

## Appendix

# Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report

The Central Bedfordshire Overview and Scrutiny Committee annual report for May 2013 to April 2014

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If you have any comments on this report, or would like to see any of the papers that are referred to, please contact Jonathon Partridge, Corporate Policy Manager on **0300 300 4634** or [jonathon.partridge@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:jonathon.partridge@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

# Introduction

Throughout 2013/14 the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees (OSCs) have considered a wide range of issues contributing to the delivery of the Council's Medium Term Plan (2012 to 2016). This annual report reflects on the value the committees have added during the year and highlights some of the activity and outcomes that have been achieved by the Council following the consideration of many of these reports at OSC meetings.

Throughout 2013/14 the OSCs have engaged in several major pieces of work and in particular some items with a significant amount of public interest. The Sustainable Communities OSC welcomed a large number of public attendees when it scrutinised the draft Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan. The Children's Services OSC welcomed a large number of representatives from a range of organisations in relation to its review of the impact on children of living in circumstances of domestic abuse/violence. These meetings are an example of the unique opportunity that is provided by the Overview and Scrutiny process to engage residents and professionals in the Council's decision making process.

Throughout 2013/14 the Chairmen of the Committees have discussed the importance of the process and the OSCs adding value to the Council and as detailed in this annual report our activity over the next year will focus on the importance of Overview and Scrutiny driving improvement.

I would like to use this opportunity to personally thank everyone who attended or contributed to any of our OSCs during the year.



*Councillor David McVicar*

Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Coordination Panel

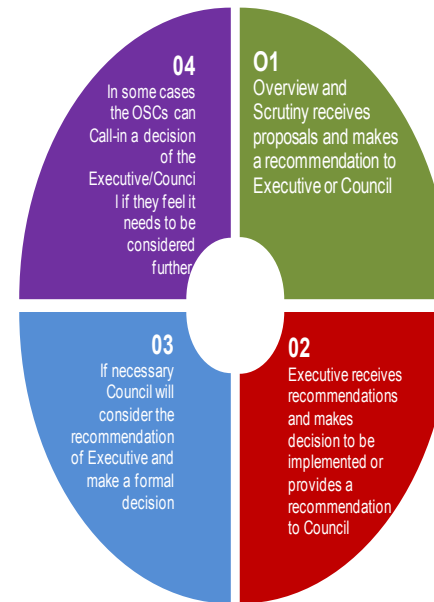
# What is Overview and Scrutiny?

Overview and Scrutiny provides an opportunity for elected Councillors and residents to discuss and comment on the Council's policies, plans and strategies before they are implemented. Meetings are normally held in public and residents are encouraged to attend to ask questions and make comments on the reports on the agenda. Overview and Scrutiny Committees (OSCs), made up of non-Executive Councillors and co-opted parent governor representatives and diocesan representatives are held throughout the year to consider proposals and whilst they do not make decisions they provide recommendations to the Executive or full Council. These recommendations will be considered before the Council makes any final decisions.

OSCs can also undertake in-depth reviews of particular topics. These reviews involve a small number of committee members who will review the issue in more detail and consider evidence from various sources to provide a report and recommendations.

If committee members feel it is necessary they can also "call-in" decisions of the Executive. During a call-in a committee will re-consider a decision that has been made to determine whether the decision should be implemented straight away or referred back to the decision maker to be reconsidered.

Scrutiny committees can consider a wide range of issues but they also have statutory responsibilities in relation to scrutiny of health and crime and disorder matters. Issues relating to Crime and disorder will be considered at least once a year and any substantial



changes to health services within Central Bedfordshire must be reviewed by the scrutiny committees before they are implemented.

# How does Overview and Scrutiny add value?

The OSCs add value to the Council in following ways:-

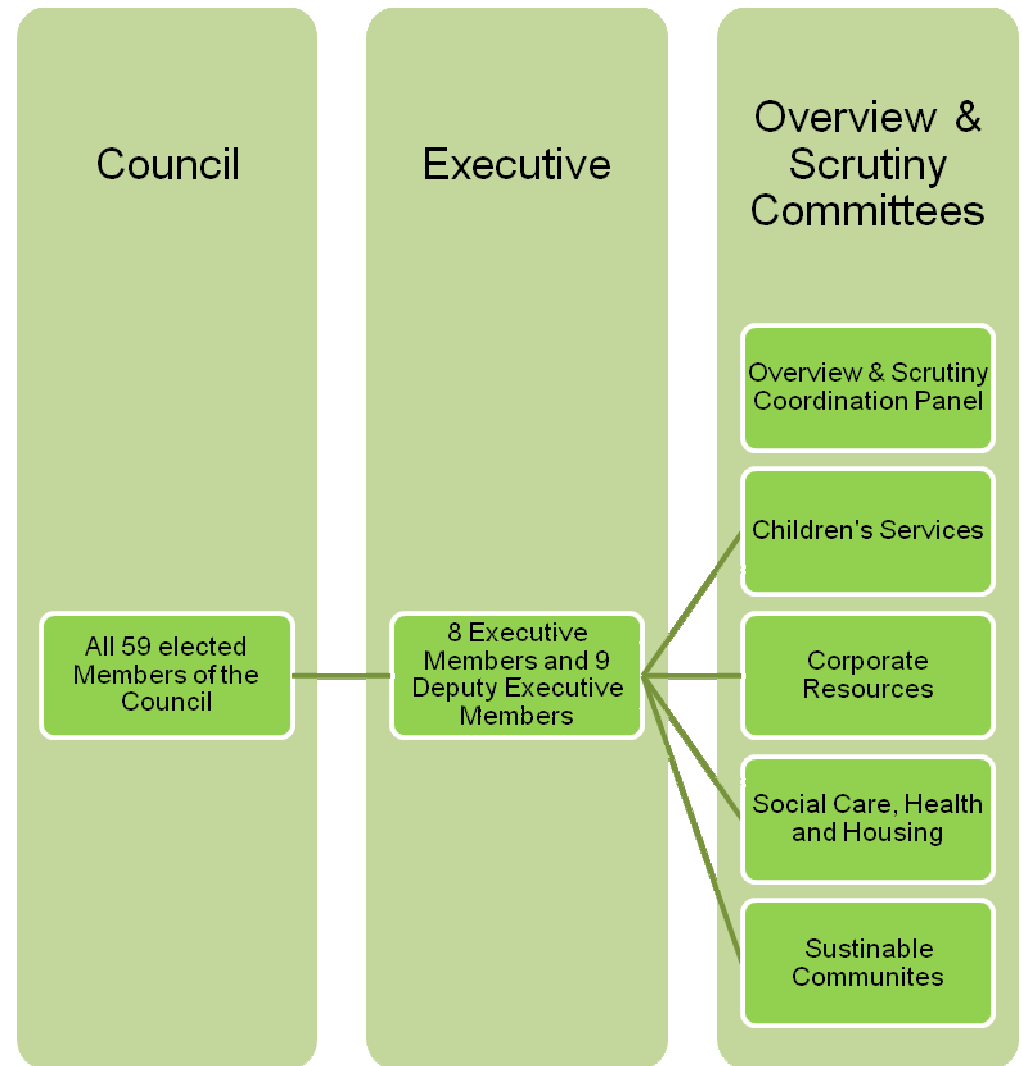


# The Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committees

There are four OSCs in Central Bedfordshire, each of which meet seven to ten times a year and are aligned to the Council's services. There is also a Co-ordination Panel (OSCP) consisting of the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the OSCs, which meets quarterly.

In addition to the elected Members appointed to the OSCs, there are three parent governors and two diocesan representatives, one for each of the Church of England and Roman Catholic churches appointed to the Children's Services OSC. A representative of Central Bedfordshire Healthwatch also attends meetings of the Social Care, Health and Housing OSC as an observer.

The remainder of this Annual Report is organised into sections that sets out some of the work undertaken by each of the OSCs during the period May 2013 to April 2014.



# Children's Services OSC

Throughout 2013/14 the Children's Services OSC has considered various reports contributing to the Councils priority of improving educational attainment. The Committee also provides a forum to engage with parent governor and diocesan representatives who are statutory co-opted Members with voting rights on education issues. In addition to receiving reports provided by the Council the Committee has also received the outcomes of Ofsted inspections, annual reports from the Schools Resilience Forum and has engaged with the Chairman of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. The Committee also held a themed meeting to discuss with a wide range of guests the impact on children of living in family circumstances of domestic abuse/violence.

## Strategic risks in Children's Services

In June 2013 the Committee reviewed a strategic risk within the Children's Services directorate of "failure to work to access sufficient resources to respond quickly enough to rapid changes or a failure to implement new child protection procedures, and update guidance and share good practice". The Executive Member and Director of Children's Services/Deputy Chief Executive provided the Committee with assurance as to the mitigating actions for this risk and the Committee discussed the following issues in detail:-

- The advice that had previously been provided to the Committee that the Council's overall children's social care caseload would increase and Members needed to be aware of and accept this.
- The importance of ensuring that appropriate funding was allocated to children's social care service in comparison to other services.
- The ways in which the Council lobbied Government for additional resources

The Committee noted that this risk was being scrutinised in several different ways including via the Local Safeguarding Board. In light of the assurance they had received at the meeting a further detailed report was not deemed necessary.

## Home to School Transport Policy

In December 2013 the Committee received a report outlining proposed changes to the Home to School Transport Policy in order to enhance clarity and reflect entitlement criteria. The Committee recommended that the Executive consider a range of issues prior implementing the strategy that included endorsing the production of a plain-English guide in consultation with parents, carers and partners and the need to refer throughout to children walking

# Children's Services OSC

between home and school and walking with 'reasonable safety', which needed to be cross-referenced with the section on safeguarding. These comments were presented to the Executive at their meeting in February 2014 by the Chairman of the OSC and were incorporated into the final Policy.

## The Impact on children of living in family circumstances of domestic violence and abuse

In February 2014 the Committee met with invited professionals to discuss the impact on children of living in circumstances of domestic abuse/domestic violence. The purpose of the meeting was to; increase the understanding of Members in relation to the prevalence of incidents; consider how best to support a multi-agency partnership approach to deal with the issue; and agree some outcome focused recommendations on how to enhance the offer to children in this situation. The Committee raised a series of recommendations and comments in relation to the following four key themes:-

- Early intervention;
- Healthy relationships and identifying the impact of domestic abuse;
- Providing support; and
- Signposting and communication.

These recommendations will be presented to the Executive in July 2014 with a plan from the Deputy Executive Members on how the recommendations will be taken forward. A progress report on the implementation of these recommendations will also be presented to the OSC later in the year.

## Early Help Offer

In June 2013 the Committee received a report that outlined the revised and updated Early Help Offer to families in Central Bedfordshire in light of the publication of the Working Together to Safeguard Children Guidance (2013). The purpose was to provide Members of the Committee with an opportunity to inform proposals prior to them being received by the Executive. In response Members recommended that several comments be considered in order to make amendments to a publication before it was published. Specifically the Committee commented on the importance of supporting families prior to the birth of a child as well as needing to ensure that children's centres were integrated as part of the Offer and the way in which performance was monitored. Members also raised concerns that parents would view the Offer as intrusive and not provide their support. It was recommended that as people's needs changed over time the information held by the Council would need to be updated periodically to reflect personal circumstances.

## The development of early intervention, early help delivered through children's centres

In April 2014 the Committee reviewed various options for developing the Council's early intervention offer delivered through Children's Centres. In light of the proposals the Committee discussed several issues such as:-

- Whether effective arrangements were in place with GPs to encourage the use of support.
- The ways in which the Council could encourage residents who needed support but did not use Children's Centres to make best use of it.



# Children's Services OSC

- Whether proof could be provided that children did not require support beyond two years of age.
- Whether other local authorities were considering similar changes in the way that services were delivered.
- Whether the impetus for change related solely to the current financial climate.

The Committee requested that the range of views provided be made available to the Executive, which included support for the principal of targeted early intervention and the inclusion of a range of models in the consultation in addition to making clear the alternative provision that would be available for children not included in the identified age range.

## Inspections and school performance

The Committee also reviewed the outcomes of Ofsted inspections and review of services for Looked After Children (LAC) so that Members could review the outcomes and the implementation of an associated action plan that related to; quality of practice and care planning for LAC; quality Assurance and performance management; educational support to LAC; health arrangements for LAC/Leaving Care; and next steps. This presentation led to the identification of a number of specific topics identified by Members for the work programme.

## Other overview items:

In light of their 'overview' role the Committee also considered and contributed to a range of other items including the following:-

- The accountability framework for school outcomes, which Members scrutinised to enhance their awareness of the current framework.

- An overview of the troubled families initiative where Members highlighted the importance of sharing data and encouraging partners to collaborate effectively in order to achieve successful outcomes.
- Annual report for the adoption and fostering services whereby the Committee scrutinised the speed of the process for taking cases through the courts.
- A meeting with the Independent Chairman of the Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (CBSCB) to review their annual report and discuss concerns.
- The annual report for the resilience group for schools and other settings for which the Committee highlighted concerns and recommended changes to the manner in which guidance was provided to schools including the consistency with which schools managed resilience.
- A review of elective home education to understand the extent of home education currently being delivered in Central Bedfordshire, whereby the Committee requested the Director to discuss with the Children's Trust the Council's approach to support education for minority communities.
- A review of the Children and Young People's Plan to determine the progress of implementing the objectives of the Plan and comment on specific issues.
- An update on the provision of health services for children.
- The annual report for the Children's Trust, to enable Members to provide comments to the Children's Trust in relation to specific concerns that included targets for domestic abuse referrals and the Council's rank in relation to statistical neighbours for the number of children who achieved a good level of development in their early years.

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- Changes in the school curriculum to enable Members to comment on proposed changes and highlight comments and concerns relating to proposed changes to the school curriculum.

# Corporate Resources OSC

The Corporate Resources OSC has a wide remit that contributes to each of the Council's priorities. The committee has scrutinised a range of policies and strategies and maintains an overview of the budgets and performance of each of the Council's directorates in addition to the scrutiny that is provided by each of the other committees. This committee also takes a lead in relation to scrutinising the Council's draft budget and during 2013/14 whilst each of the Committees received the budget proposals specific to their area this Committee received the consolidated views of all of the Committees to make a rounded view to the Executive before a final budget was approved. This committee was also the only one during 2013/14 to receive and consider a call-in regarding a decision of the Executive.

## Revenue & Benefits service performance & impact of the Welfare Reforms

In July 2013 the Committee received a report requested by Members on performance of the Revenues and Benefits service and the impact of the welfare reform. The report highlighted the impact arising from the introduction of Welfare Reforms and that whilst information was being collated on the impact of the reforms on residents at the time it was too early to make any assessment. There had been a large increase in the numbers of applications for discretionary housing payments as a result of the new regulations that limited the level of housing benefit payments to the of bedrooms being occupied.

Members commented on the introduction of Universal Credit in October 2013, which would be administered by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). The Deputy Leader and Executive Member was urged to request the Local Government Association (LGA) to lobby Government to introduce partnership working between the DWP and the Council to ensure a smooth transition to the new scheme. Members also extended their thanks to each member of staff for their outstanding achievement in dealing with the large increase in workload.

## Farm Estate Strategy

In October 2013 the Committee received the Farm Estate Strategy with a view to providing comments before it was considered by the Executive. The Committee raised concerns regarding the number of short tenures being offered and concerns at proposals to reduce the number of holdings, such as farm houses and redundant buildings. In light of the questions raised the Director agreed to report further

# Corporate Resources OSC

on aspects of the proposals and that some of the issues raised would be considered via a new Farmers' Forum. Members also recommended that a consultation be undertaken when considering a change of use for a piece of land.

## Draft Budget for the Housing Revenue Account (Housing Service) Business Plan

In January 2014 the Committee received a report in order to scrutinise the Council's proposals to increase tenant's rents by an average of 5.46% in line with the Government's rent restructuring policy, whilst also making the provision of £220k available specifically to tackle hardship and facilitate moves to smaller properties. Members queried the average market rents and requested that officers provide a written response to questions that included a comparison between the rents at the Council's Sheltered properties with the rents in General Needs properties. In light of the scrutiny of these proposals Members endorsed the budget and Business Plan but requested that officers carry out an in-depth study during the year to address the concerns of inequity in rents.

## Asset Plan

In March 2014 the Committee received an updated version of the Corporate Asset Management Strategy and Plan (CAMSAP) that would support the Council in delivering its corporate objectives. The Asset Plan included a regional asset plans, rural farms and land asset plans and proposals for joint working with the Regeneration Service and Landlord Services. In addition to supporting the plans the Committee discussed the content of the plan and agreed that a clearer performance cascade in addition to clearer timescales for delivering the plan was required. It was also proposed that a

workshop be arranged for other Members to enhance awareness of the plan and engage with a wider group of Members.

## Central Bedfordshire Next Generation Network

During 2013/14 there was also one decision of the Executive called in by the Corporate Resources OSC. In September 2013 the Committee received a presentation relating to proposals to enter into a Central Bedfordshire Next Generation Network (NGN) that would consolidate the provision of all corporate and school data network, mobile and fixed telephony services into a single supply contract so as to assist in achieving the MTFP savings for Information Assets. The Members of the Committee raised concerns that they did not feel they had a sufficient level of detail in order to scrutinise the proposals for the NGN and also raised specific concerns regarding the level of influence the Council would be able to exert over the contract due to the nature of the partnership arrangement; that a 10 year contract was considered to be too long, a three-year contract period was considered to be more suitable; whether sufficient diligence would be following by the Council in signing such a significant contract; and whether the proposed supplier was fit for purpose.

The Executive was made aware of these concerns and resolved to adopt the approach following which it was called in on the grounds that the OSC were not given sufficient information about the proposal to make an informed decision; detailed financial assessments had not been provided and the details of the contract were not available. Following further detailed consideration of the item several concerns remained for some Members but the

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Committee agreed that no further action be taken and the Executive decision be effective immediately.

Following the conclusion of the Call-in process a nine year contract was signed for Central Bedfordshire Council ending 31st December 2022. To reflect the request for a more flexible contract term break clauses were incorporated into the contract at 3, 5 and 7 years (31st December 2016, 2018 and 2020 respectively). The Provider will require 6 months' prior written notice of any termination (e.g. by 21st June 2016 for a break at 3 years). There will be no termination charges. A project to migrate data and fixed telephony services had been initiated and was underway.

## Other overview items:

In light of their 'overview' role the Committee also considered and contributed to a range of other items including the following:-

- Your Space 2 updates to inform Members of progress
- Customer Strategy

# Social Care, Health and Housing OSC

The Council is required to scrutinise any substantial changes to health services in Central Bedfordshire. The Social Care, Health and Housing OSC undertakes that responsibility and during 2014 began to split its agendas into two parts. The first part of committee meetings focuses on external health scrutiny matters and the second part focuses on internal social care and housing matters. This provides a visible focus on the role and importance of health scrutiny within Central Bedfordshire. This committee supports the Council in the delivery of its priorities to promote health and wellbeing and protect the vulnerable. Throughout 2014 the Committee has provided a forum for holding external health services such as the East of England Ambulance Trust, Bedford Hospital and Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group to account in addition to enhancing awareness of the Council's developing policies and the ways in which they support the delivery of the Council's priorities.

## Health Scrutiny

### Joint Community Bed Review and Biggleswade Hospital

In June 2013 the Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (BCCG) presented to the Committee a review of community bed provision in Central Bedfordshire and recommendations for improvement. The report outlined priorities for joint development between NHS Bedfordshire, BCCG and the Council that included developing community bed based services in the north of Central Bedfordshire by amending the admission criteria for Biggleswade Hospital; developing urgent care pathways; and developing a single approach to commissioning care home services. The report also outlined a future model to ensure services were designed around the customer and the standards of care were improved.

The Committee endorsed the priorities and model of care outlined in the report and highlighted the importance of ensuring that Central Bedfordshire residents were not overlooked in light of there being no district hospital in the area and that residents had the same options available to them as those in Luton and Bedford.

In addition to the Joint Community Bed Review the Committee continued to scrutinise throughout the year the admissions criteria for Biggleswade Hospital. In light of public concerns that South East Essex Partnership Trust (SEPT) were proactively preventing residents from being admitted to the hospital the Committee requested the attendance of BCCG and SEPT on several occasions to answer public questions and to advise Members on admissions criteria and the use of rehabilitation beds at Biggleswade Hospital. Members were able

# Social Care, Health and Housing OSC

to discuss specific concerns regarding communication and transparency, whether a clear action plan relating to the Community Bed Review had been prepared; whether plans to provide a Short Stay Medical Unit in the north of Central Bedfordshire were being considered.

Following the Committee meeting an action plan for the community bed review was produced but it was soon superseded by first the CBC Pioneer bid submission and then implementation of the national Integration Transformation Fund, now the Better Care Fund (BCF). All of this groundwork however means that BCF plans are on a sounder footing, given the ability to learn from other areas and to benefit from the system leadership input that resulted from our Pioneer submission. BCF plans do include consideration of services in north Central Bedfordshire that will build on the learning from the SSMU in the southern area in the most appropriate way for northern residents. The CCG Performance team has not been able to split data. As part of their ongoing review of the BCF metrics they hope to be able to use medeanalytics to provide a proxy measure to enable monthly reporting but splitting Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire data remains a problem. Work is currently ongoing and the CCG are liaising with public health to develop robust monitoring. The CCG is actively working to deliver a sustainable solution.

## Bedford Hospital

On several occasions throughout the year the Committee received reports and updates from the Chief Executive of Bedford Hospital with regards performance and in particular the closure of the paediatric ward at the Hospital in light of specific concerns.

Members of the Committee requested that the Chief Executive of the hospital continue to provide updates so that Members could receive reassurance that performance concerns were being addressed. Members also attended a visit at the hospital to scrutinise the levels of performance first-hand. In light of the updates provided throughout the year the Committee was able to scrutinise the turnaround at the hospital and were encouraged to see that governance and performance in relation to services had improved throughout the year.

## Bedfordshire Plan for Patients (2013/14)

In April 2013 the Committee received a report that set out the risks for health in Central Bedfordshire and the commissioning intentions for the BCCG for 2013-14. In light of the report the Committee raised several concerns relating to performance, which was below the national level for 65s and over, who had been discharge from hospital and remain at home and concerns that BCCG could not meet targets relating to the steep increase from 66% (2011 target) to 80% in 2015 to raise the number of smokers who have quit. The Committee also commented on the importance of ensuring that future reports provided an appropriate focus on Central Bedfordshire residents.

## East of England Ambulance Trust

On several occasions during 2013-14 the Committee received updates from the East of England Ambulance Trust in light of an inspection report that highlighted significant performance failings. The Committee received updates from officers with regards to the Trust's turnaround report and continued to scrutinise the plans until they were confident that plans were in place to address the failings.

# Social Care, Health and Housing OSC

## Social Care & Housing

### Park Homes Licensing Fees Policy

In January 2014 the Committee received a report that invited their comments on the draft Park Homes Licensing Fees Policy, which gave the Council the ability to recover costs associated with the licensing of park home sites. The Committee reviewed the outcomes of a recent consultation and the concerns that had been raised and queried several aspects of the policy specifically relating to the support that was available for vulnerable residents. In addition to endorsing the Policy the Committee recommended that additional information be incorporated to ensure that assistance for vulnerable residents was available.

The Park Homes Fees Policy will form part of an overarching Park Homes Strategy which will shortly be developed to include details of support and assistance to vulnerable residents. This strategy will be presented to the appropriate committees in due course. A residents' engagement event was held on 22 January 2014, which provided advice on a broad range of park home related matters and more recently the webpage was updated to provide further information including details of the approved policy. Further events for residents will be arranged in the future and the Council webpage will be enhanced to provide further advice and guidance.

### Review of Sheltered Housing

In July 2013 the Committee received a report that set out the proposed sheltered housing standard and the proposal to re-designate some schemes where the stock consisted of two and three floor properties without lift access to 55+ residents. The meeting provided the opportunity for a representative of the Sheltered Tenants Action Group to set out their concerns so that Members could address these with officers before making a recommendation to the Executive. Whilst the Committee supported the scheme it was recommended that further investigation be undertaken into the proposal to segment some schemes to be re-designated to 55+ Housing.

A full consultation was undertaken following the meeting and all schemes will be revisited again to open a dialogue with regards to what the standard means for each scheme. This discussion will include what it would mean if some schemes were no longer thought suitable for older people so that a consensus can be found on how we move forward on such changes. These further discussions will be informed by the issues raised by residents.

### Tenant Scrutiny Panel

In April 2014 the Committee received a report from members of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel (TSP) in relation to an investigation of the Council's handling of reports of anti-social behaviour. The TSP report outlined 28 recommendations for improvement for which officers commented changes relating to improving communications and web presence and developing a Learning and Development Plan would be implemented to respond to the recommendations. Officers also agreed to seek out best practice models from high performing councils to ensure continued improvements in handling



# Social Care, Health and Housing OSC

anti-social behaviour complaints. Members were keen to be kept aware of the implementation of the Panel's recommendations for which timescales were proposed to be added to identify where improvements had been made.

Following the meeting the action plan was implemented within the Estates Management Team and of the 28 actions highlighted from the report nearly half of them were completed by mid-May 2014. From the remaining outstanding actions all had been started and were on target to be completed within the timescales agreed by the panel. The implemented changes resulted in some positive feedback from residents on how the service was improving and provided a positive outlook for achieving a high performing ASB service in the future.

## Other overview items:

In light of their 'overview' role the Committee also considered and contributed to a range of other items including the following:-

- An overview of performance in relation to empty homes so that Members could identify those properties within their area that had been unoccupied for 12 months or more.
- The framework agreement for care homes in Central Bedfordshire, whereby Members scrutinised the period of notice given to care home providers to improve and the awareness of training that was available to social care providers.
- A report on the retender of domiciliary care, so Members could scrutinise aspects of the contract terms that had been agreed and the ways in which the Council would monitor the impact of the retendering exercise.

- A report on the Care Bill and the Better Care Fund to increase Member's awareness of the significance of these programmes and their implications for Central Bedfordshire residents.
- The annual adult social care customer feedback report in order to review the number of service compliments and complaints.
- The annual report of Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire Adult Safeguarding Board, to advise Members that no serious case reviews had taken place in the area of the previous year and to provide assurance that rigorous processes were in place should an issue arise.
- A report regarding the Musculoskeletal (MSK) Service Delivery Model to advise Members of a change in service delivery so as they could determine whether it was 'substantial' in their role as a health scrutiny committee.
- A report on mental health and isolation so that Members could scrutinise the services that were available in Central Bedfordshire with a view to understanding how residents were supported.

# Sustainable Communities OSC

Throughout 2013/14 the Sustainable Communities OSC has scrutinised policies to support the Council in achieving its objectives of enhancing Central Bedfordshire by creating jobs, managing growth, protecting our countryside and enabling businesses to grow. Due to the broad nature of the Community Services and Regeneration and Business Support Service directorates the committee has also focused on the Council's priorities of better infrastructure and the delivery of great universal services. The Committee has focused on a range of leisure services items and held large public meetings with regard to the draft Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan. There have also been public meetings at which the Committee have scrutinised the Community safety Plan, Bedfordshire Police and the Police and Crime Commissioner.

## Physical Activity Strategy and Leisure Strategy

At several meetings during 2013 and 2014 the Committee scrutinised reports relating to the draft Leisure Strategy and specifically the chapters that had been developed as the result of an audit and assessment process in relation to physical activity and leisure facilities. The Committee meetings provided Members with an opportunity to scrutinise the facilities that had been identified in the audit process and raise several concerns in relation to:-

- the need for overall ownership;
- the absence of a clearly defined action plan;
- the importance of partnership working, particularly to identify alternative sources of funding;
- the viability of a leisure centre at Houghton Regis (HRLC); and
- whether appropriate arrangements were in place to ensure that CIL contributions would provide adequate funding for facilities.

In addition to providing comments to the Executive the Committee recommended that strong action be taken to access money to support the delivery of the Physical Activity Strategy via Bedfordshire and Luton County Sports Partnership and the Health and Wellbeing Board.

In October 2013 the Committee also received a report on the implementation of the Leisure Facilities Strategy, including the findings of the Flitwick Leisure Centre Feasibility Study. In light of the report Members recommended that the Council needed to focus on developing new leisure facilities in the growth areas of Central Bedfordshire.

# Sustainable Communities OSC

Following the comments of the OSC the Council continued to prepare action plans for each of the chapters of the strategy. Several alternative sources of funding were identified and successful bids for funds made to various sources that included Team Beds & Luton (County Sports Partnership), Sport England and Community Sports Activation Fund. An application for £2m capital investment at Flitwick Leisure Centre from Sport England was also due to be submitted in May 2014.

Action plans were being developed to provide a comprehensive costing of prioritised projects to inform the Council's CIL and the Planning Obligations Strategy to ensure that new developments make appropriate contribution toward prioritised facilities. Support was also provided from Beds and Luton County Sports Partnership and the Health and Wellbeing Board

The viability of HRLC was tested during the procurement of a new contract and a decision taken to include HRLC in a new 7 year contract with the swimming pool being reopened as the contract provided a very positive improvement in financial performance. Chapter 1 also assessed the need for and viability of each of the Council's current leisure centres. Policies identified the provision of an improved replacement for HRLC close to the existing site (comprising 6 land 25m pool & a range of other facilities) as a high priority for the medium to long term to overcome the lack of current capacity and address the Houghton Regis urban extension.

## Incidents of Anti-Social Behaviour

In October 2013 the Committee received a requested item on the Council's performance relating to incidents of Anti-Social Behaviour

during which the Committee were able question Chief Inspector Tania Coulson of Bedfordshire Police. In light of the report the Committee queried the level of activity undertaken by the Police to safeguard vulnerable people, the links between deprivation and incidents of ASB and the importance of communication between partners in order to understand and respond to incidents of ASB. In addition the Committee discussed in detail concerns regarding the format of the data provided to the Committee on incidents of ASB. It was recommended that in the future data on ASB should include a quantum of ASB per 1,000 population and if possible a breakdown of types of incidents in relation to each ward. Officers accepted these recommendations and whilst further reports have not yet been received officers are aware of the need to present information in an alternative format and to report incidents against three classifications (personal, environmental and nuisance).

## Community Safety Plan and Priorities

In light of their statutory role as the Council's Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee the Committee held a public meeting in January 2014 to discuss the Community Safety Plan and Priorities for 2014/15 at which various partners, including the Police, Fire and Probation Services were in attendance in addition to the Police and Crime Commissioners. The Committee scrutinised several issues include the levels of support that were provided to children who were impacts by living in circumstances of domestic abuse; the prevalence and manner in which authorities were responding to repeat incidents of anti-social behaviour; confidence in the Police Force crime statistics; and the current police establishment levels and plans to close police stations as part of a review of the police estate. In light of the meeting the Committee endorsed the

# Sustainable Communities OSC

community safety plan and priorities for 2014/15 for adoption, which were supported by the Executive and adopted by the Community Safety Partnership.

Following the meeting crime in Central Bedfordshire (2013/14) has seen a 3% increase compared to the previous year. The agreed CSP priorities will provide a clear focus with statutory and voluntary groups to reduce the number of burglaries and support those who are vulnerable from becoming victims of crime, which would have a significant impact on performance in this area. A corporate review has also been undertaken with regards to Domestic Abuse, by the Head of Community Safety for the Director of Children's Services. The final report will be tabled at the Local Children's Safeguarding Board and recommendations will be made as to next steps and the way forward. The ASB, Crime and Policing Act also received royal assent in March 2014 that will have a significant impact in the way the CSP and the local authority responds to ASB. A Bedfordshire-wide Task and Finish group has been set up to work through the legislation changes and ensure Central Bedfordshire is prepared for these to come into effect in the autumn 2014 so as to drive improvement in relation to the CSP priorities.

## Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan

In January 2014 the Committee held a public meeting to receive the findings of the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) and introduced the changes to the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan (GTLP) in light of public responses. In addition to the 60 residents in attendance the Committee received questions from 14 residents in relation to the draft proposals contained in the GTLP. The Committee used the opportunity to engage with the public to

receive additional feedback to compliment that which had been received during the public consultation. The Committee provided an opportunity for Members to consider the proposals in more detail with contributions from residents so that the recommendations delivered to the Executive were delivered in light of that public input. The Committee endorsed the GTAA in addition to recommending that 131 pitches and 20 plots for travelling showpeople be allocated across seven sites. These recommendations were received by the Executive who approved the Plan for the purpose of further public consultation. The outcomes of the consultation will be reported directly to an external inspector who will determine during 2014 whether the Plan is 'sound' so that it can be implemented.

## Other overview items:

In light of their 'overview' role the Committee also considered and contributed to a range of other items prior to their consideration by the Executive that included the following:-

- The East West Rail Western Section Project;
- The Planning Enforcement Plan;
- Central Bedfordshire Design Guide;
- The Arlesey Masterplan;
- Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SuDS) guidance; and
- Funding for the Local Area Transport Plan.

The Committee also received items requested by Members in relation to the Council's Parking Strategy, in order to review performance in relation to Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) and street maintenance, in order to review the Council's maintenance scheme.

# Sustainable Communities OSC

# Task Forces

During 2013/14 the Social Care, Health and Housing OSC has commissioned and undertaken two detailed task force reviews as detailed below.

## Hospital Discharge Performance

One CBC Task Force review was concluded during 2013/14 relating to hospital discharge. The review provided Members with an opportunity to raise awareness of the main issues for residents of Central Bedfordshire in relation to experience of discharge from hospital and focus on issues relating to communication and raising awareness of the services that were available. Members took the opportunity to meet with GPs and other health professionals in order to develop a greater understanding of the local issues. The Committee report detailed several recommendations for which a report was endorsed by the Social Care, Health and Housing OSC and a progress report provided by Bedford Hospital, the CCG and the Council's own officers.

As a result of the report the majority of focus has been placed on discharges of CBC residents from both Luton & Dunstable and Bedford Hospitals, with significant input happening over winter in particular. As a result of the lessons learned from interventions trialed over the winter period, plans are being included within the Better Care Fund to ensure that appropriate and timely discharges take place.

## Joint Health OSC review of the Bedfordshire health economy

Members of the Social Care, Health and Housing OSC have also been engaged in a Joint Health OSC with Members of Bedford Borough Council in light of their statutory role to scrutinise 'substantial' changes in health services that impact on residents. Bedfordshire CCG and Milton Keynes CCG have been consulting stakeholders throughout the year on proposals to deliver a sustainable and locally-led model of healthcare for the area. The JHOSC has been engaged throughout this process as a statutory consultee to provide Members an opportunity to question the proposals as they develop and ensure that the CCG has put in place adequate proposals to inform and consult residents. A formal consultation will be undertaken later in the year and the JHOSC will provide a response as a formal consultee and scrutinise the outcomes of the consultation before making a recommendation regarding the final proposals for implementation.

# Engagement activity

Each OSC agenda has a standing item for “questions, statements and deputations” and residents are encouraged attend meetings to ask questions and contribute to discussions during the meeting. In summary this year there were approximately 150 members of the public in attendance at meetings and the OSCs engaged with the public and partners in the following ways:-

## 32 questions, statements and deputations

By registering to speak members of the public can attend and ask questions at OSC meetings regarding any of the items on the agenda. During 2013/14 questions were raised in relation to the following:-

- Arlesey Masterplan
- Biggleswade Hospital
- CRB checks.
- Draft Budget for the HRA Business Plan
- Draft Development Strategy
- East West Rail Western Section
- Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan
- Services for Children on the autistic spectrum
- The Community Bed Review

## 20 organisations attended meetings

The OSCs can also invite specific witnesses and professionals to attend meetings where they feel it would be helpful to receive additional information. During 2013/14 representatives of the following attended meetings:-

- Arlesey Village Agent
- Bedford Hospital
- Bedfordshire and Luton Fire & Rescue Service
- Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group
- Bedfordshire Police
- Bedfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner
- Bedfordshire Probation Trust
- Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity
- East of England Ambulance Service
- Freedom Programme
- Hawthorn Park Community Lower School
- Health Relationships Programme
- Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire
- Home Group
- Safeguarding Children Board
- Schools Compliance and Risk Group
- SEPT
- Sorted
- Sue Ryder Care
- Tenant Scrutiny Panel

# Getting involved

The residents of Central Bedfordshire are Overview and Scrutiny's most useful resource for finding out what the key issues are. Residents, community groups, local businesses and others that live or work in the area can make valuable contributions to much of the work Overview and Scrutiny does.

The work programme of Overview and Scrutiny can be flexible, so if there is an issue that you would like to see tackled or if you would just like to find out more about Overview and Scrutiny at Central Bedfordshire Council please contact the Overview and Scrutiny team.

Details regarding forthcoming meetings, including copies of the reports and a list of future meeting dates can be obtained from the Overview and Scrutiny website at the following link:

<http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/committees-and-decision-making/overview-and-scrutiny.aspx>

All OSC meetings are open to the public and a list of future meeting dates is available from the above website. Residents are also welcome to come and speak and provide their views at meetings. If you would like to attend a meeting and speak please contact us in advance.



## Contact us...

Për Informacion

Per Informazione

Za Informacije

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برای اطلاع

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Za Informacja

by telephone: 0300 300 4634

by email: [scrutiny@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

on the web: [www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Write to Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House,  
Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, Bedfordshire SG17 5TQ