

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Tuesday, 10 April 2012.

PRESENT

Cllr D McVicar (Chairman)
Cllr A R Bastable (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs	M C Blair	Cllrs	J Murray
	Mrs C F Chapman MBE		B Saunders
	Ms C Maudlin		

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs Mrs R B Gammons
P Williams

Substitutes: Cllrs D Jones (In place of P Williams)
A Shadbolt (In place of Mrs R B Gammons)

Members in Attendance:	Cllrs	P N Aldis	
		D Bowater	Chairman of Audit Committee
		I Dalgarno	Deputy Executive
		J G Jamieson	Members for Sustainable Communities - Services
		K C Matthews	Leader of the Council and Chairman of the Executive
		T Nicols	Executive Member for Sustainable Communities - Strategic Planning and Economic Development
		B J Spurr	Executive Member for Sustainable Communities - Services
		B Wells	Deputy Executive
		J N Young	Member for Sustainable Communities - Services
		A Zerny	Deputy Executive
			Member for Sustainable Communities - Strategic Planning and Economic Development

Officers in Attendance: Mrs P Khimasia-John – Principal Planning Officer
Mr A Lewis – Major Projects Officer

Mrs J Moakes	– Assistant Director Community Safety & Public Protection
Mr J Partridge	– Scrutiny Policy Adviser
Mr R Romans	– Minerals and Waste Team Leader
M Saccoccio	– Local Planning and Housing Team Leader
Ms S Wileman	– Service Development Manager

Others in Attendance

Atkins Consultants

SCOSC/11/74 Minutes

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 06 March 2012 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

SCOSC/11/75 Members' Interests

(a) **Personal Interests:-**

None.

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

None.

(c) **Political Whip:-**

None.

SCOSC/11/76 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/11/77 Questions, Statements or Deputations

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

SCOSC/11/78 Call-In

The Committee were advised that no decisions of the Executive had been referred to them under the Call-in Procedures set out in Appendix A to Rule No. S18 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

SCOSC/11/79 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/11/80 Gypsy and Traveller Plan: Pitch Numbers and Site Assessment Methodology

The Committee received a report from the Executive Member for Sustainable Communities, Strategic Planning and Economic Development that outlined the target number of pitches to 2031 for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople in Central Bedfordshire. The report also proposed a methodology for assessing sites for allocation to accommodate these pitches.

In addition to the report the Principal Planning Officer explained the pitch requirements and clarified that the 3% and 1.5% compound growth rates had previously been identified in the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment and the East of England Plan respectively. The compound growth rates had been applied to the total number of current sites in Bedfordshire as at 2011 to provide the number of pitches required as a result of growth.

In response to the report a Member queried why the Council was seeking to identify pitch requirements to 2031 when guidance suggested Councils should identify 5, 10 or 15 years supply. Officers responded that guidance had been issued following the publication of the report. However, the Gypsy and Traveller pitch requirement had been aligned to the Council's Development Strategy, which set out planned development up to 2031.

In response to queries from another Member it was commented that positive work had been undertaken at the Gypsy and Traveller site at Greenacres, where with the assistance of a liaison Gypsies and Travellers had been integrated with the community. The Council encouraged integration with the local community on sites throughout the area. Improvements had also been made in relation to issues such as drainage and landscaping that had been a problem on sites in the past. The Committee was also informed that sites identified in the former Gypsy and Traveller Plan for the North of Central Bedfordshire would be 'banked' for future site allocations. Consideration to the proximity of proposed Gypsy and Traveller sites and the settled community would be given as applications were submitted.

Following the discussion of these issues and in response to the report and further clarification the Committee raised and discussed the following issues in detail:-

- Adding criteria to ensure that sites were 1.5 fields away from the settled community would be too prescriptive. The criteria provided flexibility for Members to take into account any other considerations as they wish, which could include proximity.
- Despite the identification of "windfall applications" that would provide potential Gypsy and Traveller pitches there was no pressure on Development Management to approve these. If sites were not granted

when considered at Development Management alternative pitches would be found.

- Whether there needed to be a higher score for those sites that had good access to public transport services.
- Access to public facilities should be determined from safer routes.

RECOMMENDED to the Director of Sustainable Communities:-

- 1. That the total number of pitches for allocation in the Gypsy and Traveller Plan, for both the Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople communities be approved as set out in the report for consultation purposes.**
- 2. That the methodology and criteria to shortlist sites be approved.**
- 3. That during the assessment of sites consideration be given to the following:-**
 - (i) that access to public facilities be determined by safer routes; and**
 - (ii) that access to public transport be judged in relation to the frequency of the service as well as the distance to the service.**

SCOSC/11/81 Medium Term Plan: consultation document

The Committee received a report from the Leader of the Council that sought the views of Members on the proposed content of the emerging Medium Term Plan prior to its adoption by Full Council.

In response to the report the Committee raised and discussed the following issues in detail:-

- The Woodside Link should be included in the list of schemes identified under “Better Infrastructure – Improved roads, broadband reach and transport.”
- References to freezing council tax should be clarified to make it clear whether council tax will be frozen for the next three or four years.
- A reference should be added in the document to the provision of affordable housing in Central Bedfordshire.
- References to the increase in the numbers of children requiring a child protection plan should be clarified.

RECOMMENDED TO EXECUTIVE

- 1. That the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee agrees to the approach for adopting the Medium Term Plan 2012-16.**
- 2. That the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee has considered the emerging priorities and targets within**

the Medium Term Plan and recommends the following changes to be reflected in the Medium Term Plan prior to its adoption:-

- **The addition of the Woodside Link in the list of schemes identified under “Better Infrastructure – Improved roads, broadband reach and transport.”**
- **The addition of a reference to the provision of affordable housing.**
- **Clarification in relation to the period of time over which council tax will be frozen.**
- **The addition of an explanation of the numbers of children requiring a child protection plan.**

(Councillor Murray requested that his vote against these recommendations be recorded).

SCOSC/11/82 Community Infrastructure Levy

The Committee received a report from the Executive Member for Sustainable Communities, Strategic Planning and Economic Development that outlined the background for the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and set out the proposed timescales for CIL production.

In response to questions from Members it was clarified that the CIL operated as a roof tax. There could be variable CIL rates depending on the results of the viability study. Funding received through the CIL could be spent flexibly depending on the Council’s priorities, the Council will also have to delegate responsibility to Town and Parish Councils to manage a proportion of the funding. The Committee was also informed that whilst a tender brief for the Viability Assessment for CIL was being prepared there had been no discussion to date with the district valuer.

RECOMMENDED

That the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee have discussed progress in relation to the production of a Community Infrastructure Levy and recommend that the tender brief for the viability assessment of CIL be circulated to the district valuer so they can consider whether they would like to submit a tender for the contract.

SCOSC/11/83 Brewers Hill Road Opportunity Sites Planning and Development Brief

The Committee received a report from the Executive Member for Sustainable Communities, Strategic Planning and Economic Development that outlined the outcomes of the statutory consultation in relation to the Brewers Hill Road Opportunity Sites Planning and Development Brief. The Major Projects Officer and Ms H Trubshaw, Atkins Consultants, also informed the Committee of the Land Use Framework in the proposed planning and development brief and confirmed that there were no planned major changes as a result of the consultation.

RECOMMENDED TO EXECUTIVE

That the Brewers Hill Road Opportunity Sites Planning and Development Brief be endorsed as technical guidance for development management purposes subject to the addition of the schedule of suggested changes as indicated in the consultation report.

SCOSC/11/84 Minerals and Waste Core Strategy

The Committee received a report from the Executive Member for Sustainable Communities, Strategic Planning and Economic Development that set out a proposed Minerals and Waste Core Strategy for Central Bedfordshire in light of a recent consultation. The Team Leader for Minerals and Waste informed the Committee of the outcomes of the consultation and the key changes to the strategy as a result. A further set of focused changes was also circulated to Members of the Committee at the meeting as a response to the recently published National Planning Policy Framework.

NOTED

The representations made on soundness of the recently published Minerals and Waste Core Strategy as amended for submission.

RECOMMENDED TO EXECUTIVE

That the proposed responses to the representations received be accepted and that the proposed Focused Changes contained in both the main report and the later addition be approved for public consultation and then submission to the Secretary of State.

SCOSC/11/85 Capital Programme Report

The Committee received the Capital Programme report for the quarter ended 31 December 2011 for the Sustainable Communities Directorate. In response to the report the Committee raised and queried the following:-

- Whether highways street lighting in Flitwick would be considered in the future.
- The reason for a £30k net variance in the waste infrastructure budget.
- Due to the underspend in the capital budget the directorate should consider opportunities for bringing schemes forward where possible.

NOTED

- 1. Actual expenditure to date of £18,174k and external income of £16,632k.**
- 2. Forecast annual expenditure of £31,476k and external funding of £17,832k.**
- 3. Bringing forward of highways schemes from future years with a value of £3,000k**

SCOSC/11/86 **Revenue Budget Report**

The Committee received the Revenue report for the quarter ended 31 December 2011 for the Sustainable Communities Directorate. In response to the report the Committee queried the Council's approach to chasing debtors and payment of its own invoices.

NOTED

- 4. The proposed annual outturn of £51,048k.**
- 5. The proposed release of earmarked reserves of £520k.**
- 6. The forecast underspend of £126k after the use of reserves.**

SCOSC/11/87 **Quarter 3 Performance Report**

The Committee received the quarter three performance report for the Sustainable Communities Directorate. In addition to the report it was commented that the Council had exceeded its target for affordable housing completions per year.

NOTED the quarter three performance of the Sustainable Communities Directorate.

SCOSC/11/88 **Work Programme 2012/13 and Executive Forward Plan**

The Committee received their work programme for 2012/13 and Executive Forward Plan. In addition Cllr Matthews commented that this would be his last Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny meeting as an Executive Member. The Committee thanked Cllr Matthews and wished him all the best for the future.

RESOLVED

That the work programme for the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee be approved.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.10 p.m.)

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