

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Tuesday, 13 December 2011.

PRESENT

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

Cllrs M C Blair
Mrs R B Gammons
Ms C Maudlin

Cllrs B Saunders
P Williams

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs Mrs C F Chapman MBE
J Murray

Substitutes: Cllrs D Bowater (In place of Mrs C F Chapman MBE)
I Shingler (In place of J Murray)

Members in Attendance: Cllrs P N Aldis
J G Jamieson
K C Matthews
A Shadbolt
R C Stay
M A G Versallion
J N Young
Leader of the Council
and Chairman of the
Executive
Executive Member for
Sustainable
Communities - Strategic
Planning and Economic
Development
Chairman of
Development
Management Committee
Executive Member for
External Affairs
Executive Member for
Children's Services
Deputy Executive
Member for Sustainable
Communities - Strategic
Planning and Economic
Development

Officers in Attendance: Mr G Alderson – Director of Sustainable
Communities
Ms A Coleman – Service Development Manager
Mr B Fong – Interim Senior Finance Manager
(Sustainable Communities)
Mr J Partridge – Scrutiny Policy Adviser
Ms S Wileman – Service Development Manager

SCOSC/11/38 **Members' Interests**

(a) **Personal Interests:-**

None.

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

None.

SCOSC/11/39 **Minutes**

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 25 October 2011 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

SCOSC/11/40 **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/11/41 **Questions, Statements or Deputations**

The Committee were told that a total of three speakers had registered to speak at the meeting in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Annex 1 to Section A4 of the Constitution. The Chairman confirmed that two speakers would be invited to speak under this item and a further speaker, who wished to make a statement relating to Item 10 ("2012/13 Draft Budget") would be invited to speak prior to consideration of that item.

Both speakers raised issues with regards to Item 9 ("Development Strategy Task Force") relating to the following:

- Any progress that had been made in determining the future of the Development Strategy Task Force.
- Attendance of the public at meetings of the Development Strategy Task Force and public engagement in the development of proposals.
- Access to information prior to meetings of the Committee.
- Matters relating to openness, transparency and accountability.

In response to these issues the Chairman stated that the operation of the Development Strategy Task Force was being reviewed due to the cessation of one of its primary functions, to provide advice to the Luton and South Beds

Joint Planning Committee and as a result there was no longer the requirement for a prescriptive and restrictive terms of reference. There were also changes to the environment including the new localism agenda, imminent new planning legislation and the cessation of regional planning.

As a result of these changes the Council was considering an appropriate way forward and a written report would be submitted to a future committee. The Development Strategy Task Force would not meet until a written report had been considered by the Committee. In the mean time two items that would have been considered by the Task Force had been scheduled to be received by the OSC in January 2012.

In addition the Chairman commented that some meetings would continue to take place in private where sensitive or financial issues were being considered.

SCOSC/11/42 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/11/43 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/11/44 Development Strategy Task Force

The Chairman referred to his previous comments regarding the Development Strategy Task Force and emphasised that a further written report would be submitted to the Committee on 24 January 2012.

Members debated the operation of other future Task Forces and whether they would operate in the same manner as the Development Strategy Task Force, particularly in relation to recommendations being provided directly to the Executive. A Member expressed the view that all recommendations should be presented to the OSC no matter what it referred to despite an undertaking from the Chairman that any matter of 'consequence' would be referred to the OSC for consideration. Members also debated whether the public should be able to attend meetings of the Development Strategy Task Force.

NOTED

That a report on the future operation of the Development Strategy Task Force be presented to the Sustainable Communities OSC on 24 January 2011.

SCOSC/11/45 **2012/13 Draft Budget**

The Executive Member for Sustainable Communities Planning and Strategy introduced a report relating to the Draft Budget 2012/13, Medium Term Financial Plan 2012 – 2016 and the Capital Programme 2012/13 to 2015/16. The Committee were asked to consider the draft budget proposals and provide their comments for consideration by the Customer and Central Services OSC and the Executive.

In response to the proposals the Committee commented on the following:-

Draft Budget 2012/13 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2012-2016

- The appropriateness of the level of General Fund reserves and how they would be affected by an overall reduction in the Council budget.
- Ongoing work to develop proposals for SC33 “additional savings target” to achieve £644k savings in 2012/13 would need to be completed before the Executive agreed the budget. Additional unspecified savings would need to be specified before the S151 officer would approve them for recommendation.
- Whether it was prudent to include landfill tax uplift from 2010/11 as a budget pressure.
- The harmonisation of Council Tax would be phased over 2 years and be fully effective from 2013/14.
- The Internal Drainage Board had been asked to reduce the precept that we pay to them by 15% over 3 years, in the light of the overall reduction in government grant.

Capital Programme 2012/13 to 2015/16

- Whether further funds for use after 2012/13 should be identified in the budget for leisure facilities at Stotfold Football Development Project Phase 1. Also whether funds from the proposed sale of Roker Park should be identified in the budget for future years.
- The delivery of the Luton and Dunstable Busway, which was currently on schedule and within budget.
- Funding for Dunstable Town Centre Regeneration Phase 2, which was provided from a Local Authority Business Growth Incentive (LABGI).
- The principle of implementing a holistic infrastructure approach to assets within a defined area, how the decisions were made and how it achieved savings.

RECOMMENDED TO THE EXECUTIVE

That the Council’s Draft Budget for 2012/13, Medium Term Financial Plan 2012-16 and Capital Programme 2012/13 to 2015/16 be implemented.

SCOSC/11/46 **Draft fees and Charges 2012/13**

The Executive Member for Sustainable Communities Planning and Strategy introduced a report that proposed revised fees and charges for the Council to be effective from 1 April 2012.

In response to the proposals the Committee discussed the following:-

- Paragraph 14 of the report refers that there would be a 2% increase for 2011/12, this should read 2012/13.
- The importance of effective enforcement of new fees and charges if they were implemented from 1 April 2012.
- The importance of effective publication of the fees and charges to ensure that residents and businesses were aware of changes and new charges.
- The consented regime for street trading and whether it covered a range of traders.
- Whether the introduction of fees and charges for advertising frames or up to three tables where they did not present an obstruction to rights of way was appropriate.

RECCOMENDED TO THE EXECUTIVE

- 1. That in respect of permissions for tables and chairs on the highway and for advertising frames no charge be applied to small businesses for using either suitable A frames or up to 3 tables in an appropriate manner.**
- 2. That, where reasonable and where flexibility exists, fees and charges should be rounded up to an appropriate figure.**

(Subsequent to the meeting it was established in relation to recommendation 1 detailed above that Council policy already allowed for small businesses to be given consideration. This recommendation of the Committee has already been taken into account in the revised fees and charges that will be recommended to the Executive in February).

SCOSC/11/47 Quarter 2 Revenue Budget Monitoring Report

The Committee considered a report by the Portfolio Holders for Sustainable Communities Planning and Strategy and Sustainable Communities Services, which outlined the quarter 2 revenue position.

In response to a question from a Member it was confirmed that the Council had a policy in place to chase outstanding debts.

NOTED

- 1. the forecast annual outturn of £50,881k;**
- 2. the proposed release of earmarked reserves of £505k; and**
- 3. the forecast under spend of £802k after the use of reserves.**

SCOSC/11/48 **Quarter 2 Capital Report**

The Committee considered a report by the Portfolio Holders for Sustainable Communities Planning and Strategy and Sustainable Communities Services, which outlined the capital programme report for the quarter ending 30 September 2011.

NOTED

- 1. actual expenditure to date of £11,297k and external income of £9,042k;**
- 2. forecast annual expenditure of £26,466k and external funding of £17,685k; and**
- 3. re-phasing of schemes into future years with a net value of £3,840k.**

SCOSC/11/49 **Draft Work Programme 2011/12 and Executive Forward Plan**

The Committee reviewed their work programme for 2011/12 and noted that two items had been added to the agenda for 24 January 2012 as follows:-

- Development Brief for Warren Farm, Ampthill; and
- Development Brief for Stanford Road, Shefford.

In response to a Member question it was commented that the Council was to develop a single Local Development Framework (LDF) for Central Bedfordshire up to 2031. This LDF would detail the allocation of gypsy and traveller sites throughout the region and work would commence on its development in 2012. The previous Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan Document for the north of the region had been retained to be used as evidence in the development of a new LDF.

RESOLVED

That subject to the addition of development briefs for Warren Farm, Ampthill and Stanford Road, Shefford the work programme for the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee be approved.

NOTED

the Executive Forward Plan.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.06 p.m.)