At a meeting of Council held in the Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford, Chicksands on Thursday 18 July 2019 at 6.30 pm to 9.00 pm

Present:

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

Members:

Cllrs  J Baker  Cllrs  J Jamieson
R Berry  M Liddiard
M Blair  G Mackey
I Bond  K Matthews
D Bowater  C Maudlin
A Brown  D McVicar
N Bunyan  R Morris
J Chatterley  G Perham
S Collins  E Perry
K Collins  A Ryan
I Dalgarno  G Sanders
S Dixon  B Saunders
A Dodwell  D Shelvey
P Duckett  I Shingler
Y Farrell  M Smith
K Ferguson  P Snelling
S Ford  P Spicer
F Firth  B Spurr
M Foster  T Stock
E Ghent  M Walsh
S Goodchild  R Wenham
C Gomm  H Whitaker
A Graham  T Wye
P Hamill  M Versallion
R Hares  N Young
N Harris  A Zerny
V Harvey
C Hegley

Apologies:

Cllrs  S Clark  Cllrs  E Wallace
P Crawley  S Watkins
J Tamara

Absent:

None

Officers in Attendance:

Mr R Carr  Chief Executive
Mrs J Dickinson  Assistant Director Leisure,
Mrs S Hobbs  Libraries and Countryside
Mr T Hoyle  Senior Committee Services Officer
  Assistant Director of Strategic
  Commissioning
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 16 May 2019 be approved as a correct record.

2. Members’ Interests

Councillor Harvey declared an interest in item 15 b) Motion from Councillor Dixon requesting the Council to endorse the Local Government Association (LGA) motion on climate change, as she was a member of Friends of the Earth. She was present in the Council Chamber whilst this item was discussed.

Councillor Baker declared an interest in item 15 a) Motion on Fulbrook Middle School as his son attended and his partner was a Governor at Aspley Guise Lower School. Aspley Guise Lower School was part of the Fulbrook Middle School cluster. He was present in the Council Chamber whilst this item was discussed.

3. Questions, Statements or Deputations

Climate Change

Mrs Shepherd, a volunteer of Friends of the Earth and a resident in Leighton Buzzard, spoke in support of the Motion on climate change. The Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change last year had called for a reduction in carbon emissions to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, given the consequences for the planet. She stated that the Council should update its strategy and lead the way to show that it is committed to urgently addressing climate change.

Dr Brierley, an Associate Professor in Climate Science at University College London and a resident in Leighton Buzzard, spoke in support of the Motion on climate change. He emphasised the urgent need to address climate change and explained his work in the modelling of global warming. He urged the Council to support the Motion.
Mrs Shepherd and Dr Brierley’s statements would be taken into account at Agenda item 15 b).

Mr Paxman, a member of CamBed RailRoad and a local resident, spoke about the appointment of a Councillor to the East West Rail Strategic Board. He felt that it was imperative that whoever was appointed to the Board must have energy, commitment, excellent knowledge of the area, represent the wards that were affected and share information with local residents and organisations.

Mr Berry felt that there should be effective representation on the Board. He was concerned that there was a lack of communication regarding the East West Rail routes. The representative on the Board should communicate the information to those residents affected by the proposals.

Mr Paxman and Mr Berry’s statements would be taken into account at Agenda item 19.

Mrs Scholfield spoke in support of the Motion on climate change. She also spoke about the Motion on Fulbrook Middle School. The School had carried out a consultation on proposals to extend its age range. 736 people had responded to the consultation with 98% in support of the change. Statements of support had been received from local Councillors and MPs. Children from Central Bedfordshire and Milton Keynes attended the School and it was a very close community. She requested the Council support the plans for the School to change its age range to become a secondary school.

Mrs Scholfield’s statement would be taken into account when considering the Motions set out at Agenda item 15.

4. Petitions

No petitions had been received.

5. Chairman’s Announcements and Communication

Item 20 ‘Leader of the Council’s Annual Report’ would be considered at item 7 instead of the ‘Leader’s Announcements and Communications’.

The Motion on climate change would be considered before the Motion on Fulbrook Middle School.


The Leader presented his annual report celebrating successes over recent years and outlining plans for the future.
7. Executive Member Presentations

Councillor Wenham, Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources provided an overview of the Revenue and Benefits Services, including:

- Council Tax
- Business Rates
- Benefits
- Fraud

The Service was working to digitise its processes in order to contribute to the Council’s ambition to enhance both customer responsiveness and efficiency. The Council’s customer portal for revenues and benefits had been updated to allow customers’ real time access to information about their Council Tax or Business Rate accounts. Councillor Wenham asked that Members promote the portal to residents.

No questions were asked on Councillor Wenham’s report.

Councillor Hegley, Executive Member for Adults, Social Care and Housing Operations reported on developments across Central Bedfordshire within her portfolio:

- In addition to Priory View, Dunstable an independent living scheme was being built in Houghton Regis, All Saints View, with other schemes being considered across Central Bedfordshire.
- Homes England had provided the Council with financial support which was greatly welcomed.
- Sheltered housing was being reviewed and remodeled.
- In 2018/19, £13.8M had been invested in Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) and it was planned to invest £17M in 2019/20.
- There were approximately 5,500 Council-managed properties and this would continue to grow.
- The support of the Tenants Scrutiny Panel was welcomed.
- New build projects were planned for across Central Bedfordshire.
- Day opportunities would continue to be improved. This included the improved facilities at the Silsoe Horticultural Centre.
- A Parking Scheme programme had been initiated to improve parking on Council housing estates.
- 63 empty homes had been brought back into use and this scheme would continue throughout 2019/20.

Councillor Hegley provided an update on the concerns raised at a previous Council meeting regarding confidentiality of Customer Services in Shefford Library. There has been some reconfiguration of the arrangements made to improve the position.

In response to a question, Councillor Hegley confirmed that the Council had used a Compulsory Purchase Order in order to purchase an empty property to bring it back into use.
8. Recommendations from the Executive

The Council considered recommendations from the meeting of the Executive held on 11 June 2019.

a) Variation to Capital Programme

To seek approval to vary the 2019/20 Capital Programme to include up to £15M for the provision of advanced infrastructure at Chase Farm, Arlesey.

RESOLVED

that the Capital Programme 2019/20 be varied to include up to £15M for the provision of advanced infrastructure at Chase Farm, Arlesey.

b) March 2019 Capital Budget Monitoring Outturn Report

To seek approval of a net overspend on the Highways Structural Maintenance of £1.829M and the M1-A6 Phase 1 and 2 of £0.781M.

RESOLVED

that the net overspend be approved on the following schemes:

- Highways Structural Maintenance - £1.829M
- M1-A6 Phase 1 and 2 - £0.781M

Upon both recommendations being put to the vote 52 Members voted in favour, 1 voted against and 1 Member abstained.

9. Recommendations from the General Purposes Committee

The Council considered recommendations from the General Purposes Committee held on 20 June 2019.

a) Proposed Changes to the Director of Social Care, Health and Housing’s Delegated Powers on Housing Functions

To seek approval of the proposed changes to the Director of Social Care, Health and Housing’s Delegated Powers on Housing Functions.

RESOLVED

that the proposed changes to the Director of Social Care, Health and Housing’s delegated powers, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be approved and the Constitution be updated accordingly.
Upon being put to the vote 53 Members voted in favour, no Members voted against and 1 Member abstained.

b) Amendments to Members' Scheme of ICT Allowances

To seek approval of the revised scheme of Member ICT Allowances with the following amendments:

a) to make it clear that any equipment comes with the appropriate data and telephone contracts;

b) that Members can choose to have a Central Bedfordshire Council-owned computer but use their own phone and vice-versa; and

c) that the wording of Option 2 be amended to remove the word ‘these’ and replace with the words ‘Council owned’.

RESOLVED

that the revised scheme of Member ICT Allowances be approved as out, subject to the above amendments.

Upon both recommendations being put to the vote 53 Members voted in favour, no Members voted against and 1 Member abstained.

10. Audit Committee Activity Annual Report 2018/19

The Council considered a report that summarised the work of the Audit Committee during the 2018/19.

RESOLVED

that the work of the Audit Committee during the 2018/19 financial year be noted.

The decision was unanimous.

11. Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2018/19

The Council received the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report that summarised the activities of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees during 2018/19 and the anticipated activity during 2019/20.

In response to a statement, the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Coordination Panel for 2018/19 noted the comment that the presentation from Anglian Water to the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a 30-year water management strategy had not been mentioned in the Annual Report.
RESOLVED

that the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2018/19 be noted.

Upon both recommendations being put to the vote 52 Members voted in favour, no Members voted against and 2 Members abstained.

12. Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority

The Council received a report from the Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority, following its meeting held on 6 June 2019.

RESOLVED

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


The Council received the Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel Activity Report for 2018/19.

In response to a question, the Executive Member for Community Services agreed to provide the relevant Member with a written response about policing in rural areas.

RESOLVED

that the report of the Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel Activity 2018/19 be noted.

14. Motions

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

“That CBC endorse the recent LGA motion on Climate Change passed at the 2019 conference and calls on the whole council to support the production of a deliverable climate change plan, ready for roll out during 2020. The plan will start with CBC leading by example in its everyday practices, encouraging residents and businesses to do likewise and looking to invest in programmes that support a carbon free Central Beds for 2030 and beyond.”

In presenting the motion Councillor Dixon highlighted the importance of tackling climate change and the need to update the Council’s Climate Change Strategy.

The motion was duly seconded by Councillor Wye.
In responding to comments made during the ensuing debate, Councillor Dixon explained that the Council should lead by example to change residents’ attitudes and would be able to highlight climate change at the Town and Parish Council Conference, consult residents and work with other organisations. The Council was already making appropriate improvements, including, for example, through the installation of solar panels at Priory House.

Upon being put to vote, all Members voted in favour. The motion was therefore CARRIED.

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

"That this Council fully supports the aspirations of Fulbrook Middle School to become a secondary school and commits to funding half of the approximate £3m cost of the secondary conversion. This Council recognises that half of the school's intake is from the Milton Keynes Council Authority and calls upon Milton Keynes Council to fund the other half."

In presenting the motion, Councillor Baker explained that Fulbrook Middle School had 420 pupils serving Central Bedfordshire and Milton Keynes. 736 people had responded to the consultation to extend the age range at Fulbrook Middle School, with 98% in support of the change.

The motion was duly seconded by Councillor Zerny.

An amendment to the motion was moved by Councillor Dodwell and duly seconded by Councillor Shelvey as follows:

“The Council supports Fulbrook Middle School’s aspiration to become a secondary school, whilst having regard for the emerging plan for the Leighton Linslade cluster as a whole.”

In presenting the amendment to the motion, Councillor Dodwell explained that Fulbrook Middle School was part of the Leighton Linslade cluster and that no decision should be made on one school in isolation and that it should be considered as part of the emerging plan for the whole of the cluster. A report was due to be considered by Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September and the Executive in October.

Upon putting to the vote 37 Members voted in favour of the amendment, 9 Members voted against and 8 Members abstained. The amendment was therefore CARRIED.

Upon putting to the vote, 43 Members voted in favour of the substantive motion, 1 Member voted against and 10 Members abstained. The substantive motion was therefore CARRIED.

15. Written Questions

No written questions were received.
16. 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 about the Council’s representation on the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP) Board and enquired why the Leader had not attended a meeting in the last year.

The Leader of the Council advised that the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources had attended the last 6 out of 7 meetings.

Councillor Zerny asked a supplementary question regarding the process for making appointments to SEMLEP.

The Leader advised that the appointment to SEMLEP was made by the SEMLEP Board from the Leaders of all the Council’s represented.

2) Councillor Snelling asked how many schools in Central Bedfordshire had a budget deficit and how many were likely to move into deficit if the current shortfall in government funding was not addressed in the Comprehensive Spending Review? He also asked about any representations the Council had made to local MPs and the Department for Education?

In the absence of the Executive Member for Families, Education and Children, the Deputy Executive Member for Families, Education and Children advised that a written response would be provided to Councillor Snelling.

3) Councillor Baker asked how the the Leader of the Council would be able to discharge his responsibilities to this Council whilst serving as Chair of the Local Government Association.

The Leader thanked Councillor Baker for acknowledging the work he did for Central Bedfordshire.

Councillor Baker asked a supplementary question regarding the Leader’s allowances.

The Leader explained that many Councillors have two jobs.

4) Councillor Hares asked why the Council was selling assets rather than deploying them for community use which might also generate income.

The Leader of the Council advised that he would speak with Councillor Hares directly as he was unsure what asset she was referring to.

Councillor Hares explained she was concerned with the future use of the Ampthill Day Centre.
The Executive Member for Adults, Social Care and Housing Operations explained that the day offer for older people and adults with disabilities was being improved. Some of the facilities were very tired and institutional so the Council had embarked on a modernisation programme. She was aware of concerns from local community groups and the Council would work with them. There were no immediate plans for the Day Centre, but she would be happy to talk further to Councillor Hares.

5) Councillor Ryan enquired about a Housing Enabling Strategy (HES).

The Executive Member for Planning and Regeneration explained that the HES was being developed and would be considered through the Council’s governance process later this year.

6) Councillor Duckett asked if the Council was organising any activities during the summer holidays for children.

The Executive Member for Community Services acknowledged the cost of entertaining children during the summer holidays. The Council was supporting a number of free events including Xplorer orienteering events, ‘love your parks’ week, open air theatres and outdoor fitness. There would also be events for the Council’s Looked after Children.

7) Councillor Goodchild asked about the progress of improvements to Bedford Road in Houghton Regis.

The Executive Member for Planning and Regeneration advised that he would liaise with the relevant Member directly.

8) Councillor Shelvey asked for an update on the sugar tax scheme.

The Executive Member for Health & Wellbeing and Communities that the Council had received £171,000 from Government from the Healthy Schools Fund and the Council’s Public Health Service had match funded this. 95 bids for funding had been received from schools in Central Bedfordshire, with 25 bids being successful. As examples, Totternhoe Church of England Academy had used the funding to build a new trim trail area and a primary school in Sandy was building a sensory garden.

9) Councillor Mackey asked if officers could be instructed to meet with the relevant Councillors to discuss the proposed Crematorium in Steppingley.

The Executive Member for Assets and Housing Delivery was aware of Councillor Mackey’s request. Public consultation had been carried out including consultation with the relevant town and parish councils and an open day held been held. The planning application had been submitted and the public would have another opportunity to comment through the planning process.
Councillor Mackey asked a supplementary question as he believed that there were better solutions available and wanted an alternative proposal to be discussed.

The Executive Member for Assets and Housing Delivery explained that various sites had been considered for the proposed Crematorium and the most appropriate site was the one at Steppingley.

10) Councillor Brown enquired when the Councillor Community Grant Scheme would be available.

The Executive Member for Health & Wellbeing and Communities explained that each Councillor would have £2,000 to spend in their community. A report setting out the process for the scheme would be considered by the Executive on 20 August and the General Purposes Committee on 9 September. The intention was that the Scheme would be implemented from October.

17. Change of Membership on Committees

NOTED

the following changes to the membership of Committees:

- Councillor Bunyan had replaced Councillor Versallion as the substitute on the Audit Committee.
- Councillor Shingler had replaced Councillor Ford on the Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority.

18. Appointment to the East West Rail Strategic Board

Council considered a report that sought approval of the appointment of one nominated Member to the East West Rail Strategic Board.

RESOLVED

that the appointment of one nominated Member of the East West Rail Strategic Board be approved.

The decision was unanimous.

The Chairman invited nominations to serve on the East West Rail Strategic Board. Councillors Clark and Whittacker were nominated.

Upon being put to the vote Councillor Clark received 39 votes and Councillor Whittaker received 15 votes.
RESOLVED

that Councillor Clark be duly elected to the seat on the East West Rail Strategic Board.

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

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