

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL** held in the Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Thursday, 13 June 2013.

PRESENT

Cllr D Bowater (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs	P N Aldis	Cllrs	C Hegley	Cllrs	N J Sheppard
	Mrs A Barker		P Hollick		I Shingler
	A R Bastable		D J Hopkin		M A Smith
	L Birt		J G Jamieson		Miss A Sparrow
	M C Blair		K Janes		B J Spurr
	D Bowater		R W Johnstone		R C Stay
	A D Brown		D Jones		A M Turner
	Mrs C F Chapman MBE		M R Jones		Mrs P E Turner MBE
	Mrs G Clarke		D J Lawrence		M A G Versallion
	I Dalgarno		Mrs J G Lawrence		N Warren
	A L Dodwell		K C Matthews		B Wells
	Mrs R J Drinkwater		D McVicar		R D Wenham
	P A Duckett		J Murray		P Williams
	Dr R Egan		Mrs M Mustoe		T Woodward
	Mrs R B Gammons		R B Pepworth		J N Young
	Mrs S A Goodchild		J A G Saunders		A Zerny
	Ms A M W Graham		A Shadbolt		

Apologies for Absence

Cllrs	R D Berry	Cllrs	C C Gomm	Cllrs	C Maudlin
	Mrs S Clark		Mrs D B Green		B Saunders
	N B Costin		Mrs D B Gurney		

Officers:	Mr J Atkinson	–	Head of Legal and Democratic Services
	Mr R Carr	–	Chief Executive
	Ms D Clarke	–	Director of Improvement and Corporate Services
	Mr M Coiffait	–	Community Services Director
	Mr A Fleming	–	Service Director - Business Services
	Mrs E Grant	–	Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services
	Mrs S Hobbs	–	Committee Services Officer
	Mrs J Ogley	–	Director of Social Care, Health and Housing
	Ms M Peaston	–	Committee Services Manager
	Mr C Warboys	–	Chief Finance Officer

In the absence of the Chairman the Vice-Chairman took the chair.

PRAYERS

Prayers were taken by Reverend Dr Frank Coleman, Vicar of Northill, Old Warden and Caldecote.

C/13/15 Minutes

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting held on 18 April 2013 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

C/13/16 Members' Interests

None were declared.

C/13/17 Questions, Statements and Deputations

No questions, statements or deputations were received.

C/13/18 Petitions

No petitions were received.

C/13/19 Chairman's Announcements and Communications

The Chairman made the following announcements:

- Athletes from Biggleswade Athletic Club were achieving great success and at a recent national indoor championship at the National Indoor Arena the Club had picked up two medals. Biggleswade had been the most successful club in the county.
- Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Councils' Children's Centres, along with South Essex Partnership Trust Community Health Services Bedfordshire had been awarded UNICEF's 'Baby Friendly' status. The award recognised the efforts of all three organisations to increase breastfeeding and improve care for Bedfordshire mothers and babies.

- Caterlink, who provided the catering for the restaurant at Priory House, had received the Gold Heartbeat Award. This was given to Caterlink as they were able to demonstrate that they offered nutritious and wholesome food choices to their customers. The Gold Award was the highest award and was only achieved if the caterer had the maximum hygiene rating and scored over 85% in a comprehensive nutritional assessment.

The Chairman advised Members that he intended to change the order of business at the meeting and take items 15 and 16 before item 14 'Open Questions'.

C/13/20

Leader of the Council's Announcements and Communications

The Leader welcomed new appointees Marcel Coiffait, Community Services Director and Paul Meigh, Chief Procurement Officer to Central Bedfordshire Council. He also congratulated Deb Clarke, on her appointment as Director of Improvement and Corporate Services.

The Department for Transport had awarded £5m to the planned Woodside Link road. The Link road would connect Houghton Regis and the industrial estates in Dunstable to the planned new M1 junction (11a).

The Milton Keynes-based bid for a City Deal had moved a step forward following a recent presentation of the proposals to a Ministerial team.

C/13/21

Executive Member Presentations

Councillor Young, Executive Member for Sustainable Communities – Strategic Planning and Economic Development reported on recent developments within his portfolio area including:

- an innovative project for business investment in Middlefield Industrial Estate, Sandy
- recent visits to a number of businesses in Central Bedfordshire from which it was apparent that retail patterns and the role of high streets was changing
- jobs had been secured for 300 people in Central Bedfordshire as a result of a European Union funded programme
- the Luton and Dunstable Busway was progressing well and was due to be in operation from September
- it was anticipated that a planning application for the proposed development of land north of Houghton Regis would be considered in July
- the Department for Transport had awarded £5m for the Woodside Link road to help ease traffic congestion in Dunstable. The Government had agreed that the link road would be a national infrastructure project

- work on the A1 roundabout at south Biggleswade would commence in September
- Central Bedfordshire College had applied for £9m to refurbish the College
- Prologis was bringing business to Central Bedfordshire and it was anticipated that their investment would create around 1,000 jobs in the area.

Councillor Young responded to a question.

Councillor Versallion, Executive Member for Children's Services, focused his presentation on the social care of children and changes being introduced nationally. The impact of these changes was putting pressures on the Children's Services budget. He provided statistics for Central Bedfordshire which showed the considerable increase over the last two years of children with a Child Care Plan and of Looked After Children.

Councillor Versallion responded to questions.

C/13/22

Recommendation from General Purposes Committee

(a) Capital Programme Management

The Council considered a recommendation from the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 16 May 2013 seeking to amend the Constitution to simplify the approval of capital schemes in order that the Capital Programme could operate more efficiently.

RESOLVED

that the Constitution be amended by including the proposed capital programme related revisions to the Code of Financial Governance in Part I2, section 4.10 of the Constitution and to the Executive Functions in Part C3, section 3 of the Constitution as set out in Appendices A and B respectively.

C/13/23

Report from the Chairman of the Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel

Council received an oral update from Councillor Mrs Chapman on the activities of the Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel including:

- the membership and make up of the Panel
- the Panel's responsibilities for holding the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) to account, and to review and report on the PCC's Police and Crime Plan, the Annual Report and the proposed precept. It was also responsible for confirming the appointments made by the PCC including the Deputy Commissioner, the Chief Executive of the PCC's Office and the Chief Constable. The PCC had unanimously

recommended the appointment of Colette Paul as Chief Constable of Bedfordshire at a Confirmation hearing

- the Panel also dealt with non-criminal complaints made about the conduct of the PCC and the Deputy PCC, and any criminal complaints or conduct matters about them which were referred back to it by the Independent Police Complaints Commission.

C/13/24 **Report of the Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority**

Council received an update from Councillor McVicar on the activities of the Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority (BFRA) including:

- raising awareness of the safety benefits of having sprinklers installed in properties and a proposal to include a reference accordingly in Central Bedfordshire Council's Design Guide
- the BFRA had been through a Peer Review and feedback from the review had been very positive
- confirmation of attendance by Central Bedfordshire Council Members at BFRA meetings.

Councillor McVicar responded to questions.

C/13/25 **Motions (if any)**

Notice had been received from Councillor Pepworth of a Motion under Procedure Rule No 17 as follows:

"In view of the recent revelations about the blacklisting of workers in the construction industry this Council condemns such practices and disassociates itself from any involvement in them. Accordingly it will make clear to all construction companies bidding for Council contracts that any unlawful blacklisting of workers is unacceptable.

It will take all possible legal steps to remove companies that have engaged in blacklisting and have failed to compensate affected workers from its tender processes until compensation is paid".

The motion having been duly seconded was debated and voted upon.

The motion was lost.

C/13/26 **Written Questions**

A written question had been submitted under Rule No. 13.2 by Councillor Dr Egan as follows:

"On January 24 this year, I submitted a written question to Council highlighting a number of issues regarding land owned by Bellcross Homes (Shanley) in

Parkside. Since that meeting I have requested information on progress on a number of occasions. All I have received are the occasional communications indicating that meetings have taken place. However, there has been no observable action on the list of problems identified in written and oral questions to Council over the last three years. Can Councillor Spurr give me an assurance that these matters will be satisfactorily dealt with before the end of 2013.”

The Executive Member for Sustainable Communities – Services tabled a written response to the question.

The Executive Member for Sustainable Communities – Strategic Planning and Economic Development explained that a statutory process under Section 125 of the Town and County Planning Act had to be followed to resolve the situation.

C/13/27

Annual Report from the Overview and Scrutiny Committees

The Council received the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2012/13 which summarised the activities of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees during the last twelve months.

RESOLVED

that the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2012/13 be noted.

C/13/28

Audit Committee Activity - Biannual Report

The Council received the annual report from the Audit Committee for 2012/13 which presented a summary of the Committee’s activities during the last twelve months.

RESOLVED

that the Audit Committee Annual Report 2012/13 be noted.

C/13/29

Open Questions

The Chairman invited the Minority Group Leaders to ask a question each prior to the consideration of questions that had been placed in the Open Questions receptacle.

1. Councillor Murray sought assurance about the adequacy of home care support to elderly residents in Central Bedfordshire.

The Executive Member for Social Care, Health and Housing referred to the domiciliary care framework which enabled quarterly performance monitoring of complaints to ensure that residents were well looked after and safe from harm. If a contractor was not fulfilling their duties then the Council would take action. The Council was also considering replicating a similar system for residential care homes.

2. Councillor Aldis asked a question what the Executive Member for Children's Services was doing to address numbers of residents within Central Bedfordshire classified as illiterate.

The Executive Member for Children's Services advised that he was not aware of the statistics referred to, but he confirmed that he would look into this issue.

3. Councillor Shadbolt asked for an update on impact of the Government's Welfare Reform Strategy.

The Executive Member for Social Care, Health and Housing explained that a working group had been set up to monitor the impact on a monthly basis and the Council was working with residents to help them.

The Executive Member explained that a Member Development session on housing would be taking place on 14 June 2013. A document had been produced covering the Welfare Reform changes and this would be circulated to all Members.

4. Councillor Miss Sparrow asked a question about converting land outside Priory House into a wildflower meadow.

The Executive Member for Sustainable Communities – Services agreed to pass the suggestion on to the ground maintenance team.

5. Councillor D Lawrence welcomed the news that Biggleswade Hospital would remain open. In response to his request that Biggleswade ward Members be kept informed of developments he was invited to attend the next meeting of the Social Care, Health and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 29 July where the matter would be discussed.

6. Councillor Miss Sparrow asked a question about the cutting of grass verges and requested that this should be no more than 12 to 24 inches into the verges to allow wildlife to prosper.

The Deputy Executive Member for Sustainable Communities – Services explained that a rural verge grass cutting trial was taking place this year to reduce costs and to increase bio-diversity. He explained the cutting process and agreed to pass Councillor Miss Sparrow's comments to the contractor.

7. Councillor Aldis asked a question about the standard of the grass cutting, and enquired about the steps being taken to ensure that public open spaces were appropriately maintained.

The Deputy Executive Member for Sustainable Communities – Services undertook to look into the perceived problems and respond to Councillor Aldis.

8. Councillor Aldis asked a question about recent articles in the local press that had not shown the Council in a good light.

The Leader explained that the description of the cases concerned in the media did not necessarily reflect the full position.

9. Councillor Williams asked a question about the Council’s policy on parking on grass verges and the wooden posts installed in Court Drive, Dunstable. He commented that there were areas in Houghton Regis that needed similar action.

The Executive Member for Sustainable Communities – Services explained that a draft policy on parking on grass verges would shortly be submitted to the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He indicated that he would look into the problems referred to in Houghton Regis.

10. Councillor Murray asked the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources to ensure that officers make every effort to provide a substantive response to a member enquiry within two workings days.

The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources indicated that he would take the appropriate action.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 6.30 p.m. and concluded at 8.14 p.m.)

Chairman

Dated