

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Thursday, 20 August 2015.

PRESENT

Cllr D McVicar (Chairman)
Cllr B Saunders (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs D Bowater
F Firth
C C Gomm
Ms A M W Graham

Cllrs J Kane
K C Matthews
R Morris

Members in Attendance: Cllrs R D Berry
A D Brown Deputy Executive
Member for Community
Services
E Ghent
Ms C Maudlin Deputy Executive
Member for Stronger
Communities
B J Spurr Executive Member for
Community Services
R C Stay
A M Turner Executive Member for
Stronger Communities
B Wells Deputy Executive
Member for Community
Services
J N Young Executive Member for
Regeneration

Officers in Attendance: Mrs D Broadbent-Clarke – Director of Improvement and
Corporate Services
Mr M Coiffait – Director of Community Services
Mr A Davie – Development Infrastructure Group
Manager
Steve Lakin – Principal Highways Officer
Mr J Longhurst – Director of Regeneration and
Business
Mr J Partridge – Corporate Policy Manager
Mrs R Preen – Scrutiny Policy Adviser
Ms S Templeman – Senior Finance Manager
J Yandall – Head of Investment and
Employment

SCOSC/15/12 Members' Interests

None.

SCOSC/15/13 Chairman's Announcements and Communications

None.

SCOSC/15/14 Minutes

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 18 June 2015 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

SCOSC/15/15 Petitions

None.

SCOSC/15/16 Questions, Statements or Deputations

None.

SCOSC/15/17 Call-In

None.

SCOSC/15/18 Requested Items

None.

SCOSC/15/19 Executive Members Updates

The Executive Member for Regeneration informed the Committee that there would be a public consultation with regards to the Stratton Park development in Biggleswade. The Council had received a £50k grant from DEFRA to carry out a Local Development Order, the intention was to create a food enterprise zone and the company Ryvita had already shown an interest in the site.

The Executive Member for Community Services informed the Committee that Ringway Jacobs had secured the highways contract from 2016 for 7 years. He highlighted the outstanding work of the Directorate in the administration of the contract and the smooth transition of responsibilities.

The Committee were informed that the redevelopment of the Dunstable Leisure Centre was moving along at the appropriate pace. As progress was made, the item would be presented to the Committee for consideration. The redevelopment of Flitwick Leisure centre was also progressing well.

The Chairman queried whether as part of the highways contract some services would be split, such as grass cutting. The Director for Community Services confirmed that a range of possible options were being considered with regards to service delivery under the new contract.

A member also raised a query with regards to staffing structures under the new highways contract. The Executive Member for Community Services confirmed that more details would be made available when they were known.

SCOSC/15/20 **Jeans Way Bus Stop Consultation**

The Principal Highways Officer delivered a report on the outcomes of a public consultation to a proposed bus stop in Jean's Way Dunstable. There were some public concerns regarding the proposal but these would be mitigated before the commencement of work. Overall the response had been positive, with over 70% of respondents in favour.

In response to queries the Executive Member for Regeneration explained that the Luton to Dunstable busway was a rapid transport system, which travelled to specific destinations. As Tesco was not a specific destination for the busway, it had been decided to erect the bus stop at the most appropriate alternative location, Jean's Way having been identified as such.

A Member of the Committee expressed concerns regarding the results of the consultation as a high percentage stated that they didn't currently use the busway. Concerns were also raised over the issue of parking and the measures in place to address this. In response the Principal Highways Officer explained that the measures to address parking concerns were currently under consideration. It was anticipated that a high percentage of those respondents who stated that they did not currently use the busway would do so once the stop was in place.

A Member also queried whether the hospital was a destination for the busway. It was confirmed that although the nearest stop was 700 metres away from the hospital the service would provide hospital workers with reliable transport, reduce the use of cars and improve the problems experienced with parking in the area. Patients wanting to use a service which would take them directly to the hospital could utilise any number of other buses which would take them 'door to door'.

RECOMMENDED:-

- 1. That the Committee acknowledge the positive result of the recent public consultation and support the construction of a new bus stop at Jeans Way in Dunstable;**
- 2. That specific details with regards to parking provision be provided to the Committee in October 2015.**

SCOSC/15/21 **Anglian Water update**

The Chairman invited three speakers to address the Committee in relation to water supply problems in the Moggerhanger area. The speakers raised issues that in summary related to the following:-

- Residents suffering with water backwash and sewage, leading to public health concerns.
- Inadequate surface drainage causing flooding in certain areas.
- Low to non-existent water pressure.
- The impact of burst water mains elsewhere in Central Bedfordshire impacting on Moggerhanger.
- The lack of feedback provided by Anglian Water to planning applications in the area that would impact on the supply of water to Moggerhanger.
- The local water infrastructure was not fit for purpose and could not cope with further housing development.
- An investment of £4000 that had been made to improve the village hall directly related to inadequate water supply infrastructure.
- The lack of interdepartmental communication within Anglian Water in relation to known areas of concern.

In light of the concerns of residents Anglian Water delivered a presentation which highlighted areas such as legislation and regulation, why and how Anglian Water engaged in the planning process and the challenges and opportunities they faced in this regard.

In light of the presentation and the concerns raised by the speakers, Members queried Anglian Water's policies in responding to planning applications the Council sent them. In response it was confirmed that Anglian Water sought to ensure that the infrastructure was sufficient to facilitate any development and that the usual threshold for their input in planning applications was 5 Hectares or more. In acknowledgement of the concerns raised, Anglian Water suggested it would be beneficial to communicate more regularly within their own internal departments to gain an understanding of operational issues and to recognise that smaller developments could have a further, negative impact on known sensitive areas.

Members expressed concerns that Anglian Water were not prioritising customer concerns appropriately, that the 'right to connect' should protect the environment and customers. Facilitating development should be a secondary concern. Members also felt that Anglian Water were not meeting their duty to respond appropriately to planning applications leaving the Council with no recourse but to approve planning applications, leading to levels of dissatisfaction as expressed by the speakers.

Members also discussed the impact of the number of future homes required across Central Bedfordshire on the existing infrastructure and queried Anglian Water's plans to cope with this. In response the representative from Anglian Water agreed that a collaborative approach and improved communication with partners, including the Council, was essential.

Members thanked the representatives from Anglian Water for attending and for their input but asked for specific responses to the concerns raised by the speakers from Moggerhanger. In response Anglian Water agreed to respond to the questions raised.

AGREED that a detailed written response be provided by Anglian Water to residents via the Council and that further liaison be arranged at a later date between Anglian Water and the Council's Development Management Committee.

SCOSC/15/22 Central Bedfordshire's Five Year Plan: 2015-20

The Director for Improvement and Corporate Resources delivered a report and presentation which set out the draft priorities in relation to the Council's Five Year Plan.

Members of the Committee considered the challenges relating to providing the appropriate level of support and provision for the vulnerable and elderly with regards to promoting independence. The Executive Member for Regeneration highlighted the importance of ensuring support hubs were located within small market towns as well as the larger urban areas, so as to deliver the same level of care to those living within rural areas.

Members agreed that the delivery of the Plan was as important as the strategic vision and requested that Officers provide details of proposed delivery. The Chairman also highlighted the lack of clarity with regards to 'Developing the Vision for Education' and asked for more detail to be included as to what the vision included.

RECOMMENDED:-

- 1. That the Committee support the strategic vision and priorities listed within the Five Year Plan;**
- 2. That Officers provide more detail as suggested by Members in the document to be provided to the public.**

SCOSC/15/23 Q1 Budget Monitoring Report 2015/16

The Senior Finance Manager delivered a presentation to the Committee, detailing the financial position of the Directorate at the end of Quarter 4 and areas of underspend, overspend and outstanding debt for Quarter 1.

RECOMMENDED that the strong financial performance of the Council be acknowledged.

SCOSC/15/24 EUROPEAN STRUCTURAL INVESTMENT FUNDS (ESIF)

The Head of Investment and Employment delivered a report and presentation which highlighted funding opportunities available through the European Structural Investment Fund (ESIF) and informed Members of bids the Council intended to make.

In light of the presentation Members discussed the importance of these bids to the economic regeneration of Central Bedfordshire. The Director for Regeneration and Business confirmed that appropriate bidding for funds was

critical in terms of employment and skills for the future. The bids and funding underpinned the supply chains behind key skills and the Council was committed to ensuring people were appropriately skilled in order to meet employment demand. The Executive Member for Regeneration also confirmed that securing the funding supported the priorities of the Council to be a great place to live and work. Business support and adult skills were funded via the DWP and ESIF grants and so didn't cost the Council any money. The measure of match funding with services instead of money was also very economical.

In response to a Member query the Head of Investment and Employment confirmed that a management information (MI) system was currently in place but due to the need to work with more partners it was not fit for purpose. Members expressed concerns that the additional pressure placed on the IT department would be significant and as a result consideration was necessary as to how this would be addressed. The Head of Investment and Employment explained that Corporate Services had recommended the option of outsourcing the MI system and this was being explored with Corporate Services. Members requested that the Council's IT Strategy be made available to them and it was confirmed that this item would be delivered at the Corporate Resources OSC in October 2015.

The Chairman requested that caution be taken when securing funding as it was important to ensure projects were fully funded throughout their term.

RECOMMENDED that the Committee support the approach to bid for ESIF funds and that details of IT pressures be provided to Members via the Corporate Resources OSC at their next meeting.

SCOSC/15/25 **Planning Enforcement**

Members of the Committee were provided with details of concerns regarding planning enforcement and were invited to consider measures by which this could be addressed. Councillor Stay highlighted that enforcement was a high profile and important service, he expressed concerns around resource and staff capacity, which he felt led to problems on occasion with service delivery.

The Development Infrastructure Group Manager delivered a presentation outlining breaches of planning control, the departmental structure and enforcement action taken since 2013 to date.

Members discussed the need to review in further detail the concerns regarding communication and the speed with which planning enforcement cases were resolved. The Committee agreed to establish a small group of Members of the Sustainable Communities constituted of Councillors Matthews, B Saunders, Graham and Gomm to review these concerns and report back to the Committee.

RECOMMENDED that a small group of Members comprising those identified above meet to discuss the pertinent issues on planning enforcement and report back to the OSC.

SCOSC/15/26 **Work Programme 2015/16 and Executive Forward Plan**

RECOMMENDED that the Sustainable Communities OSC Work Programme be agreed subject to the addition of planning enforcement in December 2015.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.55 p.m.)