

## CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held at Committee Room 1, Council Offices, High Street North, Dunstable on Tuesday, 27 October 2009

### PRESENT

Cllr J N Young (Chairman)  
Cllr A R Bastable (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs D J Gale  
Mrs R B Gammons  
Ms C Maudlin

Cllrs Mrs M Mustoe  
P Snelling  
P Williams

Apologies for Absence: Cllr J Kane

Substitutes: Cllr Mrs C F Chapman MBE

Members in Attendance: Cllrs J G Jamieson (Chairman of Corporate Resources O & S Committee)  
K C Matthews (Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth and Regeneration)  
T Nicols (Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Development)  
B Wells (Assistant Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities)  
Ms A M W Graham  
A Shadbolt (Vice-Chairman of Development Management Committee)

Officers in Attendance: Mr G Alderson Director of Sustainable Communities  
Mr S Andrews LDF Team Leader (North Team)  
Mr R Fox Interim Head of Development Plan  
Ms S Frost Principal Planning Officer  
Mr L Manning Democratic Services Officer  
Mr J Partridge Overview and Scrutiny Officer  
Ms S Wileman Service Improvement Manager

SCOSC/09/16 **Minutes**

### **RESOLVED**

***that the Minutes of the meetings of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 29 September 2009 and 7 October 2009 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.***

**SCOSC/09/17 Members' Interests**

(a) **Personal Interests:-**

None notified.

(b) **Personal and Prejudicial Interests:-**

None notified.

(c) **Any political whip in relation to any agenda item:-**

None notified.

**SCOSC/09/18 Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

No announcements were made by the Chairman and no matters of communication raised.

**SCOSC/09/19 Petitions**

No petitions were received from members of the public in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Annex 2 of Part A4 of the Constitution.

**SCOSC/09/20 Questions, Statements or Deputations**

No questions, statements or deputations from members of the public were received in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Annex 1 of Part A4 of the Constitution.

**SCOSC/09/21 Call-In**

No matters were referred to the Committee for a decision in relation to the call-in of a decision.

**SCOSC/09/22 Requested Items**

No items were referred to the Committee for consideration at the request of a Member under Procedure Rule 3.1 of Part D2 of the Constitution.

**SCOSC/09/23 Development Strategy Task Force Recommendations: Site Allocations Development Plan Document**

The Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a note of a meeting of the Development Strategy Task Force held on 23 October at which the allocation of sites for additional housing and employment development in the northern part of Central Bedfordshire (the former Mid-Bedfordshire District Council area) had been considered. The Chairman of the Task Force introduced the note of the meeting and outlined the deliberations that had taken place. He acknowledged that the opportunity for public consultation had been limited but he reminded the meeting that substantial consultation had taken place previously under the legacy authority. It was also noted that the Task Force had received representations from a number of Town and Parish Councils during its meeting and their input had influenced the Task Force's recommendation to the Committee.

Members noted that the Task Force had recommended that development should be supported at the sites set out in the appendix attached to the note of its meeting. The Committee considered the note and the appendix and, in particular, discussed concerns relating to the allocation of a site for 24 dwellings at Shillington. A Ward Member and a local resident commented that the allocation of this site was in contravention to policies detailed in the Local Development Framework and to the Shillington Parish Plan. Furthermore, previous planning applications for the site had been refused by Mid Bedfordshire and at appeal. On this basis it was requested that the Committee reconsider the suitability of this site prior to supporting its allocation. The Ward Member stressed that she would welcome development in the village but that the site identified was, for various reasons, totally unsuitable and an alternative should be sought.

Further debate followed during which the Head of Development Plan advised the meeting that Parish Plans had no statutory status. Nonetheless, in view of the uncertainty which had arisen regarding the site at Shillington, the Committee felt that the officers should investigate the issues raised and provide additional information.

***RECOMMENDED to the Executive:***

- 1 That, subject to Recommendation 2 below, the sites allocated for additional housing and employment in the northern part of Central Bedfordshire, as set out in the attached appendix, be approved.***
- 2 That, in consideration of the allocation of site H006 in Shillington, additional information be received from officers by the Chairman of the Development Strategy Task Force regarding the Shillington Parish Plan and Local Development Framework policies and then this information be submitted to the Executive for further consideration as necessary.***

**SCOSC/09/24 East of England Plan Review - Consultation**

The Committee considered a report by the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Development which sought Members' views on four scenarios relating to the rate of housing and economic growth in Central Bedfordshire and Luton for the ten years from the end of the current East of England Plan period in 2021 to 2031 and where that growth might be located.

The Committee unanimously agreed that scenario 1, as detailed in the body of the report, was the only practical option as it represented a "roll forward" of the current Plan's growth rates over the additional ten years and this was felt to be the highest level of development which could be achieved. The meeting was aware that the other scenarios sought growth rates in excess of those achieved in the past. Scenario 1 set out the following in relation to new dwellings for 2011-2031:-

| <b>Local Authority</b>     | <b>New dwellings 2011- 2031</b> |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Former Mid-Bedfordshire    | 14,400                          |
| Former South Bedfordshire  | 28,000                          |
| Central Bedfordshire Total | 42,400                          |
| Luton                      | 2,840                           |
| Total                      | 45,240                          |

However, the Committee used the opportunity to raise specific concerns regarding what were felt to be excessive numbers of new dwellings that Central Bedfordshire was being requested to accommodate up to 2031. It was also commented that any regional growth needed to be provided in a sustainable manner.

**RESOLVED**

***That the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee supports the recommendations detailed in the officer's report but that it be stressed that all growth must be provided in a sustainable manner.***

**SCOSC/09/25 LDF (North): Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document**

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Sustainable Communities which sought Members' views on the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document (DPD). Members were advised that Public Examination of the document had taken place in June and July 2009 following a period of public consultation and that the Inspector had determined the DPD to be 'sound'. The Committee noted that the Council could only agree to accept the DPD as it now stood, including the Inspector's changes, or reject it altogether and begin the process from the beginning. It was not possible to introduce further amendments.

The meeting noted that the biggest change by the Inspector had been his rejection of the Council's proposal for an extension to the Green Belt to the south-east of Milton Keynes which had arisen as a result of concerns relating to the city's expansion and the impact on nearby villages. The Inspector had felt that this was a strategic rather than local issue and should be dealt with in the Council's response to the review of the East of England Plan.

Despite this disappointment the Committee unanimously recognised that the DPD's benefits outweighed any disadvantages to Central Bedfordshire Council. The document provided guidance and an overall strategy for development and, by doing so, substantially reduced the opportunity for speculative planning applications and costly and time consuming appeals. It was also commented that officers should be congratulated for achieving a 'sound' Core Strategy which had only been achieved by around 20% of councils in England.

***RESOLVED that the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorse the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document.***

***RECOMMENDED to the Executive***

***That the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document be adopted.***

**SCOSC/09/26 Passenger Transport Review**

The Committee received a report by the Director of Sustainable Communities which set out the background to a review of passenger transport services in Central Bedfordshire, a more detailed overview in the form of the Project Mandate and an outline of the potential role for the Committee in relation to the governance of the project should it wish to assume this responsibility.

The meeting noted that the purpose of the project was to develop and implement policy and operational changes that would improve the efficiency and quality of transport services provided to all residents in Central Bedfordshire. To this end the review would be broad, complex and cross

cutting across three of the Council's Directorates: Children, Families and Learning, Social Care, Health and Housing and Sustainable Communities.

The meeting also noted that amongst the project objectives were the quick implementation of certain improvements and savings and the delivery of a comprehensive, longer term, improvement programme to start in May 2010.

The Committee welcomed both the Review and the proposed governance role.

***RESOLVED that the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee agrees to act as a reference group for the Passenger Transport Review project and engage with the project at key stages by undertaking such tasks as reviewing the consultant's draft report.***

**NOTED**

- 1 The Project Mandate for the Review, as attached as an appendix to the report of the Director of Sustainable Communities, and that the project scope now includes a more in-depth review of subsidised bus routes than is set out in the Mandate.***
- 2 That service-specific policy areas will be addressed by the relevant overview and scrutiny committee (e.g. entitlement to school transport policies will be addressed by the Children, Families and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee).***

**SCOSC/09/27 Work Programme 2009-2010**

Members considered a report by the Overview and Scrutiny Officer which asked the meeting to consider the Committee's current work programme for the 2009-2010 municipal year and beyond and sought any comments and amendments. In addition the officer supplied a draft work programme for the Development Strategy Task Force for the same period and advised Members that discussions would be held within the next few days regarding dates for the Task Force to visit possible Gypsy and Traveller sites. He added that once the Task Force had approved the dates they would be made known to the Committee.

Discussion followed on the vacancy which had arisen on the Task Force and the need to supply Members with a link to the Vision 21 report.

**RESOLVED**

- 1 That Councillor Shadbolt be appointed to fill the Member vacancy on the Development Strategy Task Force.***
- 2 That, as a priority, the Overview and Scrutiny Officer provides a link to allow Members to access the Vision 21 report.***

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 11.45 a.m.)