

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Thursday, 22 January 2015.

PRESENT

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

Cllrs	D Bowater	Cllrs	K C Matthews
	C C Gomm		A Shadbolt
	Ms A M W Graham		P Williams

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs B Saunders

Substitutes: Cllrs F Chapman MBE

Members in Attendance:	Cllrs	A D Brown	Deputy Executive Member for Regeneration
		I Dalgarno	Deputy Executive Members for Community Services
		A L Dodwell	Deputy Executive Member for Children's Services and Community Services
		J G Jamieson	Leader of the Council and Chairman of the Executive
		T Nicols	
		B J Spurr	Executive Member for Community Services
		Mrs P E Turner MBE	Executive Member for Partnerships
		M A G Versallion	Executive Member for Children's Services
		B Wells	Deputy Executive Member for Community Services
		J N Young	Executive Member for Regeneration

Officers in Attendance:	Ms S Chapman	–	Development Planning Project and Process Team Leader
	Mr M Coiffait	–	Community Services Director
	Mrs J Piper	–	CSP Manager
	Mrs J Dickinson	–	Head of Leisure and Libraries
	Mrs J Keyte	–	Head of Community Safety

	Mr B King	– Transport Strategy Team Leader
	Mr J Longhurst	– Director of Regeneration and Business
	Mrs R Preen	– Scrutiny Policy Adviser
	Ms S Templeman	– Senior Finance Manager
Others in Attendance	Mr D Boyle	Chief Superintendent, Bedfordshire Police
	Mr J Foolkes	Deputy Group Commander, Bedfordshire Fire Service
	Mr O Martins	Bedfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner
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SCOSC/14/54. **Members' Interests**

Cllr Graham declared an interest in relation to Item 10 (Community Safety Plan and Priorities 2015/16) as she is a member of the Police and Crime Panel.

The Chairman declared an interest in relation to Item 15 (Dunstable Leisure Centre Feasibility Study) as the Ward Member for Dunstable.

SCOSC/14/55. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman announced that there would be a slight amendment to the Agenda running order to accommodate the Police and Crime Commissioner during item 10 (Community Safety Plan and Priorities 2015/16) as his availability was limited.

It was also noted there would be a special Sustainable Communities OSC on 19 February 2015 to consider four Planning related items prior to the Planning Inspectorate's hearing on 05 March 2015.

SCOSC/14/56. **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 13 November 2014 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

SCOSC/14/57. **Petitions**

None.

SCOSC/14/58. **Questions, Statements or Deputations**

None.

SCOSC/14/59. Call-In

None.

SCOSC/14/60. Requested Items

None.

SCOSC/14/61. Executive Member Update

The Executive Member for Regeneration informed the Committee that SEMLEP had been allocated their growth fund revenues, some of which would be used to enhance Millbrook Tech Park. The M6/A1 link road was a priority for SEMLEP and should help to relieve traffic in Flitwick once it was open. It was also highlighted that Luton Borough Council were seeking a judicial review regarding development proposals on land North of Houghton Regis, the hearing would be in early February 2015.

Councillor Nicols raised a query regarding Land North of Luton and the impact of the development on his ward. The Executive Member for Regeneration advised that he would liaise with the appropriate officers and provide a written response for the Committee and Councillor Nicols.

A Member queried the Luton airport expansion and the effect it would have on the surrounding area. It was confirmed that a condition of the proposed expansion was that the A5/M1 link road would be built to accommodate the additional pressure on the area.

The Executive Member for Community Services informed the Committee that Houghton Hall had received Lottery funding, the outcome of which would be of great benefit to the local community. It was also commented that the flooding issues in Leighton Buzzard, particularly the Clipstone Brook area were being addressed.

Cllr Nicols queried whether a 20 MPH limit could be set outside the school in Chalton and once the A5/M1 link road had been constructed, clarified whether there would be a lorry/HGV ban through the village. The Executive Member for Community Services agreed that this would be considered carefully, with a consultation and public survey carried out in accordance with standard procedure as they were aware of the problems in Chalton with regards to lorries and speeds around the school.

SCOSC/14/62. Community Safety Plan and Priorities 2015/16

The Community Safety Partnership Manager delivered the Community Safety Plan and Priorities for 2015/16 and clarified that the Committee was being asked to agree the priorities detailed within the plan. The manager explained why the priorities had been identified as such, highlighting that other aspects of Community Safety such as burglaries and Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) remained an operational priority. Increases in the reporting of certain offences were seen as positive as they were historically under reported crimes. The Community Safety Partnership wanted residents to have confidence in seeking

support and they were working hard to ensure this was the case. They had identified a need to better understand substance misuse and domestic violence, working closely with other partners to provide support.

The Committee were also provided with details of a new task force which had been set up to tackle child sexual exploitation (CSE), expressly to analyse what the current measures for tackling the issues were and to formulate an action plan going forward.

It was also commented that terrorism, extremism and radicalisation were issues that Community Safety needed to be sighted on and have a clearer understanding of. As such a structure was being put in place to understand and tackle them better, along with intelligence gathering in order to combat organised crime groups.

In light of the report the Committee and other Members in attendance raised the following queries:-

How the proposed 15.8% police precept increase would enable the force to meet the priorities in the plan, how long it would take to recoup the money spent on a referendum and how the extra resource would be deployed across Bedfordshire. Concerns were raised that most resource would be allocated to Bedford and Luton, therefore not benefitting the residents and businesses across Central Bedfordshire.

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) responded by explaining that the precept would help deliver against the priorities in the plan as there would be more resource to tackle those issues. Bedfordshire Police was historically an underfunded, small force compared to the complexities it faced with CSE now identified as an emerging risk. The PCC stated that he was not comfortable in having to tackle the issue with the current funds and resource available as it would mean diverting both from other vital areas which would subsequently suffer. He was proposing a modest increase to enable more appropriate capability in the deployment of resource. A referendum would not be held unless there was significant public support for a rise in the precept and any cost would be covered by current reserves.

Members challenged the stated decrease in burglary figures as trends in Houghton Regis and Dunstable had shown a sharp increase of 29% and 39% respectively. It was felt that current measures to reduce burglaries were not robust enough given the increase in the South of Central Bedfordshire; Members queried what the police would do differently to improve the situation. Members suggested that consideration be given to implement a policy which supported a visible police presence in Central Bedfordshire.

The PCC highlighted that his main priority was a return to the old style of neighbourhood policing which would be a of a direct benefit to Central Bedfordshire. There were currently 7 neighbourhood teams with a proposal that warranted officers replaced the current PCSO provision. Another priority was to place more resource into offender management and preventative policing. The overall trend in burglaries in Central Bedfordshire was downwards with an increase in Luton and despite the apprehension of known offenders, this had

been difficult to manage. 100 extra officers would enable the police to achieve better outcomes. It had been identified that the current method of policing was reactive rather than preventative which the PCC was looking to address along with visible policing which special constables would provide across Central Bedfordshire. New performance measures had been implemented which would hold the Chief Constable to account and enable a robust analysis of data.

Members queried what had changed since the recent inspection and how the precept would improve the situation for those victims, particularly children, of Domestic Violence (DV).

The PCC explained that the primary criticism of HMIC was that although the force was good at identifying those at high risk of DV, it was not as strong at recognising those at medium risk, thus preventing cases of DV was poor. The precept would allow for more resource to tackle DV and child protection issues including CSE.

Members asked that a full business case be developed so that the public could make an informed decision regarding the deployment of resource which the precept would be funding.

The PCC explained that there were no figures yet as to where the resource would be deployed, however it was acknowledged that the highest level of demand was in Bedford and Luton, hence the current deployment of officers in those areas.

Members challenged that public perception did not appear to support the statement that Central Bedfordshire was a safe place to live as confidence with regards to safety was below the national average. Concerns were raised that traditional crimes such as thefts in rural areas should not be overlooked in favour of emerging threats and pressures.

Chief Superintendent David Boyle responded to the operational queries by explaining that there was a central tasking team dedicated to known hotspot areas. This had been successful to a degree, there had been high profile arrests but there was still more to do. He went on to say that the Integrated Offender Management scheme would work to address long term issues such as drink and drug dependency. High visibility policing, identifying hotspots at a neighbourhood level and hitting known areas hard along with an active campaign to warn and inform residents as to how they could take precautions, were all measures being taken to address the issues raised. The police would continue to allocate resource to problem areas, the force was going through an organisational change and part of this would ensure that more warranted officers would be deployed within neighbourhood areas. Operationally the police were too reactive and they needed to learn how to address the root causes of crime and find long term solutions by analysing the available data.

The Community Safety Partnership Manager reiterated that traditional crimes such as burglary remained an operational priority.

RECOMMENDED that the priorities within the plan be endorsed.

SCOSC/14/63. **Draft Budget 2015/16 and MTFP 2018/19**

The Executive Member introduced a report which outlined the Council's Draft Budget for 2015/16, Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Programme which had been presented to the Executive on 13 January 2015. The report also set out the efficiencies and pressures that faced the Directorate.

RECOMMENDED that the proposals were endorsed and supported by the Committee

SCOSC/14/64. **Q2 Budget Report**

Following an amendment to the Q2 Budget Report, this item was considered under item 12a (Minute SCOSC/14/65 refers).

SCOSC/14/65. **Q2 Budget Report**

The Senior Finance Manager delivered a presentation to the Committee, detailing areas of underspend, overspend and outstanding debt for the Council. The Director for Community Services also highlighted there would be a £100k VAT bill due to car parking charges which had not previously been accounted for.

RECOMMENDED that the strong financial performance of the Council be acknowledged.

SCOSC/14/66. **Q2 Performance Report**

The Director for Community Services highlighted that overall crime levels, burglaries and ASB were decreasing, however in certain areas there had been an increase particularly in historically under reported crimes. Resident satisfaction in the condition of the Highways and pavements had gone down in the last quarter but overall, satisfaction was slowly improving. There had also been a decrease in recycling rates across the area, which was attributed to manufacturers producing less packaging and often using non recyclable materials.

Data regarding general well being in the populace was positive.

The Director for Regeneration and Business provided details regarding employment rates, which were a little under 80% and above the national average. Broadband schemes and tech support were on track and there was high interest in commercial sites and business investment within Central Bedfordshire.

The Executive Member for Regeneration advised that the Council provided robust support to those wishing to enter employment hence the strong figures. The Executive Member also provided figures with regards to investment in the South of Central Bedfordshire, detailing that £500m had been invested in roads, transport links and businesses. There had been a net increase of 1,200 jobs per year for the past 5 years and this was set to increase further.

A Member raised concerns regarding BAE laying off contractors, the Director for Regeneration and Business acknowledged that he was aware of the issue and action was being taken to monitor the situation and provide support.

RECOMMENDED that the strong performance for Q2 be acknowledged.

SCOSC/14/67. **Local Transport Plan**

The Local Transport Team Leader delivered a report relating to the 2015/16 LTP Capital Programme proposals.

He explained that the national budget had been reduced by 40% across the country so Central Bedfordshire Council would see a reduction in their funding of around £500k or 27%.

The proposals were to implement 12 schemes, the details of which were in the report.

It was also clarified with regards to rural match funding that although Parish Councils would need to meet 50% of the overall costs, they could apply to have their precept increased to assist with this. The Deputy Executive Member for Regeneration explained that with regards to safety schemes, there was the possibility of more assistance if the Parish were struggling to raise funds.

A Member queried whether police would enforce a 20 MPH limit as detailed within the report. The Executive Member explained that such limits would be enforced and were encouraged by the Department for Transport. Motorists also tended to self enforce when they saw the limits, which helped to reduce overall speeds.

A Member queried who was responsible for the maintenance of bus shelters. The Director for Community Services confirmed that the Council were responsible for some, there was no definitive budget for them but he had allocated some funds to assist with repairs.

Concerns were raised that some rural transport links were poor, it was acknowledged that some routes were not commercially viable.

RECOMMENDED that the Committee endorse the 2015/16 LTP Capital Programme proposals.

SCOSC/14/68. **Dunstable Leisure Centre Feasibility Study**

The Head of Leisure and Libraries delivered a report and presentation relating to the proposed refurbishment of Dunstable Leisure Centre.

Five options were presented to the Committee, each detailing the costs and benefits of the scheme. The following points were presented and discussed by the Committee:-

- The strategic priority of meeting the shortfall in health and fitness.
- The ongoing liabilities associated with existing buildings, which were ageing.
- The ongoing disruption to service delivery in order to repair unsafe areas.

- Facilities did not meet modern standards for service delivery and were not fit for purpose.
- The refurbishment of the facility would support the overall regeneration of the town.
- There was a high potential for the alignment and integration of services.

RECOMMENDED that:-

- 1. progress to date in delivering the Council's Leisure Facilities Strategy and Capital Programme be acknowledged.**
- 2. the executive adopt option 4 detailed in the report for the refurbishment of Dunstable Leisure Centre.**

SCOSC/14/69. Plan Making Programme

The Development Plans Process Manager delivered the report and advised Members there would be some minor amendments to the detail when it was presented to the Executive, including some diagrams and revised wording in order to clarify the content of the document. Members supported these changes in principle.

RECOMMENDED that:-

- 1. The Executive support the preparation of the three Local Plans and other associated documents.**
- 2. The amendment to the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan Timetable be noted**
- 3. The programme of plan making, which sets out the Local Development Scheme for Central Bedfordshire be endorsed.**

SCOSC/14/70. Work Programme 2014/15 and Executive Forward Plan

RECOMMENDED that the Sustainable Communities OSC Work Programme be agreed subject to the addition of two items:-

- 1. a report regarding Regeneration and Business opportunities being considered by the authority (20 March 2015); and**
- 2. the invitation of Anglian Water to attend the OSC on 20 March 2015 to discuss planning issues affecting the Moggerhangar area.**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 1.15 p.m.)