

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Thursday, 14 March 2019.

PRESENT

Cllr D McVicar (Chairman)

Clrs C C Gomm
Ms A M W Graham

Cllrs J Kane
K C Matthews

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs D Bowater
F Firth
Cllr M Liddiard

Substitutes: Cllrs R D Berry
G Perham
M A G Versallion

Members in Attendance:	Cllrs I Dalgarno	Executive Member for Community Services
	P Hollick	Chairman of Social Care, Health & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee
	T Nicols	Chairman of Licensing Committee
	B Wells	Deputy Executive Member for Community Services
	J N Young	Executive Member for Regeneration

Officers in Attendance:	Mrs S Childerhouse	– Assistant Director Public Protection & Transport
	Mr M Coiffait	– Director of Community Services
	Ms T Harris (Waste)	– Assistant Director - Environmental Services
	Mr S Mooring	– Head of Place Delivery
	Mrs R Preen	– Scrutiny Policy Adviser

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SCOSC/18/131 Chairman's Announcements and Communications

None.

SCOSC/18/132 Minutes

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 24 January 2019 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

SCOSC/18/133 Petitions

None.

SCOSC/18/134 Questions, Statements or Deputations

The Chairman invited the public speakers to make their statements in accordance with the Public Participation Scheme.

Speaker one raised concerns regarding the effects of LED lighting and 5G technology on public health and outlined the following in summary:-

- Concerns at some reported risks to health, including possible links to cancers.
- The harmful effects of blue lights in public spaces and a request that the Council install yellow or orange street lighting which was deemed safer.
- The amount of small antennas required in populated areas.
- That several large companies had refused to underwrite policy in relation to 5G technology due to the untested effects on public health.
- That the council should not agree the installation of such technology without an environmental impact study having been undertaken first.

In response to the speaker the Executive Member for Community Services outlined NHS guidance on the use of mobile phones and that continuing tests were taking place via the World Health Organisation. The directorate would continue to work closely with planners and developers in relation to the installation of street lighting and emerging technologies and it was explained that mobile phone mast installation was part of permitted development rights as set out within Government legislation. In mitigation of this the Council's planning policy HQ5 did try to minimise the impact on local residents by ensuring where possible existing phone masts were used rather than new installations.

Speaker two raised concerns in relation to the Mid Beds Dial-a-Ride tender and award of contract process and highlighted the following in summary:-

- The disparity between the number of journeys provided between the previous and current provider.
- That service users were not receiving value for money.
- That monitoring information was not made available as it was deemed confidential.
- A lack of transparency in funding.
- That service providers would be put out of business.

- That whilst the tender process may have been legal, whether it was correct.

In response the Assistant Director Public Protection & Transport confirmed that the tender process had followed the appropriate legal and procurement rules and had been ratified following the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee as correct. There had been problems for the new service provider in fulfilling some customer journeys as the previous provider had refused to share the customer list but those journeys which had been provided had reported no issues with service delivery.

In response to a Member query the Director confirmed that the overarching Passenger Transport Strategy, as supported by the Committee in 2016 and subsequently approved by full Council had achieved significant savings, this particular element had not been expected to contribute a large part of that but instead was part of the wider strategy in delivering passenger transport.

Speaker three raised concerns in relation to the South Beds Dial-a-Ride tender and award of contract process and highlighted the following in summary:-

- That the proposals made by the previous provider had been unfairly dismissed.
- That the Committee should reassess the procurement and tender process due to several changes in policies throughout the process.
- That perception amongst providers was that the outcome of the procurement exercise had been predetermined.
- That the tender process had concluded 8 months later than previously agreed.
- That the process had destroyed collaboration between partners.

In response to the speaker the Assistant Director Public Protection & Transport confirmed that a delay had been caused by all parties requesting that any meetings taking place to finalise the tender process were not held during the summer months due to staff annual leave, which council officers had been happy to accommodate. The council had encouraged all providers to work together and that the tender process did not preclude the various dial a ride operators from working collaboratively, however they had chosen not to take this approach.

In response to the speakers and subsequent concerns raised regarding the process and effect on local service providers, a Member of the Committee called a Motion to include an item at a future meeting and the Committee voted four in favour, three against and one abstention and so the Motion was carried.

In light of the Motion the other registered speakers agreed not to make their statements, instead they indicated they would attend a future meeting at which it was agreed that a full performance report and a reassessment of the tender and procurement process would be considered.

SCOSC/18/135 Call-In

None.

SCOSC/18/136 Requested Items

None.

SCOSC/18/137 Executive Members Updates

The Executive Member for Community Services advised the Committee that works to Dunstable Leisure Centre were progressing well and that a formal handover to the operator would take place in the near future. The Leisure Centre would open in two stages due to a delay in the works to the poolside area which had been created due to the substance used to seal the pool tiles. An investigation was underway with the contractor to ascertain why this had occurred and in response to a Member query it was confirmed that there would be no cost to the Council as a result. Members were apprised of a drive to recruit additional Community Safety Officers and following a meeting with the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), that additional police officers would be deployed in smaller towns and parishes which was a positive step forward in supporting community policing.

In response to the update Members agreed that an invitation be extended to the PCC to invite her to attend a future Committee meeting.

The Executive Member for Regeneration provided an update in relation to the national planning policy framework and the challenges facing councils in having to use data and statistics from 2014 instead of more up to date information obtained in 2016. In response to Member queries the Executive Member confirmed that the increased levy on empty homes would de-incentivise home owners to leave properties empty, also minimising the impact on greenbelt development and that all Members would be informed when the Local Plan inspection dates had been confirmed.

SCOSC/18/138 Waste and Resource Strategy Update

The Deputy Executive Member for Community Services delivered a presentation which provided an update on recent consultations with regards to waste collections, the management of food waste, garden waste collections, a deposit returns scheme on drinks containers and proposals to introduce a plastic packaging tax. In addition Members were advised that a young resident had suggested that the Council consider the installation of public water fountains in order to reduce plastic drinks bottles and the Executive Member invited Members of the Committee to provide their views on the proposal.

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

- Where the funding for waste management proposals would be sourced from, to which it was confirmed that the deposit returns scheme and an extended producer responsibility levy would contribute towards it, with those funds channelled towards local authorities to manage.
- The importance of public perception, particularly in relation to hygiene when considering the installation of water fountains.
- The advice required from Anglian Water in relation to the connections, costs and infrastructure requirements for public water fountains.

- To consider replicating similar schemes adopted by other local authorities, particularly those which had secured match funding from water authorities.

RECOMMENDED

- 1. That the Committee support any future initiatives to reduce plastic waste consumption in Central Bedfordshire, including where appropriate and following suitable studies, the installation of public water fountains.**
- 2. That representatives from Anglian Water be invited to a future meeting.**

SCOSC/18/139 Dunstable Town Centre Regeneration

The Head of Place Delivery delivered a presentation which set out phase two proposals in relation to the Dunstable town centre high street improvement scheme. The Executive Member for Regeneration also highlighted recent improvements in the significant reduction of heavy traffic in the town with the narrowing of roads and widening of pedestrian areas working well and improving safety. Members were advised that local businesses had reported increased profits of up to twenty percent and in addition that the number of empty shops within the Quadrant had reduced dramatically, with voids on the high street having been halved. As a high flood risk area measures had been considered to reduce flooding, with Anglian Water investing money into elements of the scheme along with external funding from Highways England and the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF).

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

- That resident feedback expressing concerns in relation to parking problems and safety crossings prior to the works being carried out had been mitigated.
- The need to understand the housing demand in the area and manage those pressures accordingly.
- The abundance of free or low cost parking in Dunstable.
- Whether the VAT levy on local shops was putting them under undue pressure to which it was confirmed that the assets team would provide a response.
- That Members would like to see similar investment across Central Bedfordshire.
- To promote the town in order to increase visitor footfall.
- The unforeseen effects on surrounding villages following the de-trunking of the A5 and a need to address this in partnership with neighbouring authorities.

NOTED the presentation.

SCOSC/18/140 Work Programme 2018/19 and Executive Forward Plan

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

- **Community Transport Update – Date TBC**
- **Community Safety Update – Date TBC**

- **An Update from the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) – Date TBC**
- **School Parking Update – Date TBC**
- **The Parking Strategy Update – Date TBC**
- **Dunstable High Street Regeneration Update – Date TBC**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.20 p.m.)