

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Thursday, 24 January 2019.

PRESENT

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

Cllrs F Firth
C C Gomm
Ms A M W Graham

Cllrs J Kane
Cllr M Liddiard
K C Matthews

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs D Bowater

Substitutes: Cllrs M A G Versallion

Members in Attendance: Cllrs A D Brown Deputy Executive Member for Regeneration
B Wells Deputy Executive Member for Community Services
J N Young Executive Member for Regeneration

Officers in Attendance: Mr M Coiffait – Director of Community Services
Mrs J Keyte – Head of Community Safety
Mrs R Preen – Scrutiny Policy Adviser
Ms L Scott – Community Safety Strategy Officer
Mrs J Selley – Head of Planning Delivery

Others in Attendance D Boyle Chief Superintendent, Bedfordshire Police
J Lunn Superintendent, Bedfordshire Police

SCOSC/18/118 **Members' Interests**

None.

SCOSC/18/119 **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman thanked Cllr Graham for organising a recent briefing hosted by Anglian Water, with their attendance reinforcing the importance of the Council working collaboratively with partners. Members were advised that following a request from officers agenda items 10 and 11 would be re-ordered to consider item 11 first.

SCOSC/18/120 Minutes

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 22 November 2018 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

SCOSC/18/121 Petitions

None.

SCOSC/18/122 Questions, Statements or Deputations

None.

SCOSC/18/123 Call-In

None.

SCOSC/18/124 Requested Items

None.

SCOSC/18/125 Executive Members Updates

The Executive Member for Regeneration provided an update in relation to the Council's apprenticeship scheme and that the Local Plan was due for examination in the Spring of 2019. Members were advised of the status of recent planning applications and the challenges around particular sites and developments in Luton impacting traffic movement within Central Bedfordshire, with the anticipated timescales for development expected to be between one to two years following the granting of planning permissions. In response to a Member query the Executive Member confirmed that the Council was still in dialogue with Luton Borough Council around the duty to cooperate in relation to the Local Plan although agreement had not yet been reached.

The Deputy Executive Member for Community Services provided an update in relation to the waste collection contract and those tenders which had been received would be evaluated, with a decision to award the contract made on 17 May 2019. The Executive Member provided details of a recent communication from DEFRA in relation to a consultation on a waste deposit return on plastic bottles, with the outcome of that consultation determining the Council's approach to future kerbside collections. The dualling of the A421 was progressing well, construction would begin in March 2019 and the road would be open to the public in 2020.

The Chairman announced that there would be a press release on Dunstable Leisure Centre circulated week commencing 28 January 2019.

SCOSC/18/126 Community Safety Resources

The Head of Community Safety welcomed representatives from Bedfordshire Police and delivered a presentation which set out proposals for additional

community safety resources. Members were appraised of the key points and changing priorities for the service in order that tangible outcomes could be realised, highlighting feedback from a resident survey which strongly indicated that respondents felt less safe than they had previously. There was a need to redress the balance, returning to a community safety model similar to that of the past and continue strong partnership working in order that statutory duties be addressed. Proposals included seeking additional delegated enforcement powers for community safety officers as well as increased resources, with those officers directly situated within the community. It was anticipated that the new model would engender a far more preventative approach rather than reactive as had been experienced in recent years and the Chief Superintendent from Bedfordshire Police highlighted a recent drive within the force to re-establish community policing, which would be complemented by the community safety team's approach.

In light of the presentation Members discussed the following in summary:-

- That the new approach was an excellent opportunity to make a difference within the community.
- That participatory budgeting between the police and the Council would allow the seizure of assets from criminals to fund future initiatives in helping prevent crime.
- That the additional resource required had been sourced from the current mid-term financial plan (MTFP) and a need to carefully consider the allocation of officers across the region.
- That the additional resource had been proposed as a result of resident feedback suggesting that the Council had not done enough to address community safety issues, despite its statutory responsibilities to do so.
- That Ward Members be appraised of the roles and responsibilities of each particular community safety officer and that robust communications with Town and Parish Councils and the rural community was essential.
- That any increase in CCTV across the region would be separate from the current proposals.
- That the police be invited to provide a briefing to all Members in relation to the policing model and their resource allocation, particularly given that perceptions were that much of the resource was deployed elsewhere in Bedfordshire .

RECOMMENDED that the Committee support the proposal for additional community safety resources and that the Executive include the required funding within the Council's current MTFP for 2019/20.

SCOSC/18/127 **Community Safety Partnership Strategy 2019-21**

The Community Safety Strategy Officer highlighted the two year priorities of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) which included ending exploitation and tackling domestic and sexual abuse, along with addressing the knowledge gap in relation to the prevalence and impact of substance misuse. Members were advised that a PAN Bedfordshire strategy between Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford and Luton Borough Councils would be initiated in March 2021 in order that a more coordinated approach be adopted. Members were advised that sexual abuse reporting had decreased which required further

analysis as did the reporting of cybercrime and that cases of unauthorised encampments (UAE) across Central Bedfordshire had increased during 2017.

In light of the report Members discussed the following in summary:-

- That the outcomes appeared ambitious with no clear action detailed in relation to how they would be achieved, along with concerns around measures to address substance misuse.
- That despite rebranding and recent communications via social media, residents were largely unaware of the existence and work of the CSP.
- That the results of a recent consultation did not correlate with the priorities of the CSP and resident's primary concerns were in relation to burglary, anti-social behaviour (ASB) and crime. In response Members were advised that crime would be dealt with as 'business as usual' with the identified priorities helping to address the underlying causes of those crimes, in particular County Lines, 'cuckooing' properties and ASB in young people living with domestic abuse.
- The importance of the CSP not being seen as a 'talking shop' and that tangible outcomes must be evidenced.
- That particular villages were considering the need for private security or policing arrangements which should not be deemed necessary due to the Police and Crime Commissioner's pledge to reinforce community policing.
- That the CSP would also be working with the Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) in order to support those experiencing domestic abuse.

RECOMMENDED that the Committee support the two Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment Priorities and one 'Knowledge Gap' identified for Central Bedfordshire for 2019-2021.

SCOSC/18/128 **Planning Enforcement and Unauthorised Development**

The Head of Planning Delivery outlined the key elements of a report which included current and possible future officer resource within the team and the nature of the roles and responsibilities of officers in relation to planning enforcement and unauthorised development. Members were advised that in the majority of enforcement cases no action was taken as they were often resolved before there was any need for intervention, however when appropriate notices were served which often required extensive officer time and resource, with delays occurring due to the exhaustive evidence gathering and appeals process.

In light of the report Members discussed the following in summary:-

- That the Committee formally thanked officers for delivering the report as requested at a previous meeting and acknowledged the complexities, challenges and delays they faced in relation to planning enforcement due to government legislation and the judicial system not favouring an expedited process.
- That the example provided in relation to the site at Kingswood, Tilsworth had been helpful and that it be shared with the focus group in that area.
- That permanent staff would be recruited to post in the coming months which would include compliance officers in order that breaches in conditions be addressed at the earliest opportunity.

- Clarification around the responsibilities of those officers tasked with addressing the burning of waste, bonfires and other environmental breaches.
- That Members would welcome a full review of the enforcement plan once a new team leader was in post.

NOTED the report and acknowledged the complexities officers faced in discharging their duties in relation to planning enforcement and unauthorised developments.

SCOSC/18/129 Work Programme 2018/19 and Executive Forward Plan

AGREED the Committee Work Programme subject to the following amendments:-

- **Waste Strategy Update to include details in relation to the installation of fresh water fountains in Central Bedfordshire – 14 March 2019**

Following a brief discussion Members agreed that a public information page detailing guidance on the roles and responsibilities and contact details of Council departments and partners would be helpful and the directorate agreed to consider publicising this on the Council's website and in other communications.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.38 p.m.)