

## CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Monday, 26 September 2016.

### PRESENT

Cllr D McVicar (Chairman)  
Cllr B Saunders (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs D Bowater  
Ms A M W Graham  
J Kane

Cllrs K C Matthews  
R Morris  
G Perham

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs Ms C Maudlin

Substitutes: Cllrs Mrs C F Chapman MBE

Members in Attendance: Cllrs Mrs A Barker  
A D Brown  
Mrs S Clark  
P A Duckett  
E Ghent  
C C Gomm  
P Hollick  
J G Jamieson  
T Swain  
M A G Versallion  
B Wells

Chairman of Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
Deputy Executive Member for Community Services  
Deputy Executive Member for Regeneration  
Chairman of Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee  
Deputy Executive Member for Adult Social Care  
Chairman of Social Care, Health & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee  
Leader of the Council and Chairman of the Executive  
Deputy Executive Member for Community Services

Officers in Attendance: Mr M Coiffait – Director of Community Services  
Mrs R Preen – Scrutiny Policy Adviser  
Ms S Childerhouse – Head of Public Protection

Public

4

**SCOSC/16/29 Members' Interests**

None.

**SCOSC/16/30 Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

None.

**SCOSC/16/31 Minutes**

**RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 01 July 2016 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.**

**SCOSC/16/32 Petitions**

None.

**SCOSC/16/33 Questions, Statements or Deputations**

The Chairman confirmed that two members of the public had registered to speak at the commencement of Item 10.

**SCOSC/16/34 Call-In**

None.

**SCOSC/16/35 Requested Items**

None.

**SCOSC/16/36 Executive Members Updates**

The Deputy Executive Member for Regeneration provided the Committee with an update on the Local Plan, that leaflets and a questionnaire would be sent to members of the public across Central Bedfordshire, after which a series of coordinated community planning events would take place. Technical site assessments were underway, the Gypsy and Traveller accommodation assessment was currently available, with the draft Local Plan ready for publication in January 2017.

The Director for Community Services updated the Committee with regards to unauthorised Gypsy and Traveller encampments whereby they were being moved on where possible, the use of pre-emptive injunctions on known problem sites and that an Officer was being recruited to deal specifically with this issue.

**SCOSC/16/37 Passenger Transport Strategy**

The Chairman invited two speakers to address the Committee in relation to the passenger transport strategy which in summary related to the following:-

- Concerns that proposals would not improve the current level of service and would be to the detriment of vulnerable service users.
- That the reduction in subsidies would push Dial a Ride services beyond viability, force them to reduce staffing levels whilst taking on additional work.
- That the Committee recommend a delay to proposals for 1 year in order to consider other opportunities to work with third party transport providers, include a full review of outsourcing options and finding a solution which worked together for all parties.
- Concerns that essential public services would be reduced in light of funding pressures and that alternative providers wouldn't have the expertise to deal with and provide an appropriate level of service to elderly and vulnerable customers.

The Deputy Executive Member for Community Services introduced the report, highlighting that the Council did not have a current strategy in operation, drawing the Committee's attention to the legal elements of the report and specifying the Council's statutory duties in relation to passenger transport.

In light of the report Members discussed the following:-

- The importance of ensuring continuity of service, not cutting passenger transport so deeply so as to leave a lack of provision, resulting in having to revisit the strategy at a later date.
- The possible knock on effect to other services were Dial a Ride to be adversely affected by the proposed changes to funding.
- Whether Dial a Ride services could be linked across the region although they had been reluctant to do this in the past.
- That certain routes to school be reassessed for safety.
- That decisions be made carefully and not in haste, entering into early discussions with community groups before final decisions were made.
- That the tender process may lead to the cheapest bid winning the contract with a subsequent negative effect on service delivery, to which the Director confirmed that price was not the only factor when determining which service provider to use.
- That Service Level Agreements (SLA's) be monitored and measured.
- The need to differentiate the needs of urban and rural areas.
- That the home to school transport policy had been approved in the past but had not been implemented, to which the Committee agreed should be remedied.
- That consideration be given to a delay in relation to the Community Transport element to which the Head of Public Protection outlined difficulties in non compliance with the EU directive relating to state aid and the tendering process organisations were allowed to enter into.

**RECOMMENDED that the Committee broadly support the Passenger Transport Strategy but recommend that the Executive consider delaying changes to the Community Transport element of the strategy, specifically the Dial a Ride service for 1 year in order to allow further discussions to**

**take place, taking into account the legal implication of not complying with the EU Directive relating to State Aid, which prohibits the Council from providing subsidies to an organisation which tenders for other transport services.**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 2.30 p.m. and concluded at 4.00 p.m.)