

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **COUNCIL** held in the Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Thursday, 18 April 2019.

PRESENT

Cllr Mrs C F Chapman MBE (Chairman)

Cllr B Saunders (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs	M C Blair	Cllrs	Mrs D B Gurney	Cllrs	I Shingler
	D Bowater		Ms C Hegley		P Smith
	A D Brown		P Hollick		B J Spurr
	J Chatterley		J G Jamieson		R C Stay
	Mrs S Clark		J Kane		Mrs T Stock
	K M Collins		D J Lawrence		T Swain
	I Dalgarno		Mrs J G Lawrence		G Tubb
	S Dixon		K C Matthews		A M Turner
	P Downing		Ms C Maudlin		M A G Versallion
	K Ferguson		R Morris		N Warren
	Mrs J Freeman		T Nicols		S Watkins
	E Ghent		G Perham		B Wells
	C C Gomm		A Ryan		J N Young
	Mrs S A Goodchild		J A G Saunders		A Zerny
	Ms A M W Graham		D Shelvey		

Apologies for Absence

Cllrs	Mrs A Barker	Cllrs	F Firth	Cllrs	D McVicar
	R D Berry		K Janes		R D Wenham
	Mrs A L Dodwell		R W Johnstone		
	P A Duckett		M Liddiard		

Absent

Cllr	Costin	Cllr	Walker
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Officers:	Mr R Carr	–	Chief Executive
	Ms C Frost-Bryant	–	Head of Strategic Growth
	Ms S Griffin	–	Committee Services Officer
	Ms T Harris (Waste)	–	Assistant Director - Environmental Services
	Mrs S Harrison	–	Director of Children's Services
	Mrs S Hobbs	–	Senior Committee Services Officer
	Mrs J Ogley	–	Director of Social Care, Health and Housing
	Ms J Piper	–	Strategic Manager for Domestic Abuse
	Mr S Rix	–	Monitoring Officer
	Mrs M Scott	–	Director of Public Health
	Mr C Warboys	–	Director of Resources

C/18/77 **Minutes**

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 21 February 2019 be approved as a correct record.

C/18/78 **Members' Interests**

No declarations of interest were received.

C/18/79 **Questions, Statements and Deputations**

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

Gypsy and Travellers

A Parish Councillor from Kensworth spoke about the range of issues associated with gypsy and travellers in the area which had escalated over time. She hoped that Councillors would take action to address the issues.

A Parish Councillor from Stanbridge raised concerns about gypsy and travellers encampments on greenbelt land and the problems this was having on the settled and the established traveller communities. She referred to a Working Group that had been initiated to address these problems. The Working Group had met on three occasions and priorities were being established. The Parish Councillor acknowledged that the Council was now taking action to improve the situation. An advisor on behalf of the Secretary of State had visited the area twice and taken away evidence of the issues occurring. She raised concerns with the Local Plan and its reliance on windfall sites to accommodate gypsy and travellers. The Council needed to ensure that these situations do not occur again and community cohesion was secured.

A local resident spoke about the negative impact of anti-social behaviour and criminality on business around the Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard area. She also raised concerns that the Local Plan was relying on windfall sites to accommodate gypsy and travellers. Local residents in this area were living in fear of crime and felt intimidated. She urged the Council to take account of police crime and disorder data when considering planning applications.

A local resident, who spoke on behalf of Billington Parish Council, explained that people in the area were too scared to speak out in public. The gypsy and traveller sites in the area had become so large that they were merging together. She referred to the impact that this was having on local farmers.

The Executive Member for Community Services acknowledged residents' concerns. The Council had made provision to invest £9m in improvements to gypsy and travellers sites in Billington. The Council was committed to strengthening its enforcement capacity to help tackle issues. The Council was working with local residents and the Working Group mentioned and actions were already in train, including to address problems with utilities on sites. Enforcements notices had been served in Billington and these had been appealed and would be considered by the Planning Inspector.

The Executive Member for Regeneration noted the concerns raised about the approach to provision for gypsy and traveller sites within the Local Plan and the comments made about the use of crime and disorder data when considering planning applications.

C/18/80 Petitions

No petitions had been received.

C/18/81 Chairman's Announcements and Communications

The Chairman had exercised her discretion to vary the order of business covering item 12 'Domestic Abuse'. This item would ordinarily have been the last item on the agenda but she felt that it was appropriate to take it before Motions, Written and Open Questions. She had also specifically requested that the Strategic Manager for Domestic Abuse deliver the presentation.

The Chairman took the opportunity to thank those Members, who were retiring in May, for their service and wished them well on behalf of the Council.

The Chairman's activities had included attending:-

- the 25th anniversary of the Citizens Advice Bureau in Leighton Buzzard in the presence of the Princess Royal
- the installation of the new High Sheriff, Meryl Dolling
- the induction of the new Archdeacon of Bedford
- the launch of the Youth Parliament's manifesto
- the bi-annual parade of the Sea Cadets in Flitwick
- the Mayor of Dunstable's Civic Service.

C/18/82 Leader of the Council's Announcements and Communications

The Leader congratulated Stephen Rix on being appointed as the Council's Monitoring Officer.

The Leader thanked Councillors Stay, J Saunders, Hollick and Costin for their long service and wished them well on behalf of the Council, given that they were not standing for re-election in May.

C/18/83

Executive Member Presentations

Councillor Ghent, Executive Member for Assets and Housing Delivery highlighted some of the activities undertaken within his portfolio, including:

- Work with schools to increase school places
- Ensuring school premises were safe
- improved leisure facilities across Central Bedfordshire
- refurbished and new Household Waste Recycling Centres
- the construction of two new Highways depots
- the maintenance of the corporate buildings including new lighting and solar panels
- investing in new housing schemes such as Priory View, Dunstable and The Brook, Houghton Regis
- future projects being invested in such as the proposed new Crematorium, new pre-school at Pix Brook Academy opening in September and the development of Integrated Health and Care Hubs; and
- £71m of capital receipts had been achieved from the sale of land.

Councillor Dalgarno, Executive Member for Community Services provided an update covering:

- the new and refurbished leisure facilities in Central Bedfordshire
- enhanced library services
- integration of Customer Services within libraries
- the investment in Houghton Hall Visitors' Centre
- the investment in highways and footpaths
- addressing gypsy and traveller issues; and
- the tendering of a new waste collection contract.

In response to questions, the Executive Member for Community Services explained that modifications had been made to Customer Services within Shefford library to help improve customer confidentiality. He would provide a written response to the relevant Member regarding customer confidentiality at Biggleswade library.

C/18/84

Recommendation from the General Purposes Committee

The Council considered a recommendation from the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 28 March 2019 that proposed changes to the Director of Children's Services' delegated powers relating to education and maintained schools.

RESOLVED

that the proposed changes to the Director of Children's Services' delegated powers, as set out in Appendix A to the minutes, be approved and incorporated into Part 3E of the Constitution.

The decision was unanimous.

C/18/85 Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority

The Council received a report from the Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority from its meeting on 7 February 2019 and its Information Bulletin for the period October to December 2018.

RESOLVED

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

C/18/86 Independent Remuneration Panel

The Council considered a report from the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources that proposed the reappointment of an existing member of the Independent Remuneration Panel.

RESOLVED

that Dr R Tipping be reappointed to the Independent Remuneration Panel until 31 March 2022.

The decision was unanimous.

C/18/87 Domestic Abuse

The Council received a presentation from the Executive Member for Families, Education and Children and the Strategic Manager for Domestic Abuse that provided an insight into Domestic Abuse. Members were urged to support measures to tackle this issue and unanimously signalled their agreement.

NOTED the presentation.

C/18/88 Motions

No motions were received.

C/18/89 Written Questions

No written questions were received.

C/18/90

Open Questions

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

- (1) Councillor Zerny asked about the funding and delivery of Silsoe Leisure Centre.

The Leader explained that funding for Silsoe Leisure Centre had been secured through a Section 106 Agreement and the role of the Parish Council in the delivery of the Centre.

Councillor Zerny asked a supplementary question that referred to a leaflet which had made claims about the delivery of the Leisure Centre. He also commented on references to the provision of roads in the Sandy area.

The Leader explained that Central Bedfordshire Council had contributed and supported the development of Silsoe Leisure Centre. The Council had made improvements in Sandy that included extra car parking and improvements to the Winchester Road Estate.

- (2) Councillor Ryan confirmed that the Labour Group did not have any questions.
- (3) Councillor Downing referred to the 40mph speed limit on the A6 and B530 in the direction of Bedford and the reasons for this.

The Executive Member for Community Services explained that this section of the road was maintained by Bedford Borough Council.

- (4) Councillor Matthews noted that 4,000 council houses had been built nationally and asked how many Central Bedfordshire Council had built?

The Leader advised that the Council was committed to building housing for all residents. The Council had built around 62 homes a year for each of the last 4 years. The Council's aim was to increase this number to 300 a year now that the Housing Revenue Account debt cap had been removed.

Councillor Matthews asked a supplementary question about the comparative performance of neighbouring authorities?

The Leader explained that the total number of houses built by Milton Keynes, Bedford and Luton Borough Councils combined was about the same as Central Bedfordshire Council.

- (5) Councillor Wells asked about the Council's financial outturn against budget for 2018/19.

The Leader anticipated a small underspend.

Councillor Wells asked a supplementary question about suggestions concerning the need for an emergency budget.

The Leader explained that the Council was in a robust financial position and the services over the last four years had been maintained.

- (6) Councillor Stay referred to a comment made by the Chief Operating Officer at LGSS Law regarding the public sector.

The Leader would raise this issue with the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources.

- (7) Councillor Blair asked what percentage of primary school children were offered their first choice of school?

The Executive Member for Families, Education and Children advised that 95% of school children had received their first choice place at a primary school. In 2018, the Council had achieved the best performance in the country, together with Northumberland, for allocating students to their first choice of secondary school.

- (8) Councillor Nicols referred to an article written by the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) that suggested that housing growth could have been accommodated on brownfield sites.

The Executive Member for Regeneration explained that there had already been a significant development of brownfield sites in the north of Central Bedfordshire. New homes were needed in the south of the area and green belt land had been released to allow for this. All brownfield sites in Central Bedfordshire had been assessed and they had either already been built on or planning permission had been granted for them.

- (9) Councillor Maudlin asked about affordable housing and support to local people wishing to purchase their first homes.

The Executive Member for Regeneration explained that over the last 5 years 8,300 homes had been built in Central Bedfordshire, with 32% of these being affordable through Help to Buy and shared ownership.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 6.30 p.m. and concluded at 8.20 p.m.)

Chairman

Dated