

## CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **COUNCIL** held in the Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Thursday, 17 September 2015.

### PRESENT

Cllr D Bowater (Chairman)  
Cllr Mrs C F Chapman MBE (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs	Mrs A Barker R D Berry L Birt A D Brown J Chatterley K M Collins N B Costin I Dalgarno S Dixon Mrs A L Dodwell P Downing P A Duckett K Ferguson F Firth Mrs J Freeman E Ghent	Cllrs	C C Gomm Mrs S A Goodchild Mrs D B Gurney P Hollick J G Jamieson K Janes R W Johnstone J Kane D J Lawrence Mrs J G Lawrence K C Matthews Ms C Maudlin R Morris G Perham A Ryan B Saunders	Cllrs	J A G Saunders D Shelvey I Shingler B J Spurr R C Stay T Stock T Swain G Tubb A M Turner M A G Versallion N Warren B Wells R D Wenham T Woodward J N Young A Zerny
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### Apologies for Absence

Cllrs	M R Jones M C Blair Mrs S Clark	Cllrs	Ms A M W Graham C Hegley D McVicar	Cllrs	T Nicols P Smith B Walker
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Officers:	Mr R Carr Mr Q Baker	– Chief Executive – Assistant Director Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer (Interim)
	Mrs D Broadbent-Clarke	– Director of Improvement and Corporate Services
	Mr M Coiffait	– Director of Community Services
	Mrs S Harrison	– Director of Children's Services
	Mrs S Hobbs	– Committee Services Officer
	Mr J Longhurst	– Director of Regeneration and Business
	Mrs J Ogley	– Director of Social Care, Health and Housing
	Ms M Peaston	– Committee Services Manager
	Mrs M Scott	– Director of Public Health

## **PRAYERS**

Prayers were taken by the Reverend Paul Niemiec, Community Minister, Leighton Buzzard.

### **C/15/29. Minutes**

#### **RESOLVED**

**that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2015 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.**

### **C/15/30. Members' Interests**

None were declared.

### **C/15/31. Questions, Statements and Deputations**

The following questions were asked in accordance with the Public Participation Scheme.

#### **1. Refugees being welcomed in Central Bedfordshire**

Mrs Denise Smith asked a question about the plans to ensure refugees would be welcomed to Central Bedfordshire and encouraged to integrate with existing communities.

The Leader of the Council explained that there were a number of asylum seekers in Central Bedfordshire, particularly unaccompanied children being looked after by the Council. The Council was considering how Central Bedfordshire could help with the Government's proposal to bring 20,000 Syrian refugees to the United Kingdom over the next five years, including how to care for them and how to integrate them within communities. The Executive Member for Stronger Communities was co-ordinating offers of support.

#### **2. Biggleswade Railway Bridge**

Mr Bernard Rix, speaking as a Biggleswade resident, raised concerns about the planned closure of the railway bridge in High Street, Biggleswade for four months to carry out maintenance works. Mr Rix referred to a petition signed by 700 people to request Central Bedfordshire Council to influence Network Rail to reconsider the timescale and he drew attention to the disruption this could cause residents in Biggleswade.

The Executive Member for Community Services explained that the Council had been liaising with Network Rail since April 2013 to negotiate an appropriate timeframe for carrying out essential maintenance on the bridge. The Council could only carry out the repairs as and when advised by Network Rail. Diversions would be in place directing the traffic to use an alternative route during the period of closure to mitigate traffic problems. The Council would be liaising with Biggleswade Town Council and press releases would be issued nearer the time to inform residents.

### **3. Robert Bloomfield Academy**

Mr John Dee drew the Council's attention to the dismissal of the governing body at Robert Bloomfield Academy by the Board of BEMAT, raising serious concerns about the impact this would have on the children's education at the school.

The Executive Member for Children's Services explained that the headteacher and governing body at Robert Bloomfield Academy had changed recently. As Robert Bloomfield was an Academy the Council was not in a position to step in to resolve the problems that had occurred, as this was a role for the Department for Education. The Council was liaising closely with the Academy and BEMAT to offer any assistance.

#### **C/15/32. Petitions**

No petitions were received.

#### **C/15/33. Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman was saddened to report the death of former Councillor Howard Lockey and Members stood in silence for one minute in respect for his memory.

The Chairman also announced that his Civic Reception would be held on 30 October 2015 and he would be taking the opportunity to publicise Central Bedfordshire by encouraging representatives of local businesses to attend.

#### **C/15/34. Leader of the Council's Announcements and Communications**

On Friday 31 July the Leader had visited the Tactic Youth Centre in Leighton Buzzard and had attended the topping out ceremony for the Greenfields Independent Living Scheme. He was also pleased to announce that the show flats at Priory View, Dunstable were now open and the accommodation there was proving very popular. Further independent living schemes were being proposed for Houghton Regis, Biggleswade and in other parts of Central Bedfordshire.

The Leader had also visited Lincolnshire County Council to learn from their practice.

The Leader had joined the Board of Aragon Housing Association. He had also been involved in the appointment process for the new Chief Constable for Bedfordshire.

The Leader spoke about the Government's devolution proposals in response to which a number of councils had submitted bids. The Government was mainly focused on City bids in the first wave. Central Bedfordshire Council was working with neighbouring authorities and SEMLEP, however, the Leader clarified that he did not consider a mayoral model or combined authority to be appropriate for Central Bedfordshire.

C/15/35. **Executive Member Presentations**

Councillor Young, Executive Member for Regeneration reported on the work within his portfolio area, including:

- an increasing number of jobs created in the area;
- a new distribution centre in Dunstable creating 800 jobs with even more during peak times. Work on a second facility was already underway;
- the Council was working closely with Amazon and an Amazon job centre would be opened in Dunstable to recruit local people to the company;
- a Food Enterprise Zone was being established at Stratton Business Park, Biggleswade and the Executive would be receiving a report at its meeting on 6 October proposing the adoption of a Local Development Order;
- the Secretary of State had approved the East of Leighton Buzzard Plan for houses, schools, employment and community facilities;
- the A5-M1 link road and the Woodside Link were being built and would benefit residents and businesses in Leighton Buzzard and Dunstable including cutting journey times to the M1;
- planning permission had been granted for land in Millbrook for B1 use creating further jobs in that area;
- Prologis had been granted planning permission for two additional buildings at Marston Gate;

- 1,522 houses had been completed in Central Bedfordshire in the year ending May 2015, since then 500 more houses had been completed; and
- a new website had been launched [www.becentralbedfordshire.co.uk](http://www.becentralbedfordshire.co.uk) to support businesses and help them relocate to Central Bedfordshire. The website was already receiving 1,000 visitors a month since its recent launch.

In response to a question, the Executive Member for Regeneration confirmed that existing sites allocated for commercial development would only be released for housing development if a marketing campaign had indicated that the site was not attracting business in that area.

Councillor Turner, Executive Member for Stronger Communities reported on the work within his portfolio area, including:

- working with town and parish councils to support their needs and encourage them to look at what services they could provide;
- 69 out of 79 parish councils were delivering services such as street cleaning and grass cutting;
- Central Bedfordshire was the first local authority to overcome the issue of insurance for local communities who wished to take on gritting responsibilities, enabling three parish councils to provide gritting on non-priority roads;
- a Town and Parish Council Conference was held on 1 July 2015 and the next conferences were due to take place on 23 September 2015 and in November 2015;
- the Volunteering Strategy would be refreshed in 2016. Central Bedfordshire had over 800 volunteers working for the Council and further work was being carried out to encourage young people to become volunteers;
- a Cheering Volunteering event was held in 2015 and a second event was being programmed for 2016;
- consultation had revealed that 40% of residents felt that they couldn't influence the Council's decision making which was an issue that needed to be addressed; and
- Members were encouraged to complete the survey on Member Development before 21 September 2015.

C/15/36. **Recommendation from the Executive**

**(1) Reducing Reliance on Bed and Breakfast Accommodation Use**

The Council considered a recommendation from the Executive concerning the financial pressures resulting from a sustained increase in the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation on a temporary basis by homeless families.

In response to a question, the Leader explained the distribution of temporary accommodation across the area and indicated that evidence had shown that there was a need for alternative accommodation in the north of Central Bedfordshire.

**RESOLVED**

**that the expenditure of £2m of Housing Revenue Account resources for the acquisition of a portfolio of around 7-9 properties and potentially land (for development) be approved.**

C/15/37. **Motions (if any)**

No motions were received.

C/15/38. **Written Questions**

No written questions were received.

C/15/39. **Treasury Management Outturn 2014/15**

The Council considered a report from the Executive Member for Corporate Resources that provided a review of Treasury Management activities for the year ended 31 March 2015, in compliance with relevant codes of practice adopted by Central Bedfordshire Council.

**RESOLVED**

**that the Treasury Management and the Prudential Indicators' performance for the year ended 31 March 2015 be noted.**

C/15/40. **Urgent Item of Business**

By virtue of the authority vested in him in accordance with Section 100 (b)(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chairman agreed to allow an additional item to be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency.

The reason for urgency was a number of resignations from Ridgmont Parish Council earlier in the month, rendering the Parish Council inquorate and unable to meet. Until the Order was in place, business could not be transacted and this matter therefore needed to be considered as a matter of urgency.

C/15/41. **Local Government Act 1972 - Section 91 - Inquorate Council**

The Council considered a report from the Executive Member for Corporate Resources seeking approval to make an Order under Section 91 of the Local Government Act 1972 to enable the Council to appoint a sufficient number of Parish Councillors on a temporary basis, to enable the work of the Parish Council to continue until it had co-opted or elected sufficient Councillors to be quorate. Four parish councillors had resigned from Ridgmont Parish Council making the Parish Council inquorate.

**RESOLVED**

1. **that an Order be made, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report, to appoint Parish Councillors at Ridgmont Parish Council to ensure that the Parish Council was quorate and could continue to act.**

C/15/42. **Open Questions**

The Chairman invited the Minority Group Leaders to ask a question each prior to the consideration of questions that had been placed in the Open Questions receptacle.

1. Councillor Zerny had submitted a question for the Executive Member for Social Care and Housing regarding the sale of council housing. As the Executive Member for Social Care and Housing was absent the question would be forwarded to her to respond to in writing.
2. Councillor Downing asked the Chairman of the Police and Crime Panel about the appointment of a new Chief Constable.

Councillor Mrs Chapman, explained that the Panel had made an unanimous decision to support the appointment of Jon Butcher as the new Chief Constable.

3. Councillor Mrs Chapman enquired if the cutting of grass verges could be co-ordinated with litter picking.

The Deputy Executive Member for Community Services explained that the grass verges outside the 30 mph speed limit were cut three times a year and that litter picking was continuous throughout the year. He was investigating the option of not cutting the grass verges outside the 30 mph speed limit where possible, to promote local ecology, including benefiting the pollinating insects, and it was anticipated that this would also make savings to the Council's budget.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 6.30 p.m. and concluded at 7.29 p.m.)

Chairman .....

Dated .....