

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Thursday, 13 December 2012.

PRESENT

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

Cllrs	Mrs C F Chapman MBE	Cllrs	B Saunders
	K C Matthews		P Williams
	Ms C Maudlin		

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs Mrs R B Gammons

Substitutes: Cllrs A Shadbolt (In place of Mrs R B Gammons)

Members in Attendance:	Cllrs	P N Aldis	
		R D Berry	
		D Bowater	Chairman of Audit Committee
		A D Brown	Deputy Executive Member for Sustainable Communities - Strategic Planning and Economic Development
		I Dalgarno	Deputy Executive Members for Sustainable Communities - Services
		Mrs S A Goodchild	
		D Jones	
		B J Spurr	Executive Member for Sustainable Communities - Services
		B Wells	Deputy Executive Member for Sustainable Communities - Services
		J N Young	Executive Member for Sustainable Communities - Strategic Planning and Economic Development

Officers in Attendance:	Mrs J Dickinson	–	Head of Leisure Services
	Mrs J Keyte	–	Head of Community Safety
	Mr I Melville	–	Acting Head of Service Development
	Mr J Partridge	–	Scrutiny Policy Adviser
	Ms S Templeman	–	Senior Finance Manager

SCOSC/12/55 Members' Interests

Councillor Nigel Aldis declared a personal interest in Item 10, Leisure Facility Strategy, as a Member of Biggleswade Rugby Club.

SCOSC/12/56 Chairman's Announcements and Communications

There were no Chairman's announcements or communications.

SCOSC/12/57 Minutes**RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the meeting of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 18 October 2012 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

SCOSC/12/58 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/12/59 Questions, Statements or Deputations

The Committee were informed that three persons had registered to speak in relation to the Leisure Facility Strategy (**Minute SCOSC/12/63 refers**) in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Annex 1 of Part A4 of the Constitution. With the agreement of those speakers they would be invited to speak during that item.

SCOSC/12/60 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/12/61 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/12/62 Executive Member Updates

There were no updates to be provided to the Committee by the Executive Members.

SCOSC/12/63 Leisure Facilities Strategy

The Committee heard from three members of the public who had registered to speak. Letters were also circulated to Members of the Committee in support of the statements. The speakers raised issues in relation to the following:-

- The current membership of the dry-side of Houghton Regis Leisure Centre.
- The previous closure of the swimming pool at Houghton Regis Leisure Centre had been to the detriment of the local community.
- The level of support locally for a new leisure centre on the existing site in Houghton Regis.
- The considerable amount of local support for reopening the swimming pool at Houghton Regis Leisure Centre.
- Specific issues relating to the distance that children of Houghton Regis Lower School and Hawthorn Park Schools have to travel to Dunstable to use a swimming pool.

The Deputy Executive Member for Sustainable Communities Services presented a report that set out the methodology and key findings of an audit and assessment of leisure facilities in Central Bedfordshire and the emerging preferred options. The Deputy Executive Member Cllr Dalgarno highlighted the purposes of the Strategy including the intention for it to be ultimately adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document and its importance to provide a strategic direction for leisure facilities in Central Bedfordshire. In response to the report and further clarification provided by Cllr Dalgarno the Committee discussed the following issues in detail:-

- Progress in relation to development of the strategy had been slow. The process had not been run in an order that permitted the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) to consider the full proposals prior to their consideration by the Executive. Concerns were raised that some information would be made available to the Executive in January that had not been made available for the OSC. The Chairman suggested that the report was incomplete and as a result of the lack of information (including financial) the Committee could not comment in a meaningful way. In response the Deputy Executive Member commented that the timeline for developing the strategy was on time. There would be more time during the development of chapters 2, 3 and 4 of the strategy to provide additional supporting information to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- Cllr Dr R Egan suggested that 8 lane swimming pools should be provided in new build leisure centres as they were more suitable for swimming clubs and allowed for more simple dual usage of the pool. The Deputy Executive Member agreed to consider this principal and consider amending the report in relation to the emerging long term proposal of a new Houghton Regis Leisure Centre.
- The Council needed to encourage the use of facilities throughout the opening hours of leisure facilities. The Council should not seek only to

address demand for court space at peak hours as this will lead to over-supply during non-peak hours.

- A Councillor's concern that some of the issues raised at the stakeholder workshops had not been included in the report (this included issues relating the use of sporting facilities in schools). It was also commented that the Council needed to ensure it supported those schools who wanted to make their sport facilities available for outside use by helping to publicise these facilities. The Council should also consider the support that could be provided to academies. In response the Deputy Executive Member commented that several schools had indicated support for increasing accessibility to use their facilities outside of school hours. Some other schools were more protective of their assets.
- The importance of investing in leisure facilities for the future so as to increase long term financial returns.
- References in the report to Tiddenfoot in Houghton Regis should be amended to Tiddenfoot, Leighton Buzzard.
- Councillor Williams suggested that the report be amended to read the Council should "open Houghton Regis swimming pool at existing centre for short-term provision", removing the reference to considering this possibility. It was suggested that this would make the facility more attractive during the tender process. In light of the support for the dry-side of the pool the Council should put faith in the local community to ensuring the swimming pool was successful. In response the Deputy Executive Member commented that the Council was undertaking a process to determine the feasibility of this proposal. The Council would need to invest £150k in the swimming pool prior to being able to reopen it.
- The current situation at Flitwick Leisure Centre and concerns relating to the difficulty of delivering the new leisure centre facility. In response the Deputy Executive Member provided an update on the process for delivering a leisure centre facility in Flitwick and particularly the financial contributions that were required.
- The lack of interest of private leisure operators in bidding for contracts as many of these operators did not have an interest in running leisure facilities that contained sports courts.
- The usefulness of adding a map to the report to indicate the location of leisure facilities throughout Central Bedfordshire. This would also support the identification of possible transport routes and travel times to use these facilities.
- Concerns that comments suggesting all residents of Central Bedfordshire could access a pool within a 20-minute travel time assumed that everyone had their own transport. Due to the rural nature of Central Bedfordshire it was suggested that the 20-minute travel time was unfeasible for many residents.
- The report referred to providing a new indoor bowls facility within Central Bedfordshire, which was not regarded as necessary.

- The importance of considering the benefits of leisure facilities in relation to their place-making role.
- The use of the Leisure Facility Strategy as a planning document. The Head of Leisure Services commented that the intention was for the strategy to become a supplementary planning document (SPD). The SPD process would involve further consultation following consideration by the Executive and involve further work in 2013 in order for the strategy to be used to secure Section 106 contributions. The strategy would direct the Council's capital programme, which was a separate piece of work.

Following discussion Members considered a recommendation that the swimming pool at Houghton Regis should be reopened immediately. Members discussed the financial implications of this proposal and whether it would be feasible for the Council to take this course of action. The Committee agreed that whilst the Council should consider reopening Houghton Regis Swimming Pool with immediate effect this could only be done if it was considered to be financially viable.

RECOMMENDED TO EXECUTIVE

- 1. That the Committee feels the process of the review has been comprehensive to date.**
- 2. That the Committee is unable to comment in a meaningful way on the emerging preferred options for inclusion in the Strategy due to the lack of full financial information.**
- 3. That progress in relation to the development of the Leisure Facility Strategy has been slow to date.**
- 4. That the Committee urges the Executive to consider reopening Houghton Regis Swimming Pool with immediate effect with due consideration to financial implications.**

Meeting Adjourned at 11.35am and reconvened at 11.42am

SCOSC/12/64 CCTV Strategy

The Committee receive a report from the Executive Member for Sustainable Communities Services that outlined a CCTV Plan for Central Bedfordshire covering the period 2013-17. In response to the report and further clarification provided by the Head of Community Safety the Committee discussed the following issues in detail:-

- Whether there was evidence of the benefits of using CCTV and how this might impact on the decision of local communities to invest in CCTV or Police Community Support Officers. In response the Head of Community Safety commented that evidence of the benefits of CCTV was difficult to determine but CCTV recordings are often used secure prosecutions. It

was felt that the police would support the use of CCTV as its removal may result in additional demands being placed on police resources.

- Clarification was required regarding the number of CCTV cameras provided in Central Bedfordshire, particularly considering whether the Council system of 99 cameras included those in Shefford.
- The importance of CCTV provision keeping up with the development of new technology to ensure that the quality of recordings were as high as possible.

Following discussion the Committee commented that it would be useful to consider any evidence of the benefits of CCTV. The Head of Community Safety agreed to circulate information to Members outside of the Committee.

RECOMMENDED TO EXECUTIVE

1. **That Executive adopt the proposed CCTV Plan 2013 - 17 for Central Bedfordshire**
2. **That delegated authority be provided to the Director of Sustainable Communities, in consultation with the Executive Member for Sustainable Communities (Services) to implement the actions as set out in the CCTV Plan.**

SCOSC/12/65 Quarter 2 performance report

The Acting Head of Service Development informed the Committee of the quarter 2 performance of the Sustainable Communities directorate. In response the Committee discussed the following issues in detail:-

- Excellent performance in relation to usage and satisfaction with the library service.
- Performance in relation to the number of people in employment (aged 16 to 64) and whether the Council could provide assurance that local young people were prioritised for available jobs.
- The commentary for performance in relation to resident satisfaction with road and pavement repairs should identify the activity underway to improve performance over the next 12 months.

NOTED the report

SCOSC/12/66 Quarter 2 capital budget monitoring report

The Senior Finance Manager informed the Committee of the capital programme report of the Sustainable Communities directorate for quarter 2. In response the Committee commented that the figures were historical in nature and as such did not provide a current position for the directorate. The Committee stated it could not comment on the report as it was out of date.

NOTED the report

SCOSC/12/67 Quarter 2 revenue budget monitoring report

The Senior Finance Manager informed the Committee of the revenue position for the Sustainable Communities directorate for quarter 2. The Committee queried whether the Executive Members were confident of achieving the £3.988k annual savings target for the directorate. The Executive Members commented that they were confident of achieving the savings required for the directorate.

In response to the report the Committee commented that the figures were historical in nature and as such did not provide a current position for the directorate. The Committee stated it could not comment on the report as it was out of date.

NOTED the report**SCOSC/12/68 Climate Change Strategy and Carbon Management Plan**

The Committee received a report from the Corporate Policy Adviser (Sustainability and Climate Change) in response to requests for clarification at a previous meeting. In response the Committee discussed the following issues in detail:-

- The ways in which the Council's property was used to contribute to the carbon reduction target. In response the Corporate Policy Adviser commented that the asset programme of works was currently considering the use of Priory House and how it could be used more efficiently.
- The level of progress achieved by the Council in relation to several programmes including; car sharing; transport for staff between council sites and video-conferencing.
- Whether the Council had a duty to encourage carbon efficiency in academy schools. Members queried the ways in which the Council supported academies and whether they were included in the Council carbon reduction target. In response the Corporate Policy Adviser commented that academies were not included in the savings figures. The Council did not have a duty in relation to academies but did work with private companies to provide information and advice.
- The benefits of signing up to the Climate Local initiative, which included access to forums and expertise. Members considered that the benefits of the programme could be achieved by other means and signing up to this commitment was not necessary.
- Whether the £70k cost to which the Council would be subject as part of the Carbon Reduction Committee attributed to street-lighting was accurate. Members suggested that this figure would be higher. In response the Corporate Policy Adviser agreed to clarify these figures.

RECOMMENDED that the Council not become a signatory of the Climate Local Initiative.

SCOSC/12/69 Work Programme 2012/13 and Executive Forward Plan

The Committee received their work programme for 2012/13 and Executive Forward Plan. Members commented that the performance and budget reports were received too late for the Committee to comment in a meaningful way. This should be considered in relation to the presentation of future quarterly reports. At the request of a Member an item on the review of bus services was agreed to be added to the work programme.

The Executive Member for Sustainable Communities Strategic Planning stated that all Members had been invited to attend a two day tour of the sites in the draft Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan for Central Bedfordshire in preparation for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) on 28 February 2013. In advance of these site visits a list of all the potential gypsy and traveller sites that were being considered would be presented to the OSC in on 17 January 2013 for their information. The Chairman stressed the importance of Members of the Sustainable Communities OSC attending both days of the tour in advance of the meeting in February 2013.

RESOLVED

- 1. That an item on the review of bus services be considered by the Committee at a future meeting.**
- 2. That a list of the potential sites in the draft Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan for Central Bedfordshire be presented to the Committee at their meeting on 17 January 2013 prior to consideration of the shortlist of potential Gypsy and Traveller Sites at the meeting on 28 February 2013**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.47 p.m.)