

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held at Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford. on Tuesday, 18 May 2010

PRESENT

Cllr J N Young (Chairman)
Cllr A R Bastable (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs D J Gale
Mrs R B Gammons

Cllrs J Kane
P Williams

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs Ms C Maudlin
Mrs M Mustoe
P Snelling

Substitutes: Cllrs Mrs C F Chapman MBE (In place of Mrs M Mustoe)
Ms A M W Graham (In place of P Snelling)
A Shadbolt (In place of Ms C Maudlin)

Members in Attendance: Cllrs P N Aldis
R A Baker
P A Blaine
D Bowater
Mrs R J Drinkwater
Dr R Egan
Mrs S A Goodchild
Mrs C Hegley
K C Matthews
D McVicar
T Nicols
P Rawcliffe
Miss A Sparrow
B J Spurr
Mrs C Turner
A M Turner
B Wells,

Officers in Attendance: Mr R Fox Head of Development Plan
Mrs E Heaney Temporary Democratic Services Officer
Mr B Jackson Assistant Director Highways & Transport
Mr J Lucas Housing Strategy Team Leader

Mr J Partridge Overview & Scrutiny Officer

Ms S Wileman Service Development Officer

Also in attendance Mr G Pearsall Bedfordshire Police

Mr S Welham Bedfordshire Police

SCOSC/10/1 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED

1. that the Minutes of the meeting of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 23 February 2010 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.
2. that the Minutes of the meeting of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 25 March 2010 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

SCOSC/10/2 Members' Interests

(a) **Personal Interests:-**

- Councillor Mrs Fiona Chapman declared a personal interest in item 8 (Call In: Petition – To change Speed Limits at Husborne Crawley) as the member who had called the matter in and as a ward member for Woburn and Harlington.
- Councillor Wells declared a personal interest in item 8 (Call In: Petition – To change Speed Limits at Husborne Crawley) as a ward member for Woburn and Harlington.

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

There were no personal and prejudicial interests declared.

(c) **Any Political Whip in relation to items on the agenda:-**

There was no political whip declared in relation to any items on the agenda.

SCOSC/10/3 Chairman's Announcements and Communications

None notified.

SCOSC/10/4 Petitions

No petitions were received from Members of the public in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Annex 2 of Part A4 of the Constitution.

SCOSC/10/5 Questions, Statements or Deputations

One member of the public had registered to speak at the beginning of the meeting in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Annex 1 to Section A4 of the Constitution.

A statement was received concerning the consultation document on the provision of Gypsy and Traveller sites in Central Bedfordshire. The speaker was particularly concerned that the consultation document consulted on 50 pitches, rather than the 40 pitches that Central Bedfordshire Council needed to identify in the north part of the Central Bedfordshire area (the former Mid-Bedfordshire area).

Officers and the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Development confirmed that, as reported to the Committee on 22 February 2010, the additional 10 pitches allowed for meaningful consultation and that once the consultation period had concluded it was the intention to allocate 40 pitches from those 50 that had been proposed.

SCOSC/10/6 Development Strategy Task Force recommendations.

The Chairman reported that recommendations from the Development Strategy Task Force meeting held on 7 April 2010 would be considered during item 10 – Housing Strategy

SCOSC/10/7 Call In: Petition - To Change Speed Limits at Husborne Crawley

The Committee noted that on 15 April 2010 the Traffic Management Committee had considered a petition to reduce the speed limit on the following roads in Husborne Crawley from 40 miles per hour to 30 miles per hour (20 miles per hour in the vicinity of Husborne Crawley Lower School), A4012 Turnpike Road, School Lane and Bedford Road. Following discussion at the Traffic Management Meeting on 15 April 2010 the Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities and Healthier Lifestyles decided not to reduce the speed limit, but to re-assess the roads for additional coloured patches and speed roundels and to place the area on the list for mobile vehicle activated speed signs.

The Committee noted that the decision of the Traffic Management Meeting had been called in by Councillor Mrs Fiona Chapman, ward member for Harlington and Woburn. The Committee was asked to consider the call-in and Councillor Mrs Fiona Chapman's reasons for calling the decision in.

The Member calling the item in was invited to speak first and the reasons given for the call in were as follows:-

(a) it was not appropriate to turn down the request to lower the speed limit only on the basis that it was not enforceable, (b) the Portfolio Holder did not appear to listen to the local Parish Councillor or to both CBC Councillors who spoke in favour of the petition at the Traffic Management Meeting, nor was the Parish Council Chairman allowed to comment when they signalled a wish to speak during the Traffic Management Meeting, and (c) the speed limit outside the school (40 mph) was, in particular, too high for the safety of children.

In accordance with the Public Participation Procedure set out in Annex 1 of Part A4 of the Constitution the Chairman then invited the members of the public who had registered to speak on this item to do so. Each speaker was asked to keep their statement to three minutes.

Statements were received from a total of three public speakers who raised a number of concerns including:

- Recent police speed measurements showed a significant number of drivers drove through Husborne Crawley in speeds exceeding 50 miles per hour.
- Claims of discrepancies in the information provided in the report in relation to the number of accidents that had occurred.
- Statements that Bedfordshire Police said they would not support reductions to the speed limit in Husborne Crawley were not true, they would support it subject to Central Bedfordshire Council supporting the restrictions with engineering measures.
- Highways engineers had not visited Husborne Crawley to assess the roads at the time the decision of the Traffic Management Meeting was taken.
- The decision was not in keeping with decisions to reduce speed limits in other local areas of Central Bedfordshire.
- The Parish Plan identified reduction in speed limits as a key local priority.
- There was a particular risk to pedestrians on the pavement as HGVs drove through narrow roads at high speeds.
- Several cars had left the road and collided with hedges or the walls of properties. This could be fatal if a pedestrian had been on the pavement at the time.
- Loose chippings often flew up injuring pedestrians.
- Children regularly walked to and from the school and there were concerns for their safety when crossing the road and when waking on the roadside.

In response to the statements from Members of the public the Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities and Healthier Lifestyles and the Assistant Director for Highways and Transport explained that when the decision was taken by the Traffic Management Committee they had noted the concerns of villagers and the issue was not simply one of speeding cars, but also concerned the width of

the roads and pavement. It was also stated that there were no known discrepancies in the report that had been submitted to the Traffic Management Meeting. Research had shown that reducing a speed limit from 40mph to 30mph would have a minimal effect unless physical measures were also introduced to enforce it, it would also criminalise a significant number of drivers. For a change in the speed limit to reduce speeds it would require additional design measures to slow the traffic down.

Representatives from Bedfordshire Police confirmed that it was their view that 20mph speed limits should not be put into place without physical measures also being put into place, however the Assistant Director for Highways and Transport did agree that recent guidance from the DfT allowed reduced speed limits to be considered without the need for associated speed reduction measures – though it was preferable to have such measures.

The decision had therefore been taken not to change the speed limit in Husborne Crawley at this time but it was agreed that an engineer liaise with the local Parish Council and discuss possible measures to slow traffic down.

In response to a question from the Chairman the Assistant Director for Highways and Transport confirmed that it had been a decision of the former legacy authority that there should be a 20mph speed limit outside all schools in the Central Bedfordshire area. However, because of the significant cost implications, and the fact that very few serious accidents were taking place outside schools, this policy had not been adopted by CBC.

Members discussed the issues at length and unanimously expressed concerns that the speed of vehicles travelling through Husborne Crawley needed to be reduced as soon as possible, in particular around the school and that HGVs should be encouraged to use Mill Lane instead of School Lane.

The Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Development drew everyone's attention to the need for the M1 – A5 link road to be built, this would reduce pressure on roads such as the A4012. Given the current economic situation there was some doubt that this scheme would come to fruition and members of the public were encouraged to contact their local MP and the minister for Transport in support of the link road.

RESOLVED

That the decision be referred back to the Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities and Healthier Lifestyles for reconsideration with the following alternative recommendation:-

- (a) the current speed limit in Husborne Crawley be reduced from 40mph to 30mph with the exception of the area around the school in which the speed limit should be reduced from 40mph to 20mph.**

Note: The meeting adjourned at 11:30 and re-convened at 11:45

SCOSC/10/8 Requested Items

The Chairman reported that no items had been requested.

SCOSC/10/9 Housing Strategy

The Committee received a report outlining the development of the Housing Strategy, which included the six key strategic objectives that had been identified for the Housing Strategy in 2010. The Committee also noted the recommendations and comments of the Development Strategy Task Force, which had considered the Strategy at its meeting on 7 April 2010.

The Head of Development Plan explained that the full Housing Strategy would be considered by the Executive in August 2010. The document had been deferred for consideration as it was considered important to ensure that the Strategy took into account any guidance from the new Central Government as well as the Local Investment Plan and the Council's economic powerhouse agenda. The Committee was invited to have a broad strategic debate following which the Strategy would be taken to the Executive for approval prior to public consultation.

In addition the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Development commented that there was a need for social engineering in the Central Bedfordshire area. There was a demand for housing locally that needed to be met as soon as possible but mechanisms were required to ensure that people would be able to buy any new properties that were developed.

Members discussed the Housing Strategy and in particular raised the following points and suggestions:

- The strategy needed to address the current difficulties faced by young people, many of whom were unable to purchase properties in the area as they grew up. The provision of affordable housing and fulfilling the Council's requirements in relation to the delivery of affordable homes should be seen as a priority.
- Incentives were needed to encourage older people to move out of large family homes, this could include planning for bungalows in central locations of new estates .
- The strategy should specifically refer to homes being carbon neutral or as close to carbon neutral as possible and to the importance of cutting carbon emissions in the area. There should be a stronger emphasis than just 'encouraging' developers to reduce the carbon footprint.
- The Carbon Management Strategy should be embedded to the Housing strategy to give it 'teeth'
- Homes should be 'future proofed' to allow for disabled access or a live-in carer at a future date.
- In response to comment 9 of the Development Strategy Task Force more work was still needed to embed the Design Guide for Central Bedfordshire into the Housing Strategy.

- Building homes at a density of 45-50 dwellings per hectare would limit the space for gardens and the character of estates but would reduce the amount of green belt land needed to meet requirements.
- Empty homes and flats needed to be addressed as a matter of urgency, private landlords should be assisted in renovating empty properties and placing them on the market at a reasonable rate.

The Committee also discussed the consultation process that would take place following the approval of the Housing Strategy. It was agreed that Members would be provided with more detail regarding the nature of the consultation, with whom officers would consult and by what means they would be consulted. It was specifically commented that the Older People's Reference Group should be included in the consultees.

RESOLVED:

1. **That the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee support the use of the Summary document as a basis for insertion into the Central Bedfordshire Sustainable Communities Strategy.**
2. **That in light of the recommendations of the Development Strategy Task Force the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorses the Housing Strategy for consideration and approval by the Executive for public consultation.**

SCOSC/10/10 Work Programme 2010-11 and the Executive Forward Plan.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be noted and approved.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.45 p.m.)

Chairman

Dated