

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held at Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Tuesday, 26 January 2010

PRESENT

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

Cllrs Ms C Maudlin
Mrs M Mustoe

Cllrs P Snelling
P Williams

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs D J Gale
Mrs R B Gammons
J Kane

Substitutes: Cllrs Mrs C F Chapman MBE
A Shadbolt

Members in Attendance: Cllrs P N Aldis
P A Blaine
I Dalgarno
J G Jamieson

Officers in Attendance: Mrs J Keyte Community Safety Manager
Ms P Khimasia Senior Planning Officer
Mr L Manning Democratic Services Officer
Mr J Partridge Overview & Scrutiny Officer
Ms S Wileman Service Improvement Manager

In Attendance: Superintendent N Bedfordshire Police
Wilson

SCOSC/09/12 Minutes

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 4 January 2010 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

SCOSC/09/13 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/09/14 Chairman's Announcements and Communications

None.

SCOSC/09/15 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/09/16 Questions, Statements or Deputations

In accordance with the Public Participation Procedure, as set out in Annex 1 of Part A4 of the Constitution, the Committee received statements from two members of the public. The first questioned the use of Task Forces, called for public access to all Task Force meetings and then referred to the calculation used to arrive at the number of Gypsy and Traveller pitches to be provided in the north of Central Bedfordshire between 2011 and 2016. The second raised objection to the number of pitches being sought and requested information regarding pitch size and related matters.

In response the Chairman reminded the meeting that the Council was required to undertake the work on pitch provision by the Government. If sites to supply the required number of pitches were not identified then there was a strong possibility that a Government appointed Inspector would impose site selection on the Council. He then referred to the information sheet circulated at the meeting which provided background detail on pitch growth from 2011 to 2016. The Chairman warned that the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) was already of the opinion that local authorities as a whole had failed to fully carry out their responsibilities in this area.

In response to the criticism expressed regarding the use of a Task Force by the Committee the Chairman explained that the Task Force was composed of Members who assisted the Committee by undertaking time consuming work at a very detailed level. He also commented that members of the public had been provided with an opportunity to make their views known once all information had been examined by the Task Force and a recommendation was ready to be considered by the Committee. Members of the public would also have an additional opportunity to make their views known during the formal consultation process. The Chairman added that public reaction to the work undertaken by the Task Force could sometimes be premature and arose before the Task Force itself had arrived at any conclusion. He stated that public access to Task

Force meetings was at the discretion of the Chairman of the Task Force and, where it was felt appropriate, the public would be admitted.

The Chairman then advised the meeting that the shortlist of Gypsy and Traveller sites and the number of pitches required was now scheduled to receive further consideration at the next Committee meeting on 23 February 2010. As a result public consultation on this matter would be delayed until the beginning of March.

NOTED

SCOSC/09/17 Call-In

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

SCOSC/09/18 Requested Items

Members were aware that the report entitled 'Highways Customer Process', which had been submitted to the Committee for consideration following a request by a Member under Procedure Rule 3.1 of Part D2 of the Constitution, had been withdrawn from the agenda. The meeting was also aware that the item had been withdrawn at the request of the Member because he was no longer able to attend the meeting for personal reasons. It was noted that the item would be resubmitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

SCOSC/09/19 Development Strategy Task Force Recommendations

No recommendations were received from the Development Strategy Task Force in accordance with the requirements set out in the adopted Guidance Document. However, the Chairman advised the meeting that the Task Force had been asked to examine how the Council had both prepared for and responded to the recent extreme weather conditions. Mindful that further snowfall could still be experienced the Task Force would undertake this work once the winter had passed and, its existing work load permitting, submit a report to the Committee in June.

SCOSC/09/20 Directorate Capital Programme

Members were aware that the report entitled 'Directorate Capital Programme', which was due to be considered by the Committee, would now only be submitted to the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee and not to each individual Overview and Scrutiny Committee. A Member expressed disappointment that the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee would not receive this item and felt that the report should have been submitted to the Committee as part of its remit. The meeting fully concurred with the Member's comments.

RESOLVED that the Committee's disappointment at not receiving the Directorate Capital Programme for consideration be recorded.

SCOSC/09/21 Work Programme 2009-2010

The Committee 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 Members were asked to consider an indicative work programme for the Development Strategy Task Force for the same period.

Arising from consideration of the latter a Member referred to the Task Force meeting scheduled for September 2010 at which the Task Force was to be asked to note the Government Inspector's final report on the Gypsy and Traveller DPD for the south of Central Bedfordshire. He queried the opportunity for consultation prior to the issue of the report and then referred to a petition which had been presented to full Council and which had set out public opposition to the proposed number of Gypsy and Traveller sites identified for Houghton Regis. The Member queried whether the petition would be made available to the Inspector so the latter was fully aware of public concerns. He then raised objection to the large amount of work undertaken to identify possible sites in the north of Central Bedfordshire in comparison with the decision taken by the then South Beds District Council to allocate this task to consultants. He was of the opinion that the consultants should be called before the Committee so that Members and the public had an equal opportunity to consider and question the site proposals for the south of Central Bedfordshire as they did for those in the north.

In response the Chairman reminded the meeting that consideration of the consultants' proposals and the process of identifying sites in what was the old South Bedfordshire District Council area had been delegated by that legacy authority to the Luton and South Beds Joint Committee. As such the matter did not fall within the remit of the Sustainable Communities O&S Committee as the identification of sites in the old Mid Beds District Council area did. The Chairman of the Task Force concurred with this explanation adding that, unfortunately, the last two scheduled meetings of the Joint Committee had been cancelled and this had delayed consideration of proposals.

The Chairman of the Committee advised Members of the current position regarding the identification of possible Gypsy and Traveller sites in the Luton Borough Council area.

The Chairman emphasised that, although the identification of sites in the south had been delegated to the Joint Committee, Central Bedfordshire Council remained a consultee with the opportunity to comment fully at the public inquiry.

RESOLVED

- 1 that the work programmes for both the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Development Strategy Task Force, as submitted by the Overview and Scrutiny Officer, be approved and adopted.**

- 2 that the Chairman of the Committee write to the Chairman of the Luton and South Beds Joint Planning Committee seeking clarification on the current position regarding the identification of possible Gypsy and Traveller sites in the south of Central Bedfordshire and the response be reported to the Committee.**

SCOSC/09/22 Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment, Identified Priorities for 2010 - 2011

The Committee considered a report informing Members of the following six priorities that had been identified for 2010-2011 through the Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment:

1. Reduce Re-Offending;
2. Reduce Substance Misuse (Drugs and Alcohol);
3. Reduce Serious Acquisitive Crime (Domestic Burglary and Theft from Motor Vehicles);
4. Reduce Anti-Social Behaviour;
5. Reduce Domestic Abuse.
6. Casualty Reduction - Road Safety.

Members noted that they were being invited to comment on the priorities and recommend to Executive that it support their adoption by the Community Safety Partnership. Once adopted by the Partnership the priorities would be included within the Community Safety Plan.

To assist Members in their deliberations the Committee received the executive summary of the Strategic Assessment which set out the detailed analysis carried out as part of the Strategic Assessment document. In addition Superintendent Neil Wilson of Bedfordshire Police attended the Committee to provide additional information, offer clarification and answer questions on the above whilst the Community Safety Manager gave a briefing presentation which provided further background detail on the Strategic Assessment process.

The Community Safety Manager explained that the common themes running throughout the priorities were a reduction in the fear of crime and improving public confidence. Following comment she undertook to circulate a copy of the draft Community Safety Plan to Members in February.

Following full and detailed consideration Members gave their approval to the priority areas identified in the Strategic Assessment. However, the meeting also raised comments with regards to the Community Safety Plan which they requested be taken into consideration by the Community Safety Partnership.

RESOLVED that the Community Safety Partnership be advised that:

- a) ***an important need exists for careful communication with the public regarding the priorities contained in the Community Safety Plan.***
- b) ***residents need to be informed of the work of the Community Safety Partnership and the areas on which partners were focusing attention whilst emphasising that although these areas were a***

priority this did not mean that action was not being taken in other areas.

- c) *appropriately detailed information regarding performance should be made available by partners of the Community Safety Partnership to residents, Central Bedfordshire Council and Town and Parish Councils***

RECOMMENDED to Executive:

That it supports the following priorities for 2010-2011, identified through the Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment, for adoption by the Community Safety Partnership and inclusion within the Community Safety Plan:

- 1. Reduce Re-Offending;***
- 2. Reduce Substance Misuse (Drugs and Alcohol);***
- 3. Reduce Serious Acquisitive Crime (Domestic Burglary and Theft from Motor Vehicles);***
- 4. Reduce Anti-Social Behaviour;***
- 5. Reduce Domestic Abuse;***
- 6. Casualty Reduction - Road Safety.***

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.30 p.m.)