

HEALTHY COMMUNITIES POLICY ADVISORY GROUP (SBDC)

Meeting - 22 February 2018

Present: P Kelly (Chairman)
P Bastiman, M Bezzant, Dr W Matthews and D Pepler

Also Present: L Sullivan

41. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr D Anthony.

42. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meetings held on 30 November 2017 and 29 January 2018 were agreed as an accurate record.

43. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

44. **NOISE APP DEMONSTRATION**

Members received a demonstration of the Noise App from Environmental Health Practitioner Alison King. The Group were informed that the app would offer a new means of reporting and investigating noise complaints, by allowing customers to record the time, date and GPS location of the offending noise disturbance as well as a 30 second audio clip. Use of the app would avoid the need for customers to record disturbances using written diary sheets and would allow officers to process complaints more efficiently.

The group were assured that the Noise App would comply with all necessary data protection legislation and that relevant data could be shared with other bodies such as the police if necessary. It was noted that, although the App would offer benefits to customers, the option to record disturbances using diary sheets would still be available.

45. **REPORTS FROM MEMBERS**

The PAG received and **NOTED** the following written updates:

1. Cllr D Pepler – Buckinghamshire Health Trust
2. Cllr W Matthews – Bucks Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee

46. **HEALTHY COMMUNITIES UPDATE REPORT**

The Head of Healthy Communities provided an update to the PAG covering the following Key Points:

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- Various training courses were being undertaken by officers within the service including training on the Homelessness Reduction Act and Safeguarding.
- Affordable Housing Delivery projects were in progress with units at the Bath Road Depot and Gerrards Cross Police Station awaiting Planning approval.
- 423 applicants had registered with the Council for Bucks Home Choice and a total of 145 Registered Provider tenancies had been let.
- 80 homelessness applications had been made since 1 April 2017 with 58 of these being subject to a main duty to provide housing, 57 applicants were currently in temporary accommodation. The CAB was providing voluntary advice on debt to residents in Gypsy and Traveller sites.
- The Council was looking to work with CDC, AVDC and WDC to standardise Disabled Facilities services across Buckinghamshire.
- The current licensing manager would be leaving the authority and a new licensing manager would be recruited on a temporary basis pending a review.
- There had been an overall increase in crime for Chiltern and South Bucks LPA, but a recent decrease in burglary in SBDC. 5 ANPR cameras were to be installed on the SBDC border and in other areas across the districts.
- 752 tickets had been sold for the Chiltern & South Bucks Lottery; Members were encouraged to promote the Lottery within their communities.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

47. DESIGNATION OF AN AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT AREA IN IVER

The PAG received a report on the designation of an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in Iver. The report sought Members' views on the size of the proposed boundary on which the consultation would proceed. Preliminary feedback from local residents on the proposed boundary of the AQMA was circulated to the Group prior to the start of the meeting.

In response to a question on a study being carried out by the Iver Heath Residents Association, Members were advised that the data collected by the Association may not meet the necessary monitoring and modelling criteria to be considered valid. Due to a number of factors, including seasonal variation which would not be picked up from a winter sample, it would not be possible to combine data from the study with data collected by the Council.

Members were informed that the 36ugm³ contour boundary would represent the smallest possible boundary that the Council could declare for the AQMA. However, Members felt that a boundary of this size would not adequately address air quality issues caused by the wider road network and main routes to and from Iver high street. The Group felt that the whole area of Iver and Richings Park should be included in the AQMA consultation as exceedances had been identified at various points within the Parish. A larger boundary would ensure that HGV issues were not shifted from one part of the Parish to another.

It was noted that declaring a larger boundary for consultation could lead to complaints from businesses which would potentially be affected by the AQMA. However, the PAG were advised that the Council had a strong legal basis for declaring a wider boundary and that any objections from businesses would be taken into account as part of the consultation.

The Group felt that the designation of a wider area for consultation would also raise awareness of air quality issues in surrounding areas and could lead to opportunities for collaboration with other relevant bodies.

The Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities asked that Iver Members work with the Portfolio Holder on the proposal and that should extra funding be needed, a conversation with the Portfolio Holder and Iver Parish would take place regarding support.

Having considered the advice of the PAG, the Portfolio Holder **RESOLVED:**

1. That the completion of additional monitoring and the production of the updated air quality assessment for Iver be noted, and to proceed to the formal declaration of a new Air Quality Management Area in accordance with Part IV of the Environment Act 1995.
2. To proceed with a consultation on the basis of the Parish boundary (shown in Appendix 1 of the report).
3. That the Head of Healthy Communities be authorised to undertake consultation with the statutory and other consultees referred to in paragraph 4 of the report between 1 March and 31 March 2018.
4. That associated reports and maps be placed on South Bucks District Council's website and its publication be advertised to relevant stakeholders.
5. That responses to the consultation be reported to Cabinet for consideration and formal designation of an Air Quality Management Area under section 83 (1) of the Environment Act 1995.

48. **CHILTERN AND SOUTH BUCKS OPEN SPACE STRATEGY**

The PAG were asked to consider a report on the draft Chiltern and South Bucks Open Space Strategy. The Strategy aimed to help inform the emerging Joint Local Plan, bring together community organisations to effectively manage recreational facilities and increase participation, and support community groups in accessing external funding. Members noted that the Strategy had identified an oversupply of green space in the districts but also an undersupply of recreational facilities for children. Members noted that feedback from the consultation would be used to inform the planning process, and that there was a possibility that the Community Infrastructure Levy could be used as a source of funding to improve open space provision.

In response to a question concerning the format of the consultation, the PAG were informed that the draft Strategy would be made available on the Councils' websites to allow Town and Parish Councils, as well as other community groups, the opportunity to comment on the findings. It was advised that if these groups had any further additions that they felt needed to be made to the Strategy these should be identified as part of the consultation process.

The Group requested that a clearer map be provided to help differentiate between Green Belt land and areas of population.

Having considered the advice of the PAG, the Portfolio Holder **RESOLVED** to approve the draft Chiltern and South Bucks Open Space Strategy for public consultation.

49. **ACQUISITION OF RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES**

The PAG received a report which sought Members' views on the acquisition of residential properties as a means of ending the long term use of B&B and private rented nightly let accommodation. Under the proposed scheme, the Council would acquire a number of residential properties, as part of a phased programme, which would then be leased to a housing association to manage allowing the Council to retain the asset.

In response to a question concerning the number of properties required to meet the current homelessness need, it was advised that 12 units would be available through the planned development at the Bath Road Depot, and that 30 units would be made available through the introduction of a private sector leasing scheme managed by Paradigm. This would leave a shortfall of between 10 to 20 units, which would be filled by the proposed acquisition of residential properties.

A concern was raised over whether the proposed scheme would be more cost effective than the private sector leasing scheme which had been arranged with Paradigm. Members were informed that the private sector leasing scheme still incurred a substantial cost to the Council, as there was still a charge per property payable to Paradigm. However, the acquisition of residential properties would enable the Council to receive an income from each unit whilst the risk of tenants falling into arrears would be taken on by the housing association. Although there would be an initial borrowing cost involved, it was noted that the costs would be recovered over the lifetime of the scheme.

The PAG noted that, should the scheme go ahead, properties would be acquired on a case by case basis with the aim of acquiring a balance of unit types. A housing association would be chosen based on the level of service which could be provided both to the Council and tenants.

Having considered the advice of the PAG, the Portfolio Holder **AGREED to RECOMMEND** to Cabinet that:

1. The overall business case for the acquisition of residential properties for use as temporary affordable housing be agreed.
2. The Director of Resources be given authority, following consultation with the Leader, to use any sums specifically included in the Council's Capital programme, currently £6.28 million, to purchase assets on receipt of a viable outline business case.
3. The Head of Finance be authorised to carry out the necessary arrangements to obtain the loan finance.

50. **HANDY HELPERS/ GARDENING SCHEME**

The PAG considered a report on the introduction of a scheme to provide home assistance and gardening services to elderly, vulnerable and isolated people. The scheme sought to address the current imbalance in services and funding provided to support vulnerable people in Buckinghamshire.

Members noted that the current need for home and gardening help among elderly and vulnerable people was not being met despite efforts from the voluntary sector. It was hoped that the introduction of the handy helpers scheme would contribute to a reduction in crime against elderly and vulnerable people, and would prevent injuries caused by attempts to carry out small repairs. The PAG noted that as Age UK Bucks was looking to increase their involvement in the local area, there may be opportunities to collaborate with the handy helpers scheme.

The PAG **NOTED** the report and endorsed the establishment of the scheme.

51. **COST OF HOMELESSNESS**

Members received a report on the cost of homelessness which had been requested by the Overview and Scrutiny Homelessness Management Task and Finish Group. The report highlighted the staffing costs of the Joint Homelessness/Housing Options team and related costs for the Legal and Finance teams. It also detailed the accommodation costs which had increased significantly year on year since 2014/15. Members noted that the overall direct cost of homelessness to the Council in 2017/18 was approximately £650,000.

In response to a question regarding housing benefit claims, it was noted that a process was now in place to ensure that homeless applicants were applying for housing benefit and officers were supporting applicants in making claims where necessary.

52. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

None.

53. **EXEMPT INFORMATION**

54. **INCENTIVE TO PURCHASE - REQUEST TO WAIVE THE REPAYMENT CONDITION**

Members were asked to consider and advise the Portfolio Holder on a report regarding a request to waive a repayment condition in relation to the Incentive to Purchase scheme. The request related to an applicant who wished to transfer a £40,000 Incentive to Purchase payment to another property, which would better suit the needs of the applicant and their family.

Members were advised that under the terms of the Incentive to Purchase scheme, the original payment would normally be expected to be repaid to the Council upon the sale of the property. However, it was noted that an exemption to the repayment condition could be offered at the discretion of the Council. The option to allow the applicant to transfer the payment to another property would incur significant administrative and legal costs to the Council.

The PAG felt that as the applicant was not suffering from a significant level of financial hardship the request to waive the repayment condition should not be approved. Members considered that the costs of the Incentive to Purchase scheme should be recovered and put back into S106 funds to be used for other projects.

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Having considered the advice of the PAG, the Portfolio Holder **RESOLVED** that the £40,000 incentive repayment be repaid to the Council upon the sale of the property.

The meeting terminated at 7.33 pm