At a meeting of Council held in the Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford, Chicksands on Thursday 26 September 2019 at 6.30 pm to 8.55 pm

Present:

Cllr B Saunders (Chairman)
Cllr G Perham (Vice-Chairman)

Members:

Cllrs
J Baker
M Blair
I Bond
A Brown
N Bunyan
S Clark
S Collins
K Collins
P Crawley
I Dalgarno
S Dixon
A Dodwell
P Duckett
Y Farrell
K Ferguson
M Foster
E Ghent
S Goodchild
C Gomm
A Graham
P Hamill
R Hares
V Harvey
C Hegley

Cllrs
J Jamieson
M Liddiard
G Mackey
K Matthews
C Maudlin
R Morris
G Perham
E Perry
A Ryan
B Saunders
M Smith
P Snelling
P Spicer
T Stock
J Tamara
E Wallace
M Walsh
S Watkins
R Wenham
H Whitaker
T Wye
M Versallion
N Young
A Zerny

Apologies:

Cllrs
R Berry
D Bowater
J Chatterley
S Ford
F Firth
N Harris

Cllrs
D McVicar
G Sanders
D Shelvey
I Shingler
B Spurr

Absent:

None

Officers in Attendance:

Mr R Carr
Mr M Coiffait
Mrs P Everitt
Mrs S Harrison
Mrs S Hobbs
Mrs K McFarlane

Chief Executive
Director of Community Services
Scrutiny Policy Adviser
Director of Children’s Services
Senior Committee Services Officer
Assistant Director Business and Investment
Prayers

Prayers were taken by Reverend Bill Britt, Vicar of St Mary’s Church, Stotfold.

1. Minutes

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 18 July 2019 be approved as a correct record.

2. Members’ Interests

Councillor Harvey declared an interest in item 8 Executive Member Presentations as she was a member of Friends of the Earth.

3. Questions, Statements or Deputations

Bus Shelter, Caddington

Mr Green spoke on behalf of residents who were in favour of the removal of the bus shelter in Caddington and enquired why the decision made at the Traffic Management Meeting on 18 December 2018 to demolish the disused bus shelter in Caddington had not been implemented.

Mr Russell spoke on behalf of residents who were not in favour of the removal of the bus shelter in Caddington and enquired why the Council had cancelled the demolition order.

The Executive Member for Community Services explained that when the Council went to demolish the bus shelter there were residents sitting within it, so the Council was unable to demolish it. Since the Traffic Management Meeting in December 2018 there had been an increase in public interest and Caddington Parish Council had been asked to consult their community and broker a solution that would satisfy the whole community. The Council were still waiting to receive the feedback from Caddington Parish Council. Once this information was available, the issue would be reconsidered.
S106 Funding for Gravenhurst

Mr Brewer, spoke on behalf of Gravenhurst Parish Council, regarding a development on Oakridge, Gravenhurst of 53 dwellings and a block of flats. The decision taken by the Development Management Committee had been changed to provide a small play area within the new development instead of using S106 monies to improve the existing playground.

The Executive Member for Planning and Regeneration explained that the Development Management Committee had approved the application on the basis of an onsite playground.

Climate Change

Mrs Palmer spoke about the Motion approved at Council on 18 July on Climate Change and the changes that had taken place in the environment since the 1980s, sustainable development and the anticipated deficit in water supply. She enquired what the Council was going to do about Climate Change.

The Executive Member for Transformation and External Relations explained that he would provide an update under Agenda item 8 ‘Executive Member Presentations’.

4. Petitions

No petitions had been received.

5. Chairman’s Announcements and Communication

The Chairman had attended an event where the Woburn Sands Band had been presented with The Queen’s Award for Voluntary Service.

6. Leader’s Announcements and Communication

The Leader provided an insight into his role as Chairman of the Local Government Association (LGA) and the work of the LGA to support local authorities and councillors. As Chairman, the Leader was lobbying Ministers for additional support and funding for councils so that they could improve residents’ lives. The LGA would be supporting councils to defend a challenge to business rates levied on NHS hospital properties. The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government had visited Priory View, Dunstable and the new scheme being built in Houghton Regis, All Saints View, to provide him with an understanding of what was taking place in Central Bedfordshire. The LGA had lobbied for the removal of the Housing Revenue Account borrowing cap which would enable councils to build additional homes. Local authorities’ core spending power would rise in 2019 to 2020 by £3.1 billion to help meet the pressures being experienced, including in adult social care, special education needs the High Needs block.
7. Executive Member Presentations

Councillor Stock, Executive Member for Health & Wellbeing and Communities provided a presentation on the work to improve health and wellbeing using digital support and the Apps that had been launched to enable this, which included:

- ‘Baby Buddy’ which provides support throughout pregnancy, from conception until the baby was six months old.
- ‘Parentline’ which provides a simple and accessible support line for parents seeking advice about their children.
- ‘Chat Health’ which was for 11-19 year olds living in Bedfordshire and provided confidential advice and support for young people.
- ‘Kooth’ which was for children and young people and provided an online counselling and support service, 7 days a week. It targeted children and young people with emotional wellbeing and/or emerging mental health problems, many of whom would require a low level/targeted/short-term intervention.
- ‘My Quit Route’ which provided expert advice and scientifically proven tools to help people quit smoking.
- ‘My Care Path’, due to be launched, would support people with drug and alcohol addiction.
- ‘Breastfeeding Hub’ was also due to be launched to support mothers with breastfeeding and provide an interactive map pinpointing friendly breastfeeding venues.

In response to a question, the Executive Member for Health & Wellbeing and Communities explained that the Apps were not a replacement for the one to one support provided but they were in addition to this support.

Councillor Dixon, Executive Member for Transformation and External Relations provided an update on the steps being taken to help tackle Climate Change:

- He would be liaising with the LGA or the Carbon Trust to assess the Council’s baseline position.
- The Council had a target to reduce its carbon footprint by 60% before 2020, the Council had not quite met this target yet.
- The Council was already making appropriate improvements, including, for example, through the installation of solar panels. The solar panels were contributing 11% to the Council’s energy use.
- The use of paper was down by 30%, car travel was down by 10% and 25% of streetlights were LED.
- The Council had planted 30,000 trees. Overall a total of 130,000 trees had been planted in Central Bedfordshire especially in the Marston Vale area.
- The Council should lead by example, look to influence residents’ behaviour, invest in a carbon free future and focus on the next 10 years.
• All Members would be asked to be involved and help take this issue into Town and Parish Councils.
• The Council would look to reduce travel across the area including home to school transport and investigate the roll out of electric charging points.
• He had been liaising with all directorates and would be looking to include a budget in the MTFP to take the agenda forward.
• He hoped to be able to launch a Climate Change Plan during Quarter 2 next year.

In response to questions, the Executive Member for Transformation and External Relations commented as follows:

• All Members would be involved in taking this agenda forward, including in conjunction with Town and Parish Councils, residents and children.
• Any solution regarding transport would need to support the rural and urban areas of Central Bedfordshire. The Luton and Dunstable Busway had been successful but it was in an urban environment. This solution might not work in the rural areas.
• He had been meeting with other local authorities and looking at best practice.
• The Climate Change Plan needed to influence other strategies such as the Integrated Transport Strategy.

8. Recommendations from the Executive

The Council considered a recommendation from the meeting of the Executive held on 20 August 2019.

a) Quarter 1 Capital Budget Monitoring 2019/20

To seek approval to increase the 2019/20 Capital Programme by £2.0M (£1.0M for Highways Innovation and £1.0M for Footpaths and Cycleways).

RESOLVED

to increase the 2019/20 Capital Programme by £2.0M (£1.0M for Highways Innovation and £1.0M for Footpaths and Cycleways) as announced by the Leader at the Annual Council meeting. Both funds would be subject to the normal outline and detailed business case process.

Upon being put to the vote 44 Members voted in favour of the proposal, 0 Members voted against and 3 Members abstained.

9. Recommendations from the General Purposes Committee

The Council considered recommendations from the General Purposes Committee held on 9 September 2019.
a) **Electoral Review Working Group**

To seek approval to the submission, to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, of a proposal to increase the Council size to 63 elected Members from 2023 onwards.

In response to a question, the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources explained that the working documents were available to any Member who had been invited to attend the working group meetings.

**RESOLVED**

that the proposed Council size submission be submitted to the Local Government boundary Commission for England.

Upon being put to the vote 46 Members voted in favour, no Members voted against and 1 Member abstained.

b) **Community Grants – Amendments to the Constitution**

To approve an amendment to the Constitution to enable the newly established community grant schemes and existing grant schemes to be implemented.

The Vice-Chair of General Purposes Committee confirmed that clarification would be sought on the legal position of Ward Members if they failed to notice any inappropriate use of the grants awarded. A Members briefing session was being held on 27 September and this issue would be addressed there.

**RESOLVED**

that the proposed amendments to the Constitution, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be approved and the Constitution be updated accordingly.

Upon being put to the vote, 36 Members voted in favour of the proposal, 6 Members voted against and 5 Members abstained.

c) **Joint Committee Terms of Reference**

To seek approval of a single set of Terms of Reference for the Town Joint Committees in Central Bedfordshire.
RESOLVED

that the proposed Terms of Reference for the Town Joint Committees in Central Bedfordshire (Biggleswade, Dunstable, Houghton Regis and Leighton Linslade) be approved with the amendments proposed at the General Purposes Committee and that the Constitution be updated accordingly.

The decision was unanimous.

10. Treasury Management Outturn Report 2018/19

The Council considered a report that provided a review of the Treasury Management activities for the year ending 31 March 2019.

RESOLVED

that the Treasury Management and the Prudential Indicators performance for the year ended 31 March 2019 be noted.

Upon being put to the vote 45 Members voted in favour of the proposal, 0 Members voted against and 2 Members abstained.

11. Motions

a) A notice of motion had been received from Councillor Zerny:

“The New Homes Bonus is a grant paid by central government to local councils to reflect and incentivise housing growth in their areas. It is appropriate that the areas which face new housing allocations should also receive the appropriate infrastructure and services to compensate. This Council agrees to calculate how much New Homes bonus is generated by each ward, and spend 50% of this amount on infrastructure and services – in the ward or town – based on priorities set out by parish/town councils and ward councillors, to ensure this money directly benefits residents.”

In presenting the motion Councillor Zerny highlighted the extent of New Homes Bonus (NHB) that had been received and felt that there was no transparency on how over its deployment. He suggested that NHB had not been spent in areas where there had been new housing development.

The motion was duly seconded by Councillor Baker.

An amendment was moved by the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources that the Motion be referred to the Executive for consideration, as detailed in the Council Procedure Rule 17.6.
In presenting the amendment to the motion, the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources explained that NHB was used to support all universal services across Central Bedfordshire and without the use of this funding, many services would not operate effectively.

In seconding the amendment, Councillor Foster explained that an integrated social care and health hub in Biggleswade would not come to fruition if funding from the NHB was not used. The Hub would support all residents in that area and relieve the pressures on doctor surgeries, the local hospitals and primary health care.

Council was asked to indicate whether or not the Motion should be referred to the Executive, without the debate.

Upon being put to the vote 12 Members voted in favour of debating the Motion before it was referred to the Executive, 33 Members voted against and 2 Members abstained.

The Motion was referred to the Executive without debate.

b) A notice of motion had been received from Councillor Mackey:

"It is proposed that this Council recognise that the lack of step free access to Flitwick station appears to be discriminatory and is a moral outrage. In order to remedy the situation Central Bedfordshire Council commits to match fund government investment and seek further grants and funding from other stakeholders in order to ensure this vital infrastructure project is progressed as a matter of urgency."

In presenting the motion, Councillor Mackey explained that during the last tranche of the Access for All Scheme, Flitwick railway station had not been allocated funding to enable step-free access to its platforms. As stairs were the only way to access the platforms, disabled people were unable to use the station. He requested that the Council provide match funding and lead the campaign for step-free access at Flitwick railway station.

In seconding the Motion, Councillor Baker explained that NHB could be used to help match fund step-free access at Flitwick railway station. He advised Council of the approximate amounts of NHB that had been generated per ward per town and parish.

The Executive Member for Planning and Regeneration acknowledged that step-free access to all railway stations was important. Flitwick railway station was not compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act. In November 2018, Central Bedfordshire Council supported Govia Thameslink Railway in submitting two applications for funding. Unfortunately, the bids for Flitwick railway station had been unsuccessful, but another opportunity to bid for funding was taking place in 2019 and the Council would support Govia Thameslink Railway in this.
Members debated the Motion and upon putting to the vote 16 Members voted in favour of the Motion, 31 Members voted against and 0 Members abstained. The Motion was therefore LOST.

12. **Written Questions**

A written question was received from Councillor Zerny:

“In order for the Leader of Central Bedfordshire Council to effectively carry out his role, how many hours a week should he be at the Council’s Priory House Head Office?”

The Leader explained that he spent as many hours as necessary at Priory House.

In response to a supplementary question, the Leader had provided Members with an insight into his role as Chairman of the LGA and the benefits this brought to local authorities. Many issues which Central Bedfordshire faced were shared with other councils and required national solutions. As Leader he also visited many communities and partners across Central Bedfordshire.

In response to a second supplementary question, the Leader explained that the six days that had been blocked out in his diary recently did include some annual leave.

13. **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 asked if the Leader’s calendar could be opened up so that Members and the public could see how much time the Leader spent on Council and LGA business.

The Leader explained that he had meetings with residents and Ministers that were private so his calendar should not be opened up to the public. He felt that Members should be held accountable for the outcomes they delivered rather than their time.

2) Councillor Snelling referred to the previous Council meeting where the Deputy Executive Member for Families, Education and Children had advised that any decision on Fullbrook Middle Schools would be included in a report to the Executive about the future of the Leighton-Linslade cluster in October.

The Executive Member for Families, Education and Children explained that work on the Schools for the Future programme had taken place over the summer and the first cluster to come forward was Shefford and Stotfold which would be discussed at the Executive on 8 October. Each cluster would be considered
individually and come forward one at a time. The Leighton-Linslade cluster was complex and was still be worked on to ensure the best way forward.

Councillor Snelling responded to the answer by indicating that he thought there would have been an awareness of how long it would take to bring forward the Leighton-Linslade cluster. There was a lot uncertainty for schools and parents in that area.

3) Councillor Goodchild asked about the proposed closure of Houghton Regis Academy, the Council’s vision for children who currently attended Houghton Regis Academy and the Council support to the Academy to drive improvement.

The Executive Member for Families, Education and Children explained that it was the Greenwood Academies Trust desire to close Houghton Regis Academy and that she appreciated the concerns of the community and the employees. As it was an Academy, Central Bedfordshire Council had no influence over the school and the decision to close the Academy would be made by the Department for Education (DfE). A report was being considered by the Executive on 8 October on the commissioning of a New Secondary School on the Kingsland Campus site in Houghton Regis, with a view to this being opened in 2022. She was in discussion with the DfE to work through the issue and would stress that it was imperative to keep the current pupils together until the proposed new school was opened. The Schools Improvement Team were working with the Academy to help support them.

4) Councillor Maudlin enquired about how the Council celebrated the achievements of children in care.

The Executive Member for Families, Education and Children referred to two events held recently to celebrate the work of foster carer families and children in care.

5) Councillor Duckett asked if the Leader could explain the benefits of the LGA.

The Leader explained that the LGA had lobbied Government for the removal of the Housing Revenue Account borrowing cap which would enable Councils to build additional homes for their residents in particular for the elderly and vulnerable children, additional funding for local authorities and improvements be sought to the planning system.

6) Councillor Tamara asked for an update on the recent spending round announcement by the Chancellor.

The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources advised that local authorities’ core spending power would rise in 2019 to 2020 by £3.1 billion to help address pressures. It was anticipated that the Council would receive at least the same level of funding for the Better Care Fund (BCF) and Winter Pressures Grant of £4.2M, although the BCF might increase by NHS inflation providing the Council. There would be a Social Care Grant of £1 billion
allocated across the sector, the Government would continue to fund negative RSG and there would be a flexible homeless support grant.

7) Councillor Smith asked if Town and Parish Councils were being consulted over the disposal of Central Bedfordshire Council land, in particular the Houghton Lodge site.

The Executive Member for Assets and Housing Delivery advised that the staff based at Houghton Lodge had been relocated and planning permission had just been sought to demolish the building to make way for further development. Ampthill Town Council would be consulted as part of the planning application process.

Councillor Smith asked a supplementary question as to why Ampthill Town Council had not been involved in discussions about the future use of the land.

The Executive Member for Assets and Housing Delivery reiterated that Ampthill Town Council would be consulted as part of the planning application process, but he would be happy to discuss the matter further with Councillor Smith.

8) Councillor Hamill asked for reassurance to the children and parents in Houghton Regis affected by the proposed closure of the Academy there and whether the capital investment would be approved for the development of a new secondary school within Houghton Regis.

The Leader explained that a report was due to be considered by the Executive on 8 October regarding the commissioning of a new secondary school in Houghton Regis. He was committed to ensuring that all schools were good across Central Bedfordshire.

Councillor Hamill asked a supplementary question about the transition for the children moving from Houghton Regis Academy to any new school. He provided background into the problems experienced with secondary education in Houghton Regis. He felt that the future was looking bleak for Houghton Regis with the lack of leisure facilities, no community centre, problems with parking and the lack of infrastructure.

The Leader explained that the report being considered by the Executive explained the proposal for secondary education on the Kingsland site.

The Executive Member for Families, Education and Children also referred to the report being considered at the Executive on 8 October. The Council was making a case to the DfE to ensure that the current pupils at Houghton Regis Academy remained there until the new school is built.

During Open Questions a query was raised about the process for selecting the open questions. The Chairman and the Monitoring Officer both confirmed that the questions were being read out in the order in which they had been removed from the box.
14. Change of Membership on Committees

NOTED

the following changes to the membership of Committees:

- Councillors S Collins and Baker had been appointed to the vacancies on the Appeals Panel and Councillor Ford had been appointed as their substitute.

- Lorraine King had been appointed to the vacancy on the Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny committee as a co-opted member with voting rights on education matters for the period July 2019 to the Annual Meeting in May 2023.

Chairman .....................................................

Dated ..............................................................