At a meeting of Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in the Council Chamber, Chicksands, on Thursday 19 September, 2019 from 10am.

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

Members: Cllr Paul Duckett (Chair) Cllr John Chatterley (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Tracey Wye Cllr Charles Gomm
Brian Saunders Peter Snelling
Ian Bond Garth Mackey

Apologies: Cllr Eddie Perry

Substitutes: Cllr Mark Versallion

Members in Attendance: Cllr Richard Wenham
Cllrs Tracey Wye
Cllrs Brian Saunders
Cllrs Ian Bond
Cllrs Charles Gomm
Cllrs Peter Snelling
Cllrs Garth Mackey

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Cllrs Ian Bond
Cllrs Charles Gomm
Cllrs Peter Snelling
Cllrs Garth Mackey

Officers in Attendance: Tim Hoyle
Assistant Director Strategic Commissioning
Charles Warboys
Director of Resources
Vikki Chapman
Assistant Director People
Debbie Crawford
Head of Academy
Georgina Stanton
Assistant Director Service Development
Sarah Hughes
Community Engagement Manager

Other in Attendance John Knight
CIPFA C.Co

1. Minutes

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 25 July 2019 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

2. Members’ Interests

None.
3. **Chair’s announcements**

The Chairman welcomed Members of Social Care Health and Housing OSC to the meeting who had attended for the Trading Entity for Social Care Services item.

4. **Petitions**

None.

5. **Requested Items**

None.

6. **Call-ins**

None.

7. **Requested Items**

None.

8. **Executive Members’ Update**

The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources updated the Committee on matters pertaining to his portfolio that included:

- That work to review and update the Revenues and Benefits Customer portal had been completed. Improvements included public accessibility to new benefit claim forms.
- That the new finance system S4HANA had been successfully launched at the beginning of September. Members would in future receive electronic pay slips and submit electronic expenses claims.
- The Finance Team were thanked for the timely completion of the Audit within the Government’s timescale.
- Action to address the shortage of legal staff who deal with planning matters was in hand.
- Steps to address the shortage of audit personnel which had caused many authorities to miss the government deadline would be taken.

In light of the update, Members discussed:

- What training would be put in place for Members to learn the new S4HANA system. In response the Executive Member advised a small group of Members would trial the system before it was rolled out to all Members with instructions on its use. A number of Members advised they were unable to access the F5 portal to be able to access the new system. The Director of Community Services agreed to investigate the issues.
- Why some declarations of Members’ interests had not been uploaded on the Council’s Website? The Director of Resources would look to resolve this matter.
The Executive Member for Assets and Housing Delivery updated the Committee on developments within his portfolio:

- That Dunstable Library had been successfully demolished.
- That the Stratton Business Park development would be completed in 2020.
- An event to update tenant farmers was scheduled.

10. Trading Entity for Social Care Services

The Assistant Director Strategic Commissioning introduced a report that updated the Committee on progress to develop a business case to establish a trading entity for social care services. The proposals would tie in with the Council’s ambition to replace outdated care homes, develop extra care independent living for older people and transform day services. The aim was that residents would have access to quality care at a reasonable cost and without destabilising the local care market.

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

- Were Central Bedfordshire residents well served with care facilities? In response the Assistant Director advised it was a complicated assessment because the market was made up of social care and self-funders. An assessment undertaken three years ago indicated that there was over-capacity in some areas of Central Bedfordshire and under-capacity in others. However, it is expected that care home demand across Central Bedfordshire will exceed supply by 2024-25 so new capacity will need to be planned ahead of this. This analysis is currently being updated and will be shared with members when completed. The current version, available on the Council’s website, would be shared with the Committee.

- A Member indicated his disappointment that the business case was not available, however, welcomed the initiative and questioned whether other care market providers were aware of our proposal. In response the Assistant Director advised that the Council had worked in an open and transparent way with care providers. The Council had a good working relationship with care home providers and was already a part of the market itself. Broad intentions have been shared with the care market and the feedback and actions of providers have been used to inform the proposals, although the details have not been shared at this stage.

- Whether it was prudent for the Council not to offer a Local Government pension scheme in its proposals? In response the Assistant Director advised that the proposals to the Executive were that a proportion of the forecast savings in pension costs could be used to provide a more flexible rewards package that would aid the recruitment and retention of staff.

- Whether a significant change in legislation would affect the business case? Members were assured that whilst this is possible the Council would aim to remain flexible and respond to any legislative changes.

The Programme Director, CIPFA C.Co delivered a presentation that set out the background to C.Co, a subsidiary company of CIPFA. The Director gave an overview of current trading companies that delivered social care service and had various levels of success. In summary the Programme Director was confident that the Council had a
clear purpose and, with the right people to run it, would deliver and achieve good quality social care services.

In light of the presentation a Member asked if the Council would receive a dividend or would any surplus be reinvested back into the Company? The Director advised that a business plan for the Company would set expectations in terms of how any surplus would be used. Once in operation this would be decided by the board of directors and CEO but the Company would remain wholly controlled by the Council.

In conclusion the Committee was reassured and welcomed the proposals that were based on sound thinking.

RECOMMENDED
a. The Committee was reassured the proposed social care company was based on sound thinking, recognised its ambition to fill a gap in the market and considered that the Company would strengthen the Council's ability to deliver quality social care services to residents.

b. That the Committee be advised when the Executive report, including the business case, was available.

11. Central Bedfordshire Academy

The Head of the Academy delivered a presentation that set out the Academy model used in Children’s Services to recruit and retain Children’s social workers. The scheme was introduced in 2014 and vacancy rates had reduced from 52% to 7% in August 2019. Following the success of the Children’s Services model, Planning, Housing and Adult Social Care Services had also adopted the Academy model and there were plans to expand the model into other directorates.

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

• Whether it was possible to tie in apprenticeship trainees for a two year period. In response the Assistant Director, People advised it was not possible to impose this restriction on apprentices.

• Was the Academy model shared with neighbouring authorities? In response the Assistant Director reported there had been keen interest in the model and support had been given.

NOTED the update and that the Committee wished to be informed on the success of the Planning model at a future meeting.

12. Medium Term Financial Plan 2020/21 to 2023/24

The Director of Resources introduced the Medium Term Financial Plan 2020/21 to 2023/24 that followed in the Council’s approach of previous years. The process would entail a review of the pressures and requirements for more funding in each Directorate and whilst seeking efficiencies to bridge the funding gap, officers would balance this to ensure quality of services were maintained.
Members’ attention was drawn to the changes and adjustments that were required as well as the known financial pressures with the Revenue Budget that included ambitious targets for retained business rates.

The Council remained ambitious with plans for the Capital Programme compared to Local Authorities nationally. The Housing Revenue Account continued to perform well and had a strong direction of travel.

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

- What modelling was being done in relation to NNDR? In response the Director of Resources advised that a joint directorate approach with Regeneration and Business and Revenues and Benefits services around a new model for businesses, both current, and those the Council wished to attract to the area. The new business rate forecast has led to some proposed increases.
- What were the services that residents might contribute towards? In response the Director of Resources advised these related to Adult Social Care costs.
- In respect of the Adult Social Care budget 2018/19, there had been a ‘structured’ approach to this budget overspend that had been mitigated by funding received by the Council and help from Reserves. The Director advised the overspend had been caused by the cost of care packages and the complexity of care need. With the early publication of the Spending Review by the Government, a new option had been announced for Councils to implement a precept of 2% through Council Tax should this approach be agreed. The proposal for an Adult Social Care trading company would also help to address structural funding and to maintain a balance.
- Whether there were proposals to ring fence innovation monies. Members were advised this had been a one off expenditure and it was unlikely that the Council would be in a position to do this again.

In conclusion the Committee endorsed the approach agreed by Executive to meet the financial challenges of the Medium Term Financial Plan.

**RECOMMENDED** that full support be given for the formal budget setting framework.

### 13. Fees and Charges 2020/21 (Excluding Social Care Health and Housing)

The Director of Resources introduced a report that set out the proposed fees and charges for 2020/21, excluding SCHH. In general, the charges had been increased in line with the September consumer price index of 2%. Where charges had not covered costs, then an appropriate charge had been set to achieve this. A new modelling feature had been included in the report that set out three pricing models.

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

- Where consideration had been given to the provision of free car parking in town centres in order to attract shoppers to our towns. It was possible to extract data from car parking meters to analyse the volume and time. However, evidence in the past suggested free parking had not had any impact.
- Had the Council considered waiving charges for bulky waste in order to alleviate the problem of fly tipping in the area? In response the Director advised this would be a decision for the Executive.
• Whether the charges were sustainable in respect of room hire fees at Houghton Hall Park in Houghton Regis. The Director of Community Services advised with the loss of the Heritage Lottery Fund Grant, review of the operating model for the centre was underway to ensure the centre remained viable.

RECOMMENDED to the Executive:-
1. That the Fees and Charges 2020 report be fully endorsed.
2. That consideration be given to provide bulky waste collections on a free of charge basis to residents in order to curtail the instances of fly tipping.

14. Q1 Budget Monitoring Reports

The Committee considered the Q1 Revenue Budget monitoring report presented by the Director of Resources. The Budget forecast a £600,000 underspend and had seen cost pressures in Fostering and Adoption service amongst others in Children’s Services and Adult Social Care.

In light of the report, Members discussed the following in summary:-
• Commended the purchase of transitional properties for the Homeless that had reduced the need for Bed and Breakfast accommodation and had achieved immediate savings for the Council.
• That the addition of agency staff within the Community Transport team was required to cover staff sickness and to ensure residents and children could be transported to day centres and schools.
• The current underspend in the Community Safety budget. The Director of Community Services advised the underspend was due to the staff recruitment processes that would be resolved shortly.

The Committee noted the Capital and HRA budgets were performing very well and there was a slight underspend reported for Q1.

NOTED the update.

15. Voluntary and Community Sector Review – Phase 2

The Assistant Director Service Development delivered a presentation that set out the approach to the second phase of the Voluntary and Community Sector Review to be led by an independent resource. The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources would oversee the process to look strategically at the whole voluntary and community system with the support of two Executive Members and two Overview and Scrutiny representatives.

The Committee supported the framework of the review and Cllrs Duckett and Bond volunteered to serve on the Executive Working Group.

RECOMMENDED that Cllrs Duckett and Bond be proposed to join the Working Group and an update be presented to a future meeting.
16. 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:

- Voluntary and Community Sector Review – update to be confirmed
- Climate Change Governance Arrangements – March 2020

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

Chair ..........................…………………..

Dated ..........................…………………..