

## CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **COUNCIL** held in the Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Thursday, 20 July 2017.

### PRESENT

Cllr Mrs C F Chapman MBE (Chairman)

Cllr B Saunders (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs	R D Berry	Cllrs	Mrs S A Goodchild	Cllrs	I Shingler
	M C Blair		Mrs C Hegley		P Smith
	D Bowater		P Hollick		B J Spurr
	J Chatterley		J G Jamieson		Mrs T Stock
	K M Collins		K Janes		A M Turner
	N B Costin		R W Johnstone		M A G Versallion
	I Dalgarno		K C Matthews		B Walker
	Cllr S Dixon		Ms C Maudlin		N Warren
	Mrs A L Dodwell		R Morris		R D Wenham
	P Downing		T Nicols		J N Young
	P A Duckett		G Perham		A Zerny
	F Firth		A Ryan		Cllr M Liddiard
	E Ghent		J A G Saunders		S Watkins
	C C Gomm		D Shelvey		

### Apologies for Absence

Cllrs	Mrs A Barker	Cllrs	Mrs D B Gurney	Cllrs	R C Stay
	A D Brown		J Kane		T Swain
	Mrs S Clark		D J Lawrence		G Tubb
	K Ferguson		Mrs J G Lawrence		B Wells
	Ms A M W Graham		D McVicar		T Woodward

Cllr J Freeman - Absent

Officers:	Mr Q Baker	–	AD Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)
	Miss H Bell	–	Committee Services Officer
	Mr R Carr	–	Chief Executive
	Mr M Coiffait	–	Director of Community Services
	Mrs S Hobbs	–	Senior Committee Services Officer
	Mr A Davie	–	Development Infrastructure Group Manager
	Mr L Jones	–	Assistant Director for Education and Transformation
	Mrs J Ogley	–	Director of Social Care, Health and Housing
	Mrs M Scott	–	Director of Public Health
	Mr C Warboys	–	Director of Resources

C/17/12 **Prayers**

Prayers were taken by The Reverend Lucy Davis.

C/17/13 **Minutes**

**RESOLVED**

**that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 18 May 2017 were approved by the Chairman as a true and correct record.**

C/17/14 **Members' Interests**

No declarations of interest were received.

C/17/15 **Questions, Statements and Deputations**

The Chairman advised that four members of the public had registered to speak on the draft Local Plan and one member of the public wished to speak on fluoridation.

The Chairman invited the members of the public who had registered to speak to address the Council.

1. Mr Denchfield raised concerns about the draft Local Plan which he considered to contain vague and inaccurate details of the proposed number of homes and exact locations and asked if government models had been used to determine the proposals. Mr Denchfield felt that it was inappropriate at this time to ask residents to comment on the draft Plan. He raised concerns about the focus that there appeared to be on the East of Central Bedfordshire because of its infrastructure links rather than other large conurbations such as Ampthill and Flitwick. Mr Denchfield spoke about how he felt Biggleswade had been unfairly targeted with significant developments already having taken place and as a result how the existing infrastructure was struggling to cope.
2. Mr Lasham spoke about his concerns on the draft Local Plan proposals, particularly for Biggleswade and how he felt Biggleswade has been adversely effected by significant developments that had taken place already. He raised concerns about the impact on wildlife and on agriculture land.
3. Mr Crockart, a Biggleswade resident, spoke about his concerns and the impact of the proposals on the town, in particular the roads and infrastructure in Biggleswade.
4. Mr Rix raised concerns about the road infrastructure and car parks in Biggleswade and how the proposals in the Local Plan would exacerbate existing problems. He asked if there was a plan in place to alleviate the problems and urged the Council to reconsider their proposals.

5. Mrs Williams spoke about the fluoridation of water in Central Bedfordshire and the extent to which those residents affected had been made aware that their water had been fluoridated.

Councillor Young, Executive Member for Regeneration thanked the speakers and responded to concerns about the draft Local Plan as follows:

The public consultation had been extended from six to eight weeks and so far four public drop-in sessions had taken place. He explained why it was important to have a Local Plan as quickly as possible and emphasised that no decisions had been made at this stage. The plan was proposing options for growth over the next 20 years, including homes which were needed.

Councillor Young addressed concerns about the draft plan being unbalanced and focusing on the eastern area of Central Bedfordshire. He advised that development was balanced and gave an example of the 23,000 new homes with planning permission in the southern half of Central Bedfordshire, including 7,000 in Houghton Regis.

Councillor Young responded to concerns about the need for more detail about specific sites and the number of homes. He advised that at this stage the plan set out broad locations for growth and numbers and that the next stage of the plan would be more specific. The current version of the draft plan included space for schools, health provision, shops and community facilities. The community planning events would inform requirements. The next stage of the plan would develop the requirements further.

In terms of infrastructure, feedback from residents indicated that there was a need and desire for development to be located close to road and rail infrastructure. The major growth locations included requirements for improvements to existing infrastructure, such as the A1 and a new bypass at Arlesey. It was noted that infrastructure would have to be in place prior to substantial development taking place. Some of the growth was dependant on the East –West rail.

Councillor Young addressed concerns about protecting the wildlife and agricultural land and advised that it was the intention within the plan to enhance the countryside.

Councillor Spurr, Executive Member for Health responded to Mrs Williams and advised that homes that were affected by fluoridation had been identified and that a map was being produced which would be published. Councillor Spurr referred to work that a neighbouring authority was undertaking into this area of work which Central Bedfordshire hoped to draw on.

C/17/16

## **Petitions**

No petitions were received.

**C/17/17 Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman advised of events that she had attended since the last meeting of Council, including:

- the Sunset Ceremony, Chicksands to mark the armed forces day parade;
- the Topping Out Ceremony and planting of a time capsule at Houghton Park Hall;
- the High Sheriff's Garden Party;
- official opening of the M1/A5 Link Road;
- the funeral of Late Chief Constable, Alfred Hitchcock;
- presentation of the Queen's Award for Enterprise to Peli Bio Thermal based in Leighton Buzzard.

The Chairman spoke about the facilities at the Safety Centre Hazard Alley, Milton Keynes and that she would be planning a visit for all Members to attend.

The Chairman advised that her Civic service would be held on 21 January 2018, 3.00p.m at St Mary's Church, Woburn. The function would be attended by the Bishop of Bedford.

The Chairman advised that she and Vice Chairman would like to meet Members of Central Bedfordshire staff and would be making plans to visit all offices throughout the year.

**C/17/18 Leader of the Council's Announcements and Communications**

The Leader thanked members of the public who had spoken under agenda item 4, Questions, Statements and Deputations.

The Leader referred to the official opening of the M1/A5 Link Road and the importance of this infrastructure, particularly, the positive impact that this was having on Houghton Regis and Dunstable. The new link would also underpin significant development.

The expansion of homes in Central Bedfordshire had been accompanied by the creation of 925 additional school places. This had contributed to 97% of pupils being allocated to their first choice school.

**C/17/19 Executive Member Presentations**

Councillor Wenham, Executive Member for Corporate Resources, reported on recent developments in the Revenues and Benefits area of his portfolio including:

- continued improvement in the performance of Council Tax collection and NNDR;
- a new streamlined debt management process, ;
- monthly monitoring of housing and council tax benefit claims;

- fraud investigation successes, including £60,000 of housing fraud prevention, blue badge fraud and school admissions cases;
- digitisation of a new benefits claims form; since its introduction, 2700 claims had been made on line;
- the soft launch of a revenues and benefits portal allowing customers to have access to information about council tax and NNDR accounts. Future developments would include automatic email alerts when new letters and bills are generated;
- plans to automate data transfer to the Valuation Office and e form processing.

The Executive Member for Corporate Resources placed on record his gratitude to the Revenues and Benefits team.

Councillor Dalgarno, Executive Member for Community Services updated Council on Culture and Arts and the ways in which these were delivered by libraries throughout Central Bedfordshire:

- completion of a refresh of a consultation undertaken in 2012 called the 'Big Listen', which would see changes to the service being rolled out soon;
- an increase of online usage, including the substantial uplift in visits to the virtual library;;
- £2 million had been invested in the 12 libraries across Central Bedfordshire libraries, including in refurbishments, improved infrastructure and upgraded data lines;
- an increase in the satisfaction user satisfaction from 93% in 2012 to 97% in 2017;
- an increase in people attending activities in libraries;
- an extension of library opening hours in September 2017;
- the presence of library services throughout Central Bedfordshire in 148 settings;
- increases in ticket sales at the library theatre in Leighton Buzzard since the introduction of on line bookings;
- work that was underway with the Arts Council to conduct a review of cultural offer at the library theatre, Leighton Buzzard and Grove theatre Dunstable;
- work with local and national partners, including an Arts Council grant in conjunction with the Royal Opera House Bridge, linking leisure, libraries and countryside projects to provide vulnerable learners with an opportunity to experience music and arts.

Councillor Dalgarno responded to questions.

C/17/20 **Recommendations from the Executive**

The Council considered recommendations from a meeting of the Executive held on 20 June 2017 that set out the provisional capital outturn for 2016/17 as at the end of March 2017.

**RESOLVED**

**that the net overspend on the following items be approved:**

- **Woodside Link £8.01M (see paragraph 55 in Appendix A to the report);**
- **New Schools Places £2.32M (see paragraph 21 in Appendix A to the report); and**
- **Stratton Park Infrastructure Works £0.70M (see paragraph 37 in Appendix A to the report).**

Upon being put to the vote all 42 Members voted in favour of the resolution.

C/17/21 **Audit Committee Activity - 2016/17 Annual Report**

The Council considered a report which summarised the work of the Audit Committee during the 2016/17 financial year.

**RESOLVED**

**That the work of the Audit Committee during 2016/17 financial year be noted.**

Upon being put to the vote all 42 Members present voted in favour of the resolution.

C/17/22 **Report of the Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority**

The Council received a report of the Bedfordshire and Luton Fire and Rescue Authority, following its meeting held on 27 April 2017.

Councillor Downing updated Council on the work undertaken by fire fighters throughout Bedfordshire.

In addition to fire fighting, officers attended road traffic collisions, flooding incidents, special incidents including animal rescue, aircraft and railway rescues. 1900 household safety audits had been undertaken for vulnerable and elderly people. The Fire Authority had been increasing its road safety awareness campaign, particularly working closely with young people for accident prevention.

Following on from the Grenfell Towers fire, a full audit of high rise buildings had been carried out. There were 3 high rise buildings in Central Bedfordshire.

**RESOLVED**

**that the report of the Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority be noted.**

**C/17/23 Motions**

No motions were received.

**C/17/24 Written Questions**

No written questions were received.

**C/17/25 Open Questions**

The Chairman invited the Minority Group Leaders to ask a question each, prior to the consideration of questions that had been placed in the Open Questions receptacle.

1. Councillor Zerny asked a question about the attendance of the Leader at a recent function in Cannes on the Kingsland Legacy project.

The Leader explained his attendance which he had funded at his own expense.

2. Councillor Maudlin asked a question about the future of Sandy railway station once the East West Rail station is sited north of Sandy, near Tempsford and about the case for residents to petition for the retention of the station.

The Executive Member for Regeneration advised that the Local Plan identified the need to fully support the infrastructure and transport links in Central Bedfordshire, that there were no plans to close station in Sandy and therefore no requirement for a petition.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 6.30 p.m. and concluded at 8.19 p.m.)

Chairman .....

Dated .....