

At a meeting of **Council** held in the Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk,
Chicksands on Thursday 12 January 2023 at 6.30 p.m. to 9.29 p.m.

Present: Cllr C Maudlin (Vice-Chair in the Chair)

Members:	Cllrs J Baker R Berry M Blair I Bond A Brown N Bunyan J Chatterley S Clark K Collins S Collins P Crawley I Dalgarno S Dixon P Duckett Y Farrell K Ferguson S Ford M Foster E Ghent C Gomm S Goodchild A Graham P Hamill R Hares	Cllrs N Harris V Harvey C Hegley J Jamieson M Liddiard G Mackey R Morris E Perry B Saunders D Shelvey I Shingler M Smith P Snelling J Tamara M Versallion E Wallace M Walsh S Watkins R Wenham H Whitaker T Wye N Young A Zerny
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Apologies:	Cllrs D Bowater A Dodwell F Firth D McVicar G Perham	Cllrs A Ryan G Sanders P Spicer B Spurr T Stock
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Absent: None

Officers in Attendance:	Mr M Coiffait Mrs J Dickinson Mrs S Hobbs Mr C Martin Mr J Murphy Ms J Ogle Mr B Singh Ms C Shohet	Chief Executive Deputy Director Place and Communities Committee Services Manager Committee Services Officer Deputy Monitoring Officer Director of Social Care, Health and Housing Monitoring Officer Assistant Director Public Health
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Ms S Smedmor
Mr C Warboys

Director of Children's Services
Director of Resources

In the absence of the Chair, the Vice-Chair took the Chair.

1. Election of Chair 2022/23

Following the resignation of Councillor Perham as the Chair of the Council, the Vice-Chair had agreed to accept an urgent item to elect a Chair for the remainder of the 2022/23 municipal year.

Before seeking nominations, the Vice-Chair thanked the outgoing Chair for his work.

The Vice-Chair invited nominations for the office of Chair of the Council for the remainder of the municipal year 2022/23. Councillors Maudlin and Mackey were duly proposed and seconded.

As the Vice-Chair had been nominated for the role of Chair, the Proper Officer stepped in to Chair the rest of the item.

Upon being put to the vote 11 Members voted in favour of Councillor Mackey, 30 Members voted in favour of Councillor Maudlin and 2 Members abstained from voting.

RESOLVED

that Councillor Maudlin be elected to the office of Chair of the Council for the remainder of the municipal year 2022/23.

Thereafter, the Chair thanked Members for their support. She highlighted that chairing the Full Council meetings would be challenging and she would do her best to ensure Members debated issues without feeling threatened or scared to speak out.

Councillor Maudlin then signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

2. Election of Vice-Chair 2022/23

As the Vice-Chair of the Council had been appointed to the role of Chair, an election for a Vice-Chair was required.

The Chair invited nominations for the office of Vice-Chair of the Council for the remainder of the municipal year 2022/23. Councillor Bunyan was duly proposed and seconded. There were no other nominations.

RESOLVED

that Councillor Bunyan be elected to the office of Vice-Chair of the Council for the remainder of the municipal year 2022/23.

Councillor Bunyan signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

3. Minutes

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the Full Council meetings held on 24 November 2022 and 21 December 2022 be approved as a correct record.

4. Members' Interests

Councillors Wenham, Shelvey and Dalgarno declared an interest in item 9.1 'Community Governance Review – Arlesey Town Council' as they were members of the Town Council. They were not present in the Chamber during this item.

Councillor Shingler declared an interest in item 13.3 'Motion proposed by Councillor Harvey' as he was registered disabled. He was not present in the Chamber during this item.

5. Questions, Statements or Deputations

No members of the public had registered to speak.

6. Petitions

No petitions had been received.

7. Chair's Announcements and Communication

The Chair reminded Members of the procedures to be followed throughout the meeting.

The Chair took the opportunity again to thank Members for electing her as Chair of the Council following the sad news that Councillor Perham had resigned from the position. She highlighted that Councillor Perham had excelled in the role of representing Central Bedfordshire Council by meeting and engaging with the community and looked forward to seeing him back in the Chamber attending meetings.

The Chair congratulated and highlighted those members of the public in Central Bedfordshire that had been honoured in the King's New Year Honours List.

A request had been received to move item 13.2 'Motion proposed by Councillor Smith' before item 10 'Calendar of Meetings 2023/24'. She also highlighted that the motion proposed by Councillor Smith would be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committees for discussion as set out in Council procedure rule 18.6.1.

8. Leader's Announcements and Communication

The Leader referred to a request, at the Full Council meeting on 24 November, for him to write to the BBC to express concerns about the loss of television and radio services for the local area. An acknowledgment from the BBC had been received in response to the letter from the Leader advising that the concerns had been referred to the Director General's office and a response would be received in due course. Once a response had been received, he would share it with Members.

He had also written to the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Secretary of State supporting the LGA's free school meals campaign following the Executive and Extraordinary Council meetings in December. Acknowledgement had been received from the Secretary of State, but a full response was still awaited. No response had yet been received from the LGA. If no responses were received he would follow this up.

9. Recommendation from the Executive

a) Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2023/24

The Council considered a recommendation from the Executive meeting held on 10 January 2023 that proposed the revised Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2023/24.

RESOLVED

that the revised Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2023/24, as set out in paragraph 23 of the Executive report, be adopted.

The decision was unanimous.

10. Recommendation from the General Purposes Committee

a) Community Governance Review – Arlesey Town Council

The Council considered a recommendation from the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 15 December 2022 recommending that the number of seats on Arlesey Town Council be reduced from 12 to 7 Councillors and that a reorganisation order be approved.

RESOLVED

that the number of seats on Arlesey Town Council be reduced from 12 to 7 Councillors and that a reorganisation order be approved.

Upon being put to the vote 42 Members voted in favour, 0 Members were against and 3 Members abstained from voting.

b) Pay Policy Statement

The Council considered a recommendation from the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 15 December 2022 that recommended that the Pay Policy Statement be adopted and published to the Council's website with effect from 1 April 2023.

It was noted that the report and minute referred to the lowest average figure, but it had since been clarified that it was the lowest figure and not the lowest average figure. The lowest salary was used in the calculation and it was not an average.

RESOLVED

that the Pay Policy Statement be adopted and published to the Council's website with effect from 1 April 2023.

Upon being put to the vote 43 Members voted in favour, 0 Members were against and 3 Members abstained from voting.

c) Increasing the number of Independent Persons for Central Bedfordshire Council

The Council considered a recommendation from the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 15 December 2022 recommending that the number of independent persons be increased from two to five to facilitate the standards complaints procedure and its efficiency when dealing with standards complaints.

RESOLVED

that the increase from two to five Independent Persons be adopted and appointed for a four year term expiring in January 2027.

Upon being put to the vote 46 Members voted in favour, 0 Members were against and 1 Member abstained from voting.

11. Written Questions

The Chair had agreed to accept an urgent question from Councillor Bond following the announcement from the Integrated Care Board (ICB) that they did not intend developing further health hubs across the Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes (BLMK) area.

- a) Councillor Bond asked the Leader if there was anything the Council could do to request the ICB to reconsider its decision not to develop further health hubs across the BLMK area as he was dismayed at the apparent loss of the Biggleswade Health Hub.

The Leader advised that the decision by the ICB would impact primary healthcare across the BLMK area. The Primary Care Commissioning and Assurance Committee took place on 11 January 2023 and considered the plan for future development of primary care facilities across the region. The outcome was that the ICB had committed funding to the Health Hub in Dunstable but all other health hub projects in Central Bedfordshire were deemed unaffordable on revenue grounds. This position was unacceptable to the Council and its residents. He and the Chief Executive had expressed disappointment directly to the Chief Executive of the ICB and spoken to the local MP. The Chief Executive had met with the Minister for Primary Care and the Chief Executive of the ICB. The Government had provided billions of pounds of additional funding and it was vital that NHS England provided additional primary care for the BLMK area due to the increased growth and lack of GPs. There was an opportunity to raise this at Social Care, Health and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16 January 2023 and the Health and Wellbeing Board on 18 January 2023.

There were also two critical meetings of the ICB; firstly on 27 January 2023 where the Board would be asked to rubberstamp the proposal and it was hoped that these proposals would not be accepted and instead a request made for further discussions to take place. The second meeting was a seminar on 24 February 2023 to talk about primary care and the impact of the report. This report set out details about the links that integrated care had across the community and that this was the way forward. The Council would be making strong representations against the proposals. He was very disappointed that the Biggleswade Hub had not been selected as work had been taking place over several years to commence the vital project. The Council looked forward to continuing the discussions on Biggleswade Health Hub, as there was money in the Council's budget, and for other health hubs across the area. The Council would provide capital funding and the NHS would be able to rent the facilities.

There was no supplementary question.

- b) Councillor S Collins asked the Executive Member for Planning and Regeneration for an update on the M1/A6 Link Road.

The Executive Member for Planning and Regeneration explained that the extension of the funding from the Department for Transport was until March 2026 and it was hoped that agreement could be reached quickly to enable this significant piece of infrastructure to be delivered. Active discussions were taking place with all the landowners regarding access to all the land necessary to construct the link road, and recovery of the costs of its construction. It was important that relevant landowners should form a consensus on an approach and do so without undue delay. The benefit of public funding and a co-ordinated approach was a better way forward than developers having to deliver the road in its entirety through private arrangements amongst themselves. It was hoped that agreement would be reached as this link road would provide a significant enhancement in east-west connectivity in Central Bedfordshire and, along with the rail-freight interchange, would bring further jobs. He would continue to provide updates when available.

In response to a supplementary question, the Executive Member for Planning and Regeneration explained that the timeframes were being driven by the negotiations with third parties and once a consensus was reached work would be started on the Link Road.

- c) Councillor Harvey asked the Executive Member for Community Services if the Council would provide ways of delivering safety briefings and equipment to groups of volunteers and have salt bins positioned around Leighton Buzzard town centre so volunteers could grit pavements and non-arterial roads in icy conditions.

The Executive Member for Community Services explained that the Council had worked hard to manage the networks safely during the winter and was one of the top performing authorities in the country when it came to winter maintenance based on National Highways and Transport Surveys. During periods of ice and snow around 420 miles of network was gritted as these roads had the highest volume of traffic, including those roads that were at greater risk of accidents. Gritting footpaths was not possible with the fleet of gritters and was a manual process and was not something the Council did proactively as part of the winter scheme. To help residents manage gritting their footpaths the Council provided salt bins which were refilled at the start of winter and a list of where the salt bins were located could be found on the website. The Highways Authority did not have a legal responsibility to provide the salt bins. Members of the public could request additional salt bins. The Council worked closely with town and parish councils and schools as they could also request salt bins. Town and Parish Councils could also request bags of salt three times a year. The Chief Executive had committed to talk to the Chief Executive at Leighton Lincolne Town Council to make him aware of the schemes that the Council undertook which could be signed up to.

In response to a supplementary question, the Executive Member for Community Services explained that this would require additional resources which the Council would not provide. He was unable to provide a timescale for the meeting with the Chief Executives.

12. Open Questions

- a) Councillor Zerny asked the Executive Member for Planning and Regeneration about his involvement in a particular planning application.

The Executive Member for Planning and Regeneration explained that when the planning application went before Development Management Committee he would be speaking as ward Member and would then leave the Council Chamber and not take part in the debate or vote.

In response to a supplementary question, the Executive Member for Planning and Regeneration explained that it was his role as Executive Member to encourage businesses to bring investment to Central Bedfordshire.

He had no influence over the planning decision as this would be dealt with by the Planning Case Officer in line with the planning processes to ensure the evidence was assessed. None of the officers took instruction or direction from him.

- b) Councillor Snelling asked the Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Communities what influence she had to ensure that the ICB remedies its failure to consult adequately, to publicise its project evaluation and rationale behind its decision not to develop any further health hubs and its failure to plan adequate staffing in the Leighton Buzzard surgeries which was leading to the current crisis in patients unable to access appointments.

In the absence of the Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Communities, the Leader explained that the provision of primary care services was a concern for the whole of Central Bedfordshire. This had been flagged as a serious issue with Andrew Selous MP to be addressed. The Council would be making representation to the ICB about the provision of health hubs and primary care in Leighton Linlade. He reminded Members that Social Care Health and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16 January 2023 would be discussing this issue. He was also shocked to see that the Agenda for the Primary Care Commissioning and Assurance Committee had only been published with just under 48 hours notice before the meeting. Councillor Stock was the Chair of the Integrated Care Partnership and would be encouraged to write to the ICB stating that this was unacceptable and that it should have been subject to public consultation. This decision conflicted with the ICB's fuller report on implementing primary care and health hubs. The role of NHS England also needed to be looked at due to it putting huge constraints on the ICB. He would encourage all Members to lobby their MPs and Ministers.

There was no supplementary question.

- c) Councillor Hamill asked the Executive Member for Community Services about the number of roadworks taking place in and around Houghton Regis with traffic lights causing traffic congestion. He requested that officers plan these works better so as not to inconvenience residents and that local councillors be notified prior to works taking place.

The Executive Member for Community Services explained that the gas board were fixing a gas leak in Park Road North, Houghton Regis which needed to be dealt with urgently. He had asked officers to look into the problem of utility companies closing roads and why at times there was no one working on site. A weekly email was sent to all Members from Streetworks notifying of any roadworks taking place in the area and he hoped to be able to add more information to this to provide an indication of how long the roadworks were likely to last. Utility companies had to book with the Council and provide notice of when they were undertaking roadworks. There was also the impact of the Council spending £20m on its own road programme to improve the quality of highways.

In response to a supplementary question, the Executive Member for Community Services agreed to look into the issue of Members not being provided with a progress update when roadworks were taking place.

- d) Councillor Whitaker asked the Leader about the quote provided to Richard Fuller MP that the Council was raring to go with the development of the Biggleswade hospital site as a modern local health hub but was being held back by the ICB decision on the NHS estates, would he make the Council's owned site of London Road available for a hub.

The Leader explained that negotiations and plans for the Biggleswade hospital site had been taking place for at least two years. The NHS had previously advised that they wanted to use this site. Given the changes announced by the ICB on 9 January 2023 it did not matter that the Council were prepared to provide capital funding with a rental agreement with the users. The provision of healthcare revenue funding was the responsibility of the NHS. He was very frustrated with the ICB's decision as residents in Central Bedfordshire deserved better.

In response to a supplementary question, the Leader explained that it was a question for the ICB as to why they never requested additional funding as part of the Section 106 agreement for the land east project in Biggleswade. The Council went to all stakeholders with the details of new developments to provide them with the opportunity to respond if funding was needed for things such as a new doctors surgery. Section 106 funding was only a limited pot and the Government was trying to address this when the Housing Bill came into fruition. Ideally this would provide more proportion of the land value uplift to pay for these additional facilities.

- e) Councillor Bunyan asked the Executive Member for Housing and Assets if there were any plans to reopen the café at Priory House.

The Executive Member for Housing and Assets explained that the café closed during the pandemic. A number of operators had been contacted to run the café but due to numbers none had been willing to do so as it was not viable and when an operator was found they withdrew due to staffing issues. A decision had now been taken to run the café inhouse for two years. The Council was working with the Learning Disability Team to use the café to provide work experience for their clients. Provision was being proposed in the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2023/24 and 2024/25 to run the café inhouse. The café would be reopening on Monday 30 January and demand would be monitored.

There was no supplementary question.

- f) Councillor Blair asked the Executive Member for Adults Social Care about Agate House no longer being sustainable and was everything being done to mitigate the situation and condemn the irresponsible social media postings that were spreading fear amongst residents at other care homes in Central Bedfordshire.

The Executive Member for Adults Social Care acknowledged that Leonard Cheshire Disability had a long and positive history and appreciated the value it had in the community. Her attention had been drawn to this home about 2 years ago and Members received an update from the Director of Social Care, Health and Housing in August 2022 about concerns she had having seen the CQC inspection when it was rated inadequate. Where the Council placed a resident in a care home it had an active and robust system of contract management. The Council worked with providers to help them improve their services when there were challenges. It was the decision of Leonard Cheshire Disability that this home was unsustainable and was having to rely on agency staff. Agency staff did not bring a consistent service and had an additional cost to care homes. She urged everyone to be extremely sensitive as people had worked at this care home for years and were committed to the home and sharing information on social media could be upsetting to the staff, residents and their family. There would be a Members briefing and updates provided to Overview and Scrutiny on what the Council's role was and about where the Council was in the market provision for care. The Council would do everything it could to support those residents moving to another provider.

There was no supplementary question.

11. Motions

- a) A notice of motion had been received from Councillor Jamieson and was duly seconded:

“Any motion brought to Council involving unbudgeted expenditure above £50k should be accompanied with a financial impact assessment along with details as to how the Executive should fund such a proposal, this should also be signed off by the S151 officer as being a reasonable estimate.”

As the motion fell within the remit of the General Purposes Committee due to the implications this would have on the Constitution, the motion would be referred to the General Purposes Committee, as set out in Section 18.6 of the Council Procedure Rules, to allow a report to be submitted to the General Purposes Committee setting out the implications and appropriate risks associated with the proposals in the motion.

Council was asked to indicate whether the motion should be referred to the General Purposes Committee, without debate, as set out in 18.6.3 in the Council Procedure Rules.

Upon being put to the vote 6 Members voted in favour to debate the motion, 16 Members were against and 9 Member abstained from voting.

- b) A notice of motion had been received from Councillor Smith and was duly seconded:

“As an authority we wish to remove obstacles that prevent residents from standing as candidates in future elections to ensure that this council is more representative of the people we serve. Currently, the timing of our meetings is a major disincentive for residents of working age to stand for election.

Council consider moving the majority of the Overview and Scrutiny meetings to early evening, to bring us in to line with the majority of our neighbouring authorities. As a result, this will enable more residents to stand for future elections, as well as enabling more residents to attend and participate in our meetings.”

As the motion fell within the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees due to the implications this would have on their meetings, the motion would be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committees, as set out in Section 18.6 of the Council Procedure Rules, to allow a report to be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committees setting out the implications and appropriate risks associated with the proposal in the motion.

Council was asked to indicate whether or not the motion should be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committees, without debate, as set out in 18.6.3 in the Council Procedure Rules.

Upon being put to the vote 40 Members voted in favour to debate the motion, 1 Member was against and 5 Members abstained from voting.

During debate it was moved and seconded to proceed to the next item as set out in 19.1.9 in the Council Procedure Rules.

Upon being put to the vote 28 Members voted in favour to move to the next item of business, 13 Members were against and 3 Members abstained from voting.

Debate on the motion came to an end and comments would be passed to the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

- c) A notice of motion had been received from Councillor Harvey and was duly seconded:

“This Council will write to the Secretary of State for Transport asking for the rights of the Disabled and those without digital access to be a high priority in plans for the railway and to ensure that there are adequate staff on stations and on trains to ensure assistance for disabled people and to assist generally with the purchase of tickets and advice on fares and travel, as well as ensuring safety for passengers.”

Following debate the motion was put to the vote.

The motion was supported unanimously and declared **CARRIED**.

12 Calendar of Meetings 2023/24

Council received a report that set out the proposed Calendar of Meetings for the 2023/24 municipal year.

Following debate the Calendar of Meetings 2023/24 was put to the vote.

RESOLVED that the Calendar of Meetings for 2023/24 be approved.

Upon being put to the vote 27 Members voted in favour, 9 Members were against and 8 Members abstained from voting.

Chairman

Dated