

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Tuesday, 21 June 2011.

PRESENT

Cllr D McVicar (Chairman)

Cllrs	M C Blair	Cllrs	J Murray
	Mrs C F Chapman MBE		B Saunders
	Mrs R B Gammons		P Williams
	Ms C Maudlin		

Apologies for Absence: Cllr A R Bastable

Substitutes: Cllr Mrs M Mustoe (In place of A R Bastable)

Members in Attendance:	Cllrs	P N Aldis	
		D Jones	
		K C Matthews	Executive Member for Sustainable Communities - Strategic Planning and Economic Development
		T Nicols	
		N J Sheppard	
		B J Spurr	Executive Member for Sustainable Communities - Services Deputy Executive
		B Wells	Member for Sustainable Communities - Services Deputy Executive
		J N Young	Member for Sustainable Communities - Strategic Planning and Economic Development

Officers in Attendance:	Mr G Alderson	–	Director of Sustainable Communities
	Mr S Caldbeck	–	Major Projects Officer
	Mr J Cliff	–	Head of Economic Development and Physical Regeneration
	Mrs P Everitt	–	Research and Business Support Officer
	Mr A Fleming	–	Acting Director of Sustainable Communities
	Mr J Partridge	–	Overview & Scrutiny Officer
	Ms S Wileman	–	Service Development Manager

SCOSC/11/1 **Members' Interests**

(a) **Personal Interests:-**

There were no declarations made.

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

There were no declarations made.

SCOSC/11/2 **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 18 January 2011 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

SCOSC/11/3 **Petitions**

No petitions were received from members of the public in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Part D2 of the Constitution.

SCOSC/11/4 **Questions, Statements or Deputations**

One speaker had registered to speak at the meeting in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Annex 1 to Section A4 of the Constitution. The speaker asked the Committee to reject proposals in Item 10 preventing members of the public and press from attending task force meetings except where staffing issues and confidential contracts were being discussed. The speaker also requested that agendas and Minutes of task force meetings be available within 21 days of the meeting and that all recommendations and comments from the task force be considered by the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee before being presented to the Executive.

A statement was also circulated to Members of the Committee from a member of the public relating to the proposals contained in Item 10 asking why the public were excluded from Task Force meetings.

The Chairman thanked the public speaker and undertook to provide a written response to the issues that had been raised. In response the Chairman stated that the Committee would be mindful of the concerns that had been raised during consideration of Item 10 and the matters in relation to the task forces.

RESOLVED that a written response be provided to the public speaker in relation to the issues they raised.

SCOSC/11/5 **Call-In**

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

SCOSC/11/6 **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/11/7 **Sustainable Communities Directorate**

The Director of Sustainable Communities gave a presentation, which provided an overview of the Sustainable Communities directorate. The Director drew particular attention to work underway within the directorate which included; planning; economic growth, skills and regeneration; highways and transportation; community safety, public protection, waste and leisure; and the Central Bedfordshire Energy and Recycling (BEaR) project.

In response to questions from Members of the Committee the Director confirmed the following:-

- Public consultation on planning matters was undertaken through various mechanisms set out in the Council's Community Engagement Strategy. There were further opportunities for public engagement in overview and scrutiny committees and Executive meetings and in various local meetings.
- The Infrastructure Planning Commission was currently considering an application by Covanta for a resource recovery facility (RRF) at Rookery South Pit. The BEaR project and the application by Covanta for an RRF at Rookery South Pit were completely separate.
- The Localism Bill proposed a 'duty to cooperate' with other local authorities in relation to planning proposals, which would require the Council to continue its current practice of discussing plans regionally where applicable.

NOTED the presentation

SCOSC/11/8 **Draft Work Programme 2011 - 12 & Executive Forward Plan**

The Committee received a report from the Director of Sustainable Communities that outlined the current draft work programme and the latest Executive Forward Plan. The report also proposed the approval of three overview and scrutiny task forces. The Chairman stated that in discussion of this item the Committee must be mindful of the issues raised by the earlier public speaker and in the statement that had been circulated at the meeting.

The Committee discussed in detail issues relating to meetings of the Development Strategy Task Force being held in private. It was commented that in addition to Committee meetings the task force had occasionally undertaken visits, such as those to proposed gypsy and traveller sites, It was suggested that it would have been inappropriate for members of the public to attend these visits. There were also several issues considered by the task force that were commercially sensitive and could not be considered in public. The Committee was in agreement that the meetings should remain private and that members of the public should only be invited to attend at the discretion of the Chairman of the Task Force.

The Committee also discussed in detail whether the Chairman of the Committee should be delegated authority to agree recommendations on behalf

of the Committee so they could be submitted directly to the Executive. It was proposed that all recommendations of the Task Force should be presented to the Committee regardless of whether they were considered controversial. This proposal was not agreed by the Committee, however it was agreed that the Vice-Chairman of the Committee and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Task Force should also be responsible for agreeing if a recommendation was controversial and required further consideration by the Committee.

In addition to these issues the following were also discussed or noted:-

- All notes and recommendations would be made available on the Council's website as soon as possible following meetings, except where they were confidential.
- All non-Executive Members would be invited to declare an interest in being a Member of the proposed task forces, the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee would appoint the Membership.
- The proposed Highways and Transportation Task Force would be in operation until the end of September 2011. A time-limit had been placed on the operation of these task forces in order to complete the work within an appropriate period of time.
- Members of the public would be invited to be involved in the proposed Highways and Transportation and Leisure Facilities Task Forces.
- The review of leisure facilities was proposed by Central Bedfordshire Council in advance of the budget proposals agreed by the Council in January 2011. This task force review would not commence until the completion of the Highways and Transportation Task Force.

In relation to the work programme the Chairman also noted that he had agreed to cancel the meeting on 2 August and that an additional meeting had been organised on 1 December 2011.

RESOLVED

That the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- 1. approves its draft work programme;**
- 2. re-establishes the Development Strategy Task Force and approves the terms of reference and communications protocol as set out in Appendix D to the report subject to (3) below;**
- 3. delegates authority to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of a task force to agree recommendations of the task force on behalf of the Committee so that they can be submitted directly to Executive or Executive Member(s) as appropriate, except when they are considered to be controversial in which circumstances they will be presented to the full Committee;**
- 4. establish a Highways and Transportation Task Force to review roads and footways maintenance and the managing agent contract**

(MAC) with Amey LG and the developing approach to car parking as set out in paragraphs 7 – 9 to the Committee report;

- 5. establish a task force to review leisure facilities in Central Bedfordshire following the conclusion of the task force review detailed in (4) above;**

NOTED

- 1. That the Chairman had agreed to cancel the Committee meeting on 2 August and arrange a further meeting on 1 December 2011.**
- 2. That the Cultural Strategy Task Force and Member Advisory Group on Highways will cease to operate with immediate effect.**

SCOSC/11/9 Member Engagement with the Local Area Transport Plans and Highways Programme

The Committee received the report of the Executive Member for Sustainable Communities (Services), which proposed how Member consultation on LAMP and Highways Programme should take place in developing the 2012/13 programmes of work.

RESOLVED that the approach to engagement with Local Area Transport Plan and the Highways work programme as detailed in the report be approved.

SCOSC/11/10 Biggleswade Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan SPD

The Committee received a report and presentation regarding the draft Biggleswade Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and the outcomes of earlier public consultation. The Committee also received supplementary information that detailed all of the changes that had been made to the SPD in light of the public consultation.

In response to the report and in light of the consultation responses Members discussed the following:-

- Proposals for development in the town centre would be required to provide adequate car parking. There was no intention to reduce the current level of car parking that was available.
- The Masterplan was an important tool for attracting inward investment to the town centre from the commercial market. Whilst public funding was limited there were opportunities through Section 106 and LAMP funds although the majority of funding would come from private investment.
- There had been a considerable level of public engagement in the consultations regarding the masterplan and the process had been a particularly positive one.

- The Council would discuss with local partners the most appropriate means of continuing local discussion to deliver the plan, which may replace the town centre partnership.

NOTED the outcomes of the statutory consultation held during February and March 2011 and the proposed changes arising to the Draft Strategy and Masterplan.

RECOMMENDED to the Executive that the Biggleswade Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document as part of the Local Development Framework (North).

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.13 p.m.)

Chairman.....

Dated.....