

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Thursday, 15 March 2018.

PRESENT

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

Cllrs D Bowater
Ms A M W Graham

Cllrs Cllr M Liddiard
K C Matthews

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs P Downing
J Kane
R Morris

Substitutes: Cllrs C C Gomm
P Hollick
N Warren

Members in Attendance: Cllrs A D Brown Deputy Executive
Member for
Regeneration
I Dalgarno Executive Member for
Community Services
B J Spurr Executive Member for
Health and Chairman of
the Health and Wellbeing
Board
B Wells Deputy Executive
Member for Community
Services
J N Young Executive Member for
Regeneration

Officers in Attendance: Mr M Coiffait – Director of Community Services
Mrs P Everitt – Scrutiny Policy Adviser
Mr P Keates – Head of Development and
Regulation
Mr P Mason – Head of Highways
Mrs R Preen – Scrutiny Policy Advisor
Ms L Scott – Community Safety Strategy Officer

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SCOSC/17/64 Members' Interests

None.

SCOSC/17/65 **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman advised the Committee that due to a recent Environment Agency decision to grant a permit in relation to a waste site at Stewartby, the company Covanta would be invited to attend a future Committee meeting to discuss and explore the potential of any environmental and traffic related impacts within Central Bedfordshire.

SCOSC/17/66 **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 08 January 2018 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

SCOSC/17/67 **Petitions**

None.

SCOSC/17/68 **Questions, Statements or Deputations**

None.

SCOSC/17/69 **Call-In**

None.

SCOSC/17/70 **Requested Items**

None.

SCOSC/17/71 **Executive Members Updates**

The Executive Member for Community Services advised the Committee that due to a recent cold spell there had been an 80 percent uplift in the amount of gritting runs carried out by the authority in comparison to the previous year and that the service would continue to react to inclement weather as necessary. Salt bins would be refilled as demand required but Members were also encouraged to report any empty bins within their local areas. Members were advised that any damage to the roads during the winter period was not caused by salt, instead variations in temperatures affected the integrity of concrete and tarmac, causing it to break down. In addition, Members were reassured that ongoing works to Dunstable Leisure Centre were progressing well.

The Deputy Executive Member for Community Services advised the Committee that a recent public consultation in relation to waste collections within the region had received the largest response to any other public consultation to date, public information sessions were being held regularly across the region in libraries and public buildings and that all responses would be assessed prior to any final decision being made. The new Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) at Thorn Turn, Dunstable was complete but due to delays in the issuing of a waste license via the Environment Agency, the site was not yet open to the public. Members were reassured that the existing HWRC in

Dunstable would remain open until Thorn Turn was ready in order that the public could still dispose of waste locally.

The Executive Member for Regeneration advised that a recent consultation in relation to the Local Plan had concluded and that a significant number of resident opposition groups had been formed, with representation to Central Government expected by them in the near future. Members were reminded of the importance of having a valid Local Plan in order that the Council could meet their obligations in relation to a five year land supply, the absence of which would result in sanctions and an inability to determine planning applications locally, increasing the possibility of appeals being upheld by the Planning Inspector. An HGV ban towards the east of the M1 had recently been introduced which had resulted in a significant decrease in the amount of lorries travelling on local roads although there were still a core number cutting through villages and towns. An operation to combat this had been mounted and as a result a number of HGV's had been booked or warned with Members encouraged to report any they saw in their local area.

In response to a Member query the Executive Member confirmed that the Government were currently reviewing a financial viability loophole often used by developers to deliver fewer affordable houses than originally agreed with local authorities and agreed that the wording in a recent national press article had been unhelpful. It was clarified that Central Bedfordshire was one of the worst affected areas due to the loophole, rather than being one of the worst 'offenders' as stated within the article which Members agreed was misleading.

SCOSC/17/72 Planning Enforcement Task Force Update

The Head of Client and Development Services delivered a report which set out progress to date on recommendations to improve the Planning Enforcement service. Members were advised that a new officer had been appointed to oversee the service and that the team were working closely with planning colleagues in order that any conditions applied to a site or development could be realistically enforced.

In light of the report Members discussed the following in summary:-

- That a lack of funding for additional officers within the service was not a concern as the original recommendations had been based on a cost neutral approach.
- That any minor amendments to the Planning Enforcement Plan would not need to go back to the Executive for approval, instead they should be actioned by senior officers within the team.
- That the Committee was broadly satisfied with the Member protocol however Members agreed that a simplified version of the Planning Enforcement Plan be included within the document, along with relevant timescales for action and the different categories assigned to enforcement cases.
- That statistics within the Planning Enforcement Plan should highlight figures for a typical year rather than specifics which would soon be out of date.

- That timescales with regards to retrospective planning applications be revisited, taking into account the complexities once the planning application process had begun and taking each application on its merits.
- That problems regarding technology and the reporting of enforcement issues be investigated by officers.
- That without monitoring officers it was difficult to monitor conditions applied to planning applications, however it was acknowledged that the team were broadly successful in being as proactive as possible with the staff resourcing available to them.
- That the addition of resource for an out of hours service could not be justified due to current levels of demand, instead emergency response teams dealt with issues as they arose.

RECOMMENDED:-

- 1. That the next iteration of the Planning Enforcement Plan be delivered at a future meeting.**
- 2. That an annual performance report on the Planning Enforcement Service be delivered to the Committee.**

SCOSC/17/73 Schools Parking Task Force Update

The Assistant Director for Highways delivered a report which set out progress to date on recommendations to improve school parking within the region. There had been a delay in implementing several recommendations due to staff vacancies however these had recently been recruited to and officers were confident that recommendations in relation to school travel planning could be implemented as a result. However, due to budget constraints a decision had been taken not to recruit additional enforcement officers, instead the directorate were exploring the use of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) vehicles outside of schools. Increased car use had been reported locally with a decrease in sustainable travel which was something the directorate were keen to address, bringing forward the timescale for reassessing the wider transport plan as a result.

In light of the report Members discussed the following in summary:-

- That the reintroduction of the school's travel officer be welcomed in order to strengthen school liaison and ensure the compliance of school travel plans.
- That the Committee consider receiving an annual report on school travel plans in order to monitor compliance.
- That the recommendation in relation to the information leaflet to be distributed to schools and parents be amended to remove the wording 'existing practice' as it had not been until the task force recommended its production.
- That it was a condition of all new school builds to have a valid travel plan in place.
- The importance of engaging with school governors in relation to travel plans, particularly with regards to the health and safety of pupils.

- That feedback from schools and parents with regards to parking solutions outside of schools would be welcome.
- That in excess of 500 enforcement notices had been issued to parents outside of schools, with Members acknowledging the benefits of education in relation to safe parking practice, as well as enforcement action.
- Concerns with regards to air quality outside of schools and the level of cars putting children's health at risk.

RECOMMENDED that the Committee support the review and update of the authority's Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy in preparation for Issue 4 of the Local Transport Plan.

SCOSC/17/74 Community Safety Partnership Update

The Community Safety Strategy Officer delivered a report which highlighted the ongoing work of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and their three year strategy which was due to conclude in 2019. In reviewing the priorities, two new emerging issues had been identified which the CSP agreed required targeted focus. These were in relation to illegal encampments and 'County Lines' which tackled drug dealing across the region and was recognised as a national challenge for many police forces. Members were appraised of recent achievements of the CSP, that meetings were being streamlined in order to realise efficiencies and that the CSP would be further branded and promoted within the local community and online in order to highlight their work.

In light of the report Members discussed the following in summary:-

- Confirmation that Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) remained a high priority for the CSP.
- Concerns regarding shoplifting locally.
- Concerns regarding knife crime which was a priority for the police, with the CSP working in partnership and focussing on those areas they could most affect.
- That the CSP was working closely with Town and Parish Councils in order that they understood the work and role of the Partnership.

RECOMMENDED that the Committee support the CSP to adopt two new emerging issues for 2018- 19;

County Lines

Unauthorised Encampments.

SCOSC/17/75 Work Programme 2018/19 and the Executive Forward Plan

AGREED the Committee Work Programme subject to the following amendments: -

- **Police Performance Update – 24 May 2018**
- **Highways Performance Update – 12 July 2018**
- **Well Managed Highways Policy 12 July 2018**

- **Parking Management Strategy – 12 July 2018**
- **To Consider the Effect of the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) on the Regeneration of Dunstable High Street – 12 July 2018**
- **The Waste Collection Contract – 13 September 2018**
- **The Covanta Waste Disposal Site – TBC**
- **The Leisure Contract - TBC**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 11.55 a.m.)