

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **EXECUTIVE** held in the Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Tuesday, 4 February 2014.

PRESENT

Cllr J G Jamieson (Chairman)
Cllr M R Jones (Vice-Chairman)

Executive Members:	Cllrs	C Hegley B J Spurr R C Stay	Cllrs	Mrs P E Turner MBE M A G Versallion J N Young
Deputy Executive Members:	Cllrs	A D Brown Mrs S Clark I Dalgarno A L Dodwell	Cllrs	D J Hopkin A M Turner B Wells R D Wenham
Members in Attendance:	Cllrs	P N Aldis Mrs A Barker A R Bastable R D Berry C C Gomm	Cllrs	Mrs S A Goodchild Ms A M W Graham J Murray Miss A Sparrow
Officers in Attendance		Mr R Carr Ms D Clarke Mrs M Clay Mr M Coiffait Mrs E Grant Mrs S Hobbs Mrs J Ogley Mr C Warboys		Chief Executive Director of Improvement and Corporate Services Chief Legal and Democratic Services Officer Community Services Director Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services Committee Services Officer Director of Social Care, Health and Housing Chief Finance Officer

E/13/116 **Minutes**

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meetings held on 14 January 2014 and 21 January 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

E/13/117 **Members' Interests**

None were declared.

E/13/118 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman announced that due to the number of public present, item 12 'Determination of the Content of the Consultation regarding the Future of Brewers Hill Middle Community Middle School, Streetfield Community Middle School and Ashton CofE VA Middle School, following an Analysis of the Future Viability of these Dunstable Schools' would be considered after item 7 'Forward Plan of Key Decisions'.

E/13/119 **Petitions**

No petitions were received.

E/13/120 **Public Participation**

The following statements were received in accordance with the Public Participation Scheme.

1. **Ms Exelby**

Ms Exelby spoke to item 12, the future of Brewers Hill Community Middle School, Streetfield Community Middle School and Ashton CofE VA Middle School. She expressed concern about the potential implications for children in Dunstable. In particular, Ashton CofE VA Middle School where her children attended. Ms Exelby also referred to a proposal coming forward from Ashton CofE VA Middle School to change their age range.

2. **Mr Fox**

Mr Fox also referred to Agenda item 12, as he was a parent of a child at Ashton CofE VA Middle School and was Chairperson of the Governing Body. Mr Fox referred to the Council's commitment to children in the area and that the age range changes had brought much confusion for parents. He also voiced concerns that the Executive had held it's meeting at 9.30 a.m. at Priory House.

The Executive Member for Children's Services thanked Ms Exelby and Mr Fox for their comments. He explained the background to the consultation proposals. The proposals had come forward as a consequence of the changing pattern of provision in the area, which had impacted on the future financial viability of all three schools. The Council's priority was to improve educational outcomes for children in Central Bedfordshire. He was unable to comment regarding the proposal for Ashton CofE VA Middle School as he could not predetermine a decision before he had seen the relevant business case. There would be plenty of opportunity, if the proposals were taken forward, for the public to participate through the consultation process and in public meetings that would take place in Dunstable.

3. **Mr Allen**

Mr Allen referred to traffic management issues along the A1 in Biggleswade and discussions that had taken place with the Highways Agency.

The Executive Member for Sustainable Communities – Services had met with Mr Allen and was keen to continue to work with him.

E/13/121 **Forward Plan of Key Decisions**

RESOLVED

that the Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1 March 2014 to 28 February 2015 be noted.

E/13/122 **Determination of the Content of the Consultation Regarding the Future of Brewers Hill Community Middle School, Streetfield Community Middle School and Ashton CofE VA Middle School, following an Analysis of the Future Viability of these Dunstable Schools**

The Executive considered a report from the Executive Member for Children's Services that proposed to initiate consultations on the phased closure of the Community Schools of Brewers Hill Middle School and Streetfield Middle School and the Church of England Voluntary Aided School of Ashton Middle School from September 2015, with full closure from August 2016. This was due to the analysis indicating that all three schools would not be financially viable in the future following the age range changes to other schools within the town.

The Chairman of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee advised Members that the Committee would be holding a public meeting in the evening in Dunstable at the beginning of May to consider the results of the public consultation before making recommendations to the Executive.

In response to questions, the Executive Member for Children's Services explained that action needed to be taken as pupil numbers were likely to drop at these school which meant that pupil funding would be reduced leaving the schools unviable. The Executive would consider the findings from the public consultation process at its meeting on 27 May 2014 before taking any further action.

Reason for decision: To ensure the Council continues to meet its statutory obligations to provide sufficient school places and also to meet the legal requirements placed on the Council by The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 regarding proposals to close the three maintained schools as set out in the report.

Final approval of the proposals will be determined by the Executive on 19 August 2014, informed by the outcome of the consultation exercises. The Council's Executive is required to make its decision within 2 months of the end of the consultation period.

RESOLVED

- 1. that the initiation of a consultation to close Brewers Hill Community Middle School in Dunstable be approved, phased from September 2015, with final implementation in August 2016;**
- 2. that the initiation of a consultation to close Ashton Church of England Voluntary Aided Middle School in Dunstable be approved, phased from September 2015, with final implementation in August 2016;**
- 3. that the initiation of a consultation to close Streetfield Community Middle School in Dunstable be approved, phased from September 2015, with final implementation in August 2016; and**
- 4. to receive a report providing the responses to each consultation at the Council's Executive on 27 May 2014, to enable a decision to be made on whether to proceed to the publication of statutory notices for each school, with a view to receiving a final report and making final decisions at the Council's Executive on 19 August 2014.**

E/13/123

Budget 2014/15 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2014 to 2018

The Executive considered a report from the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources that proposed the Council's spending plans for the medium term and Council Tax rate for 2014-15, with indicative figures for future years. There had not been any changes to the budget since the draft had been considered at the Executive meeting on 14 January 2014. Members welcomed the proposal for a 0% increase in the Council's element of the Council Tax.

On a point of clarification, it was pointed out that a further £17 million of savings were proposed for 2014/15 and not £16 million as mentioned on page 71 of the report.

In response to questions, the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources explained that Executive Members would consider the results from the public consultation.

Reason for decision: To enable the Council to agree a balanced budget for 2014/15 and identify resource requirements for the medium term.

RECOMMENDED to Council

1. ***that the responses from consultation with Overview and Scrutiny as set out in Appendix K to the report and the response to consultation with the public and stakeholders as set out in Appendix A to the report be noted;***
2. ***that the Revenue Budget for 2014/15 and the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2014/15 to 2017/18 be approved;***
3. ***that there were no adjustments to the draft Budget as described in paragraph 52 of the report;***
4. ***that the Council Tax Base as set out in Appendix G be noted;***
5. ***that a Band D Council Tax (CBC element) of £1,308.33 for residents of Central Bedfordshire, representing a 0% increase on the charge for 2013/14 be approved;***
6. ***that the fees and charges set out in Appendix J to the report be approved; and***
7. ***that certain efficiency proposals identified in Appendix I to the report be noted and that they will be subject to formal consultation and Equality Impact Assessment in the coming months and that the Corporate Management Team be instructed to propose alternative compensatory savings if it appears, following a review of the outcome of the Equality Impact Assessment, that any specific proposal cannot be delivered.***

E/13/124 **Capital Programme 2014/15 to 2017/18**

The Executive considered a report from the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources that proposed the Capital Programme (excluding the Housing Revenue Account) for the four years from 1 April 2014.

Reason for decision: To enable the Council to confirm the Capital Programme as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan 2014 – 2018.

RECOMMENDED to Council

that the Capital Programme for 2014/15 to 2017/18 be approved.

E/13/125

Budget for the Housing Revenue Account (Housing Service) Business Plan

The Executive considered a report from the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources and the Executive Member for Social Care, Health and Housing that set out the financial position of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), including proposals concerning the debt strategy, investment potential and proposed increase in rents.

Reason for decision: To enable the Council to facilitate effective financial management and planning for the HRA.

RECOMMENDED to Council

That the HRA budget proposals for 2014/15 be approved, as follows:

- (a) that the HRA's debt portfolio and interest payments due in 2013/14 be noted;***
- (b) that the proposal for principal debt repayments to begin in 2017/18 be approved;***
- (c) that the use of £3.237m from the Major Repairs Reserve to finance part of the HRA Capital Programme for 2013/14 be approved;***
- (d) that the development of an Investment Plan during 2014/15 to set out future development objectives, subject to consultation with stakeholders be approved;***
- (e) that the HRA Revenue Budget for 2014/15 and the Landlord Service Business Plan summary at Appendices A and B to the report be approved;***
- (f) that the 2014/15 to 2017/18 HRA Capital Programme at Appendix C to the report be approved; and***
- (g) that the average rent increase of 5.46% for 2014/15 be approved in line with the national rental increase, as per the Government's Rent Convergence Policy.***

E/13/126

Treasury Management Strategy and Treasury Policy

The Executive considered a report from the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources that outlined the Treasury Policy and Treasury Management Strategy for 2014-15. No changes were proposed for the Treasury Management Policy adopted by the Council in February 2012.

The Treasury Management Strategy Statement was made up of three main components covering Economic Forecast, Borrowing Strategy and Investment Strategy. There was also a requirement to include the Council's policy on the use of financial derivatives, charges between the Housing Revenue Account and the General Fund and borrowing in advance of need.

The Leader of the Independent Group expressed his thanks to the Chief Finance Officer and his team.

Reasons for decision: To enable the Council to have an effective treasury management framework in place.

RECOMMENDED to Council

that the Treasury Management Policy and Strategy Statement for 2014/15 be approved.

E/13/127

Home to School Transport Policy

The Executive considered a report from the Executive Member for Children's Services that set out the proposed Home to School Transport Policy for Central Bedfordshire from September 2014. The proposed policy was designed to improve the application process and the way in which transport was provided. It had not been designed to secure financial efficiencies or to reduce the eligibility criteria.

In a response to a question, the Executive Member for Children's Services explained that this Policy did not preclude taking account of the impact of possible schools closures.

Reason for decisions: To ensure that the Council meets its statutory obligations and adopts a fair, equitable and transparent policy to support all pupils and their families and that could be implemented within the available resources.

RESOLVED

- 1. that the Home to School Transport Policy, attached at Appendix A to the report be adopted, to apply to all transport provided from 1 September 2014, without phasing the new policy in; and**
- 2. to delegate authority to the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Executive Member for Children's Services, to approve any subsequent minor variations to the Home to School Transport Policy.**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 9.30 a.m. and concluded at 11.20 a.m.)

Chairman

Dated