

Central Bedfordshire's Five Year Plan 2015 - 2020

Report of Councillor James Jamieson, Leader of the Council
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This report relates to a non-Key Decision

Purpose of this report

1. To update Executive on the development of the plan following Overview and Scrutiny engagement and stakeholder feedback.
2. To recommend a revised plan for consideration by Council in November 2015.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive is asked to:

1. consider the five year plan, as revised in light of feedback from engagement with Overview and Scrutiny Committees and other stakeholders.
2. recommend that the plan be referred to full Council for ratification at the meeting to be held on 19 November 2015.

Overview and Scrutiny Comments

3. The outline plan was discussed extensively at each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees in August.
4. There was broad endorsement of the vision and the priorities, as well as recognition that the plan is a comprehensive document.
5. As a corporate plan, this document will underpin the Council's work for the coming five years and as such it was suggested it must be predicated on robust intelligence and should include specific measures and targets.

6. The critical importance of engaging with other organisations was acknowledged, in order to achieve some of the priorities that are not directly within the control of the Council (e.g. Town and Parishes, schools, the health service).
7. The need to develop a more accessible narrative about the Council's ambitions was also suggested, with core messages that are relevant and memorable for the public.
8. Specific areas of interest that were identified through the Overview and Scrutiny process were:
 - Skills – in the broadest sense rather than an exclusive focus on conventional academic achievement.
 - Balance – between nurturing growth and prosperity, whilst preserving the environment. It was suggested the focus must be on sustainable development and transport.
 - Scope – of the ambitions in relation to taking care of vulnerable people. It was suggested the focus should be on supporting healthy living for everyone, through activities and services that prevent demand.

Corporate Planning at Central Bedfordshire Council

9. When Central Bedfordshire Council was created in 2009, its initial priority was to manage the unification of services that had been previously provided by three distinct organisations and to ensure that these were delivered to a sound standard, consistently across the Council and the area.
10. Following the 2011 elections, the Council developed its first medium term plan, which spelt out the priorities that would be the focus of the Council until 2015.
11. Beneath the vision of making Central Bedfordshire a great place to live and work, the Council endorsed the following six priorities:
 - Enhancing Central Bedfordshire – creating jobs, managing growth, protecting the countryside and enabling businesses to grow.
 - Improving educational attainment.
 - Promoting health and wellbeing and protecting the vulnerable.
 - Delivering better infrastructure – improved roads, broadband reach and transport.
 - Offering great universal services, - bins, leisure and libraries.
 - Giving our customers value for money – freezing council tax.
12. Performance measures and targets for these priorities have been developed and are rigorously monitored through a quarterly report to Executive.

13. Highlights of achievements and progress in relation to each of the previous priorities has been reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committees as part of the development of a new plan

A New Five Year Plan

14. The election of a new Administration at Central Bedfordshire Council in May 2015 has prompted a review of the Council's priorities.
15. This review has been conducted in the context of changing circumstances, not only in terms of the Council's own development, but in relation to national and international change.
16. Demography, technology, rising expectations, the economy and legislative change are all significant drivers to the thinking about new priorities.
17. The new plan, attached at Appendix A, has been informed by engagement with various organisations and individuals.
18. The purpose of the plan is not to articulate everything that the Council will be delivering in the coming years. It is to highlight some strategic priorities.
19. Following Executive agreement of a draft set of priorities, these have been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and other stakeholders including health, police, fire services, other Bedfordshire local authorities and other interest groups.
20. As a result of feedback on the original priorities, the revised plan has fewer headline priorities (now six rather than eight).

Council Priorities

21. If approved, the new plan will form the basis of a new set of priorities as follows:
 - Enhancing Central Bedfordshire
 - Great resident services
 - Improving education and skills
 - Protecting the vulnerable; improving wellbeing
 - Creating stronger communities
 - A more efficient and responsive Council.
22. A series of programmes of work have been developed to underpin the delivery of these priorities. Subject to the approval of the plan, more detailed programme and performance management arrangements will be put in place to focus energy and resources into the achievement of these priorities.

Corporate Implications

Legal Implications

23. There are no legal implications in developing the five year plan.

Financial Implications

24. Once the refreshed plan is adopted, the future Medium Term Financial Plan will become the financial expression of what the Council aspires to achieve through the priorities and targets set up within it.

Equalities Implications

25. Public authorities have a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Conclusion and next Steps

26. The development of the next five year plan has been an important process. It allows the Council to clearly articulate what it is seeking to achieve between now and 2020, informed by feedback from the whole Council and external stakeholders.
27. Subject to the approval of Council, it will form the basis of our core programme of activity against which performance will be measured.
28. The Council will be held accountable by its success or failure to deliver against the plan by the public, stakeholders and staff.

Appendices

Appendix A – Central Bedfordshire Five Year Plan 2015 - 2020

An appendix of feedback from stakeholders other than Overview and Scrutiny will be tabled at the Executive meeting.

Reports considered previously

- (i) Delivering our Priorities – Central Bedfordshire's Medium Term Plan 2012 - 2016.
<http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/plan-central-bedfordshire-2012-2016/delivering-your-priorities.aspx>