

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Thursday, 26 July 2012.

PRESENT

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

Cllrs	Mrs C F Chapman MBE	Cllrs	J Murray
	Mrs R B Gammons		B Saunders
	K C Matthews		P Williams

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs Ms C Maudlin

Substitutes: Cllrs D Bowater (In place of Ms C Maudlin)

Members in Attendance:	Cllrs	P N Aldis	
		T Nicols	
		B Wells	Deputy Executive Member for Sustainable Communities - Services
		J N Young	Executive Member for Sustainable Communities - Strategic Planning and Economic Development

Officers in Attendance:	Mr R Fox	–	Head of Development Planning and Housing Strategy
	Mr S Mooring	–	Corporate Policy Adviser (Climate Change/Sustainability)
	Mr J Partridge	–	Scrutiny Policy Adviser
	Ms S Templeman	–	Senior Finance Manager
	Mrs L Wade	–	Assistant Director Economic Growth and Regeneration
	Ms S Wileman	–	Service Development Manager

SCOSC/12/18 **Members' Interests**

There were no declarations of interest or political whip in relation to any agenda items.

SCOSC/12/19 **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman informed the Committee that Item 9 (**Minute SCOSC/12/25**) had previously been requested by Councillor Nigel Aldis. Councillor Aldis would be invited to speak under this item.

SCOSC/12/20 **Minutes**

Cllr Nicols commented that there was a conflict in the draft Development Strategy relating to the definition of the link road between the M1 and the A6. In some places this road was described as a 'bypass' and in others it was described as 'critical infrastructure'. Cllr Nicols stated that a clear definition needed to be agreed prior to the Development Strategy being published. Cllr Nicols stated that he reserved the right to challenge this issue further and to request that it be considered at a future meeting of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee. In response the Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Economic Development stated that this issue would be taken outside of the meeting and commonality of the terms that were used to describe the link between the M1 and the A6 would be ensured in the final draft Development Strategy.

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meetings of the special Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 16 May 2012 and the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 11 June 2012 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

SCOSC/12/21 **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/12/22 **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/12/23 **Call-In**

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

SCOSC/12/24 **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/12/25 **Climate Change Strategy and Carbon Management Plan**

The Corporate Policy Adviser (Sustainability and Climate Change) introduced a report that updated Members on the implementation of the Council's Climate Change Strategy and Carbon Management Plan. The report also

proposed how the Council could continue to demonstrate its commitment to tackling climate change and becoming more energy efficient.

In response to the report and further information provided by officers Cllr Aldis queried several issues that included:-

- Whether academies could be removed the Council's carbon footprint as the Council was not responsible for their running.
- Whether there were plans to run any of the buses on the Luton - Dunstable Guided Busway on cooking oil, as this had worked well elsewhere.
- Whether the Council still intended to turn off street lighting in some areas overnight.
- The importance of a robust approach to supporting local communities during floods.
- The kerb side collection of glass, which would reduce the need for residents to travel and could reduce carbon emissions.
- Whether the Council could encourage greater use of solar panels and energy efficient lighting at its own buildings as well as reducing the size of agenda papers in order to reduce the Council's carbon footprint.
- Whether the Council might encourage the use of wind turbines on its portfolio of farms as a means of producing more sustainable energy sources and reducing carbon emissions.
- The benefits of building more energy efficient homes.
- The importance of collecting grey water so that it can be reused.

In response to these issues the Deputy Executive Member for Sustainable Communities Services, commented that he would take on board the comments in relation glass collection. The Council was currently considering street lighting and the implications of turning lights off in some areas overnight, which was a long-term aspiration. The Council was presently removing some street lights where there were considered to be more than necessary. As lights were replaced the Council used low emission bulbs. The Corporate Policy Adviser (Sustainability and Climate Change) also commented that the Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC) was currently under consultation but until advised otherwise the Council had to include academies in figures relating to the Council's carbon footprint.

In light of the report and the additional points raised by Cllr Aldis the Committee and other Members in attendance discussed several issues in detail, which included:-

- Concerns that the carbon footprint for "leisure" had not dropped as much as may have been expected resulting from the closure of Houghton Regis Swimming Pool. It was queried whether effective monitoring of

this building was being undertaken to ensure that it was not being heated unnecessarily. The Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Economic Development commented that he would review this figure and report back to the Committee.

- Whether the targets agreed by the Council in 2010 in the Climate Change Strategy were realistic and whether an appropriate capital allocation had been provided to achieve these targets. In response officers commented that these targets had been reached through conversation with the Carbon Trust and comparisons with other local authorities. The target of a 35% reduction by 2015 was considered to be achievable as there were several significant projects underway. The Council would need to consider whether an overall reduction of 60% by 2020 was achievable and how it would aim to achieve this. The Committee requested that a further report in relation to this be received at a future meeting.
- The importance of allocating an appropriate amount of money in the capital programme to adaptations in schools if targets in relation to reducing the carbon footprint were to be achieved. The Committee was particularly concerned that the targets were unachievable without an appropriate budget being allocated for adaptations in schools. The Committee suggested that the Executive Members for Children's Services and for Strategic Planning and Economic Development be requested to consider if the capital programme was appropriate to achieve targets in the reduction of the Council's carbon footprint.
- Concerns that the Council could not achieve level 5 of the code for sustainable homes in relation to water standards by 2013 and level 5 of the code relating to building efficiency by 2016. It was suggested by Cllr Nicols that these levels were unsustainable and without adequate training for the building community they could not be achieved, it was suggested this would result in the Development Management Committee (DMC) having to refuse planning applications. In response the Head of Development Planning and Housing Strategy commented that Central Bedfordshire was an area of serious water stress, as a result the Council needed to ensure that sustainable homes codes were met as well as developments being viable. The draft Development Strategy was presently out to consultation and officers would consider how these codes could be implemented after the consultation, at which stage the draft Development Strategy would be considered by the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee. DMC would be able to apply conditions to planning permissions where it felt appropriate.
- The importance of ensuring that water companies did not increase the price of water as a means reducing water usage. Homes in Central Bedfordshire should be able to access affordable water.
- Concerns that switching off street lighting overnight would not reduce the Council's carbon footprint as power stations would be slow to react to these changes.

- Whether it was appropriate for academies to be included in the breakdown of the Council's carbon footprint when the Council did not have the responsibility for improving the efficiency of these buildings.
- Whether it would be appropriate to sign up to the LGA's Climate Local initiative without the benefits of this programme being understood and without appropriate identification of the actions that would be undertaken locally. Officers undertook to provide further detail in relation to the added value of the LGA's Climate Local initiative and what the Council could achieve without taking part in the initiative.

In response to the issues raised by Members the Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Economic Development commented that the Council would insist on white energy efficient lighting in new homes. It was also commented that the Council would not delay the completion of new homes if Anglian Water stated that they could provide water to those homes, the Council should however encourage Anglian Water to provide surface water storage solutions in the region to alleviate concerns of water stress. In relation to schools the Council was not able to commit the capital budget to adapt all schools in the area but a cost-benefit analysis was undertaken of potential works to consider the effect they could have on the Council's carbon footprint.

Prior to agreeing their recommendations the Committee discussed whether they should comment on the ability of the Council to achieve the codes for sustainable homes and the need to inform developers as early as possible of the requirements for future developments. The Committee agreed to wait until the consultation on the draft Development Strategy had been completed before commenting on this, developers would be required to meet the standards set by the Council in the future.

RECOMMENDED TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER

- 1. That the comments of the Committee as detailed in the Minutes be taken into account during the delivery of the Climate Change Strategy and Carbon Management Plan during 2012/13.**
- 2. That the Committee receive more detail in relation to the Council's proposed actions and level of ambition prior to considering whether the Council should sign up to the LGA's Climate Local Initiative.**
- 3. That the Committee feels the three key aims of the Climate Change Strategy, in particular the reduction of the Council's own carbon footprint by 35% before 2015 and 60% before 2020, were unrealistic without an appropriate level of capital funding being made available to support the delivery of these targets.**
- 4. That a further report be submitted to the Committee detailing the programmes that the Sustainable Communities directorate aims to progress in order to deliver a 35% reduction by 2015 and 60% reduction by 2020 in the Council's carbon footprint. The report should also detail the discussion that the Executive Member for**

Strategic Planning and Economic Development has undertaken with the Executive Member for Children's Services as to whether an appropriate budget has been allocated for adaptations in schools in order to reduce the Council's carbon footprint.

SCOSC/12/26 2011/12 Provisional Outturn Capital Budget Monitoring Report

The Committee received the 2011/12 provisional outturn capital budget monitoring report for the Sustainable Communities Directorate. In response to the report Cllr Nicols queried whether the £10k gross expenditure on the Luton Northern Bypass Strategic Infrastructure project was appropriate and whether it would be increased. Cllr Nicols also commented that £330k had been attributed to Carbon Reduction Improvements but there was no increase in future years to support the target of a 60% reduction in the Council's carbon footprint by 2020.

The Committee raised concerns with regard to the level of underspend in the Sustainable Communities budget. It was commented that the Executive should be encouraged to ensure that this underspend was managed more effectively during 2012/13 so as to ensure that it was reduced.

NOTED the report

SCOSC/12/27 2011/12 Provisional Outturn Revenue Budget Monitoring Report

The Committee received the 2011/12 provisional outturn revenue budget monitoring report for the Sustainable Communities Directorate. In response to the report the Committee sought clarification regarding the use of earmarked reserves.

NOTED the report

SCOSC/12/28 Quarter 4 Performance Report

The Committee received the quarter 4 performance report for the Sustainable Communities Directorate. In addition to the report the positive performance in relation to attracting inward investment, offender schemes, the level of residual waste per head and the provision of affordable homes was highlighted. In response to the report Members raised and queried the following:-

- Figures that were not yet available in relation to the percentage of household waste sent for recycling, verification of these figures was required from Westminster.
- Recycling rates, which were seasonal and reduced annually during the summer.
- Improvements in policing detection rates, which had improved performance in relation to the number of serious acquisitive crimes per 1,000 population.

NOTED the report

SCOSC/12/29 Work Programme 2012/13 and Executive Forward Plan

The Committee received their work programme for 2012/13 and Executive Forward Plan.

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 11.36 a.m.)

Chairman.....

Date.....