

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Thursday, 25 July 2013.

PRESENT

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

Cllrs	Mrs R B Gammons	Cllrs	T Nicols
	R W Johnstone		B Saunders
	K C Matthews		P Williams

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs Ms A M W Graham

Substitutes: Cllrs M A Smith (In place of Ms A M W Graham)

Members in Attendance:	Cllrs	P N Aldis	
		D Bowater	Vice-Chairman of the Council
		I Dalgarno	Deputy Executive Members for Sustainable Communities - Services
		A Shadbolt	
		B J Spurr	Executive Member for Sustainable Communities - Services
		M A G Versallion	Executive Member for Children's Services
		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:	Mrs J Dickinson	–	Head of Leisure Services
	Mr J Gleave	–	Senior Strategic Transport Officer
	Mr I Melville	–	Head of Service Development
	Mr J Partridge	–	Scrutiny Policy Adviser
	Mr T Saunders	–	Assistant Director, Planning
	Ms S Templeman	–	Senior Finance Manager
	Ms S Wileman	–	Service Development Manager

SCOSC/13/24 **Members' Interests**

Cllr Bastable declared an interest in Item 11 (East-West Rail) as he had previously attended Parish Council meetings at which the matter had been discussed, although he had not formed an opinion relating to the plans.

SCOSC/13/25 **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

There were no announcements.

SCOSC/13/26 **Minutes**

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the previous meeting of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 06 June 2013 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

SCOSC/13/27 **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/13/28 **Questions, Statements or Deputations**

The Chairman drew to the Committee's attention to a statement regarding item 11 (East-West Rail) that had previously been circulated to Members from Cllr S Clark. The Committee were informed there were two speakers who had agreed to speak at the commencement of item 11.

SCOSC/13/29 **Call-In**

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

SCOSC/13/30 **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/13/31 **Executive Member Update**

The Chairman informed the Committee that an update had been circulated outside of the meeting by the Executive Member Strategic Planning and Economic Development pertaining to the Woodside Link and Sundon Rail Freight Interchange (RFI). A Member commented that the update regarding Sundon RFI did not contain a sufficient level of detail or provide any further detail than could have been provided in 2006. The Member insisted that further information be provided relating to the Section 106 (S106) agreement, timescales and road infrastructure related to the proposed RFI. In response the Assistant Director Planning stated that the briefing note was up to date and

that a Framework Plan was being drafted for public consultation in the Autumn and that consultation responses along with the plan would then be considered by the Committee and Executive. There would be no proposals relating to S106 until the planning application stage, which would be after the Framework Plan had been approved. It was the intention that ward Members would be made aware of the contents of the draft Framework Plan prior to the Framework Plan going out on public consultation.

Cllr Wells informed the Committee that a report on the BEaR Project would be submitted to a Special meeting of the Executive on 08 October 2013. The decision of Executive would be presented to the Committee after 08 October to enable Members to scrutinise the process. In response to a question Cllr Wells commented that further detail regards refuse collection could not be provided until the preferred bidder for the BEaR Project had been awarded. Cllr Wells also confirmed that the Executive's decision in October regarding the BEaR project was to agree a preferred bidder, the contract would not be awarded for another four to six months, within which there was time for Members to influence proposals further.

Cllr Dalgarno informed the Committee of developments relating to the Leisure Strategy and major investment at Tiddenfoot Leisure Centre. A Member queried the benefits to the wider community of the investment at Tiddenfoot Leisure Centre and whether consideration had been given to providing connectivity via the bypass to provide access to the leisure centre from the south and Houghton Regis. In response Cllr Dalgarno commented that further investment in Dunstable and Houghton Regis was being considered that would alleviate the need for residents to travel to Tiddenfoot.

Finally Cllr Spurr asked that his thanks be recorded to Cllr Aldis for raising a question at Council regards free swimming, which as a result the Council was now providing.

SCOSC/13/32 East-West Rail (Western Section)

The Chairman invited two registered speakers to address the Committee. In summary their concerns were as follows:-

Brogborough Parish Council

The Parish Council felt that Ridgmont was a more suitable calling location for a new hourly semi-fast service between Bedford and Milton Keynes. The station was more suitable than Lidlington for various reasons including employment, accessibility, car parking and impact on local traffic. The Parish Council said that they would welcome the use of the Ridgmont station and requested that full consideration be given to its use.

Lidlington Parish Council

The Parish Council commented that they had not yet met with East-West Rail representatives to discuss proposals to use Lidlington as a calling location for the new hourly semi-fast service between Bedford and Milton Keynes whereas other Parish Councils had. It was suggested that the proposals would be overbearing on Lidlington and would be to the detriment of local residents' human rights, affecting noise levels, destroying the community and making the

area unsafe for children. The Parish Council urged the Council to consider all the facts before agreeing the use of Lidlington.

The Assistant Director Planning introduced the report that set out the strategic nature of the route, the potential benefits and how the scheme would be funded. The Assistant Director highlighted that the Council's contribution to the project was 40% less than a contribution based purely on population. In addition the Senior Strategic Transport Officer responded to the issues raised by public speakers as follows:-

- Officers were aware of the views of Lidlington Parish Council, Lidlington had been referred to in the report as the potential location of a station in the area to maintain continuity with previous East-West Rail statements. However, no final decision had yet been made on the location of a station and all views were welcomed at the current stage regards the choice of station, which would be made available to the East-West Rail Consortium, which included local authorities, Network Rail and the Department for Transport.
- The East-West Rail Consortium was in the process of visiting all Parish Councils across the route, including Lidlington Parish Council.
- Due to the Council providing a financial contribution it had more say in the final proposals.
- An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) would be undertaken to assess the impact of electrification of the line and possible compensations.
- Network Rail were presently reviewing all level crossings to assess concerns, this included the crossing in Lidlington.

The Committee discussed the proposals and in light of the comments raised by the public speakers and the further information provided by officers raised the following comments and questions:-

- Ridgmont should be promoted by the Council as the logical and preferred choice as a calling station along this part of the route and had excellent locational advantages over Lidlington that would commend it as an excellent transport node.
- An EIA was essential to help determine the impacts of this part of the East-West Rail scheme and both the Council and local communities should have the opportunity to see and comment on the promoters EIA in due course.
- In comparison to other infrastructure schemes that were currently underway the amount of funding sought from the Council was fairly minor and the scheme would encourage investment.
- The importance of providing the scheme as early as possible to encourage greater connectivity locally.
- The importance of East-West Rail engaging with Parish Councils in a timely manner to take account of their views.
- An understanding that a contribution from local authorities along the route was expected by Government to enable the project to go ahead but that there was flexibility in the sources of funding used by the Council to make its contribution to the scheme. It was noted that CIL could be used by the Council to help it make its contribution, but there were other potential sources that the Council could consider.

- In light of the expansion of the population and the need to create jobs locally, the East-West Rail project was considered essential.
- An understanding that there might be the potential for a spur at Brogborough to improve access for freight at the adjacent logistics business park. It was understood that a spur was not part of this project but there may be opportunities in the future.
- The EIA should include consideration of public health matters including the issue raised that there were studies linking electrification of rail lines and cases of leukaemia.

RECOMMENDED:-

- 1. That Executive express the Council's support for the East-West Rail Western Section with a preference for the new Bedford to Oxford/Reading rail service to include a stop at Ridgmont station.**
- 2. That Executive recommends to Full Council the inclusion of the Council's contribution to the East-West Rail Western Section in future updates of the Capital Programme.**
- 3. That Officers maximise their works in kind and seek other funding sources for the Council's contribution to the East-West Rail Western Section where possible.**

SCOSC/13/33 Physical Activity Strategy

Cllr Dalgarno introduced the draft Physical Activity Strategy and referred to the three stages of the methodology used in its development. He also outlined the key issues that had been raised during the audit and assessment process, which had led to the development of four emerging strategic priorities.

In response to the report the Committee discussed several issues in detail as follows:-

- The need to clarify what activity took place in Town & Parish Councils.
- Why the strategy excluded private health clubs. The Head of Leisure Services commented that private health clubs were considered to be a barrier to accessing sport/activity due to cost and the Council had less influence to direct their programmes. Whilst information regarding the usage of private health clubs continued to be recorded the Head of Leisure Services agreed to amend this reference.
- Concerns that the report was very informative but did not provide definitive actions or recommendations that would impact on development control or planning. Cllr Dalgarno commented that there would be more specific detail and an action plan set out in other chapters that would be presented to the Committee. Other chapters would also set out the ways in which the Council was working with the Health and Wellbeing Board to deliver priorities.
- Concerns that no single agency was cited as having overall responsibility for providing, developing or promoting physical activity. Cllr Dalgarno commented there would be significantly more coordination between partners in order to deliver long-term benefits to residents.

- The importance of funding being allocated to rural communities, for schemes such as outdoor gyms, so that residents could be involved in sport and physical activity closer to home. The Deputy Executive Member commented that funding was provided through Sport England and the Health and Wellbeing Board to deliver schemes in smaller villages. It was important that the Council was a facilitator for activity to take place rather than forcing people to drive elsewhere or providing the funding for the activity.
- The importance of a joined-up approach between partners to inform residents of the sport and physical activities that were available to them. Cllr Dalgarno commented that a more joined up approach was being developed in relation to the delivery of health checks at Leisure Centres. The use of schools to deliver sport and physical activities was also considered to be a key part of the strategy moving forward.
- The need to define the meaning of 'inactive'.

RECOMMENDED

That the comments of the Committee be taken into consideration prior to the adoption of the Physical Activity Strategy and that the Council takes strong action to access money to support the delivery of the Strategy via Bedfordshire and Luton County Sports Partnership and the Health and Wellbeing Board.

SCOSC/13/34 Capital Budget Monitoring Report

The Senior Finance Manager introduced the provisional annual capital expenditure and external funding report for 2012/13 for the Sustainable Communities directorate and drew attention to the £19.188M expenditure and further detail on major schemes completed in 2012/13.

NOTED the report.

SCOSC/13/35 Revenue Budget Monitoring Report

The Senior Finance Manager introduced the provisional revenue outturn for 2012/13 for the Sustainable Communities directorate and highlighted the provisional underspend of £879K after the use of reserves. The Committee were also informed that £700K additional capital funding for 2013/14 was due to be spent on pot holes. The Assistant Director Planning also commented that there had been increased revenue generated from pre-application charges and planning performance agreements. The Executive Member for Sustainable Communities Services informed the Committee that although Amey delivered repairs to pot holes it was the Council that funded these. As a result of a bad winter there had been an overspend resulting from pot hole repairs.

The Executive Member Strategic Planning and Economic Development commented on the directorate's success in relation to achieving efficiency targets and developments in relation to Adult Skills, which would be fully self-funded from 2013/14. The Committee were also informed that the Local Transport Board had recently agreed to recommend a £10M contribution from central government to the Woodside Link.

Cllr Wells also informed the Committee savings would be achieved in Environmental Services for 2013/14.

NOTED the report.

SCOSC/13/36 **Q4 Performance Monitoring Report**

The Acting Head of Service Development introduced the quarter four performance report from Sustainable Communities and commented that future reports would be set out as per the new directorates.

In light of the report and the further guidance provided the Committee discussed in details concerns regarding performance of the number of recorded anti-social behaviour (ASB) incidents. Members raised concerns that the police were not responding adequately to incidents of ASB and as a result residents had stopped reporting them. The response in rural areas in particular was considered to be inadequate. Members also queried why there had been such a change in the reported numbers of incidents between quarters three and four (2012/13) and whether the figures provided any assurance of accuracy of reporting. The Acting Head of Service Development informed the Committee that the police were trying to improve the accuracy of their data although it may take a year before there was a sufficient amount of data to see an accurate trend.

In light of the discussion the Committee requested that the Police and Crime Commissioner be invited to attend a future meeting to discuss incidents of ASB. It was also requested that the Head of Community Safety present a report to a future meeting providing an overview of ASB incidents in Central Bedfordshire and if possible a breakdown of these incidents by area.

The Executive Member for Sustainable Communities Services also drew the Committees attention to the high level of satisfaction of adults with the library service.

Noted the report.

SCOSC/13/37 **Work Programme 2013/14 and Executive Forward Plan**

The Committee discussed the current work programme and the latest forward plan and requested the following amendments:-

- The addition of an item relating to performance on recording incidents of anti-social behaviour.
- The addition of an item relating to the Council's parking strategy and performance of automatic number plate recognition (ANPR). The Committee agreed this should also include analysis of all income from 2012/13 received from car parks and penalty charge notices (PCNs), resulting both from parking and ANPR. The Committee also requested that a breakdown be provided to show where income received through PCNs had been spent. If possible the Committee requested that the analysis be broken down by town.
- Amendments to the dates for an item on the BEaR project.

In addition to these amendments to the work programme a Member reiterated his disappointment regarding the update provided to Members on the Sundon Rail Freight Interchange and the need for information up front so that Members could manage the situation locally. In response the Executive Member for Sustainable Communities Strategic Planning and Economic Development commented that there was presently no further detail as a masterplan, planning brief and/or planning application did not exist. The Executive Member was meeting with Prologis following which he would share information with Members as soon as it became available, it was anticipated that a planning application would be prepared by early 2014.

RESOLVED

That the work programme be endorsed subject to the amendments detailed above.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.30 p.m.)