

## CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Wednesday, 22 January 2014.

### PRESENT

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

Cllrs	Cllr K M Collins	Cllrs	T Nicols
	Ms A M W Graham		B Saunders
	K C Matthews		P Williams

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs R W Johnstone

Substitutes: Cllrs A Shadbolt (In place of R W Johnstone)

Members in Attendance: Cllrs P N Aldis  
R D Berry  
Mrs C F Chapman MBE  
D Jones  
B Wells

Deputy Executive  
Member for Sustainable  
Communities - Services

Officers in Attendance:

Mr R Fox	– Head of Development Planning and Housing Strategy
Mrs J Keyte	– Head of Community Safety
Mrs J Moakes	– Assistant Director Environmental Services
Mr J Partridge	– Scrutiny Policy Adviser
Mr T Saunders	– Assistant Director, Planning
Ms S Templeman	– Senior Finance Manager
Mrs L White	– Strategy and Policy Manager
Ms S Wileman	– Service Development Manager

Others in Attendance	CI Tania Coulson	Chief Inspector
	Mr O Martins	Bedfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner
	Mr L Mitchell	Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service
	Ms K Morgan	Bedfordshire Probation Trust

SCOSC/13/93 **Members' Interests**

None

SCOSC/13/94 **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman welcomed the Police and Crime Commissioner and those officers attending the meeting on behalf of Bedfordshire Police, Bedfordshire Probation Trust and Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service.

The Committee expressed its disappointment that the Director and Executive Members were not in attendance.

SCOSC/13/95 **Minutes**

**RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 13 December 2014 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.**

SCOSC/13/96 **Petitions**

None

SCOSC/13/97 **Questions, Statements or Deputations**

None

SCOSC/13/98 **Call-In**

None

SCOSC/13/99 **Requested Items**

The Chairman informed the Committee that items 16 and 17 as detailed on the agenda had previously been requested by a Member.

SCOSC/13/100 **Executive Member update**

None

SCOSC/13/101 **Community Safety Plan and Priorities (2014/15)**

The Head of Community Safety introduced a report that set out the three priorities and emerging issues that had been identified through the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Strategic Assessment for 2014/15. In particular the report highlighted increasing numbers of incidents of serious acquisitive crime and domestic abuse, which was in part due to a change in the definition of domestic abuse. The CSP had also identified several emerging issues that would be reviewed in more detail over the coming year. In addition the Committee were advised that references to the estimated growth in Gypsy and Traveller population and the number of

pitches needed to meet need would be amended in light of recent Overview and Scrutiny and Executive meetings.

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) advised the Committee that each of the CSPs priorities featured in his Police and Crime Plan. Crime across Central Bedfordshire was lower than in other parts of the County but there were areas that were more challenging. Bedfordshire Police did not receive a significant amount of funding and due to reductions in grants it had been necessary to enforce a recruitment freeze, as a result of which front-line policing had suffered. Bedfordshire Police was now in a position to recruit staff in order to rebalance this issue. Due to historical under-reporting of incidents of domestic abuse it was expected that the number of incidents would increase. This would demonstrate increase confidence in the Police approach to dealing with incidents of domestic abuse.

In light of the report the Committee and other Members in attendance discussed the following issues in detail:-

- How support was provided to children who were impacted by living in circumstances of domestic abuse. In response the PCC commented that in 2014 he would receive responsibility for commissioning support services for victims at which point he would consider the support provided in relation to domestic abuse that was currently delivered in partnership with other agencies. The Head of Community Safety also confirmed that support was provided to children in collaboration with the Children's Services directorate and the Safeguarding Children Board
- The process for dealing with repeat incidents of anti-social behaviour (ASB). The PCC advised that in light of a previous inspection Bedfordshire Police had taken action to address weaknesses in the control room to give assurance that performance had improved. CI Tania Coulson also commented that a structured process was in place to provide checks and balances and this started at the first point of contact from control room.
- The current numbers of Police Community Safety Officers (PCSOs) and Police Constables. The PCC advised the Committee that the numbers of PCSOs had increased to establishment level (42 in Central Bedfordshire). There were 80 officers recently recruited who would go into response policing.
- The degree of confidence in the crime statistics used to produce the strategic assessment risk matrix. The Head of Community Safety advised the Committee that in addition to statistics the risk matrix was developed in light of engagement and discussion with partners. If issues emerged during the year the CSP would be able to work together to mitigate the issue.
- The importance of the Council adding value where it was involved and not being seen to tamper in police business unnecessarily. In response the PCC commented that Bedfordshire would not be able to deal with some challenges without a multi-agency approach. Working in partnership provided a means of addressing problems with resources and encouraged the delivery of outcomes, Integrated Offender Management was one such example where partnership

working had add value. Multi-agency intervention in an issue could provide benefits to a range of partners rather than just one partner.

- Whether detection rates for ASB and burglary were rising in Central Bedfordshire. In response CI Tania Coulson commented that the detection rate had not fallen but rates were counted holistically so the rate for Central Bedfordshire could not be separated from that for Bedford and Luton.
- Whether it was acceptable that Parish Councils had to fund additional hours for PCSOs. In response the PCC commented it was important that Parish Councils received clarity on where there money was spent and the additional benefit they received for funding additional hours.
- Member concerns regarding plans of the PCC to close police stations as part of a review of the police estate. In response the PCC clarified there was no target in relation to savings on the estate. There was no timetable for the review but facilities would make services more accessible and would enable the police to more effectively spend resources elsewhere. Although the funding settlement had been worse than expected resulting in additional pressure the Innovation Fund would help to balance the budget.
- The negative perception that results publically from discussing the potential closure of police stations. The PCC advised the Committee that due to the importance of public perception and confidence he did not talk in terms of station closures. Accessibility of police stations by moving them would help to improve perceptions. CI Tania Coulson also commented on the importance of engaging with numerous people to encourage positive perceptions and to realise the benefits of collaboration. Communication and collaboration with Parish Councils and Councillors was to be encouraged in order to encourage more responsive Police force.

In response to a specific question from a Member CI Tania Coulson agreed to review a specific case where a Member had been told that the Police would not respond to an incident where an offender had been apprehended at the scene. It was clarified that in those circumstances the Police would provide a response as a priority.

**RECOMMENDED to Executive that the Committee supports the three Partnership Strategic Assessment priorities identified for 2014/15 as follows:-**

- a. reduce the number of victim of anti-social behaviour and supporting those who are most vulnerable;**
- b. reduce the number of victims of domestic abuse and supporting those who are most vulnerable;**
- c. reduce domestic burglary.**

**(Meeting adjourned at 1102hrs and reconvened at 1115hrs)**

## SCOSC/13/102 **Leisure Strategy**

The Policy and Strategy Manager (Leisure Services) provided a presentation that set out the purpose of the Leisure Strategy and its key

components. The presentation also outlined the information detailed within each chapter of the Strategy and the next steps in its implementation in order for it to be adopted as interim Technical Guidance to inform the emerging Development Strategy. Public consultation had been undertaken with regards to the Strategy, the outcomes of which were outlined in the report.

In light of the report and the presentation the Committee discussed the following issues in detail:-

- Whether it was appropriate to call it a 'leisure' Strategy as this could encompass many different facilities. The Strategy and Policy Manager clarified that people had different interpretations of what constituted 'leisure'.
- The Council is developing a questionnaire for Parish Councils to identify where the Council may be able to provide them with CBC land for new allotments and cemeteries.
- The positive nature of including burial grounds and cemeteries in the Strategy.
- The need to identify additional football pitches in the Strategy for Cranfield as proposed developments would not address existing deficiency. In response the Strategy and Policy Manager confirmed the data regarding Cranfield would be reviewed.
- Whether it was feasible to expect sufficient Section 106 contributions from the North Houghton Regis development to fund a leisure centre in Houghton Regis. The Policy and Strategy Manager clarified that officers were working with the development consortium to achieve an indoor leisure facility on the development, however, this is within the financial constraints of the viability assessment. At the current time a new Houghton Regis leisure centre is predicated on S106 contributions as there is currently no CBC capital budget for it. In addition, the Assistant Director Planning clarified that there were potential contributions from the HRN1 application and future planning applications in the Houghton Regis, Dunstable and North Luton area. At this stage however, there were no firm guarantees that the value of the HRN1 scheme would be of a sufficient level to deliver a contribution towards a new leisure centre and Development Management would have to weigh up various priorities to determine whether a new leisure centre was of higher priority than other planning obligations (for example transport). If the Council implemented a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), the Council would have greater flexibility over the use of CIL funding, and could prioritise spend of CIL funds towards a new leisure centre rather than other infrastructure requirements.
- Convenient access to open space will be a requirement when delivering new development being planned for locally. It was important that the Council was driven by the large growth agenda and that there was clarity in delivering convenient accessibility to local open space.
- Indoor cycling facilities are not included in the Leisure Strategy despite its growing popularity. The Policy and Strategy Manager clarified that indoor cycling facilities are a specialist activity and these are not within the scope of the strategy, however, cycling activities are included in Chapter 4: the Physical Activity Strategy,.

- How quality improvements had been defined. The Policy and Strategy Manager clarified that quality recommendations were based on site-specific research which could be used to inform how Town and Parish Councils could achieve developer funding, or apply for external funding.. At the next stage the Council will consult with asset owners to assess schemes in terms of viability and this information will be used in the Action Plans which will be developed
- Whether it was feasible to expect Town and Parish Councils to provide funding and deliver schemes. The Assistant Director Planning commented that Members might wish to consider whether additional capital funding was necessary to provide a fund that groups could draw from in order to deliver specific schemes. The Council would support Town and Parish Councils in applying for other pots of external funding that might be available to deliver schemes.
- Arrangements that could be put in place to ensure smaller towns and villages were prioritised for funding that arose from a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The Assistant Director Planning commented that arrangements for prioritising the use of CIL would be developed after members had considered what an appropriate level of CIL should be. At that point, the Committee would get the opportunity to consider how the use of CIL might be prioritised.

**RECOMMENDED that Executive**

- 1. Following formal consultation required for adoption as Technical Guidance, approve the minor amendments to the adopted Leisure Strategy Chapter 1: the Leisure Facilities Strategy**
- 2. Note the comments of the Committee in relation to the process and proposed policy standards and facility recommendations of the draft Leisure Strategy, Chapters 2 and 3.**
- 3. Adopt the Leisure Strategy (Chapters 1, 2 and 3) for Central Bedfordshire and as Technical Guidance for development management purposes.**

**SCOSC/13/103 Community Services - Draft Budget 2014/15 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2014-2018**

The Senior Finance Manager introduced a report that outlined the Community Services draft Budget, Medium Term Financial Plan and outlined the efficiencies and key pressures for the directorate. An additional paper was also circulated and explained to Members that outlined changes to the proposed capital budget following the Executive meeting on 14 January 2014.

**RECOMMENDED that the Council's draft budget for 2014/15 Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Programme 2014/15 to 2017/18 in relation to Community Services be supported.**

**SCOSC/13/104 Regeneration and Business Support Services - Draft Budget 2014/15 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2014-2018**

The Senior Finance Manager introduced a report that outlined the Regeneration and Business Services draft Budget, Medium Term Financial

Plan and outlined the efficiencies and key pressures for the directorate. An additional paper was also circulated and explained to Members that outlined changes to the proposed capital budget following the Executive meeting on 14 January 2014.

**RECOMMENDED that the Council's draft budget for 2014/15 Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Programme 2014/15 to 2017/18 in relation to the Regeneration and Business Support Service be supported.**

SCOSC/13/105 **Fees and Charges (2014/15)**

The Senior Finance Manager introduced a report that proposed the revised fees and charges for the Community Services and Regeneration and Business Support Services directorates. Changes were highlighted in relation to several specific areas including libraries, pest control, parking charges, room hire, and Private Hire taxi fees.

In response to questions from Members the Senior Finance Manager agreed to provide clarification with regard to Hackney Carriages fees and whether the Council could set its own discounted prices on penalty charge notices .

It was also commented that whilst the Council set a charge for dog fouling it did not appear that anyone had been successfully charged for that offence.

**NOTED the proposed fees and charges for the Community Services and Regeneration and Business Support Services directorates.**

SCOSC/13/106 **Street scene and environmental service issues**

The Deputy Executive Member introduced a report that responded to several questions from a Member regarding a range of street scene and environmental services. Several questions were raised, which were responded to as follows:-

- All vulnerable gullies were visited and emptied approximately three times a year, where there was a particular urgent issue it was normally cleared within 24 hours. Other non-vulnerable gullies were cleared less frequently.
- The Council did not own any small sweeping vehicles, cycleways were predominantly cleared by hand brushing. A Member commented on the poor state of cycleways and suggested that the Council consider whether it would be feasible to purchase small ATVs that could be used to make it easier to clear debris. It was also commented that the Council needed to review the use of maintenance strips by cyclists as they were often filled with debris and cyclists were pushed often into using them by road users. The Deputy Executive Member agreed to look into this and respond to Members by email.
- Previous problems in relation of weed spraying had been brought to the attention of the contract manager who has advised contractors to take greater care when spraying.

- Maintenance of trees located on the highway was the Council's responsibility, where trees were overhanging onto the highway from a property the Council would advise the land owner to cut it back and give them a timescale within which to do the work. If it was not completed within that timeframe the Council would undertake the work and charge the land owner. The tree strategy that was referred to in the report would relate to trees located on the highway.
- There was an application process for dog bins, if the application was accepted the Council would pay for and service it providing that it was to be located on the highway.

**NOTED the update.**

SCOSC/13/107

### **Road and Pavement Maintenance Performance**

The Assistant Director Environmental Services advised the Committee that in 2012 satisfaction with performance on road and pavement maintenance had been below the national average. A project was established in 2012 that sought to improve satisfaction focusing on four individual workstreams. Focus groups were undertaken that led to the Council developing a revised policy for pothole repairs and a more joined-up service. The Council had also sought to minimise the number of multiple visits that would be necessary to a site in order to remedy a problem. Recent survey results showed that satisfaction had improved in comparison to 2012/13 and the Council was on track to achieve its target for 2016. The biggest number of calls and complaints currently received by the service related to issues with street lighting.

In response to questions from Members the Deputy Executive Member commented that there was £1.3m in the draft Budget for 2014/15 to continue to resolve category one and category two potholes on site at the same time. With regard to tarmac being overlaid on concrete, if there was structural integrity the potholes were not repaired.

**NOTED the report.**

SCOSC/13/108

### **Work Programme and Executive Forward Plan**

The Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Manager advised the Committee of several recent additions to the work programme as follows:-

- South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership
- Central Bedfordshire Design Guide
- Central Bedfordshire Development Strategy

The Chairman also advised that the types of taxis used within Central Bedfordshire might be an item to be added to the agenda in the future.

**RECOMMENDED that the work programme be approved subject to the additions detailed above.**

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



p.m.)

Chairman .....

Date.....