a meeting of Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in PH15, Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford on 25 July 2019 from 10am.

**Present:**
Cllr Paul Duckett (Chair)  
Cllr John Chatterley (Vice-Chair)

**Members:**
Cllrs  
- Ian Bond  
- Garth Mackey  
- Eddie Perry  
Cllrs  
- Peter Snelling  
- Brian Saunders

**Apologies:**
Cllrs  
- Charles Gomm  
- Richard Wenham  
Cllrs  
- Tracey Wye

**Members in Attendance:**
Cllrs  
- Victoria Harvey  
- Susan Goodchild  
- Frank Firth  
- Susan Goodchild  
- David Bowater

**Officers in Attendance:**
- Charles Warboys: Director of Resources  
- Andrew Gordon: Head of Estate Management  
- Georgina Stanton: Assistant Director Service Development  
- Nick Costin: Head of Housing Initiatives  
- Iain Berry: Assistant Director Assets  
- Jackie Woods: Head of Knowledge and Insight  
- Gurminder Singh: Housing Innovations Manager  
- Paula Everitt: Scrutiny Policy Adviser

**Others in Attendance**
Cllr Eugene Ghent: Executive Member Assets and Housing Delivery  
Cllr Steve Dixon: Executive Member Transformation and External Relations  
Cllr Tracey Stock: Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Communities  
Cllr Carole Hegley: Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Housing Operations (HRA)

**Public 0**

1. **Apologies**
Cllrs Wenham, Gomm and Wye submitted their apologies for the meeting.
2. Minutes

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 31 May 2019 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

3. Members’ Interests

Cllr Bond declared an interest in item 17.

4. Chair’s Announcements

The Chair reminded the Committee that item 17 contained exempt information and warned against the disclosure of commercially sensitive information to the public.

5. Petitions

None.

6. Questions, Statements, Deputations

Cllr Spicer had provided a set of questions that related to the Farm Strategy update and a response would be provided at item 10.

7. Call-ins

None.

8. Requested Items

None.

9. Executive Members’ Update

In agreement with the Chair, it was confirmed that the Executive Member for Transformation and External Relations would provide the Committee with an update that related to his portfolio in future.

The Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Communities presented an update on behalf of the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources that included:

- A major planned IT systems change that affected Finance, HR and Procurement services had gathered pace and was on course to be implemented in September.
- A review of the Council’s partnership with LGSS Law had seen an improvement in overall service levels including user satisfaction and cost management. The introduction of an e-form for service users would help to streamline and update service delivery.
• A new Data Security Manager in IT had been appointed and security testing of the Council’s systems would be phased in to ensure data was safe.

In response to a question regarding data protection training, the Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Communities advised training had been provided to new Members. However, if Members wished to receive bespoke training, this could be arranged. On-line training was also available to Members and reminders would be sent to those yet to undertake the training.

The Director of Resources advised that Members would not be adversely affected during the two week IT system freeze. Officers would make early payments, including Housing Benefit payments, to avoid any hardship during this time.

The Executive Member for Assets and Housing Delivery presented an update on activities in his portfolio that included:

• Facilities Management performance satisfaction levels had reached 90%.
• The Houghton Lodge, Ampthill office had closed and a total of 650 staff had been accommodated at different locations.
• The Capital Construction team had sold land at Stratton Business Park worth £3.725m. This was one of twenty other projects in development by the Capital Construction team.

In response to a question regarding the future of Watling House in Dunstable, the Assistant Director, Assets advised initial consideration had been outlined in the Corporate Quadrant Accommodation Plan and plans would take into account office space available to the Council at the proposed health hub site. It was confirmed that no decision had yet been reached on the future of Watling House and any proposals would be presented to the Committee.

The Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Communities advised of a recent meeting of the Town and Parish Council Conference that had been well received by attendees.

10. Farm Strategy

The Head of Estate Management delivered a presentation that introduced the Farm Strategy to new Members and updated them on developments that included:-

• A national award presented to a CBC Tenant Farmer for diversification achievements.
• The purchase of 200 acres of farm land in Ivel Valley
• The appointment of managing agents, Strutt and Parker.

In response to a question regarding the provision of farming opportunities for new entrants, the Head of Estates Management advised the aim was to maintain a range of farms suitable for all. Members were also informed that tenant farmers, entitled to current EU subsidies, would be advised of opportunities to diversify and made aware of new funding streams.

The questions submitted by a Member related specifically to environmental issues, opportunities for new farming entrants and the clean air strategy. A written response
would be provided to all Members of the Committee. Assurances were given that due consideration had been given in regard to the Council’s approach to its environmental responsibilities that included the Council’s Climate Change commitment.

In response to a question regarding local farmers’ markets, Members were advised markets formed part of a scheme that supported and encouraged their growth or new provision in towns and parishes where none existed.

**NOTED** the update and a written response would be provided to the Member questions submitted.

11. **2018/19 Provisional Outturn Budget Monitoring**

The Committee considered the provisional outturn budget position for 2018/19 presented by the Director of Resources. The Revenue budget was £0.05m underspent although this figure would have been significantly more had a new earmarked reserve budget not been created. £1.45m had been transferred to this new reserve budget to pay for transformation costs.

In light of the presentation, Members discussed the following in summary:-
- Budget pressures had remained constant in Social Care Health and Housing where care packages for residents with learning disability and mental health issues remained high.
- In Community Services the Directorate had looked at contract efficiencies for the school transport service. Children’s Services had taken responsibility for this service and undertaken a review of transport routes for children with special needs. Initiatives to curtail the high costs of this service were on-going. In response to the budget pressures related to special schools’ transport arrangements, the Committee proposed that Children’s Services OSC be requested to seek an update from officers on the initiatives being considered to reduce costs.
- A Member raised a question regarding an underspend on the Highways budget of £1m. In response, the Director advised the Highways Service had received an additional Income of £1m and that this money would be treated as slippage rather than an underspend. Members of the Committee requested further information be provided so they could understand the complexities of the Highways Budget.

The budget position for Capital and HRA was noted.

**RECOMMENDED**

1. That Children’s Services OSC be requested to seek and assure itself on progress to resolve financial pressures on special schools’ transport.
2. That the Highways service submit a report that explains in more detail the complexities of its budget.

12. **Q4 Performance**

The Head of Performance and Insight introduced the outturn performance for the Council and demonstrated use of the performance portal on the Council’s website.
In response to a Member question regarding the lack of target in performance terms for new dwellings suitable for older people, Members were advised this target was being developed. The Executive Member for Assets and Housing Delivery informed the Committee that more was being done in planning terms to ensure MANOP needs were considered by the Planning Service.

The Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Housing Operations advised whilst new homes would be provided by the Council, there was a significant shortage of affordable homes for rent or shared ownership.

Data held by the Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Housing Operations to support the Council’s approach to housing provision for older people would be shared to Ward Members by request.

**NOTED** the update.

13. **Residents’ Survey 2018**

The Assistant Director Service Development delivered a presentation that outlined the three key themes which were of concern to the Committee and were detailed in the Residents’ Survey 2018 which were crime and anti-social behaviour, roads maintenance and responsiveness.

- The Community Safety Team had received £1.5m of investment monies for community safety. This investment had enabled the Team to fund additional prevention measures, work in partnership with communities and provide additional enforcement activities that included CCTV and community wardens with extended powers that would complement the work of the Police.
- The Council’s response to roads maintenance had seen the development of an asset management and targeted approach to deal with its 875 miles of roads. Roads were regularly surveyed and issues prioritised for repair to stop degradation. This approach had seen the Highways Team improve its performance and satisfaction levels.
- Measures to improve the Council’s responsiveness and the general perceptions of residents that the Council was listening and engaging with them had been introduced. New technology in the Contact Centre had helped increase its performance targets. A new chat box had been developed and introduced on the Council’s website to enable officers to quickly respond to enquiries from residents. Face-to-face services had been moved to libraries across Central Bedfordshire where there was a high level of need for them.

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

- Whether an offender management scheme was in place across Bedfordshire to supported offenders. The Head of Community Safety advised that the Council had for many years belonged to, and supported, the Bedfordshire Offender Management Scheme that had been recognised as a best practice model nationally.
- How Community Safety officers engaged with residents from a diverse background in order to give them a voice and opportunity to contribute to community initiatives. In response the Head of Community Services advised
officers would endeavour to reach all representatives in a community and would continue to develop small numbers of community initiatives and build on the successful events.

- That community safety groups would be contacted and advised of funding available to them and availability of community officers in their area.
- The Head of Community Services was happy to discuss with any town or parish councils that wished to invest in a Community Warden for their area.
- The Committee welcomed the development of the new CCTV infrastructure in public spaces and discuss the opportunity to match fund new cameras.

**NOTED** the update and the Committee welcomed the initiatives implemented to improve services and improve residents’ perception.

14. **CR OSC 2019/20 Work Programme and Executive Forward Plan**

The Committee considered the current Work Programme and Executive Forward Plan. The Work Programme was approved subject to the following additions:

- Central Bedfordshire Academy Service - 19 September 2019
- Procurement Options in relation to the Agency provision of Temporary staff (Commensura) - 28 November 2019.

**AGREED** the CR OSC 2019/20 Work Programme be approved.

15. **Purchase of Property for Transitional Accommodation**

The Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Housing Operations introduced a report that set out the urgent need for additional temporary housing units for homeless families. It was hoped to provide a variety of temporary homes to meet immediate need and officers had identified two potential sites.

With the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act, the Council had seen the demand from families in high priority need grow. Whilst officers sought to help these families, the need for temporary housing solutions was paramount and affordable for tenants.

In response to a question regarding the purchase of the properties, the Head of Housing Solutions advised that Housing Revenue Account funds and Commuted Sum funding would be used to buy them and would help the Council to achieve its ambition to acquire 100 – 170 units of transitional care accommodation in 2019/20.

In order to help those residents affected by drink or drugs misuse, the Head of Housing Solutions advised the Government had set up a fund to help. A housing plan would be developed to help get a resident back on track and referrals would be made to other Government agencies for help.

*The Committee were invited to indicate and pass a resolution under section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the Press and Public from the meeting in order to discuss the exempt appendices on the grounds that the consideration of the*
items was likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

The Committee unanimously agreed to the resolution. There was no press or public present at the meeting, however, the webcast was paused.

RECOMMENDED that the report, ambition and delivery of additional transitional accommodation for homeless residents in Central Bedfordshire be fully endorsed to the Executive.

The meeting finished at 1.30 pm.

Chair ...........................................

Dated ...........................................