

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Friday, 1 July 2016.

PRESENT

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

Cllrs	Ms A M W Graham	Cllrs	R Morris
	J Kane		G Perham
	K C Matthews		

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs D Bowater
Ms C Maudlin

Substitutes: Cllrs Mrs C F Chapman MBE
M A G Versallion

Members in Attendance:	Cllrs	A D Brown	Deputy Executive Member for Community Services
		I Dalgarno	Deputy Executive Member for Community Services
		B Wells	Deputy Executive Member for Community Services
		J N Young	Executive Member for Regeneration

Officers in Attendance:	Miss C Ashley	– Administration Officer
	Mr S Barrett	– Community Safety Operations Manager
	Chief Inspector N Lyll	– Bedfordshire Police
	Ms Michelle Marley	– ASB and statutory nuisance team leader
	Mr M Coiffait	– Director of Community Services
	Mrs R Preen	– Scrutiny Policy Advisor
	Chief Inspector R Quinn	– Bedfordshire Police
	Ms S Templeman	– Senior Finance Manager

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SCOSC/16/1 **Members' Interests**

None.

SCOSC/16/2 **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman informed the Committee that the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee (CS OSC) had requested that parking concerns around schools be considered by the Sustainable Communities OSC and the Committee discussed measures to address the issues.

A Member of the Committee and the Chairman of the CS OSC expressed concern that the issue had been raised several months prior with no action to date and suggested it would be productive if an Executive Member could oversee a cross directorate working group to produce proposals to amend the current policy.

The Executive Member for Regeneration highlighted that the current policy encouraged sustainable methods of transport to school, the need to liaise with head teachers and cited concerns with the cost of additional ground to provide parking.

Members agreed that a small task force be responsible for considering measures to address the concerns raised, the findings of which would be reported back to the CS OSC at a future meeting.

SCOSC/16/3 **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 17 March 2016 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

SCOSC/16/4 **Petitions**

None.

SCOSC/16/5 **Questions, Statements or Deputations**

None.

SCOSC/16/6 **Call-In**

None.

SCOSC/16/7 **Requested Items**

None.

SCOSC/16/8 **Executive Members Updates**

The Chairman announced apologies for the Executive Member of Community Services and agreed that an explanation would be provided at the next meeting

with regards to a recent traffic management decision relating to Downs Road in Dunstable.

The Executive Member for Regeneration informed the Committee that the draft sustainability criteria for the Local Plan was out to public consultation and that an all Member briefing had been arranged for 13 July 2016. The Gypsy and Traveller (G&T) accommodation aspects were an integral part of the Local Plan and were out to separate consultation and there was also a Green Belt review underway. It was confirmed that the Directorate were seeking to appoint an enforcement officer with regards to managing G&T unlawful encampments which were becoming an increasing problem across the region impacting time, officer resource and the local community. The Director reinforced the need for a sustainable and long term solution to the problem.

The Deputy Executive Member for Community Services informed the Committee that teams were working hard to deal with asbestos at Dunstable Library and that the consultation with regards to Dunstable Leisure Centre was still ongoing, but so far the response had been wholly positive. The outcome of the consultation would be delivered at a future Committee meeting.

The Deputy Executive Member for Community Services updated the Committee on progress to works at the Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC's) across the region and confirmed that problems with grass cutting were being addressed, that contractors were revisiting areas to treat them again and that where cutting had not been carried out to the required standard, measures had been taken to ensure equipment was appropriate for the task. The Chairman requested an update to be provided at the next Committee meeting.

SCOSC/16/9 Police Restructure Update

The Chief Inspector for Bedfordshire Police provided the Committee with an update to the recent Police restructure which included information setting out the delegation of the responsibilities of each Chief Inspector for the North and South of the region, increases in community police officers to include a community PCSO, acting as a point of contact for local partners, a rural crimes officer, traveller liaison officer and the creation of an investigative community crime team. The Chief Inspector acknowledged that in recent years concerns had been raised with regards to rural and community policing and that this restructure would address this.

In response to a Member query the Chief Inspector thought it unlikely that the new Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) would commission another restructure but instead assign more resource the force which had been lacking in previous years.

The Chief Inspector informed the Committee that six volunteers had been appointed, one function being to improve and reinstate communications with Town and Parish Councils. Crime statistics would again be provided and they would engage in local meetings as they had in previous years. A recent seminar had been held with Town and Parish Councils in the North of Central Bedfordshire with a meeting to be held in the South in the very near future.

Members agreed that these developments were very welcome and were pleased with the direction of travel and focus for the force.

The Chairman queried whether there was a focus on prevention of ASB given that a recent HMIC report found Bedfordshire to be a largely reactive force and queried the level of coordination with partners, particularly the Community Safety Partnership. In response the Chief Inspector confirmed that the new structure would lend itself to preventative policing, the force were making improvements at recognising the cross cutting nature of service delivery and were always willing to proactively engage with other agencies where necessary.

In response to a Member query the Chief Inspector confirmed that the force encouraged local neighbourhood watch schemes, volunteer groups and that it would be beneficial for Members to link in with these groups, creating a conduit to assist with the dissemination of information. The Chief Inspector confirmed that he and his colleague would be the primary liaison officers for Members of the Authority and could be contacted whenever necessary.

NOTED the update and acknowledged the positive direction of travel for the Police Force.

SCOSC/16/10 **ASB Overview & Scrutiny Presentation 1 July 2016**

The Community Safety Operations Manager delivered a presentation which set out the Council's approach to managing Anti Social Behaviour (ASB), explaining that the focus was victim led, and outlined recent changes to legislation including the ASB Case Review (Community Trigger), Civil Injunction, Public Space Protection Order (PSPO), and the Community Protection Notice. He encouraged Members to consider promoting the ASB Case Review when in discussion with constituents who are unsatisfied about the way their reports of ASB have been dealt with (full details on the Council website including application form).

The ASB and Statutory Nuisance team leader briefed Members on the resource make-up of her team and the range of issues that they investigate and case manage: domestic statutory nuisance (noise, smoke, and light), fly-tipping, ASB e.g. neighbours and youth nuisance, fly-tipping, littering, graffiti, fly-posting, and unauthorised advertising of vehicles.. The team highlighted the proactive approach used when dealing with cases of fly tipping, the close relationship with the rural liaison officer and the importance of educating the public with regards to passing waste to unlicensed carriers and the subsequent penalties involved.

Members queried the process for investigating statutory nuisance. In response the ASB and Statutory Nuisance team leader confirmed that cases could be reopened if necessary and that complainants could also take their own action against offenders under legislation within the Environmental Protection Act.

In response to a Member query about the large case load of the ASB and Statutory Nuisance – approx.. 900 cases per year – the ASB and Statutory

Nuisance team leader advised that comparisons with other authorities were problematic due to varying structures and recording practices.

The Committee requested liaison with the Magistrates Court in order to understand the level of sanctions imposed which often appeared too low in relation to the offence committed, with many of the penalties levied at the originator of the waste and not the carrier disposing of it. A discussion arose around the ease by which the public could dispose of waste and it was conceded that it would be difficult to prevent people who refused to use the HWRC's and instead chose to fly tip, with Members concluding that in these instances penalties needed to be prohibitive so as to discourage such activity as much as possible.

Members expressed concern at the level of nuisance cyclists in the South of the region and that measures to tackle the problem had not yielded results. The Environmental Protection Officer confirmed methods used to identify offenders, the close liaison with schools and parents as many offenders were under the age of 16, but acknowledged ongoing difficulties in improving the situation.

The Chief Inspector for Bedfordshire Police delivered a presentation which set out the Force's approach to dangerous motorcycles in the region, in particular the South of Central Bedfordshire, titled Operation Meteor. The Chief Inspector explained the difference between those legally riding motorcycles who required education with regards where to ride safely and those deliberately breaking the law, with little regard for the consequences or the impact upon local communities. The police were ensuring pressure was applied to those adults responsible for the young people involved in nuisance motorcycle activity, with sanctions including a possible risk to tenancy agreements due to the anti social nature of the offences. The police force were working proactively to educate young people, family and friends of offenders with regards to the dangers posed when riding unsafely and the associated impact upon the local community. Additional officers were being trained in the use of motorcycles which would help remedy the situation over time.

In response to a Member query the Chief Inspector confirmed that Go Pro cameras were used which allowed officers to capture events as they occurred and that CCTV data was often of a high enough quality to support the identification of offenders. A discussion arose regards the use of tracking devices being fitted to motorcycles but it was conceded that this would be down to the owners with the cost often prohibitive.

A presentation was provided which detailed the work of the Community Alcohol Partnership which has been formed in Biggleswade. The CAP sees the Community Safety Team working alongside partners, local retailers and the community to reduce alcohol related youth ASB and Street Drinking in Biggleswade. The CAP aims to look at longer term prevention opportunities rather than reactive enforcement options.

The presentation explained the outcomes expected from the CAP which included a reduction in the number of alcohol related ASB and Crime, an improvement relationship between local agencies and the retailers, an increase

in the education of young people around the effects of alcohol and improved wellbeing for the identified street drinkers.

The CAP to date has provided retailers and local licensees with free training of the responsible sale of alcohol and has seen a significant decrease in the number of complaints regarding the street drinking issue in Biggleswade.

The Committee went on to assess information with regards to street drinking across the region and Members were keen to understand any correlation between mental health issues and a rise in street drinking, associated offences and alcoholism as a whole. Nationally collated evidence suggested a decrease in happiness in children and young people and Members were keen to understand any holistic measures being taken to address this and wider issues. The Community Safety Analyst explained that there was no local data to support a correlation between street drinking and mental health, that surveys suggested young people sought fun and diversion, pre-loading their drinking due to the largely responsible sale of alcohol locally. Officers acknowledged the importance of providing and publicising positive and healthy activities for the mid-teen age group who were at an increased risk of developing negative behaviours in relation to drinking habits.

RECOMMENDED:-

- 1. That a report be delivered at a future meeting highlighting reasons for an increase in fly tipping.**
- 2. To invite a written response from the Magistrates Court explaining the rationale behind the levels of penalties imposed upon offenders.**
- 3. That the Directorate ensure costs be kept to a minimum with regards to waste disposal in order to encourage responsible management of waste and deter fly tipping.**

SCOSC/16/11 Provisional Outturn 2015/16 Presentation - Community Services and Regeneration & Business Support

The Senior Finance Manager delivered a presentation detailing the provisional outturn position for 2015/16. Members queried levels of underspend and whether there was an agreed level of slippage and in response the Senior Finance Manager confirmed that an agreed distribution of monies would be allocated to projects over the coming year and carried forward into 2016/17.

NOTED the presentation.

SCOSC/16/12 Q4 Performance Report

The Director for Community Services highlighted the overall positive outturn for the Directorate at the end of Quarter 4 although there had been an increase in overall crime figures. Close liaison with the police was continuing with confidence that the increase in resource for community policing would help alleviate any future pressures and in time would have an impact on current figures. Satisfaction with Bedfordshire highways was good, with a RAG rating of green for the first time and there had been a marked increase in adults participating in sports and recreation.

Members discussed costs in relation to recycling targets and agreed the benefits in encouraging residents to recycle in order to minimise levies in relation to landfill tax

NOTED the report.

SCOSC/16/13 Work Programme 2016/17 and Executive Forward Plan

AGREED the Committee Work Programme for 2016/17.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 1.30 p.m.)