

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL** held in the Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Thursday, 19 November 2009.

PRESENT

Cllr B J Spurr (Chairman)
Cllr P Hollick (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs	P N Aldis	Cllrs	M Gibson	Cllrs	D McVicar
	R A Baker		Mrs S A Goodchild		J Murray
	Mrs A Barker		Ms A M W Graham		Mrs M Mustoe
	A R Bastable		T Green		A Northwood
	R D Berry		Mrs D B Gurney		Ms J Nunn
	L Birt		Mrs C Hegley		P Rawcliffe
	P A Blaine		D J Hopkin		A A J Rogers
	D Bowater		J G Jamieson		A Shadbolt
	A D Brown		K Janes		K Sharer
	Mrs C F Chapman MBE		R W Johnstone		P Snelling
	J A E Clarke		D Jones		Miss A Sparrow
	N B Costin		M R Jones		R C Stay
	I Dalgarno		J Kane		J Street
	Mrs R J Drinkwater		D J Lawrence		G Summerfield
	P A Duckett		Mrs J G Lawrence		A M Turner
	Dr R Egan		Mrs A M Lewis		Mrs C Turner
	A Fahn		H J Lockey		Mrs P E Turner MBE
	Mrs J Freeman		S F Male		B Wells
	D J Gale		K C Matthews		J N Young
	Mrs R B Gammons		Ms C Maudlin		

Apologies for Absence

Cllrs	P Freeman	Cllrs	J A G Saunders	Cllrs	P Williams
	T Nicols		P F Vickers		

Officers in Attendance	Mr G Alderson	Director of Sustainable Communities
	Mr R Carr	Chief Executive
	Mr R Ellis	Director of Business Transformation
	Mr C Heaphy	Director of Corporate Resources
	Mrs S Hobbs	Democratic Services Officer
	Mrs K John	Head of Democratic Services
	Mr D Jones	Interim Assistant Director for Commissioning and Strategy
	Mr R Mills	Committee Services Manager
	Mrs B Morris	Assistant Director Legal & Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer
	Mr M Pratt	Assistant Director Children's Specialist Services

Prayers

Prayers were taken by Reverend Caren Topley.

Adjournment - Presentation by the Reserve Forces & Cadets Association for East Anglia

Council adjourned for 30 minutes as Members welcomed Colonel Jackson and Major Powell from the Reserve Forces and Cadets Association for East Anglia to Central Bedfordshire Council. Colonel Jackson gave an oral presentation on:-

- defence - including the national security review and a comprehensive governance review;
- operations – including Afghanistan, Iraq, Northern Ireland;
- ‘firm base’ – supporting the armed forces and engaging the community; and
- Reserves and Cadets – on 4 July 2010 the cadets would be celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Army Cadets. He also commented on Supporting Britain’s Reservists and Employers (SaBRE).

Colonel Jackson responded to questions put to him by Members.

C/09/41

Minutes

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 24 September 2009 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

C/09/42

Members' Interests

(a) Personal Interests:-

None.

(b) Personal and Prejudicial Interests:-

None.

C/09/43

Chairman's Announcements and Communications

The Chairman welcomed the new Chief Executive, Richard Carr to his first Council meeting at Central Bedfordshire Council.

The Chairman advised Members that Central Bedfordshire Council had won an award for the best Traffic Flow Improvement Scheme of the Year for the Leighton Buzzard Traffic Calming Scheme. The Chairman thanked the Officers involved, including Basil Jackson and David Bowie and from Amey, Jon Shortland, Anthony Hood, Alan Trill and Steve Hall and presented them with the award.

C/09/44 **Questions, Statements or Deputations**

No questions, statements or deputations had been received under Annex 1 of Part A4 of the Constitution.

C/09/45 **Petitions**

No petitions had been received in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Annex 2 of Part A4 of the Constitution.

C/09/46 **Recommendations from the Executive**

Executive – 13 October 2009

(a) Customer Services Strategy

The Council received and considered a recommendation from the meeting of the Executive held on 13 October 2009 proposing the adoption of the Customer Services Strategy for Central Bedfordshire Council.

RESOLVED

that the Customer Services Strategy for Central Bedfordshire Council, as set out in Appendix A to the submitted report, be adopted.

(b) Review of Fees and Charges Policy

The Council received and considered a recommendation from the meeting of the Executive held on 13 October 2009 proposing the adoption of the Fees and Charges Policy.

RESOLVED

that the Fees and Charges Policy, as set out in Appendix A to the submitted report, be adopted.

Executive – 10 November 2009

(c) LDF (North): Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document

The Council received and considered a recommendation from the meeting of the Executive held on 10 November 2009 proposing the adoption of the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document.

The Leader of the Council had circulated letters from the Chairman of Potton Town Plan and the Potton Town Clerk about how proposed development in the town was being approached. The letter also mentioned that consideration should be given to the Potton Town Plan as to where development should take place. A request was made that a letter from Shillington Parish Council be included in the consideration.

A Member asked why apparently the former Mid Bedfordshire Planning Department had not responded to a letter sent to them in October 2007. The Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth and Regeneration advised that he would arrange to provide a written response to the Member.

Members also queried the status of parish plans in relation to site selection. The Leader of the Council referred to a paper which was being produced on this topic and commented on the importance of having a clear development framework in place to avert the prospect of speculative development.

She circulated an additional recommendation as follows:-

“that the Leader, in consultation with the Director of Sustainable Communities, be authorised to make typographical and other inconsequential corrections to the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document, prior to publication of the document.”

RESOLVED

- 1. that the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document, as set out in the Executive report of 10 November 2009, be adopted**
- 2. that the Leader, in consultation with the Director of Sustainable Communities, be authorised to make typographical and other inconsequential corrections to the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document, prior to publication of the document.**

(d) LDF (North): Site Allocations Development Plan Document

Members were advised that the LDF (North): Site Allocations Development Plan Document had been withdrawn from the Council meeting to allow time for a fully worked up version of the Development Plan Document to be prepared. The final document would include a number of site specific policies that set out the details of the proposals for each site, any infrastructure requirements and any associated community benefits that might arise.

Due to the short period of time between the Executive meeting on 10 November 2009 and the Council meeting, it had not been possible to complete work on this document. Therefore, this item would not be considered until the Council meeting on 7 January 2010.

(e) Review of Capital Programme

The Council received and considered a recommendation from the meeting of the Executive held on 10 November 2009 proposing the approval of the revised General Fund Capital Programme for 2009/10 and the Revised Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme for 2009/10.

The Leader of the Council circulated a revised recommendation 3 as follows:-

“That the Council:-

- (a) utilises a further £8.887m of its own resources through the use of unapplied capital receipts and borrowing to fund the 2009/10 Capital Programme
- (b) notes that any borrowing will be undertaken within Central Bedfordshire’s operational boundary under the Prudential Code.”

A Member queried whether any funds for Tithe Farm Lower School, Houghton Regis were likely to be diverted to Roecroft Lower School, Stotfold for improvements and when the improvement work would begin. The Portfolio Holder for Children’s Services advised that she would provide a written response to the Member.

Members also raised questions about capital provision for the Luton Dunstable Guided Busway, which it was noted was due to be discussed shortly by the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and about future support for registered social landlords to provide more affordable housing.

Members were advised that the recommendation set out on page 5 of the Chairman’s briefing note was no longer required.

RESOLVED

1. that the revised General Fund Capital Programme for 2009/10, attached as Appendices B1 to B5 set out in the Chairman's briefing note be approved
2. that the revised Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme for 2009/10, attached at Appendix E to the Executive agenda of 10 November 2009 be approved
3. that the Council:-
 - a. utilises a further £8.887m of its own resources through the use of unapplied capital receipts and borrowing to fund the 2009/10 Capital Programme
 - b. notes that any borrowing will be undertaken within Central Bedfordshire's operational boundary under the Prudential Code.

C/09/47

Recommendations from the Constitution Advisory Group

Constitution Advisory Group – 9 November 2009

(a) Review of Capital Programme Processes

The Council received and considered a recommendation from the meeting of the Constitution Advisory Group held on 9 November 2009 covering the procedures relating to the Capital Programme.

RESOLVED

1. *that Section 4.9 of the Code of Financial Governance (Part I2) be replaced by a new Section 4.9 as set out in Appendix A to Agenda Item 8 – Recommendations from the Constitution Advisory Group as set out in the Chairman's briefing note*
2. *that in Part C2, paragraph 1.3.3, the word 'project initiation document' be replaced by 'detailed business case'*
3. *that, as a general principle, future delegations requiring sanction by a Portfolio Holder should be phrased as being to the relevant Portfolio Holder in consultation with the relevant Director, rather than vice versa.*

(b) Key Decisions/Delegations

The Council received and considered a recommendation from the meeting of the Constitution Advisory Group held on 9 November 2009 covering the definition of a key decision and the delegation arrangements.

The Council also noted that the Leader had agreed a general scheme of delegation to the relevant Portfolio Holder in each case to authorise savings or expenditure between £200,001 and £500,000 inclusive (revenue per annum or capital whole life/total contract value), in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources, the relevant Director and the Director of Corporate Resources. The delegation was also subject to compliance with Rule 19 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules. Authority for approving savings or expenditure over £500,000 (revenue per annum or capital whole life/total contract value) continued to rest with the full Executive.

RESOLVED

- 1. that Paragraph 1.2 of Part C2 (Key Decisions and the Forward Plan) be amended to read:**

“For the purposes of 1.1.1 above, savings or expenditure are significant if they exceed £200,000 per annum (revenue) or £200,000 whole life cost (capital), or 10% of the budget for the cost centre concerned, whichever is the smaller.”

- 2. that the thresholds in recommendation 1 above and in the Leader’s delegation be applied to the Code of Procurement Governance (Part I3, paragraph 5.1) and Land Acquisitions and Disposals (Part H3 – paragraph 4.6.71).**

(c) NHS Campus Closure Programme

The Council noted that the Leader had agreed a delegation to the Portfolio Holder for Social Care, Health and Housing, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources, the Director of Social Care, Health and Housing and the Director of Corporate Resources to approve individual projects, without financial limitation, under the NHS Campus Closure Capital Grant Programme, subject to the criteria set out in paragraph 4 of the report at agenda item 19 to the Executive on 15 September 2009 (i.e. projects signed off by the Learning Disabilities Leadership Group). The delegation would be subject to (a) consideration of the detailed business cases for each project; and (b) compliance with Rule 19 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules in respect of any key decision.

(d) Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy and Confidential Reporting (“Whistleblowing”) Policy

The Council received and considered a recommendation from the meeting of the Constitution Advisory Group held on 9 November 2009 proposing the inclusion of the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy and the Confidential Reporting (“Whistleblowing”) Policy within the Constitution.

RESOLVED

- 1. that the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy set out in Appendix B to Agenda Item 8 – Recommendations from the Constitution Advisory Group, as set out in the Chairman’s briefing note, be included in the Constitution under Part I1 – Finance, Contracts and Legal Matters**
- 2. that the Confidential Reporting (“Whistleblowing”) Policy set out in Appendix C to Agenda Item 8 – Recommendations from the Constitution Advisory Group, as set out in the Chairman’s briefing note, be included in the Ethical Framework appended to the Constitution.**

C/09/48 Report of the Bedfordshire Police Authority

A report from the meeting of the Bedfordshire Police Authority held on 23 October 2009 was submitted.

Councillor Hollick, representative of the Police Authority, elaborated on some of the issues in the submitted report. He elaborated on some of the details in the report.

Members were advised if they had individual questions about policing in their ward these could be emailed to Councillor Hollick for his comments.

RESOLVED

that the report be received.

C/09/49 Written Questions (if any)

No written questions had been received from Members of the Council under Rule No. 12.2.

C/09/50 Oral Questions

The Chairman presided over oral questions asked of the Leader, Deputy Leader, Portfolio Holders, the Chairman of a Committee or a Member representing the Bedfordshire Police Authority or the Bedfordshire and Luton Combined Fire Authority under Council Procedure Rule 12.7.

In response to a question from Councillor Birt concerning the condition of the accommodation at Campton Lower School, the Portfolio Holder for Children’s Services advised Members that a survey of all schools was being carried out and once the results of this were known, Officers would be able to prioritise school improvements.

In response to a question from Councillor Aldis on residents' concerns about inappropriate parking in town centres and what the Council could do to ease the problems, the Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities explained that the Executive would be considering a policy on parking and traffic congestion, which would reflect the authority's enforcement role.

In response to a question from Councillor Mrs Chapman about Central Bedfordshire Council's response to the motion agreed by Milton Keynes Council proposing the extension of Milton Keynes boundary to include parts of Aspley Guise, the Leader of the Council explained that a press release had been prepared and that she would check if it had been issued. She emphasised that there was no desire for any part of Central Bedfordshire to merge with Milton Keynes. She would shortly be meeting with Members from Milton Keynes Council, Buckinghamshire County Council and Aylesbury Vale District Council to discuss this matter.

In response to a question from Councillor Snelling about the Council's finances and whether (a) residents in the former South Bedfordshire area would see their Council tax equalised with the residents in the former Mid Bedfordshire area from 1 April 2010 and (b) members and residents receive open and honest consultation about possible reductions in services next year, the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources explained that it had been a difficult year pulling together a budget for the new authority from the three legacy authorities, but an initial deficit of 5% had been reduced by identifying savings. The Council's ambition was that the Council Tax would be harmonised by the end of year 2. Proposals for further savings in 2010/11 would be coming to the Executive on 8 December 2009 and Members would have an opportunity to consider the budget through the Overview and Scrutiny Committees prior to the Executive submitting final proposals to Council on 25 February 2010.

In response to a question from Councillor Gibson about the Council's official position on the Covanta proposals, the Assistant to the Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities advised Members that the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be considering the BEaR project on 24 November 2009 before being considered by the Executive on 8 December 2009.

In response to a question from Councillor Stay about the breakdown of the transition budget, the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources advised that he would organise a meeting to provide these details.

In response to a question from Councillor Shadbolt about Bedford Borough Council's decision to adopt a two-tier education system, the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services advised that there were no current plans to do the same in Central Bedfordshire. Central Bedfordshire Council was working on the transforming teaching and learning agenda in partnership with schools and governing bodies. Officers had prepared a letter for schools which bordered Bedford Borough to send out to parents to reassure them that the implications of the change in Bedford were being examined. A copy of this letter would be circulated to all Members.

In response to a question from Councillor Aldis on the steps being taken to bring empty homes within Central Bedfordshire back into occupation, including houses within the ownership of Aragon Housing Association, the Portfolio Holder for Housing advised Members that the Council was working with landlords in this issue. She also explained that the Council worked in partnership with Aragon Housing Association to keep their properties occupied.

C/09/51

Motions (if any)

No motions had been received from Members of the Council under Rule No. 16.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 6.30 p.m. and concluded at 8.37 p.m.)