

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Thursday, 18 August 2016.

PRESENT

Cllr D McVicar (Chairman)

Cllrs Ms A M W Graham
K C Matthews
Ms C Maudlin

Cllrs R Morris
G Perham

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs D Bowater
J Kane
B Saunders

Substitutes: Cllrs Mrs C F Chapman MBE

Members in Attendance:	Cllrs A D Brown	Deputy Executive Member for Community Services
	I Dalgarno	Deputy Executive Member for Community Services
	S Dixon	Executive Member for Education and Skills
	P A Duckett	Chairman of Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee
	C C Gomm	
	Mrs C Hegley	Executive Member for Social Care and Housing
	J G Jamieson	Leader of the Council and Chairman of the Executive
	B J Spurr	Executive Member for Community Services
	B Wells	Deputy Executive Member for Community Services
	J N Young	Executive Member for Regeneration

Officers in Attendance:	Mr S Catchpole	– CEX SEMLEP
	Mr J Dove	– Youth Services Commissioning Manager
	Mr D Galvin	– Head of Financial Performance
	Mr A Hardy	– Public Transport Manager
	Mrs C Jones	– Chief People Officer

Mrs J Keyte	– Head of Community Safety
Ms H Mason	– Programmes and Improvement Manager
Ms K McFarlane	– Business Investment Group Manager
Mr C Proto	– Parking Enforcement Manager
Mrs R Preen	– Scrutiny Policy Adviser

Public 1

SCOSC/16/14 **Members' Interests**

None.

SCOSC/16/15 **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman announced that the meeting would be webcast.

SCOSC/16/16 **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 01 July 2016 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

SCOSC/16/17 **Petitions**

None.

SCOSC/16/18 **Questions, Statements or Deputations**

The Chairman confirmed that one member of the public had registered to speak at the commencement of Item 13.

SCOSC/16/19 **Call-In**

None.

SCOSC/16/20 **Requested Items**

None.

SCOSC/16/21 **Executive Members Updates**

The Executive Member for Community Services confirmed that issues with the quality of grass cutting were being resolved and that the situation was improving.

SCOSC/16/22 **Update from SEMLEP**

The Chairman welcomed the Chief Executive of SEMLEP who delivered a presentation outlining the organisation's merger with the Northamptonshire

Enterprise Partnership (NEP) leading to a single set of targets across the region. The Chief Executive highlighted the importance of benchmarking performance and delivery against other LEP areas within the country along with the need to manage housing completions. The impact of 'Brexit' was cited as a concern in relation to future funding and the two primary areas of focus for SEMLEP were outlined as business engagement and economic growth, along with identifying future skills requirements.

Members queried targets in relation to housing completions, changes to planning regulations passed down from central government and how SEMLEP perceived its role in the planning system given that it was not the planning authority. In response the Chief Executive agreed the need to find practical methods of lobbying and applying a strategic influencing role and modelling best practice from elsewhere in order to create jobs and growth. Maintaining the continued strength of Central Bedfordshire in relation to the creation and expansion of jobs and growth was a priority along with the need to continue the support of a wide range of sectors in order to maintain and improve on current levels.

Members requested a written response with regards to performance compared with other regions within SEMLEP's area and why targets were not achieved in relation to increased business growth.

NOTED the presentation and RECOMMENDED a closer working relationship between the Council and SEMLEP.

SCOSC/16/23 **Central Bedfordshire Council All Age Skills Strategy**

The Business Infrastructure Group Manager delivered a presentation which set out the objectives in relation to the All Age Skills Strategy and included:-

- Partnership working.
- Responding to employer need and skills requirements.
- Supporting careers advice for young people and adults.
- Supporting the access and provision of learning opportunities.
- Improving business competition through investment in the workforce.
- Maximising apprenticeships and traineeships with details of current numbers within the Authority provided.
- The support of businesses in relation to recruitment drive.
- That funding and course delivery was a combination of central, external and locally sourced provision.
- The risks associated with future funding as a result of 'Brexit'.

In response Members agreed the importance of ensuring the focus was on all age skills, that apprenticeships were not restricted to younger applicants and to ensure quality standards were maintained and improved upon. The Committee requested that the minimum standards as detailed within the report were circulated to them along with analysis of the percentage of an unskilled workforce so that a targeted approach could be applied.

RECOMMENDED that the Committee approve the All Age Skills Strategy with performance reported through the Council's Five Year Plan

monitoring arrangements and the Sustainable Communities OSC as necessary.

SCOSC/16/24 2015/16 Annual Parking Report for Central Bedfordshire

The Head of Community Safety, Parking and Programme delivered the annual parking report for 2015/16, highlighting that the parking strategy would be delivered at a later date.

In response to Member queries it was confirmed that the Council were well above average in relation to adjudications at approximately 70% and that issues would be addressed within the future strategy in relation to rural parking problems which were acknowledged as an ongoing issue. It was confirmed that a surplus of £522k would go back into the Council's overall budget and the Committee discussed elements of parking policies which fell within the Council's remit and that of the police.

NOTED the report and RECOMMENDED that a yearly report detailing Penalty Charge Notices in each area be reintroduced and circulated to Town and Parish Councils, also retaining the information within the annual report.

SCOSC/16/25 Passenger Transport Update

The Chairman invited a speaker to address the Committee in relation to the passenger transport update which in summary related to the following:-

- The viability of current and future provision due to financial difficulties.
- Concerns regarding the decision making process.
- Concerns regarding the reduction of grant funding affecting the service.
- That the needs of users would not be met by future providers under the tendering process.
- The need to examine the process of outsourcing the service.
- The need to work in partnership in order to deliver a viable and appropriate service.

In response to the speaker the Executive Member for Community Services agreed the importance of the Dial –a-Ride service, that tenders were not based on price alone but on service provision due to the critical nature of user need and that although savings would have to be made due to the budget setting process, no decision would be made until after the Executive meeting and it would be in full consultation with the public and current providers.

RECOMMENDED that a report be delivered to a future meeting of the Sustainable Communities OSC.

SCOSC/16/26 Fees & Charges 2017

The Head of Financial Performance and Support delivered a report detailing proposed changes to Fees and Charges for 2017, outlining the rationale behind the advisory 1% increase and highlighting those charges which had a significantly differing revision to that of 1%. Members were informed that the

Council could only charge according to costs incurred and were not permitted to generate a profit, with any increase over and above the advisory 1% being ratified by full Council

- In light of the report Members queried individual elements of the charges and were keen to understand the cost modelling exercise undertaken in order to ascertain how a final figure for each charge was calculated.
- Members agreed that benchmarking against neighbouring Authorities would be useful, in particular in relation to taxi license charges and requested that additional detail was provided in future reports, suggesting that the method of calculating fees and charges be revisited in future.
- Several queries arose in relation to leisure centre and mobile food charges to which it was agreed Members would receive a written response.
- The Head of Community Safety highlighted elements within the report which detailed income figures rather than fees and charges, to which Members queried the relevance and agreed was confusing.

RECOMMENDED:-

- 1. That the Executive consider the Fees and Charges prices for 2017 and recommend to Council.**
- 2. That the methodology in calculating Fees and Charges be revisited as Members were unsatisfied with the level of detail presented.**
- 3. That details not relating to Fees and Charges be omitted from future reports.**

SCOSC/16/27 Q1 Performance Report

The Committee received a report detailing the performance position for the Directorate for Quarter 1.

NOTED the report.

SCOSC/16/28 Work Programme 2016/17 and Executive Forward Plan

AGREED the work programme for 2016/17 with the addition of a special OSC to consider the Passenger Transport and Parking Strategies.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 1.00 p.m.)