

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **COUNCIL** held in the Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Thursday, 19 July 2018.

PRESENT

Cllr Mrs C F Chapman MBE (Chairman)

Cllr B Saunders (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs R D Berry
M C Blair
D Bowater
J Chatterley
Mrs S Clark
K M Collins
N B Costin
I Dalgarno
S Dixon
Mrs A L Dodwell
P Downing
P A Duckett
F Firth
E Ghent

Cllrs C C Gomm
Mrs S A Goodchild
Mrs D B Gurney
Ms C Hegley
P Hollick
J G Jamieson
K Janes
D J Lawrence
Mrs J G Lawrence
Cllr M Liddiard
K C Matthews
Ms C Maudlin
D McVicar
R Morris

Cllrs T Nicols
G Perham
A Ryan
D Shelvey
P Smith
Mrs T Stock
T Swain
A M Turner
B Wells
R D Wenham
T Woodward
J N Young
A Zerny

Apologies for Absence

Cllrs Mrs A Barker
A D Brown
K Ferguson
Ms A M W Graham

Cllrs R W Johnstone
I Shingler
B J Spurr
R C Stay

Cllrs M A G Versallion
N Warren
S Watkins

Absent

Cllrs Mrs J Freeman
G Tubb

Cllr J Saunders

Cllr B Walker

Officers:	Mr R Carr	– Chief Executive
	Mr M Coiffait	– Director of Community Services
	Mr D Galvin	– Assistant Director of Finance
	Mrs S Harrison	– Director of Children's Services
	Mrs S Hobbs	– Senior Committee Services Officer
	Mr T Hoyle	– Assistant Director of Strategic Commissioning
	Mr J Longhurst	– Director of Regeneration and Business
	Mr S Rix	– Interim Monitoring Officer
	Mrs C Shohet	– Assistant Director of Public Health

C/18/12 **Minutes**

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 17 May 2018 be approved as a correct record.

C/18/13 **Members' Interests**

Councillors Bowater and Perham declared a personal interest in item 5 'Petitions' as they had been in contact with the lead petitioner.

C/18/14 **Questions, Statements and Deputations**

The Chairman invited the public speakers to make their statements in accordance with the Public Participation Scheme.

Everton Heath Primary School

Mr Mardi, Chair of Governors at Everton Health Primary Schools, spoke on the proposal for the school to become part of the CAM Multi-Academy Trust. Mr Mardi referred to the Executive's decision in March 2013 that the Trust would have to take over the responsibilities of any unpaid teacher pension payments for the period between 2007 and 2013. Neither the Governing Body nor the Trust felt able to accept this liability. He requested a meeting with the Council to resolve the issue.

The Executive Member for Children's Services explained that since March 2013 there had been 20 Academy conversions, which had proceeded on the basis suggested by the Council. However, he would respond directly to Mr Mardi.

Sewerage and Fly Tipping

Mr Briggs, a resident from Stanbridge, congratulated the Council on securing an Enforcement Order for the Kingswood Nursery Site for the prevention of the burning of industrial waste. He raised concerns that there was no provision for drainage at the site which had led to foul smells. An additional 6 caravans had moved onto the site meaning that there were now 30 using it with no proper sewerage provision. The ditches around the crop fields were full of sewerage.

The Executive Member for Community Services would raise the concerns with the Environment Agency. He would provide an update on the work being undertaken to Mr Briggs in writing.

Enforcement

Mr Gibson, a local resident, was concerned that the Council was not enforcing breaches of planning and green belt policy by the gypsy and traveller community. He felt that the Council was turning a blind eye and that this had led to Central Bedfordshire having one of the highest concentrations of gypsy and traveller communities in the area. This was having an impact on the communities living in Central Bedfordshire.

The Executive Member for Regeneration requested a list of specific concerns where it appeared that enforcement had not taken place. He would look into these concerns and respond directly to Mr Gibson. He explained that enforcement was a long and difficult process.

The Leader of the Council confirmed that the Council treated everyone the same and had an effective enforcement policy. He acknowledged the frustration and the difficulties with the enforcement policy and assured residents that it was not for the lack of trying that the Council did not always succeed.

Community Cohesion

Ms Dimmock, spoke about community cohesion between the gypsy and traveller and the settled communities in the Tilsworth and Stranbridge area. She believed that these two groups followed different planning laws undermining community cohesion. To improve the situation, the Council needed to show strong leadership by enforcing planning rules. She referred to a recent planning application for Kingswood Nursery, Tilsworth where 140 objections were received. Kingswood Nursery was an unauthorised site and a brick wall had been built in the drainage ditch where hedges used to be. There was a lack of adequate gypsy and traveller sites and this was leading to unauthorised sites. The Council should act fairly to protect the green belt and improve community cohesion. She requested that the Leader set up a steering committee to develop a strategy to address the situation.

The Executive Member for Regeneration explained that the planning application for 6 pitches at Kingswood Nursery had not yet been determined. He requested that Ms Dimmock provide him with the specific details of her concerns and he would reply to her directly.

The Leader advised that he would consider the suggestion of setting up a steering committee.

Councillor's Duty to Care to Residents

Ms Sutton, spoke on behalf of local residents about the lack of enforcement action in the area. She highlighted problems such as the anti-social behaviour, fly tipping, blocked drains and an imbalance in planning decisions in the area. The lack of action by the Council was having an impact on the community. She referred to the work of the Parish Council and queried whether Officers at Central Bedfordshire Council felt valued with the reduction in budgets. She requested that the Council take action to create a fair society.

The Leader confirmed that the Council tried to do its best for the residents of Central Bedfordshire with the funding available. The Council faced significant resource pressures in areas such as adult social care and vulnerable children. The Council was committed to improving its services, within those resource constraints.

Regenerating Small Businesses in Central Bedfordshire

A member of the public read out a statement on behalf of another member of the public who wished to remain anonymous. The statement referred to regeneration in Dunstable and the Oxford-Cambridge Corridor initiative, but raised concerns that the same effort was not being put into Leighton Buzzard. A recent planning application for a barn conversion had been turned down. It was felt that planning applications were not being dealt with fairly as the greenbelt was being built on and hard surfaces were covering pastures, woodlands, natural habitats etc. The statement questioned whether the Council was trying to attract people who ignored planning laws and would not integrate into the local community. The second part of the statement referred to a formal complaint about a Director.

The Executive Member for Regeneration explained that Dunstable Town Centre was in the process of being rejuvenated. Infrastructure benefitting the area such as the A5-M1 and Woodside link roads had been built and employment in the area had increased. He would be happy to liaise with the member of public whose application for a barn conversion had been turned down. If any specific details regarding the lack of enforcement on green belt could be passed to the Executive Member, he would investigate.

The Leader advised that any complaint against a Director should be submitted through the Council's formal complaints process.

C/18/15

Petitions

Leighton Buzzard High Street

Mr Crowe, Chairman of Leighton Buzzard Society, presented a petition containing 615 signatures requesting the Council to repair the pavements in High Street, Leighton Buzzard back to their original standard. Temporary repairs to the High Street had been undertaken, but this had left the pavement looking untidy.

The Executive Member for Community Services thanked Mr Crowe for his work on behalf of the residents in Leighton Buzzard. A project would be carried out in the autumn to repair the footpaths and improve the street scene in the town centre.

C/18/16

Chairman's Announcements and Communications

The Chairman announced that her charity for 2018/19 would be Cancer Research.

C/18/17 Leader of the Council's Announcements and Communications

The Leader thanked the members of the public for attending the meeting and was pleased that the Executive Member for Community Services was able to confirm that works would be carried out in Leighton Buzzard town centre in the autumn.

C/18/18 Executive Member Presentations

Councillor Ghent, Executive Member for Assets and Housing Delivery provided an update on the activities of the Assets Team:

- a restructure had taken place to enable a greater focus on delivery;
- the three main areas were facilities management; estates service; capital construction;
- the Team was responsible for ensuring all the Council's buildings, including schools, were compliant with appropriate health and safety requirements;
- a digital help-desk had been launched to help the Team interact with customers quickly;
- the Quadrant Accommodation Plan had been approved by the Executive;
- the consultation on the Farm Estates Plan ended in August; and
- the Commercial Estate Plan was being drawn up and would be submitted to the Executive by the end of December 2018.

In response to a question, the Executive Member explained that the move of Customer Services into the libraries did not fall within his remit.

Councillor Young, Executive Member for Regeneration provided an update on the activities taking place within his portfolio:

- the Building Control Service had won six local authority building control (LABC) awards; and
- Biggleswade was the fastest growing commercial area in Central Bedfordshire; and
- he updated on the progress of Stratton Park, Biggleswade.

In response to a question, the Executive Member confirmed that he had not attended any award ceremonies and would advise the relevant Member if any officers had attended and the cost of this.

In response to questions, the Executive Member confirmed that any matters relating to schools were dealt with by the Executive Member for Families, Education and Children and that he was not aware of any S106 contributions for Sandye Place Academy.

He confirmed that he would continue to put pressure on Highways England and Network Rail to improve the infrastructure in Biggleswade.

The Council had supported a number of businesses that had been recognised in the 2018 Queens Award for Enterprise.

The Executive Member for Community Services advised that Modplan based in Arlesey had also won a LABC award for the construction of Houghton Hall.

C/18/19 Recommendations from the Executive

The Council considered a recommendation from the meeting of the Executive held on 12 June 2018, seeking approval of the net overspend on:

- Library and Leisure Centre, Dunstable - £1.596m
- Flitwick Leisure Centre Redevelopment - £3.037m
- Woodside Link - £1.101m
- Fleet Replacement Programme - £0.624m.

RESOLVED

that the above net overspend be approved.

The decision was unanimous.

C/18/20 Audit Committee Activity - 2017/18 Annual Report

The Council considered a report that summarised the work of the Audit Committee during the 2017/18.

RESOLVED

that the work of the Audit Committee during the 2017/18 financial year be noted.

The decision was unanimous.

C/18/21 Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2017/18

The Council received the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report that summarised the activities of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees during 2017/18 and the anticipated activity during 2018/19.

RESOLVED

that the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2017/18 be noted.

C/18/22 Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority

The Council received reports from the Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority, following its meetings held on 26 April 2018 and 31 May 2018.

RESOLVED

that the reports of the Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority be noted.

C/18/23 Bedfordshire Police Authority

The Council received the Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel activity report for 2017/18.

In response to a question, Councillor Downing explained that the Police and Crime Panel held the Police and Crime Commissioner to account and not the Police Service.

RESOLVED

that the report of the Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel be noted.

C/18/24 Motions

No motions were received.

C/18/25 Written Questions

No written questions were received.

C/18/26 Open Questions

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

- (1) Councillor Zerny commented on the Leader of the Council's election as the Leader of the Conservative Group on the Local Government Association. He enquired whether the Leader would have the capacity to discharge his LGA responsibilities in addition to being Leader of this Council.

The Leader confirmed that his first duty was to the residents of Central Bedfordshire and that he did have the capacity to take on this new role.

- (2) Councillor Ryan asked for an update on the proposals for the Kingsland Site, Houghton Regis.

The Executive Member for Regeneration apologised that he had not been in a position to meet with ward Members regarding the Kingsland Site. Discussions were still taking place with the Legacy organisation. There were still plans to bring forward better leisure, community facilities, schooling and affordable housing to Houghton Regis.

- (3) Councillor Matthews asked how the review mechanism worked for approving developments where the number of affordable dwellings had not been compliant with the appropriate Local Plan.

The Executive Member for Regeneration explained how the review mechanism worked by looking at the viability appraisal of a site. If the houses on a development sold for more money than in the original viability appraisal, additional payments would be made to the Council and go towards affordable housing.

- (4) Councillor Mrs Goodchild asked about the Council's bids for funds from the Government's Housing Infrastructure Fund; one focused on Biggleswade and one for Houghton Regis.

The Executive Member for Regeneration explained that the Council had submitted three bids to the Housing Infrastructure Fund. A bid had been approved for Dunstable, the Council's bid for £65m in Biggleswade had been shortlisted and officers were working to try and secure this funding. The bid for Houghton Regis had not been shortlisted, but officers were working with Homes England to try to secure funding support. Any funding secured would go towards affordable housing in Dunstable, Biggleswade and Houghton Regis.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 6.30 p.m. and concluded at 8.12 p.m.)

Chairman

Dated