

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Thursday, 6 June 2013.

PRESENT

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

Cllrs Mrs R B Gammons
Ms A M W Graham
R W Johnstone
K C Matthews

Cllrs T Nicols
B Saunders
P Williams

Members in Attendance: Cllrs P N Aldis
D Bowater
I Dalgarno
B Wells
J N Young

Vice-Chairman of the Council
Deputy Executive
Members for Sustainable Communities - Services
Deputy Executive
Member for Sustainable Communities - Services
Executive Member for Sustainable Communities - Strategic Planning and Economic Development

Officers in Attendance: Ms D Clarke – Director of Improvement and Corporate Services
Mr M Coiffait – Community Services Director
Mrs P Everitt – Research and Business Support Officer
Ms C Harding – Corporate Policy Advisor (Equality & Diversity)
Mr J Partridge – Scrutiny Policy Adviser
Ms S Wileman – Service Development Manager

SCOSC/13/14 **Members' Interests**

There were no interests declared.

SCOSC/13/15 **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

There were no Chairman's announcements or communications.

SCOSC/13/16 Minutes

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 25 April 2013 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

SCOSC/13/17 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/13/18 Questions, Statements or Deputations

No questions, statements or deputations were received from members of the public in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Annex 1 of Part A4 of the Constitution.

SCOSC/13/19 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/13/20 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/13/21 Executive Member Update

The Executive Member for Sustainable Communities Services provided the Committee with an update on activities pertaining to his portfolio, which were not already included on the agenda. This included the following:-

- Funding that had been received from the Department for Transport for use on the Woodside Link.
- The consultation that was underway on the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan, which Members were asked to draw to the attention of Parish Councils. Several windfall applications had been approved by the Council since the Committee had previously considered the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan. Members were reminded of the importance of Development Management having regard to the Council's policy on Gypsy and Traveller site allocations.
- Matters relating to transport in Dunstable and the negative feedback that had been received via social media.

Members of the Committee asked several questions to which the Executive Member responded as follows:-

- The location of the proposed Gypsy and Traveller site at Faldo Road had not changed. After consideration it was proposed that it be located in the

north east corner of the field, which had been included in the previously received proposals.

- The Woodside link was on course to be delivered on schedule despite an additional 28-day consultation that had taken place. The Executive Member agreed to provide an update at the next meeting.
- The importance of the police making an example of motorists driving with undue care and attention in the vicinity of zebra crossings.
- He would provide an update outside of the meeting to all Members of the Committee regarding the Sundon Rail Freight Interchange.
- The positive impact of completing both the A5-M1 link and the Woodside Link. The A6-M1 link would be brought forward following the completion of both of these schemes having a positive effect on Flitwick.
- The Guided-Busway was on target for completion in September. It may be £2-3m over budget but CBC hoped to recoup their proportion.

In addition Cllr Matthews informed Members of the Committee that site visits had been arranged on 17 June for Development Management Committee Members to visit two potential Gypsy and Traveller sites for which applications had been submitted. All Councillors were invited to attend the site visits.

Noted the update

SCOSC/13/22 Equality and Diversity Strategy

The Director of Improvement and Corporate Services delivered a corporate priorities diversity quiz and drew the attention of the Committee to the following four corporate, overarching objectives and activities essential to ensuring that consideration of equality and diversity was embedded across all council activities:-

1. Strong leadership (championing diversity in our area, identifying objectives and monitoring outcomes).
2. Improved outcomes for vulnerable groups.
3. Good recruitment and management of a high performing workforce.
4. Improved engagement, civic participation and cohesion.

In response to the quiz and the further clarification provided by the Director of Improvement and Corporate Services Members of the Committee discussed the following:-

- The importance of Members taking a lead on equality and diversity.
- Whether Council funding was available to support schemes to improve disabled access to buildings. The Corporate Policy Adviser (equality and diversity) commented that whilst funds were not available work was undertaken with planning colleagues to ensure that designs and planning policy guidelines promoted disabled accessibility.
- Whether staff training was provided on cultural awareness. A Councillor referred to a specific incident where distress had been caused to a vulnerable resident as a result of cultural diversity. The Director of Improvement and Corporate Services commented that training was provided to staff on customer care and the importance of treating all people with respect. The Corporate Policy Adviser (equality and diversity) also commented that specific training was provided to officers in housing due to

the nature of their work. The specific case to which the Councillor referred could be used as a case-study in future training for officers.

- Workforce information that was available annually relating to Council staff.
- The Council did not engage in positive discrimination as it was unlawful.
- The strategy should refer specifically to the Gypsy and Traveller community. The Committee agreed that specific references to this group should be included in the strategy to ensure that they were supported in a fair manner.
- The process through which complaints could be registered regarding the comments of local MPs on Gypsies and Travellers. The Director of Improvement and Corporate Services commented that the response depended on the nature of the comments of the MP but there was a due process through which any complaints would be taken.

In addition the Executive Member requested that his thanks be recorded to those staff engaged in drafting the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan who continued to work without prejudice.

RECOMMENDED

That the strategy be supported and the comments of the Committee be considered by the Director of Improvement and Corporate Services.

SCOSC/13/23 Work Programme 2013-14 and Executive Forward Plan

Members discussed the Committee's forthcoming work programme and noted that the BEaR project would be presented to a future committee meeting to be confirmed. It was agreed that at future meetings if the Executive Member was unable to attend the Deputy Executive Member should be requested to provide an update.

RESOLVED

That the work programme be endorsed

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 11.25 a.m.)