

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Thursday, 22 November 2018.

PRESENT

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

Cllrs D Bowater
F Firth
C C Gomm

Cllrs Ms A M W Graham
J Kane
Cllr M Liddiard

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs K C Matthews

Substitutes: Cllrs M A G Versallion

Members in Attendance: Cllrs A D Brown Deputy Executive Member for Regeneration
I Dalgarno Executive Member for Community Services
Mrs S A Goodchild
Ms C Hegley Executive Member for Adults, Social Care and Housing Operations (HRA)
T Nicols Chairman of Licensing Committee
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 J Dickinson – Assistant Director Leisure, Libraries and Countryside
Mrs J Keyte – Head of Community Safety
Mrs R Preen – Scrutiny Policy Advisor
Mr R Romans – Minerals and Waste Team Leader
Mrs J Selley – Head of Planning Delivery

Others in Attendance Mr S Bussell – Veolia
Ms Emma D'Avilar – Environment Agency
Mr N Goudie – Environment Agency
Mr T Koltis – Covanta
Mr D Spencer – Covanta

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SCOSC/18/106 **Members' Interests**

None.

SCOSC/18/107 **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman welcomed representatives from Covanta, Veolia and the Environment Agency who were due to deliver a presentation at item 10 and reminded all present that the meeting was open to the public and would be webcast.

SCOSC/18/108 **Minutes**

In response to a Member query in relation to points raised at the previous meeting the Executive Member clarified the following:-

- That a steering group had been created as requested in order to consider issues with regards to permanent Gypsy and Traveller sites.
- That although the ownership of sites was a factor when dealing with enforcement issues it was not a material factor in the planning process.
- That although names of occupants and owners could be checked when a suspected planning breach had occurred it was not possible to check them prior to a breach or hold a database of such information due to the resource required, nor would it be appropriate.
- That a site at Kingswood, Tilsworth had received four enforcement notices which were now all under appeal.
- That an unauthorised development count was available to any interested parties and would be circulated to Members.
- That a detailed report in relation to planning enforcement and unauthorised development would be delivered to the Committee in January 2019, as requested at a previous meeting.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 13 September 2018 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

SCOSC/18/109 **Petitions**

None.

SCOSC/18/110 **Questions, Statements or Deputations**

None.

SCOSC/18/111 **Call-In**

None.

SCOSC/18/112 Requested Items

None.

SCOSC/18/113 Executive Members Updates

The Executive Member for Community Services confirmed that the most recent meeting of the Gypsy and Traveller steering group had been very constructive, he had been elected as Chairman and that local Ward Members would be regularly briefed with progress updates. The steering group represented 22 villages and were working closely with residents and Parish Councils within each of their respective areas. Further funding had been secured to recruit additional officers within the Gypsy and Traveller liaison team which had historically been under resourced, however it was anticipated to take some time to recruit to all posts due to the nature of the work involved.

The Executive Member for Regeneration updated Members on a number of local consultations and the Government's response to those. The Government would be introducing a new national planning policy framework which would take into account updated national statistics on projected population growth, although the anticipated target of 300k homes across the Oxford to Cambridge arc was still expected to be achieved over the coming years. The Government had also suggested they would be removing the pooling system on developer contributions and instead a renewed focus on the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) would be applied. In response to a Member query the Executive Member confirmed that an email had been circulated to all Members on 12 November 2018 which set out the current position with regards to the Local Plan and that the Inspector was taking a detailed approach to certain queries which had been raised, resulting in a delay to the hearing dates which were expected in early 2019. In addition, the Executive Member provided an update on major roadworks planned for the area and agreed to liaise with the Executive Member for Children, Education and Families in order to determine information which had been shared with a school Governor forum in relation to the Local Plan and schools for the future.

SCOSC/18/114 Waste Incinerator

The Chairman welcomed representatives from Covanta, Veolia and the Environment Agency and a presentation was delivered to Members which set out Covanta's experience and expertise, the choices available for the recycling of waste, the levels of energy generated by the facility and the associated benefits of energy from waste. Members were also apprised of the anticipated traffic movement to and from the site which was expected to be 250 movements per day, significantly less than the authorised limit, the measures taken to regulate emissions and also workforce planning and local economic growth.

As a result of the presentation Members discussed the following in summary:-

- That measures were in place to ensure traffic movement would be kept within the agreed parameters and that the extensive traffic studies which had been undertaken also allowed for anticipated growth in housing and population.

- That the use of the rail line for transporting waste would continue to be explored as an option in the future where appropriate and following extensive feasibility studies. Most of the waste would be sourced from a 30-mile radius of the site although if rail transportation were an option in the future it would likely be sourced from a wider area.
- In response to a Member query, representatives from the Environment Agency confirmed that safeguards were in place to regulate emissions and that the permit would not have been granted if there was any suspected risk to health or the environment. In the eventuality of an emissions breach Covanta were duty bound to report it to the Environment Agency and follow the necessary protocols, with robust sanctions applied in cases of non-compliance.
- That housing developers had liaised with Covanta in relation to energy generated being available to local homes and that they were open to any commercially viable opportunities.
- The Chairman read a statement from the Deputy Executive Member for Regeneration who, despite having opposed the plans for the incinerator, in light of the permit having been granted she felt that it would be beneficial to work in close partnership with Covanta and in the best interests of residents.
- That Members were reassured that many of the fears and concerns expressed by residents and Members in relation to traffic movement and the regulation of emissions had been addressed within the presentation.

NOTED the presentation

SCOSC/18/115 Leisure Management Contracts

The Executive Member for Community Services delivered a report which provided an update to progress on the new leisure centre in Dunstable, an innovative approach to the library provision on site and that the timeline for delivery was proceeding as scheduled. A recruitment drive was underway and it was anticipated that the leisure centre would open to the public in early 2019.

The AD for Leisure confirmed that with the same contractor now responsible for managing all leisure centres across the region the service was realising a consistent approach to service delivery, income generation was at the expected levels with a strong focus on KPI's and performance outcomes.

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

- Whether there was a risk to the Council now that one contractor was responsible for managing all leisure facilities across the region and in response the Director confirmed that the Council had followed all correct procurement procedures and that with a lot of private competition available to customers there were no concerns regarding a lack of choice.
- The use of Parish Council facilities and how they could be supported given that many sites required updating and investment to bring them up to the expected standard.
- The need to work closely with Sandy Town Council and the school in order to ensure the leisure facility there remained open to the public.

- That the active lifestyles team worked closely with the CCG and public health colleagues in order to promote the benefits of physical activity and mental health.
- That a new site had been identified in Houghton Regis for a leisure centre which was designed to meet growth for that area.
- The importance of ensuring a local offer for users in order to minimise any need for extensive travel to access facilities.

NOTED the report and RECOMMENDED that the Committee receive performance updates on leisure facilities and contracts as appropriate.

SCOSC/18/116 **Gypsy and Traveller Responsiveness**

The Head of Community Safety, Parking and Programmes delivered a presentation which outlined the Council's responsibilities in relation to Gypsy and Traveller encampments, the number of sites across the region and measures taken by the Council to address particular challenges on certain sites, with some positive outcomes achieved as a result. A successful injunction had been applied to prevent certain named individuals coming into Central Bedfordshire and setting up unauthorised encampments (UAE) which had achieved positive results. Officers were using the learning at the site in Billington to inform their approach going forward and there would be a continued development of temporary stopping sites which would further reduce the problems caused by UAE.

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

- Measures taken to assess the feasibility of temporary stopping sites and their location, with a need for the information to be shared within the public domain prior to the Council adopting or agreeing specific locations.
- That two sites would be required, one in the North of the region and one in the South to help address the challenge of UAE to the benefit of the community but that no specific sites had yet been agreed.
- Whether funding was available to recruit staff to posts before Christmas, using agency staff in the interim where necessary. In response it was confirmed that monies were available within the reserve immediately, with longer term funding considered during the usual budget setting process.
- Problems with encampments on private land not owned by the Council and the measures taken to liaise with those responsible for the land in order to minimise the impact on road users, cyclists and residents.
- That temporary stopping sites would increase the powers of the police to manage instances of UAE and move on any incursions to an appropriate site
- The need for central Government to revisit legislation in order to assist the work of local authorities in managing instances of UAE.

RECOMMENDED:-

- 1. That the Committee support the next steps in relation to the temporary stopping sites feasibility study and;**
- 2. That the Executive include the necessary funding within the Council's current MTFP in order to ensure appropriate levels of staff resource.**

SCOSC/18/117 Work Programme 2018-19 and Executive Forward Plan

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

- **Planning Enforcement and Unauthorised Development – 24 January 2019**
- **Anti-Social Behaviour – January 2019**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.25 p.m.)