

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Tuesday, 6 March 2012.

PRESENT

Cllr D McVicar (Chairman)
Cllr A R Bastable (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs	M C Blair	Cllrs	J Murray
	Mrs C F Chapman MBE		B Saunders
	Mrs R B Gammons		P Williams

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs Ms C Maudlin

Substitutes: Cllrs A Shadbolt (In place of Ms C Maudlin)

Members in Attendance:	Cllrs	P N Aldis	
		I Dalgarno	Deputy Executive Members for Sustainable Communities - Services
		Mrs S A Goodchild	
		K C Matthews	Executive Member for Sustainable Communities - Strategic Planning and Economic Development
		M A G Versallion	Executive Member for Children's Services
		J N Young	Deputy Executive Member for Sustainable Communities - Strategic Planning and Economic Development

Officers in Attendance:	Mr J Cliff	–	Head of Economic Development and Physical Regeneration
	Mr R Fox	–	Head of Development Planning and Housing Strategy
	Mr B Jackson	–	Assistant Director Highways & Transport
	Mr B King	–	Principal Transport Planner - Transport Strategy Team
	Ms K McFarlane	–	Head of Community Regeneration & Adult Skills
	Ms C Murphy	–	Principal Planning Officer
	Mr J Partridge	–	Scrutiny Policy Adviser
	Mr M Pyecroft	–	Major Projects Officer
	Mr J Tombe	–	Transport Strategy

Others in Attendance	Mr M Taylor	GVA
	Mr M Whitehead	Bloor Homes

SCOSC/11/62 **Minutes**

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 24 January 2012 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

SCOSC/11/63 **Members' Interests**

(a) **Personal Interests:-**

Cllr A Shadbolt (Item 10) as he had previously provided views on the planning and design brief as a Member of Leighton Linlade Town Council.

(b) **Personal and Prejudicial Interests:-**

None.

(c) **Political whip:-**

None.

SCOSC/11/64 **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman informed the Committee that a Special meeting of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been arranged for 16 May 2012 from 2pm in Watling House, Dunstable. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the draft Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire. Prior to the meeting briefings for Members had been arranged as follows to discuss the Development Strategy, all Members were invited to attend:-

- Friday 9 March 2012; and
- Wednesday 4 April 2012

SCOSC/11/65 **Petitions**

No petitions were received from members of the public in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Part D2 of the Constitution.

SCOSC/11/66 **Questions, Statements or Deputations**

No questions, statements or deputations were received from members of the public in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Annex 1 of Part A4 of the Constitution.

SCOSC/11/67 **Call-In**

The Panel was advised that no decisions of the Executive had been referred to the Panel under the Call-in Procedures set out in Appendix "A" to Rule No. S18 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

SCOSC/11/68 **Requested Items**

No items were referred to the Committee for consideration at the request of a Member under Procedure Rule 3.1 of Part D2 of the Constitution.

SCOSC/11/69 **Development Brief for land at Stanford Road, Shefford**

The Committee received a report from the Executive Member for Sustainable Communities, Strategic Planning and Economic Development that outlined a development brief for Land at Stanford Road, Shefford. In addition to the report the Committee was informed that additional comments had been submitted from Natural England as a consultee who were happy with the principles of the development. A further response had been received in relation to public health, which commented that the Council needed to ensure proposals provided access to green space, sustainable transport and supported health and well-being.

A presentation was provided by Max Whitehead, Bloor Homes, which outlined the principles of the development, the key issues raised during consultation and alterations that have been made to the brief as a result. In response to the report and the presentation the Committee raised and discussed the following issues in detail:-

- As a result of the consultation it had been agreed that developments would be a maximum of two storeys high.
- The importance of designing new developments effectively so that they fitted into the local area. Officers needed to ensure that any planning applications were submitted in consideration of the Council's design guide.
- Whilst there were byelaws prohibiting the use of bicycles on some pathways in the brief these had been designed so that if byelaws could be removed the pathway would be wide enough to permit shared use by pedestrians and bicycles.
- A 30% allowance for climate change that had been included in the development to protect against flooding.
- Concerns that the single access road to the residential development would not be sufficient for the level of traffic. The Committee was concerned that existing local infrastructure was not sufficient to support the proposed residential development.
- The importance of ensuring a sufficient level of car parking within the residential development.

- The importance of a mix of affordable housing in line with the Council's adopted policy.
- The importance of officers in the highways and transportation team and highways and transport planning teams coordinating effectively during the development of proposals.

RECOMMENDED TO EXECUTIVE

That the Development Brief for Land at Stanford Road, Shefford be adopted as technical guidance.

SCOSC/11/70 Planning and Development Briefs for Bridge Meadow and Land South of High Street, Leighton Buzzard

The Committee received a report from the Executive Member for Sustainable Communities, Strategic Planning and Economic Development that outlined planning and development briefs for Bridge Meadow and land south of High Street, Leighton Buzzard. A presentation was also provided by the Major Projects Officer and Mike Taylor of GVA, consultants working with the Council. The presentation outlined the planning and development briefs and outcomes of public consultation.

In response to the report and the presentation the Committee raised and discussed the following issues in detail:-

- There were no proposals for development on Church Square.
- The potential to widen some access points to the High Street and the importance of appropriate signage and quality of space.
- The importance of enhancing the area adjacent to the canal.
- The importance of design quality and space to address concerns in relation to community safety.
- The level of additional retail that was proposed as part of the development. Whilst the developer commented that additional retail would compliment the retail units that were already in the High Street it was agreed that a response be provided to the Member outlining the additional level of retail proposed in the brief.

Following discussion Members were informed that additional comments had been provided in relation to public health that supported the proposals.

NOTED

the suggested changes detailed in Appendix C that were to be included in the final planning and development briefs for Bridge Meadow and Land South of High Street, Leighton Buzzard.

RECOMMENDED TO EXECUTIVE

That the planning and development briefs for Bridge Meadow and Land South of High Street, Leighton Buzzard be adopted as technical guidance.

SCOSC/11/71 Local Transport Plan Scheme Prioritisation Framework

The Committee received a report from the Executive Member for Sustainable Communities, Strategic Planning and Economic Development that proposed a scheme prioritisation framework for determining funding priorities through the Local Transport Plan. To determine which schemes should be a priority the framework provided each scheme with a score based on the areas of policy compliance, deliverability and value for money. The framework related only to schemes that were in the integrated transport budget, road safety or road maintenance schemes would not be included.

In response to the report the Committee raised and discussed the following issues in detail:-

- The list of Local Area Transport Plans (LATPs) did not provide enough detail of the individual areas that would be considered within each plan to enable Members to determine when their areas would be included. It was noted that all areas of Central Bedfordshire were included somewhere before the end of 2013/14.
- Whether the issue of road safety should be attributed with a greater score so as to reduce the risk of people killed or seriously injured on the roads.
- The importance of effective consultation with Town and Parish Councils during the planning and design of schemes.
- The importance of reviewing LATPs annually to ensure that priorities still matched those of local residents.

RECOMMENDED TO EXECUTIVE

- 1. That the Scheme Prioritisation Framework be approved as a tool for determining the ranking of the schemes put forward for approval within the Local Transport Plan.**
- 2. That the Executive Member consider whether the weight and prioritisation given to road safety was appropriate.**

SCOSC/11/72 Central Bedfordshire Council Library Service Strategy

The Committee received a report from the Deputy Executive Member for Sustainable Communities Services. The report provided Members with an update of the outcomes the Library Service review including the outcomes of public consultation. The report also provided the proposed Library Service Strategy and road maps for individual libraries. The key principles of the

strategy were to promote greater local involvement, accessibility and flexibility as well as modernising the Library Service.

In response to the report the Committee raised and discussed the following issues in detail:-

- The Library Service Team should be congratulated on the Library Services review and for ensuring that Central Bedfordshire Council had not closed any of its libraries as a result of budget proposals.
- There was a statutory obligation for Councils to provide a free Library Service. In neighbouring authorities in some cases Town and Parish Councils were being asked to provide financial contributions to support buildings that libraries operated out of that were not owned by the library service.
- The importance of working in partnership and outreach work to encourage use of libraries by schools, older people and people from black and minority ethnic communities.
- The importance of taking opportunities to diversify libraries, including café facilities.
- The potential benefit of extending library opening hours including opening on Sundays. It was however noted that extension in opening hours would rely on increased volunteer support in order to address running costs. Any extension in hours would be subject to consultation locally.
- The importance of the Council considering opportunities for engagement with the Central Bedfordshire University Technical College.
- The importance of adequate library provision in rural areas.

RESOLVED

That the Library Service be applauded for ensuring that all libraries in Central Bedfordshire had remained open.

RECOMMENDED TO EXECUTIVE

That the Library Services Strategy and library road maps be approved as the direction for the service for the next 15 years.

SCOSC/11/73 Draft Work Programme 2011-12 and Executive Forward Plan

The Committee received their work programme for 2011/12 and Executive Forward Plan. In addition to the report Members were reminded that a Special Sustainable Communities OSC was taking place on 16 May 2012 and various Member briefings had been arranged prior to that. Members requested that a full list of Member Briefings be re-circulated.

RESOLVED

- 1. That the work programme for the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee be approved.**
- 2. That a list of Member Briefings in relation to planning matters be circulated to Members of the Committee.**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.31 p.m.)