

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held at Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Tuesday, 16 November 2010

PRESENT

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

Cllrs D Jones
J Kane

Cllrs Mrs M Mustoe

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs D J Gale
Mrs R B Gammons
Ms C Maudlin
P Williams

Substitutes: Cllrs M Gibson (In place of Ms C Maudlin)
Ms A M W Graham (In place of P Williams)
J G Jamieson (In place of Mrs R B Gammons)
A Shadbolt (In place of D J Gale)

Members in Attendance: Cllrs P N Aldis
R A Baker
Mrs A Barker
P A Blaine
D Bowater
Mrs C F Chapman MBE
I Dalgarno
Mrs R J Drinkwater
Mrs S A Goodchild
M R Jones
Mrs J G Lawrence
D J Lawrence
H J Lockey
K C Matthews
D McVicar
T Nicols
Miss A Sparrow
B J Spurr
J Street
Mrs C Turner
Mrs P E Turner MBE
B Wells

Officers in Attendance: Mr G Alderson Director of Sustainable Communities
Mr S Ayres Public Transport Manager

Mr L Manning	Democratic Services Officer
Mr J Partridge	Overview & Scrutiny Officer
Mrs S Wileman	Service Development Officer
Mr J Partridge	Overview & Scrutiny Officer

Also in Attendance: Mr J Taylor TAS Partnership

SCOSC/10/36 Minutes

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 7 September 2010 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

SCOSC/10/37 Members' Interests

(a) **Personal Interests:-**

None notified.

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

Member	Item	Nature of Interest	Present or Absent during discussion
Cllr Mrs C F Chapman MBE	10	Chairman of Marston Vale Trust.	Present

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

None notified.

SCOSC/10/38 Chairman's Announcements and Communications

None.

SCOSC/10/39 Petitions

In accordance with the Public Participation Procedure, as set out in Annex 2 of Part A4 of the Constitution, ePetitions relating to the following issues were received by the Committee:

- a) the proposed cessation of the mobile library service;
- b) the proposed closure of Houghton Regis Leisure Centre.

The meeting noted that the ePetitions would not close for signing until 6 December and 9 December 2010 respectively.

The Committee was aware of the need to have regard to the content of these ePetitions during its deliberations on the proposals contained within the corporate budget strategy report (minute 10/44 refers). The Committee was advised that, in relation to Houghton Regis Leisure Centre, there were two paper petitions circulating for signing and Members were asked to also take this into account when considering the corporate budget strategy report.

RESOLVED

- 1 that the ePetition requesting that the Council 'keep Houghton Regis Leisure Centre open until such time as a new facility is provided in the town' be received and taken into consideration during discussion of item 10, the Corporate Budget Strategy – Savings Proposals;**
- 2 that the ePetition requesting that the Council 'reconsider the proposed removal of the Mobile Library Service' be received and taken into consideration during discussion of item 10, the Corporate Budget Strategy – Savings Proposals.**

RECOMMENDED to the Executive

that the Executive receive the ePetitions relating to Houghton Regis Leisure Centre and the Mobile Library Service at its meeting at which the Council's budget proposals for 2011/12 are considered.

SCOSC/10/40 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/10/41 Call-In

No decisions of the Executive had been called-in to be reviewed in accordance with the Call-In Procedure as set out in Part D2 of the Constitution.

SCOSC/10/42 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/10/43 Public Transport Strategy and Community Transport Strategy

The Committee received a presentation by a representative of the TAS Partnership Ltd entitled "Local Bus and Community Transport Support". A copy of the presentation is attached at Appendix A to these minutes.

Following the presentation full discussion took place on a number of related issues including the ability of volunteers to participate in service provision, the use of taxis to replace bus services in areas of low demand, the extent of local authority influence on public transport provision within a deregulated environment, concessionary bus fares, the need to observe equality and fairness, the validity of the public consultation and the accuracy of the bus use data.

Following comments by Members the Public Transport Manager advised the meeting that because public consultation would not close until the following day he was unable at this point to make proposals regarding specific routes. Instead any recommendations regarding the future of service provision would be submitted to the Executive on 7 December. The Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities and Healthier Lifestyles stressed that Members' views on the general strategic direction regarding the delivery of the proposed savings in local bus and community transport were sought at this time but that Members would have the opportunity to comment the future of individual services at the Executive meeting.

RESOLVED

- 1 that the Executive be advised that the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorses the strategic approach outlined in the presentation to the Committee regarding the delivery of the proposed savings of £545,000 in local bus and community transport including the proposed investment in longer term measures too achieve savings;**
- 2 that the Executive also be advised that Members of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee reserve the right to comment on the detailed proposals for reductions in local bus and community transport services when they are presented to the Executive.**

(Note: The Committee adjourned at 11.30 a.m. for a short break and reconvened at 11.41 a.m.)

SCOSC/10/44 Corporate Budget Strategy - Savings Proposals

The Committee considered a report by the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Governance and People which provided Members with the opportunity to assess all savings proposals for financial robustness and to consider the viability and suitability of the specific proposals relating to the Sustainable

Communities Directorate. Members also had before them two additional documents. The first was the report of the Portfolio Holder to the Executive on 2 November 2010 setting out a number of outline savings proposals (at Appendices A and B to the report) affecting all four Directorates and the Office of the Chief Executive. The second was a revised Appendix B(v) which had been amended to reflect the decisions taken by the Executive.

The Committee made the following specific comments and recommendations regarding the Sustainable Communities Directorate in the order set out below:

a) P6 Reduction in Small Grants/Commissions

The Committee queried whether there were other fiscally neutral proposals that had been considered to maintain the Marston Vale Trust and whether the Council could match the £10k funding proposed to be contributed by Bedford Borough Council.

RECOMMENDED to the Executive

that the Executive adopt the proposal to reduce Central Bedfordshire Council's £25k contribution towards the core resource costs of the Trust. Having adopted the proposal the Executive should seek to provide fiscally neutral support to the Marston Vale Trust.

b) EG, S&R1 Reduce External Enterprise and Marketing Activity

The Committee queried whether the full £200k budget could be saved in relation to external enterprise and marketing activity. Members were informed that the £100k in funding which would remain after the proposed savings was essential to help support the creation of an additional 27,000 new jobs in Central Bedfordshire.

RECOMMENDED to the Executive

that the Executive adopt the proposal to reduce external enterprise and marketing activity in order to achieve £100k savings.

c) EG, S&R2 Stop Grant to Luton Gateway Local Delivery Vehicle (LDV)

The Committee asked how Central Bedfordshire Council would continue to promote economic regeneration in the absence of the Luton Gateway and discussed the other available levers to promote economic growth.

RECOMMENDED to the Executive

that the Executive adopt the proposal to cease the grant to Luton Gateway Local Delivery Vehicle in order to achieve £50k savings.

d) EG, S&R3 Town and Parish Planning Support Activity Stopped

The Committee was told that there were very few Town and Parish Plans still to be produced. Members discussed the plans currently under development for Houghton Regis and Sandy and were informed that if savings proposals were implemented the support to develop these would cease on 1 April 2011. Town and Parish Plans were not statutory documents and where they were considered to be necessary the local Town or Parish Council would be expected to develop these from their own resources.

RECOMMENDED to the Executive

that the Executive adopt the proposal to stop town and parish planning support activity in order to achieve £45k savings.

e) EG, S&R4 Mobile Library Service to be Stopped. However, Library Link will Continue to be Provided

The Committee discussed the implications of this proposal and the current cost and usage of the Library Link and Mobile Library services. Members were mindful of the ePetition received on this matter which asked the Council to reconsider the proposed removal of the Mobile Library Service. The Committee considered the effect on users of the Mobile Library service if it was to stop.

The Committee raised various concerns relating to the accessibility of static libraries in the absence of the Mobile Library service, which would be affected by the rural nature of Central Bedfordshire. It was suggested that some residents would not be able to access static libraries and may also not meet the criteria to receive the Library Link service.

The Committee discussed the total cost per user of the Mobile Library and Library Link services and agreed that costs needed to be reduced whilst also seeking to address what Members saw as additional capacity in both services. It was suggested that a merger of these services might be more appropriate in order to utilise their benefits whilst also achieving savings.

RECOMMENDED to the Executive

that the Executive reconsider these proposals in order to explore an alternative combination of the services whilst avoiding cost creep and still achieving the estimated £55k savings set out in the report.

- f) EG, S&R5 Libraries Homework Centres for Five Areas to be Discontinued from 1 July 2011

The Committee was informed that the Library Homework Centres were not a statutory service and that schools and colleges might be able to support the users of this service. It was agreed that Members who were also school Governors should encourage schools to consider whether they can support users of this service.

RECOMMENDED to the Executive

that the Executive adopt the proposal to discontinue the Library Homework Centres for five areas from 1 July 2011 in order to achieve £30k savings.

- g) EG, S&R6 European Development Programme Fund Stopped

The Committee was told that this fund was non-statutory.

RECOMMENDED to the Executive

that the Executive adopt the proposal to cease the European Development Programme fund in order to achieve £20k savings.

- h) EG, S&R7 Reduction in Arts Development Service and Refocus to Support the Most Vulnerable

The Committee queried the total size of the budget for the Arts Service and the amount of funding that was attributed to Leighton Buzzard Theatre. Members commented that the proposal needed to be considered in the context of the proposed changes to the Music Service and taking into account the total size of the arts budget queried whether it may be possible to achieve a greater level of savings.

RECOMMENDED to the Executive

that the Executive reconsider these proposals to seek further options for reducing funding to the Arts Service by a greater extent than the £65k identified in the report in the context of the £450k total budget.

(Note: The Committee adjourned at 1.00 p.m. for lunch and reconvened at 1.38 p.m.)

i) CSPPWL5 Waste and Street Cleansing: Rationalise a Range of Waste Services

i) Rationalise Fly Tip Resource

The Committee discussed the use of tidy tips and asked if their use and that of PREEN could be extended. The Portfolio Holder was asked to consider schemes similar to that which had been in operation in Milton Keynes as a means of reducing the level of fly tipping.

ii) Street Cleansing in the South

The Committee noted that this was currently a very high performing service. The Committee accepted that street cleansing standards may be impacted by the proposals but accepted this on the grounds that a reasonable standard would be maintained in the town centres.

iii) Household Waste Recycling Area

The Committee discussed the operating hours of the Household Waste Recycling Centres and accepted that these services should be rationalised. Members stressed it was important that the Centres remain open at weekends and at other times where usage was at its highest.

iv) Food Waste Collection

Members commented that several residents had complained about the proposal to cease the supply of biodegradable bags for use with the scheme. It was also commented that this proposal would have a negative 2-3% impact on recycling targets.

The Committee requested that if the Council ceased to supply biodegradable bags residents should be made aware of where they can be purchased. Residents should also be made aware that food waste could be wrapped in newspaper.

RECOMMENDED to the Executive

that the Executive adopt the proposal to rationalise a range of waste and street cleansing services in order to achieve approximately £400k savings.

j) HT1 Replace Illuminated Bollards with Reflective Ones and Turn Off Street Lighting Between 2400 and 0600 Daily

The Committee raised no objection to the use of reflective bollards but expressed concerns relating to the turning off or dimming of street lighting and the impact this would have on the effectiveness of CCTV. It was felt that due regard needed to be given to public safety and

interested parties should be consulted locally before the proposal was implemented.

RECOMMENDED to the Executive:

- 1 that the Executive adopt the proposals to replace illuminated bollards with reflective ones in order to achieve the proposed savings; and**
- 2 that the Executive adopt the proposals to turn off or dim street lighting between 2400 hours and 0600 hours daily in order to achieve the proposed savings having due regard to public safety and having first undertaken consultation with interested parties locally before the lights are switched off or dimmed.**

k) HT4 Cease Support for the Provision of School Crossing Patrols

The Committee discussed concerns relating to the removal of school crossing patrols at schools where there were no urban design measures, such as pedestrian crossing, to improve safety. The Committee stressed the importance of health and safety and ensuring that children and young people were safe whilst walking to school. Where a patrol had been put in place on road safety grounds the Council should seek alternatives to ensure these patrols remained, including the schools taking responsibility for funding.

RECOMMENDED to the Executive

that the Executive seek to transfer the support for the provision of school crossing patrols to schools wherever possible. Where schools were not able to support the provision of the patrol the Council should seek to implement pedestrian crossings where they do not already exist and only remove the patrol following a safety audit indicating that it was felt safe to do so.

l) CSPPWL3 Community Safety Team

RECOMMENDED to the Executive

that the Executive adopt the proposal to reduce the number of posts in the Community Safety Team in order to achieve an estimated £90k savings.

m) CSPPWL4 Closed Circuit Television Surveillance System (CCTV) Reduced Monitoring, Reduction of CCTV Operator Posts and Changes to Terms and Conditions

RECOMMENDED to the Executive

that the Executive adopt the proposal to reduce monitoring, reduce CCTV operator posts and change terms and conditions in order to achieve an estimated £95k savings.

- n) CSPPWL6 Biggleswade Recreation Centre

RECOMMENDED to the Executive

that the Executive adopt the proposal to reduce the service at Biggleswade Recreation Centre in order to achieve approximately £65k savings.

- o) CSPPWL7 Close of Leisure Centre – Houghton Regis Leisure Centre

The Committee discussed the age of the facility and the necessary investment to raise it to standard. Members were mindful of the ePetition received on this matter which asked the Council to keep the Leisure Centre open until a new facility was provided in the town. It was noted that two paper based petitions in support of the Leisure Centre's retention were also in circulation.

Members queried whether an alternative provider could be sought to continue operation of Houghton Regis Leisure Centre beyond 2011. The Portfolio Holder provided an undertaking that he would seek to discuss alternatives with other providers before the proposed closure in December 2011.

RECOMMENDED that the Executive adopt the proposal to close Houghton Regis Leisure Centre in order to achieve approximately £172k savings and that the Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities and Healthier Lifestyles discuss with alternative providers how the facility could be retained post December 2011.

- p) P1 Housing Strategy and Support for new Affordable Housing Provision

RECOMMENDED to the Executive

that the Executive adopt the proposal to reduce support for the Housing Strategy and support for new affordable housing provision in order to achieve £67k savings.

- q) P2 Sustainable Growth Advice and Support

RECOMMENDED to the Executive

that the Executive adopt the proposal to reduce the level of sustainable growth advice and support in order to achieve £35k savings.

- r) P10 Countryside Services Restructure

RECOMMENDED to the Executive

that the Executive adopt the proposal to restructure Countryside Services in order to achieve £145k savings.

- s) P11 Reduction in Transport Strategy Team Resource and Transport Surveys Reduced from Six Monthly to Annual

RECOMMENDED to the Executive

that the Executive adopt the proposal to reduce the Transport Strategy Team resource and produce transport surveys annually in order to achieve £60k savings.

(Note: The Committee adjourned at 3.31 p.m. for a short break and reconvened at 3.40 p.m.)

SCOSC/10/45 **Access to Services Strategy**

The Committee considered a report by the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Development which summarised the content of the Central Bedfordshire Access to Services Strategy: Baseline Report which would form part of the third Local Transport Plan (LTP3) for Central Bedfordshire. A copy of the draft Strategy was attached as Appendix A to the report.

The meeting noted that the Strategy would contribute towards the creation of sustainable communities and the effective management of needed growth across the Authority as part of the development of Central Bedfordshire as an economic powerhouse. This would be achieved by providing the capacity to accommodate an increase in travel demand through the creation of more efficient use of transport networks and the provision, promotion and education about alternatives to car travel for journeys to schools.

The Portfolio Holder explained that the Strategy had focussed on access to the following key services:

- Health care
- Food shopping and essential services
- Leisure, culture and tourism

In response to a Member's comment the Portfolio Officer acknowledged that access to food shopping was essential and required on a far more frequent basis than health care, however the later was far more critical. Furthermore, access to food shopping would be met by a commercial driver.

RESOLVED

that the Executive be advised that the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorses the vision and objectives of the Access to Services Strategy: Baseline Report, and the proposed priorities and intervention methods contained within it, as part of the wider Local Transport Plan (LTP3).

SCOSC/10/46 Central Bedfordshire LTP Sustainable Modes of Travel to Schools and Colleges: A Strategy for Central Bedfordshire (SMoTS)

The Committee considered a report by the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Development which summarised the content of the Central Bedfordshire Sustainable Modes of Travel to Schools and Colleges Strategy (SMoTS) which would form part of the third Local Transport Plan (LTP3) for Central Bedfordshire. A copy of the draft strategy document was attached at Appendix A to the report.

The meeting noted that the report focused on access to schools and colleges which formed part of the Access to Services element of the LTP. It provided a strategic approach to the management of issues relating to school and college journey trips across the Authority and provided a framework for the identification of site specific measures through the Local Area Transport Plans which in effect would form the implementation plans for the LTP.

Members referred to various road safety matters within the draft strategy with particular reference to ensuring its effective implementation.

RESOLVED

- 1 that the Executive be advised that the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorses the objectives, methods of intervention and proposed policies of the Sustainable Modes of Travel to Schools and Colleges Strategy (SMoTS) as part of the wider Local Transport Plan (LTP3) subject to resolutions 2 and 3 below;**
- 2 that the Sustainable Modes of Travel to Schools and Colleges Strategy (SMoTS) include urban street design as a means of promoting safer routes to schools;**
- 3 that the Sustainable Modes of Travel to Schools and Colleges Strategy (SMoTS) be amended on page 67 (Speed Limit Review) of the document to indicate that Central Bedfordshire Council will promote 20mph speed limits at schools where it is appropriate and will look for these to be incorporated in the highways capital programme.**

SCOSC/10/47 Quarter One Performance Report

The Committee considered a report by the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Development, the Portfolio Holder and Assistant Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities and Healthier Lifestyles and the Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, Skills and Regeneration which highlighted the Quarter 1 performance for the Sustainable Communities Directorate.

NOTED

the report.

SCOSC/10/48 Work Programme 2010-2011

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 2010-2011 municipal year and beyond and sought any comments and amendments. In addition the Committee was asked to consider the Executive Forward Plan and an indicative work programme for the Development Strategy Task Force for the same period.

RESOLVED

that the work programmes for both the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Development Strategy task Force be approved.

NOTED

the Executive Forward Plan.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 4.04 p.m.)

Chairman

Dated