

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Monday, 26 September 2016.

PRESENT

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

Cllrs D Bowater
Ms A M W Graham
J Kane

Cllrs K C Matthews
R Morris
G Perham

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs Ms C Maudlin

Substitutes: Cllrs Mrs C F Chapman MBE

Members in Attendance: Cllrs Mrs A Barker
A D Brown Deputy Executive
Member for Community
Services
Mrs S Clark Deputy Executive
Member for
Regeneration
P A Duckett Chairman of Corporate
Resources Overview &
Scrutiny Committee
E Ghent Deputy Executive
Member for Adult Social
Care
C C Gomm
P Hollick Chairman of Social Care,
Health & Housing
Overview & Scrutiny
Committee
J G Jamieson Leader of the Council
and Chairman of the
Executive
T Swain
M A G Versallion Chairman of Children's
Services Overview and
Scrutiny Committee
B Wells Deputy Executive
Member for Community
Services

Officers in Attendance: Mr M Coiffait – Director of Community Services
Mrs R Preen – Scrutiny Policy Adviser

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SCOSC/16/29 Members' Interests

None.

SCOSC/16/30 Chairman's Announcements and Communications

None.

SCOSC/16/31 Minutes

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 18 August 2016 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

SCOSC/16/32 Petitions

None.

SCOSC/16/33 Questions, Statements or Deputations

The Chairman confirmed that two members of the public had registered to speak at the commencement of Item 10.

SCOSC/16/34 Call-In

None.

SCOSC/16/35 Requested Items

None.

SCOSC/16/36 Executive Members Updates

The Deputy Executive Member for Regeneration provided the Committee with an update on the Local Plan highlighting that leaflets and a questionnaire would be sent to members of the public after which a series of coordinated community planning events would take place. Technical site assessments were underway, the Gypsy and Traveller accommodation assessment was currently available and the draft Local Plan would be ready for publication in January 2017.

The Director for Community Services updated the Committee with regards to unauthorised Gypsy and Traveller encampments and that an Officer was being recruited to focus on this matter.

SCOSC/16/37 Passenger Transport Strategy

The Chairman invited two speakers to address the Committee, who raised the following points in summary:-

- Concerns that proposals would not improve current service levels and would be to the detriment of vulnerable service users.
- The reduction in subsidies would make the Dial a Ride service unviable, forcing them to make redundancies.
- A delay of one year would enable the Council to consider alternatives including working with third party transport providers. Concerns that essential public services would be reduced in light of funding pressures and that alternative providers would not have the expertise to support elderly or vulnerable customers.

The Deputy Executive Member for Community Services introduced the report, drawing the Committee's attention to the legal elements of the report and specifying the Council's statutory duties in relation to passenger transport.

In light of the report Members discussed the following:-

- The importance of ensuring continuity of service and not cutting passenger transport so deeply as to leave a lack of provision.
- The possible knock on effect to other services were Dial a Ride to be adversely affected by the proposed changes to funding and the potential for the service to be regional.
- The need to reassess some routes to school for safety purposes in addition to implementing the previously approved School Transport Policy.
- The importance of engaging community groups early in the development of strategies to ensure that proposals were fully informed.
- The importance of both cost and service quality being taken into account during the tender process.
- That need to monitor and measure Service Level Agreements (SLA's).
- The need to differentiate the needs of urban and rural areas.
- That potential for a delay relating to proposals for the Community Transport element despite the potential for non compliance with the EU directive relating to state aid and the tendering process organisations were allowed to enter into.

RECOMMENDED that the Committee broadly support the Passenger Transport Strategy but recommend that the Executive consider delaying changes to the community transport element of the strategy, specifically the Dial a Ride service for a period of one year in order to allow further discussions to take place.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 2.30 p.m. and concluded at 4.00 p.m.)