

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 November 2014.

PRESENT

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

Cllrs	D Bowater	Cllrs	A Shadbolt
	C C Gomm		B J Spurr
	Ms A M W Graham		P Williams
	K C Matthews		J N Young
	B Saunders		

Members in Attendance:	Cllrs	P N Aldis	
		Mrs D B Gurney	
		D J Hopkin	Deputy Executive Member for Corporate Resources
		J G Jamieson	Leader of the Council and Chairman of the Executive
		B Wells	Deputy Executive Member for Community Services
		R D Wenham	Deputy Executive Member for Corporate Resources

Officers in Attendance:	Ms S Chapman	–	Development Planning Project and Process Team Leader
	Mr M Coiffait	–	Community Services Director
	Mr J Cushing	–	Head of Investment
	Mr B Finlayson	–	Head of Capital Projects
	Mr R Fox	–	Head of Development Planning and Housing Strategy
	Ms T Harris (Waste)	–	Head of Waste Services
	Mrs R Preen	–	Scrutiny Policy Adviser

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SCOSC/14/41. Members' Interests

None.

SCOSC/14/42. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman announced that an update on the Waste Procurement Strategy had been included in the Agenda as an urgent item. The Chairman also welcomed Heather Price as Head of Business Performance.

SCOSC/14/43. **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 18 September 2014 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

SCOSC/14/44. **Petitions**

None.

SCOSC/14/45. **Questions, Statements or Deputations**

The Chairman confirmed that one member of the public had registered to speak and they would be invited to speak at the commencement of Item 10.

SCOSC/14/46. **Call-In**

None.

SCOSC/14/47. **Requested Items**

None.

SCOSC/14/48. **Executive Members Updates**

Cllr Spurr updated the Committee with regards to the role of Highways Area Stewards returning as an 'in house' function. He explained that a Supervisor would be appointed as the current post holder was leaving, there would be no TUPE requirements for any staff. It was confirmed that if there were any changes to contact details for these Officers, Members would be updated and a revised list of contacts circulated.

Cllr Young informed the Committee there had been an application from PRADERA to seek permission for several companies to operate from the White Lion Retail Park. Quadrant Retail Park had been sold to Edinburgh House but at the present time it was not envisaged this would be a substantial development.

SCOSC/14/49. Superfast Broadband

The Chairman invited one speaker to address the Committee in relation to Superfast Broadband. The speaker raised issues that in summary related to the following:-

- Broadband speeds in Bourne End were incredibly slow, averaging 1.3 Megabits per Second (Mbps) which she felt was unacceptable.
- The lack of speed negatively impacted students, those working from home and residents living in the area.
- Getting BT to take action had been problematic and it was often difficult to speak with the most appropriate person.
- The speaker asked the Committee and Council as a whole to put pressure on BT to remedy the problem where residents could not.

In response The Deputy Executive Member for Corporate Resources explained that Central Bedfordshire Council was aware of the issue in Bourne End and said he fully appreciated that Internet access was an essential service for many people. He explained that Bourne End would not be included in the first phase of Superfast Broadband delivery but during the first quarter of 2015 the Council would have a clearer picture as to which areas would be included in the second phase. The Council was also pushing for very remote areas to be included in the next phase but the engineering costs for that were very expensive. The Head of Investment went on to say that his department did have some resource to look at particularly poor broadband speed areas and agreed to investigate further. The Head of Investment also explained that the last part of the current project was to increase every dwelling within Central Bedfordshire to 2Mbps by 2016. However, those who were due to receive Superfast Broadband (24 Mbps) would not also receive support for the 2Mbps increase as it would be a duplication of funds.

In light of the report and the comments raised by the speaker Members discussed the following issues in detail:-

- Whether BT was the most appropriate provider given the difficulties in resolving historic problems and lack of speed. The Head of Investment explained that only two companies had gone through the tendering process, one had withdrawn, leaving BT as the only likely option. The Deputy Executive Member for Corporate Resources conceded that it was disappointing so few companies had come forward for tender but due process with regards to competition and tendering had been followed under the UK Framework Agreement, ensuring competitive procedures had been adhered to.
- The Committee were reassured that Central Bedfordshire would receive the appropriate share of the funds available and allocated to Local Authority areas.
- Concerns regarding those homes and businesses currently receiving speeds of less than 2Mbps and the length of time before they would receive Superfast speeds, which had led to a perception of a two tier system with regards to sufficient internet access. The Deputy Executive Member for Corporate Resources sought to reassure the Committee that

the Council would combat this by ensuring recent aspects regarding planning requirements for new developments were adhered to, in particular the need for appropriate broadband installation. Targets were for 95% of dwellings to have access to superfast broadband by 2017.

RECOMMENDED to support the continued investment in delivering Superfast Broadband through investment in the Phase Two Broadband Project.

SCOSC/14/50. Allocations Local Plan Scoping Report

The Head of Development Planning & Housing Strategy delivered a presentation and in response to Members highlighted the following:-

- There would be a review of boundaries including Green Belt and Settlement Envelopes; proposals were being drafted to allocate non-strategic sites for development up to 2031; providing standards for development was critical.
- Proposals to award Green Space Status to Aspley Guise, which provided a similar status as Green Belt and would afford it certain protections.
- Opportunities to develop small businesses, particularly in light of the Care Home shortage.
- At least 2,000 new homes would be created as part of an overall 31,000 provision.
- Confirmation that local authority land would be considered on its merits for suitability alongside external sites when the call for sites was implemented.
- Confirmation that Leighton Buzzard had been considered inappropriate for Garden City status and there were currently no other areas being proposed as viable options.
- There would be a need for more social housing in the future and this would be factored in as part of any development along with robust infrastructure requirements as a pre-condition.
- The importance of evidencing that the Council's plan was robust and the Committee were reassured that Officers were working to ensure this was the case.

Members expressed concerns regarding the possible creation of a large settlement envelope in Eggington. The Head of Development Planning and Housing Strategy explained that the area would have the opportunity to apply for Green Space Status. Members also raised concerns with regards to a small development in Heath and Reach, on the border with Milton Keynes, which if further permissions were agreed by Milton Keynes Council could potentially double the size of the development. The Head of Development Planning & Housing Strategy explained that permission had been granted for an appropriate number of homes in the area and Central Bedfordshire Council would work closely with Milton Keynes Council so as to ensure the avoidance of additional and inappropriate numbers of houses being built there should the issue be raised in future. The Committee was reassured that local communities would be consulted and their views taken into consideration with regards to any developments.

Members also discussed the possible allocation of dedicated green space in Houghton Regis, which it was requested be brought forward to the Allocations Local Plan.

RECOMMENDED that:-

- (1) The Committee support the broad parameters for the scope and content of the Allocations Local Plan provided it included information regarding Green Space Areas**
- (2) The Committee support the proposed call for sites in November/December 2014**
- (3) Specific areas must be deemed able to cope with any increase in demand as a result of additional development and the appropriate infrastructure must be put in place to support any development.**

SCOSC/14/51. Q1 Performance Report

The Executive Member for Sustainable Communities introduced the Q1 Performance Report, which focussed on a set of indicators in support of the monitoring of progress against the priorities in the Medium Term Plan (MTP). Overall performance in Q1 was strong but there were areas where performance could be improved and Officers were working hard to address these issues.

RECOMMENDED that the Committee acknowledge the continuing overall strong performance in Quarter 1 and that recommend Officers further investigate and resolve underperforming indicators as appropriate.

SCOSC/14/52. Work Programme 2014/15 and Executive Forward Plan

RECOMMENDED that the Sustainable Communities OSC Work Programme be agreed subject to the addition of an item regarding Regeneration and Business opportunities being considered by the authority.

SCOSC/14/53. Waste Procurement Strategy Update

The Head of Capital Projects and the Head of Waste Services delivered a presentation regarding the Waste Procurement Strategy, the details of which included:-

- The Residual Waste Disposal Contract.
- The Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) Operational Contract.
- The Green Waste Disposal Contract.
- The redevelopment of the HWRC sites.
- The development of a Waste Park at Thorn Turn.

Site design goals in respect of the redevelopment of the HWRC sites were identified as:-

- Improved site safety.
- Improved traffic flow.
- Increased recycling rates.

It was confirmed that all of the HWRC sites would be refurbished except Dunstable, which would be replaced by a new site at Thorn Turn. A Member expressed concern at the length of time each site would be closed and asked whether the department anticipated complaints. It was explained that a phased delivery would be deployed to ensure continuation of service at alternate sites. Redevelopment was likely to require the closure of each site for a period of between 4 to 6 months and construction was expected to start during the summer of 2015. Alternative options regarding green waste disposal were discussed such as providing green bins at or near the existing sites for a short while; the department confirmed they would be exploring all available options.

Members requested details regarding entry and exit points for several sites, in particular Thorn Turn and Ampthill as there were concerns regarding traffic management. It was confirmed that more data was required from the transport team regarding the proposed entrances and close liaison with them would ensure the proposals were appropriate for each area.

Members requested details regarding green waste disposal due to occasional issues regarding foul odours when using the open window process. The Head of Waste Services confirmed that the process was valid, environmentally sound and the most appropriate option with regards to costs. The Deputy Executive Member for Sustainable Communities invited all Members to take part in site visits with regards to the issue of odours and waste disposal processes.

RECOMMENDED that the Waste Procurement Strategy Update be noted.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.40 p.m.)