

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Thursday, 12 July 2018.

PRESENT

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

Cllrs D Bowater
F Firth
C C Gomm

Cllrs J Kane
K C Matthews

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs Ms A M W Graham
Cllr M Liddiard

Members in Attendance: Cllrs I Dalgarno Executive Member for
Community Services
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
Mr P Mason – Head of Highways
P Middleton – Highways Asset Manager
Mrs R Preen – Scrutiny Policy Adviser
Mr N Shaw – Sustainable Transport Officer
Ms J Yandall – Head of Investment and
Employment

Others in Attendance Mr A Denman Operations Director, Ringway Jacobs
Mr C Goodacre Contract Director, Ringway Jacobs

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SCOSC/18/85 Members' Interests

None.

SCOSC/18/86 Chairman's Announcements and Communications

None.

SCOSC/18/87 Minutes

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 24 April 2018 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

SCOSC/18/88 Petitions

None.

SCOSC/18/89 Questions, Statements or Deputations

None.

SCOSC/18/90 Call-In

None.

SCOSC/18/91 Requested Items

None.

SCOSC/18/92 Executive Members Updates

The Executive Member for Regeneration advised the Committee that the local authority was confident that it had cooperated with neighbouring authorities in relation to the Local Plan and that when a date had been confirmed by the Planning Inspector for the hearing it would be circulated accordingly. Members were appraised of the progress to date in relation to a number of key road and infrastructure developments, one of which was experiencing delays due to land ownership disputes in the Milton Keynes area. Central Bedfordshire Council was working with Milton Keynes Council to have the issue resolved as a matter of urgency in order not to delay the process further.

The Executive Member for Community Services advised Members that the contract for leisure services in the north of the region would be managed by Stevenage Leisure and that attendance figures across all leisure centres had seen a significant increase, with Houghton Regis Leisure Centre alone having increased participation from 80,000 members in 2014-15 to 185,000 in 2018. The leisure centre in Flitwick had exceeded expectations which had resulted in the need to install new equipment in order to meet demand, with the climbing wall in particular proving very popular locally. The leisure team were further developing swimming within the region in order to ensure young people continued to swim in later life which would support a healthy lifestyle, maintain a necessary life skill and reduce health inequalities. An update on Tiddenfoot Leisure Centre would be provided as part of the wider leisure strategy which would be delivered to the Committee at a future meeting.

The Chairman reminded Members that the new reuse and recycle shop located at the Thorn Turn Household Waste and Recycling Centre in Houghton Regis was now in operation and accepting goods from across the region in order to minimise landfill waste and provide affordable second hand goods to residents.

SCOSC/18/93 Highways Improvement Plan

The Head of Highways introduced the report and advised Members that the service improvement plan had been drawn up to address three key themes which had subsequently been assimilated into the plan and as a result 22 of the 32 actions identified had been addressed.

The Operations Director and Contract Director from Ringway Jacobs (RJ), the contractor responsible for delivering highways maintenance and improvements delivered a presentation which set out a 6 month progress update, the priority assigned to particular works, an update on the Member portal, street light performance, future innovations and improvements and the impact of recent extreme weather. The contractor acknowledged the need to react with greater speed to issues raised and as a result had been working hard to minimise back office procedures which had historically hindered an expedited process. Members were advised that historic assets had not been included in past asset data collection exercises and this had caused delays to the maintenance programme. Measures to rectify this were now in place so improvements were expected during 2018-19.

The Director for Community Services acknowledged the challenges facing the local authority which was running at a seven year deficit with regards to highways works and maintenance but highlighting that some other local authorities were at a 35 year deficit. Therefore in comparison, Central Bedfordshire Council was in a stronger position than many others and the Director was committed to hold the contractor and highways team to account for performance.

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

- The cost associated with street lights burning during the day and the need to log instances where this was occurring.
- A lack of confidence that enough had been done to address the 32 actions identified within the report.
- That the spray injection programme was effective in repairing carriageway defects quickly but was not as thorough as a full repair, acknowledging the need to prioritise works accordingly and within the resources available to the Council.
- The importance of accurate and timely data and the impact on performance.
- The need to consider the Government's long term commitment to promote the use of electric cars and the need for the local authority to ensure the appropriate infrastructure (charging points) was in place to accommodate this.
- The need to address the rise in compensation claims against the Council due to car damage caused by road defects.
- Concerns that the gully cleaning process was too slow and the associated flooding risk if too many were blocked. In response it was confirmed that the programme of works was ongoing and that new equipment was being deployed in order to expedite the process which, due to inaccurate historic asset data was a larger than anticipated programme of works.

- Clarity around the teams and agencies responsible for the initial planning of roads, acknowledging the need to work closely with partners in order to ensure new roads met local need.

RECOMMENDED:-

- That the Committee acknowledge the progress made by the Highways Service Improvement Plan and the outcomes of the Service Improvement Plan (SIP1).
- That the Committee support the proposed actions for the 2nd phase of the Service Improvement Plan (SIP2).
- That a detailed performance update on the next phase of the improvement plan (SIP2) be delivered at a future meeting, ensuring a greater emphasis on detailed data and statistical information.

SCOSC/18/94 Work Programme 2018/19 and Executive Forward Plan

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

- Covanta update – Date TBC following a judicial review.
- The Local Plan – Date TBC following the Inspector’s judgement, if necessary.
- Passenger Transport Strategy - removed from the Committee work programme as it was supported by the Committee in September 2016 and adopted by the Executive at a later meeting.
- Update from the Police and Crime Commissioner – removed from the Committee work programme at this time.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 11.40 a.m.)