

Central Bedfordshire
Council
Priory House
Monks Walk
Chicksands,
Shefford SG17 5TQ



please ask for Bernard Carter
direct line 0300 300 4175
date 2 June 2011

NOTICE OF MEETING

CUSTOMER AND CENTRAL SERVICES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date & Time

Tuesday, 14 June 2011 10.00 a.m.

Venue at

Room 15, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford

Richard Carr
Chief Executive

To: The Chairman and Members of the CUSTOMER AND CENTRAL SERVICES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:

Cllrs P A Duckett (Chairman), I Dalgarno (Vice-Chairman), A D Brown, J A E Clarke, Mrs R J Drinkwater, Dr R Egan, R W Johnstone, J Murray and Miss A Sparrow

[Named Substitutes:

L Birt, Mrs C F Chapman MBE, K Janes, D Jones, J A G Saunders and I Shingler]

All other Members of the Council - on request

**MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND THIS
MEETING**

AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence and notification of substitute members

2. **Minutes**

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Customer & Central Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 21 March 2011 and to note actions taken since that meeting.

3. **Members' Interests**

To receive from Members any declarations and the nature thereof in relation to:-

- (a) personal interests in any agenda item
- (b) personal and prejudicial interests in any agenda item
- (c) any political whip in relation to any agenda item.

4. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

To receive any announcements from the Chairman and any matters of communication.

5. **Petitions**

To receive petitions from members of the public in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Annex 2 of Part A4 of the Constitution.

6. **Questions, Statements or Deputations**

To receive any questions, statements or deputations from members of the public in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Annex 1 of part A4 of the Constitution.

7. **Call-In**

To consider any decision of the Executive referred to this Committee for review in accordance with Procedure Rule 10.10 of Part D2.

8. **Requested Items**

In accordance with Procedure Rule 3.1 of Part D2 of the Constitution, to consider a request from Councillor N Aldis regarding the following issue:-

I would like to request that there be a review of the arrangements for this year's election from when the election was first announced to post results stage. I think there are a number of issues that need scrutiny:

- informing Agents about meetings
- ensuring nomination papers were properly completed
- the Count at Dunstable (including the payment of expenses/parking facilities for counting staff)
- Time taken for results to be announced
- the lack of a results information service
- notification of results to Towns & Parishes

In accordance with Procedure Rule 3.1, the Committee can decide either:-

- If the matter is a simple one, to resolve it forthwith; or
- To request officers to prepare a report for the next meeting; or
- To set up a task and finish group to investigate and report back to the committee; or
- To make recommendations to the Executive or Council, as appropriate; or
- To decide to take no further action upon the request, for stated reasons.

Reports

Item	Subject	Page Nos.
9	Executive Member Update To receive a brief verbal update from the Executive Member for Corporate Resources.	*
10	Community Engagement Strategy Update To receive a report regarding current work refreshing the Community Engagement Strategy and how it links into the localism agenda.	* 13 - 54
11	Treasury Management Annual Report To consider the 2010/11 Treasury Management Annual Report.	* 55 - 74

The report provides Members with details of the currently drafted Committee work programme and the latest Executive Forward Plan.

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CUSTOMER AND CENTRAL SERVICES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held at Room 15, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Monday, 21 March 2011

PRESENT

Cllr J G Jamieson (Chairman)
Cllr D J Hopkin (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs J A E Clarke
P A Duckett
M Gibson

Cllrs D Jones
Ms J Nunn

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs A Fahn
R W Johnstone
R C Stay

Substitutes: Cllr L Birt (In place of R W Johnstone)

Members in Attendance: Cllrs D Bowater
M R Jones
S F Male
B J Spurr

Officers in Attendance: Mr P Ball – Senior Finance Manager
Mr B Carter – Overview and Scrutiny Manager
Mr R Ellis – Director of Customer and Shared Services
Mr P Fraser – Head of Partnerships and Performance.
Mr A King – Head of Financial Strategy
Mr L Manning – Committee Services Officer
Mr J Unsworth – Interim Assistant Director of Finance

CCS/10/133 **Minutes**

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meetings of the Customer and Central Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 17 January 2011 and 24 January 2011 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as correct records.

CCS/10/134 Members' Interests

(a) Personal Interests:-

None.

(b) Personal and Prejudicial Interests:-

None.

(c) Any political whip in relation to any agenda item:-

None.

CCS/10/135 Chairman's Announcements and Communications

The Chairman thanked the Vice-Chairman, Members, Portfolio Holders and officers for their hard work and contribution over the preceding year.

CCS/10/136 Petitions

No petitions were received from members of the public in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Part D2 of the Constitution.

CCS/10/137 Questions, Statements or Deputations

No questions, statements or deputations were received from members of the public in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Annex 1 of Part A4 of the Constitution.

CCS/10/138 Call-In

No decisions of the Executive were called-in to be reviewed in accordance with the Call-In Procedure as set out in Part D2 of the Constitution.

CCS/10/139 Requested Items

No items were referred to the Committee for consideration at the request of a Member under Procedure Rule 3.1 of Part D2 of the Constitution.

CCS/10/140 Portfolio Holders' Updates

The Committee received verbal updates from the Portfolio Holders for Finance, Governance and People and Customers, Systems and Assets.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Governance and People advised Members that a Recovery Programme for the Customer and Shared Services Directorate was being undertaken and was overseen by the Member Reference Group composed of the Leader, Deputy Leader, himself as Portfolio Holder and officers. He added that there were seven workstreams covering the Directorate and, arising from these, the aim was to introduce more cost effective working practices from June 2011 through to March 2012.

The Chairman reminded the meeting that discussion on this topic would take place following the submission of a detailed presentation to the Committee in June.

In response to a query on the appointment of a Section 151 Officer the Portfolio Holder and the Director of Customer and Shared Services reported on the progress made to date. It was noted that, subject to confirmation, the appointee would begin work at the end of June. The meeting further noted that it was envisaged that the appointee would work in tandem with the current Interim Assistant Director of Finance during a 'handover' period of three months.

The Portfolio Holder for Customers, Systems and Assets reported on the recent ICT problems which had been experienced and explained how they had arisen. The Portfolio Holder stressed that the fundamental problem lay with the Council's dependence on centralised server provision, a requirement which was reinforced by the Council's need to comply with the Government's CoCo protocols. Unfortunately, should a single element fail, the whole system was unable to operate. However, it was noted that work was being undertaken to make the system more robust and the provision of the dual network was proceeding. The Portfolio Holder suggested that use of the Cloud could provide a longer term solution.

The Portfolio Holder advised the meeting that it was intended to operate project management software from 1 April in order to track the use of ICT officer time and that from September the software use would be automated. He explained that the underlying aim was to secure greater control of ICT projects. The meeting concurred with his suggestion that the Committee should give consideration to an update on this matter in June or July. Following a query from a Member the Portfolio Holder undertook to advise her of the cost.

The Portfolio Holder reported on the movement of back office tasks to Customer Services and explained that delays had arisen, though with good reason. The meeting concurred with his suggestion that progress be reviewed by the Committee.

The Portfolio Holder referred to problems which had occurred with regard to the failure to cancel bookings for unneeded meeting rooms and that consideration was being given on how to deal with this.

With regard to office requirements the Portfolio Holder reported that three and a half years remained on the Technology House lease before the lease break

point but it was envisaged that all employees currently based at that building would have been relocated to either Watling House or Priory House by that date. Further, there was no indication that a centralised replacement office building would be required. The Portfolio Holder stated that additional home working would be encouraged coupled with hot desking if an employee's work often took place on site. Permanent desk allocation would only occur if an employee was permanently office based. In addition document scanning would reduce the requirement for filing cabinets and associated storage space. Further discussion followed during which the Director of Customer and Shared Services referred to the savings which would arise through the rationalisation of Council office accommodation. In response to a Member's comment regarding the cost of relocating employees he referred to proposed changes to employees' terms and conditions regarding the payment for 'excess' travel.

The Chairman suggested that the Council's accommodation requirements be considered further at a future meeting.

CCS/10/141 **Quarter 3 Corporate Budget Management Report 2010**

The Committee considered a report by the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Governance and People which set out the corporate financial position to the end of December 2010 (Quarter 3) and the latest forecast position.

The Portfolio Holder drew the meeting's attention to the revenue forecast overspend of £1.954M which, despite taking into account expenditure commitments for the last quarter of the year, represented a significant reduction. He also referred to the £12.076M of efficiencies identified within the 2010/11 revenue budget and stated that £11.987M of efficiency savings had been identified as being on track to be delivered by the end of the year. Last, the Portfolio Holder stated that the capital programme was significantly underspent with a year end forecast of £4.776M underbudget.

The Chairman congratulated those involved in achieving the financial position. He queried the final probable overspend level and was advised by the Portfolio Holder that the outturn was likely to be on or near budget. Following further queries from a Member the Portfolio Holder reported that Children's Services would need to retain the Connexions staff to fulfil some statutory requirements. He also reported that, with regard to the Music Service, the outcome of the national Henley Review was awaited and that significant changes could arise with the possibility that funding would be allocated directly to schools. In connection with the Music Service the Chairman commented that a consultation process was now in operation and that comments would be passed to the Chairman of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Following comment by the Chairman the Portfolio Holder acknowledged that budget profiling and accruing required further work.

The Chairman reminded Members that the Committee had commented in the past that the length, content and style of budget reports should be revised so

that they were easier to produce and simpler to read. The Portfolio Holder concurred with the Chairman and it was felt by Members that the appropriate action should be taken.

RESOLVED

that the format of budget reports be reviewed so as to provide simpler and more consistent reports in the new municipal year but with no loss of information.

NOTED

the Quarter 3 Corporate financial position and the latest forecast position.

CCS/10/142 Budget Management Report Quarter ended 31st December 2010 for Customer and Shared Services

The Committee considered the report of the Portfolio Holders for Finance, Governance and People and Customers, Systems and Assets which set out the financial position for the Customer and Shared Services Directorate for the period to 31 December 2010 (Quarter 3) and the latest forecast position.

With regard to the forecast variance of £1,033k the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Governance and People reminded the meeting that the Recovery Programme was designed to overcome the underlying problems within the Directorate. In response to comments by the Chairman the Portfolio Holder acknowledged that a contributory factor had been budget build errors but referred to the influence of other issues, in particular to the need for Finance to provide detailed information to Directorates rather than being left to focus on the strategic overview. He stated, however, that this position should change as Directorates assumed greater responsibility for producing financial information internally.

In response to further comments by the Chairman the Director of Customer and Shared Services stated that although he was unable to give complete assurance that the base budget for 2011/12 would be totally free of errors he was able to state that the number of errors would be substantially less than had been experienced before. The Portfolio Holders for Finance, Governance and People and Customers, Systems and Assets concurred with this assessment, the former referring to the benefits which had arisen as a result of the base budget exercise last year.

A Member referred to Appendix E to the report which listed overdue debtor invoices with a value greater than £10k and sought clarification on the origin of the two largest amounts. In response the Senior Finance Manager provided information regarding the outstanding amount of £119,095.18 and undertook to establish and then email information regarding the outstanding amount of £189,000.00. Members also requested that summary details of items below £10k be included in future reports.

NOTED

the financial position for the Customer and Shared Services Directorate for Quarter 3 and the latest forecast position.

CCS/10/143 Budget Management Report Quarter ended 31st December 2010 for the Office of the Chief Executive

The Committee considered the report of the Portfolio Holder for Policy and Performance which set out the financial position for the Office of the Chief Executive for the period to 31 December 2010 (Quarter 3) and the latest forecast position. In connection with the latter the meeting noted that the forecast outturn variance was an underspend of £255k (5.2%). The Senior Finance Manager stated that there were no major operational issues and that difficulties relating to the production of the News Central magazine had been overcome.

NOTED

the financial position for the Office of the Chief Executive for Quarter 3 and the latest forecast position.

CCS/10/144 Treasury Management Quarter Three Report

The Committee considered a report by the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Governance and People which provided an update on treasury management activity for Quarter 3 of the financial year 2010/11.

The Chairman thanked the Head of Financial Strategy for incorporating the previously requested information on cashflow and debt in the report.

The Chairman referred to Appendix D to the report, which included a graph setting out an analysis of daily cash movements, and commented that it would be of assistance if the cumulative position for each day was added to it.

The Chairman then drew the meeting's attention to the Council's fixed interest loans and queried whether, in view of their size, the break fees were also substantial. In response the Portfolio Holder explained that these loans were examined on a regular basis and action taken where possible. The Interim Assistant Director Financial Services added that the situation was affected by the current volatility of the market.

NOTED

the update on treasury management activity for Quarter 3.

CCS/10/145 Quarter 3 Performance Report

The Committee considered a report by the Portfolio Holder for Policy and Performance which highlighted the Quarter 3 performance for the Customer and Shared Services Directorate and Corporate Health Indicators for the Council.

The Head of Partnership and Performance drew Members' attention to the corporate sickness absence rate and advised that this had increased slightly in Quarter 3 although the increase could be regarded as reasonable given the issues faced by the Authority and the normal seasonal increase in levels of illness. The officer also referred to the long term sickness rates and the skewing affect this could have on the overall rate. He explained that if long term sickness was removed the sickness levels dropped to the average rate. Nonetheless the Chairman commented on the number of employees on long term sickness

In response to a query from the Vice-Chairman the Head of Partnership and Performance advised the meeting of the protocols followed by managers in response to employee absence through long term sickness.

Lengthy discussion on various aspects of this issue took place during which concern was expressed regarding the levels of absence. The Chairman requested that a presentation be made to the Committee's July meeting on absence management and sickness support.

Members turned to consider the level of Council tax collection and service provision by Customer Services. With regard to the latter a Member advised of a problem experienced at a Point of Presence (PoP). In response the Portfolio Holder for Customers, Systems and Assets explained the remedial measures that had been introduced to overcome such situations and enable more effective advice and assistance to be offered to members of the public.

The Committee examined the time taken to process Housing Benefit and other claims. In response to a comment by the Chairman on the time taken (37 days) to process claims the Interim Assistant Director of Finance stated that the Authority was on track to reduce this figure to 29 days. He pointed out that the issue was recognised as fundamental hence its inclusion within the Recovery Programme. He added that further improvements were anticipated in 2011/12.

NOTED

the Quarter 3 performance for the Customer and Shared Services Directorate and Corporate Health Performance Indicators for the Council.

CCS/10/146 **Work Programme 2010-2011 and Executive Forward Plan**

The Committee received its current work programme and the latest Executive Forward Plan. Members were aware that additional reports had been identified during the meeting for consideration by the Committee.

NOTED

that the following items have been added to the Committee's work programme:

- a) **progress on the transfer of back office functions to Customer Services (no date specified);**
- b) **progress on medium term accommodation strategy (no date specified);**
- c) **update on the Council's ICT time recording project (June/July 2011);**
- d) **absence management and sickness support (July 2011).**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 11.22 a.m.)

Meeting: Customer and Central Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date: 14th June 2011
Subject: Community Engagement Strategy - refresh
Report of: Cllr David Hopkin, Deputy Executive Member
Summary: This report provides an overview of performance against Year 1 of the 2010 – 2013 Community Engagement Strategy (CES) and sets out the rationale, key drivers and timeline for a refresh.

Advising Officer: Ian Porter, Assistant Director Strategy and Performance
Contact Officer: Peter Fraser, Head of Partnerships & Performance
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Council

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

The strategy has implications for all five of the Council's strategic priorities

Financial:

Funding and dedicated staff resource is critical to the implementation of many aspects of the delivery plan. The 'Targeted Support' funding from Inspire East was used to support the implementation of Year 1 of the strategy. This grant ended in March 2011, but further funding has been secured from Central Bedfordshire Together (the local strategic partnership) to deliver the actions contained in Years 2 and 3 of the delivery plan.

Legal:

Implementing this strategy will help the local authority and its partners to deliver its community engagement obligations

Risk Management:

Risk management is a key part of the service delivery plan for the team and any risks will be managed through this process. Community engagement has been identified as an operational risk that could impact on the Council's reputation with residents, communities and town and parish councils. This is mitigated by the Community Engagement Strategy and the actions in the delivery plan.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

The strategy comprises a dedicated staff post, which is paid for by partnership funding.

Equalities/Human Rights:

The impact assessment highlighted the importance of adopting a variety of inclusive and appropriate engagement practises and that all groups must be treated with dignity and respect. These issues have been addressed during the development of the strategy and subsequently in the delivery of Year 1 activity.

Community Safety:

Community engagement is and will continue to be a key element to tackling crime and reducing the fear of crime.

Sustainability:

The community engagement strategy will help to strengthen and empower communities to do more for themselves and relieve pressure on public services.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **That the Committee notes the progress made in the first year of delivery of the Community Engagement Strategy.**
2. **That the Committee notes the process, scope and timetable for the refresh of the Community Engagement Strategy.**

1. Background Information

- 1.1 The CES is a partnership strategy, which was developed by Central Bedfordshire Together (CBT) and approved by Full Council in June 2010.
- 1.2. The aim of the CES is to deliver greater added value to our citizens by understanding their needs and issues, and giving them greater involvement in the decision-making process and access to services.
- 1.3. A key feature of the creation of Central Bedfordshire Council was the opportunity unitary status brought to improve the way local public service organisations engage with local people. The CES seeks to address this by bringing local government closer to the communities it serves.
- 1.4. The CES also supports CBC's commitment to devolve some quality of life services to town and parish councils, where they want them and where there is a clear business case for doing so and there is no additional cost to the council.
- 1.5. The strategy has been measured against the National Framework for Empowering Authorities and is based on the following five key principles:
 - Giving more people more opportunities to influence decisions.
 - Enabling Ward Councillors to be leaders in and for their communities.
 - Enhancing the role of town and parish councils.
 - Building the capacity of local people to engage.
 - Ensuring a strategic and joined up co-ordinated partnership approach

2. Progress and Key achievements in the first year

- 2.1 The CES Delivery Plan sets out 21 specific actions for the first year and good overall progress has been made against each of these.
- 2.2 A performance management system is in place and is overseen by a sub group of the Stronger Communities Thematic Partnership. All of the actions have been completed or are on track except for one, which relates to how Parish Plans are used to inform local strategies policies and plans. This issue will be addressed as part of the planned refresh of the strategy to reflect emerging legislation in the Localism Bill relating to neighbourhood planning. The action to develop a handy guide to the third sector and COMPACT was superseded by a revised and much simplified COMPACT¹, and the action to develop three year funding agreements with voluntary and community sector organisations is unlikely to move forward in the short term.
- 2.3 Below is a summary of key achievements in Year 1 against each of the five principles of the strategy:

Giving more people more opportunities to influence decisions

- A successful pilot of seven Let's Talk Together meetings that provides a strong foundation for further conversation and collaboration with communities to tackle local issues, supports Ward Councillors in their role as community leaders and acts as a catalyst for a joined-up strategic approach to community engagement with other public service organisations.
- Introduced a quarterly Partnership 'Ezine' to communicate to partners what is happening within Central Bedfordshire Together. The ezine is sent to all partners and stakeholders by email in newspaper format, making it easy for them to target and link into stories of interest. Four electronic magazines have been published so far, and analysis shows significant growth in its usage.
- Established a stakeholder database to enable targeted communication and engagement with a wide range of community stakeholders, and which is used to distribute the Ezine to over 1,000 partners/stakeholders.
- The creation of a Social Media Network to engage with Central Bedfordshire residents, called 'Lets Talk Central'. Although take up of this has been somewhat slower than expected, the 'Let's Talk Together' community meetings are being used to develop the network and encourage an ongoing dialogue with and between communities inbetween meetings.
- Actively recruiting to a new electronic citizens panel.
- Key consultation and engagement activities planned by partners have been mapped to enable opportunities for future join up to be identified.

Enabling Ward Councillors to be leaders in and for their communities

- Organised a series of four Member briefings on topical issues to support them in their role as community leaders.
- Prepared and issued ward based profiles providing key information about each ward.
- Offered and provided regular support for Members in advance of their attendance at town and parish council meetings.

¹ The COMPACT is an agreement between local statutory organisations and the voluntary and community sector to improve and develop their relationships, and sets out the way they will work together to deliver real outcomes and improvements for people and communities. The Council is a signatory to the COMPACT.

- Provided a dedicated staff post, which is paid for by partnership funds, to support Members, CBC officers, CBT partners and town and parish councils with their engagement responsibilities.
- Provided bespoke Member briefings and de briefings pre and post each of the Let's Talk Together pilot meetings.

Enhancing the role of town and parish councils

- Two Town & Parish Council conferences held and a new relationship with schools through six School Governor Forums.
- Prepared a key contacts sheet, handy guide and direct dial number for town and parish councils to be able to locate the right service and member of staff.
- Revised terms of reference prepared and approved for Town Centre partnerships in Leighton Buzzard and Dunstable.

Building the capacity of local people to engage

- A draft volunteering strategy has been developed for consultation and refinement in Year 2 of the strategy
- Let's Talk Together meetings provided a vital opportunity for local people to engage with a range of public service providers and determine local policing priorities.
- Two 'Third Sector' Assembly meetings engaging community and voluntary sector groups representing the interests of local communities and interests in topical debate and discussion.

Ensuring a strategic and joined up co-ordinated partnership approach

- A successful bid to RIEP's Targeted Support Grant provided regional funding for Year 1 of the strategy, which ended on 31 March 2011. Partnership funding has been secured from CBT's performance reward grant to provide a dedicated staff post to support implementation of the next two years of the strategy (until March 2013).
- Let's Talk Together meetings provide a forum for joining up engagement activity with local public service organisations including the Council, Police, Fire, Health, voluntary and community sector, housing associations and town and parish councils.
- A forward plan of Let's Talk Together meetings has been developed for the next 12 months, which is available on the Central Bedfordshire Together website.

3. Issues

- 3.1 The CES is a three year strategy and CBT has committed to carrying out an annual refresh, which is scheduled to be presented at its next Board meeting on 5 July 2011.
- 3.2 Since the strategy was developed a new legislative framework has begun to emerge to build the Big Society. The Localism Bill is being created to support a shift of power away from central government to councils and local communities. A fundamental element of this is to empower local people to get involved with and direct the development of their communities. Whilst the existing strategy supports this, a refresh will ensure it is fully aligned with the latest national policy, and ensure our organisational approach is fully aligned to recognised governance within the council.
- 3.3 Other local and national drivers that will be addressed as part of the refresh include:

- A political desire to enhance our engagement with communities (ensuring meaningful consultation).
 - Communities doing more for themselves and the need to proactively facilitate this.
 - Service reviews and remodelling of delivery approaches, and overcoming obstacles associated with the transfer of responsibility for the delivery of local services.
 - A cultural shift to embrace and mainstream wider involvement and engagement in what we do, for example from town and parish councils.
 - The new Equality Duty to ensure we engage with all of Central Bedfordshire's diverse communities.
- 3.4 The refresh will focus on:
- reviewing and updating the strategy and action plan to reflect the latest national policy (including the new legislative framework) and local drivers;
 - removing any actions already achieved or no longer relevant and adding new ones;
 - refreshing the principles to ensure the key drivers are adequately embraced; and
 - identifying specific and measurable outcomes to achieve through improved community engagement.
- 3.5 Partner organisations will be engaged in the refresh process through the Central Bedfordshire Together Board, the Stronger Communities Thematic Partnership and its Community Engagement Delivery Group (CEDG) – a briefing note from the CEDG meeting held on 23 May 2011 will follow.
- 3.6 CBC Directorates will be engaged via colleagues involved in partnership working and will be kept informed at every stage of the refresh process. The Head of Partnerships & Performance will work closely with the Deputy Executive Member.
- 3.7 The refreshed strategy will be presented to Executive on 23 August 2011 for approval.

4. Financial and Other Implications

- 4.1. There are no specific funding requirements to carry out the review and refresh of the CES. Any financial implications associated with its implementation will be managed within the existing budget allocation.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Central Bedfordshire Community Engagement Strategy and Delivery Plan 2010 - 2013

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9th June 2010

Central Bedfordshire Community Engagement Strategy 2010 - 2013

Central Bedfordshire Community Engagement Strategy

Contents

Executive Summary

The Community Engagement Strategy

1. Introduction
2. What we mean by Community Engagement
3. The benefits of this strategy
4. The scope of this strategy
5. The five key principles of the strategy
6. Delivering the strategy
7. Structures to support community engagement
8. How we will measure our success
9. Our community engagement values

Community Engagement Strategy - Executive Summary

This strategy has been developed by Central Bedfordshire Together (the Local Strategic Partnership for Central Bedfordshire - "LSP") which comprises senior representatives of: the Local Authority; Police; Fire; Health; Education; Business; Town & Parish Councils; and the Third Sector.

The aim of this Community Engagement Strategy is to deliver greater added value to our citizens by understanding their needs and issues, and giving them a greater involvement in the decision-making process and access to public sector services.

The current economic climate will result in diminishing financial resources leading to significant restrictions in the delivery of services from the public sector. Consequently, communities will need to be encouraged to do more for themselves.

Good information about our communities is fundamental to ensuring that partnership strategies are genuinely inclusive. A better understanding of our communities' needs will enable scarce public sector resources to be targeted more effectively. This will ensure that services are provided only where they are needed.

This Strategy will enable us to establish a new relationship with individuals and organisations and help communities understand the tough choices and decisions ahead, and manage their expectations about the service levels provided by the public sector in the future.

The Strategy will shift the balance in the way some services will be delivered in the future. On 18th May 2010 the new Government launched its programme for the "Big Society", which includes proposals to give communities more powers, and encourage people to take a more active role in their communities. This Strategy will support the Government's plans to enable citizens, communities and local government to come together to solve problems and improve their localities.

The strategy is based on five key principles, which are set out below:

1. Giving more people more opportunities to influence decisions

We will strengthen the link between decision-makers and local people by:

- giving a greater role to citizens or community representatives in deciding how services are delivered in their area;
- providing more choice and mechanisms for engagement which are appropriate to the locality, issue and audience; and
- identifying opportunities for local people to decide how specific budgets are spent in their community.

2. Enabling Ward Councillors to be leaders in and for their communities.

Councillors will be provided with up-to-date, relevant community intelligence and information, training and officer support to fulfil their community leadership role. Councillors will be:

- kept informed of all key activities in their wards;

- allocated a small budget to spend locally in their wards if resources allow;
- supported to efficiently resolve local issues as quickly as possible;
- supported to communicate and engage with their communities, including conducting ward surgeries and attending key community events in their wards; and
- alerted to any feedback about community issues in their wards.

3. Enhancing the role of Town and Parish Councils.

We will support Town and Parish Councils in the delivery of local services that affect the quality of life of their community. We will:

- enable residents to participate in setting the vision and priorities for their local area, through community-led planning, such as Parish Plans, Town Plans and Neighbourhood Plans;
- work with Town and Parish Councils to devolve budgets for 'quality of life' services to those who want them and where the service will be enhanced by doing so, and only according to the Local Authority's agreed priorities; each application must also be supported by a robust business case that demonstrates improved value for money;
- support clusters of Town and Parish Councils working together to resolve common issues; and
- improve communications by providing a key contact from the Local Authority for each Town and Parish Council, and ensuring appropriate representation in response to requests for Local Authority attendance at Town and Parish Council meetings.

4. Building the capacity of local people to engage.

We will ensure that, where needed, we will develop our communities to have the knowledge, skills and confidence to get involved in decision-making. We will:

- help people to form or join groups that are set up to influence local decisions;
- pilot learning programmes for local people interested in participating in civic and community activities; and
- support the development and implementation of a local Volunteering Strategy.

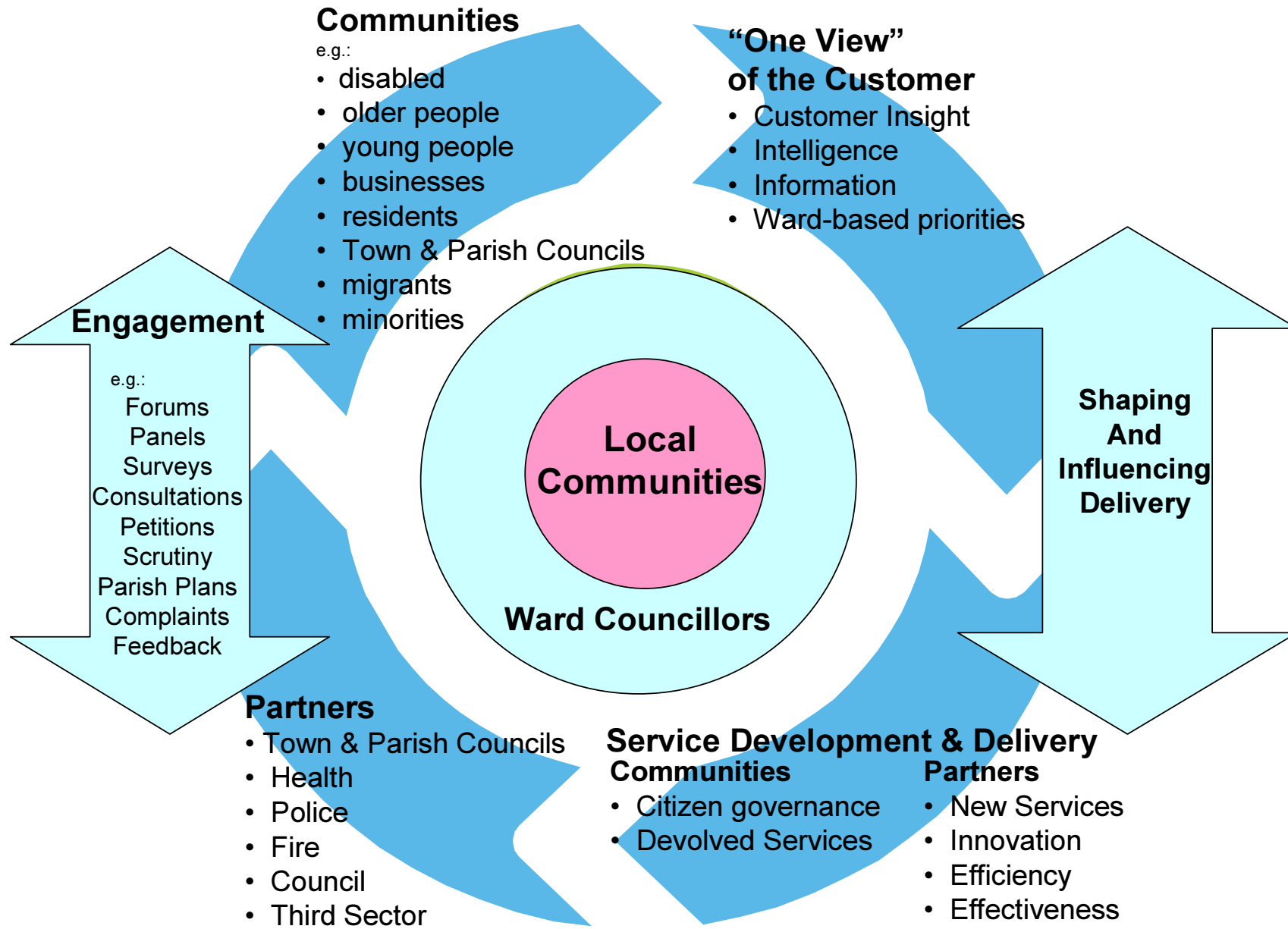
5. Ensuring a strategic and joined-up, coordinated partnership approach.

By sharing opportunities, resources and learning with partners and across directorates, we will save money, avoid duplication, and reduce engagement fatigue for our communities. In doing so we will develop a clear and consistent 'One View' about what our communities really want. This will also support and complement the work being carried out as part of Total Place, for which we are a pilot authority. We have established a joint partner Community Engagement Delivery Group to:

- develop a joint consultation and engagement plan;
- coordinate community engagement at local events; and
- share appropriate data, intelligence and information and customer insight.

This strategy places local people and Councillors, as their elected representatives, at the heart of our community engagement activities. The key principles identified here will remain true irrespective of any possible changes to future public sector operating models in Central Bedfordshire.

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE'S COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MODEL



The Community Engagement Strategy

1. Introduction

This strategy has been developed by Central Bedfordshire Together (the Local Strategic Partnership for Central Bedfordshire - "LSP") which comprises senior representatives of: the Local Authority; Police; Fire; Health; Education; Business; Town & Parish Councils; and the Third Sector.

The outcome of this Community Engagement Strategy is to deliver greater added value to our citizens by understanding their needs and issues, and giving them a greater involvement in the decision-making process and access to public sector services.

This will be delivered by giving more people more opportunities to influence decisions, supporting Councillors to be leaders in and for their communities, enhancing the role of Town and Parish Councils; building the capacity of local people to engage; and developing a more strategic and coordinated partnership approach.

All of the key statutory partners in the LSP including Health, Police, Police Authority, Fire and Rescue Service and the Local Authority have visions that place the citizen at the heart of everything they do. This strategy is designed to enable this and enhance the community engagement activities of other LSP partners including Town and Parish Councils and Third Sector organisations.

This strategy is designed to encourage people to help shape Central Bedfordshire by taking an active part in making or influencing decisions about their locality. Ultimately this will increase satisfaction with all local public services and engender greater pride in Central Bedfordshire as a good place to live, work and visit.

An equality impact assessment of the potential effects of this strategy has been undertaken to ensure effective engagement with all communities, including identifiable groups of people segmented by age, race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion or belief, as well as communities disadvantaged by deprivation eg. poverty.

2. What we mean by community engagement

Community engagement is the actions we take to inform, consult, involve and empower communities through ongoing relationships and dialogue. For the Local Authority and its partners community engagement means we will:

Inform: by providing solid, user-friendly information on how to access services and on how local services are performing;

Consult: by seeking advice, information and opinions about our strategies, policies and services, to inform our decision-making and design better services;

Involve: by working together to design and deliver our services, enabling people to be fully involved in the agenda-setting and decision-making process, and deciding together on future developments; and

Empower: by enabling individuals and groups to make decisions and deliver some services themselves.

3. The benefits of this strategy

- Involving our communities in the design and delivery of local services will help us to: improve the quality of service delivery; get it “right first time”, be more responsive and accountable; and deliver better value for taxpayers’ money.
- A joined-up strategic and coordinated partnership approach will save money, avoid duplication, and reduce engagement fatigue for our communities. It will also ensure partners have ‘One View’ about what our communities really want, which will enhance our joint strategic decision-making.
- Supporting Councillors in their leadership role for their community will help ensure the views of local residents are known and considered by their elected representatives when they make key decisions.
- Increasing opportunities to participate in local decisions helps increase trust in public bodies and interest in local democracy.
- Involving people in making decisions about how local money is spent gives communities a better understanding of the difficult prioritisations and trade-offs that have to be made, and a stronger sense of “ownership” over the eventual decision.
- Bringing communities and local decision-makers together to tackle shared concerns creates greater openness about decision-making and can help improve community cohesion.
- Finally, implementing a comprehensive community engagement strategy should not be optional because:
 - a key feature of the bid for unitary government was the opportunity the creation of Central Bedfordshire Council brings to improve the way local public service organisations engage with local people;
 - the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act has placed on authorities a new statutory Duty to Involve, from 1st April 2009 (which this strategy will address);
 - the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill includes an expectation that participatory budgeting will be introduced in all areas from 2012; and
 - understanding our communities and responding to their needs is a key element of the new Comprehensive Area Assessment.

4. The scope of this Strategy

This strategy aims to raise the profile of Engagement and Stronger Communities work within the partnership structures. It applies to all methods and processes used by the Local Authority and its partners to inform, consult, involve and empower residents.

In delivering this strategy, the roles of and relationship between those leading on and responsible for the delivery of engagement within the LSP are set out below:

- Ward Councillors will play a lead role as community champions;
- the LSP Board will provide the governance and strategic leadership;
- the Stronger Communities Thematic Partnership will provide the operational leadership; and

- the Community Engagement Delivery Group will coordinate the development and implementation of a joint partnership plan for community engagement.

The officer leads will be Central Bedfordshire Council's Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement and the Chief Executive of Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity (BRCC), who is also the Theme Lead for the Stronger Communities Thematic Partnership.

Involving, engaging and empowering the community is every service's and partner organisation's responsibility. There are many well established mechanisms for engaging with service users across all of the Council's directorates and partner organisations. This strategy is not about telling services or partners how to engage but to ensure that engagement activities are coordinated and opportunities for joining up and sharing resources, outcomes and learning are maximised. This will reduce the number of consultations and duplication of effort by all, and improve value for money.

Our model of community engagement should be based around the issues identified by the local communities themselves and that these should be the key drivers for our community engagement work – not area structures.

It is clear that "one size does not fit all". Therefore this strategy envisages a great degree of flexibility and does not create area structures for engagement activities.

This strategy should align with and influence key strategies and policies that have an impact on public engagement directly or indirectly e.g. customer service strategies, communications strategies, consultation plans, budget strategies and business transformation strategies.

5. The Five Key Principles for a successful Community Engagement Strategy

Following broad consultation with a wide range of partners and staff, the consensus on what the key principles for a successful comprehensive community engagement strategy should be are:

1. **Giving more people more opportunities to influence decisions** by increasing the opportunities and mechanisms to enable a wider range of people to get involved in decision-making, and identifying opportunities for local people to decide how specific budgets are spent in their community.
2. **Enabling Ward Councillors to be leaders in and for their communities** by: supporting Councillors to communicate and engage with the people they represent; providing Councillors with up-to-date, relevant information about activities in their wards; and providing each Councillor with a budget to spend locally in their wards. This budget would need to be considered alongside Central Bedfordshire Council's other budget requirements within its annual budget process.
3. **Enhancing the role of Town and Parish Councils** through community-led planning, supporting clusters of Local Authorities to work together to resolve common issues, and devolving budgets to deliver local quality of life services.
4. **Building the capacity of local people to engage** by developing the skills and confidence of local people to engage, increasing communication and cooperation, supporting the voluntary and community sector, and increasing volunteering.

5. **Ensuring a strategic and joined-up, coordinated partnership approach** by sharing appropriate data, intelligence and information to save money, avoid duplication, reduce the number of community consultations, and develop a clear and consistent 'One View' amongst all statutory agencies about what our communities really want, including customer insight.

6. **Delivering the strategy**

The delivery plan in Appendix B sets out the actions to meet the principles of the strategy.

Below details each of the actions under the key principle they relate to.

Principle One: Enabling more people to influence decisions

We want the people of Central Bedfordshire to be able to influence and shape local decisions. The actions below are aimed at strengthening this and facilitate greater empowerment:

1. **Develop a Joint E-Panel for Citizens**

This should be established to enable residents to register their interest in participating in consultations on certain services. By joining an e-panel residents will be able to take part in online surveys, online discussions and opinion polls on the services they are interested in. The topics would normally be generated by partners but e-panel members can also put forward ideas for discussion.

2. **Petitions and E-Petitions:** Petitions have the potential to empower individuals, generate activity in the community and influence decisions. E-petitioning is a statutory requirement, by December 2010, in the new Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

3. **Scrutiny:** The Local Authority's Constitution enables residents to participate in and contribute to investigations by overview and scrutiny committees. The Overview and Scrutiny Toolkit encourages public participation. The aim should be to have at least two investigations per year which involves significant public participation.

4. **Specialist Forums and Citizen Governance:** Key partners will continue to use established forums. These forums should be mapped and rationalised to avoid duplication, reduce costs and make better use of the limited time available for those who take part.

New forums should be encouraged and supported to ensure that all sections of the community are given more and better opportunities to engage. Such forums should be managed centrally to ensure a coordinated approach and to enable any Local Authority services and partners to consult and engage with all sections of the community. This will include new statutory engagement processes such as that set out by the Tenant Services Authority to involve housing tenants in decisions about services that affect them and strengthen the role of the tenant in all housing organisations.

Vulnerable and minority groups are underrepresented in participation in civic roles and engagement and consultation. Groups, such as, older people, young people, women, black and minority ethnic groups, disabled people, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and rurally isolated residents in Central Bedfordshire may fear discrimination and/ or have specific requirements that prevent them from participating in traditional approaches. This strategy will establish a range of approaches including

targeted techniques to specifically ensure appropriate mechanisms are in place to enable greater involvement of these groups.

A Youth Parliament and Local Youth Forums are already in place to influence decisions and services that impact on young people.

Further opportunities will be explored to establish greater links between young people and the democratic decision-making processes.

5. **The Sustainable Communities Act:** This Act allows Local Authorities to put forward proposals from local communities that require action from central government. Proposals can be submitted for any activities that promote the sustainability of an area. Any proposals must be endorsed by a Panel of Local Representatives made up of residents from the local community and representative groups.
6. **Social Networking:** Partners will be asked to explore a Central Bedfordshire social networking website. A relatively easy way of engaging the community is through the use of websites and social networking sites.

LSP partners will be asked to consider investing in a website where local people can tell their stories about Central Bedfordshire, take part in discussions about topics of their choosing in forums, share their thoughts and views or share pictures or videos.

Principle Two: Enabling Ward Councillors to be leaders in and for their communities
Involvement with local people is already a key part of a Councillor's role. The Duty to Involve aims to provide local people with additional opportunities to work closely with Councillors to influence decisions.

In the 2008 Place Survey (a postal survey with responses from 2,828 residents), 60% of residents said they do not know the name of their local Councillors. All age groups had limited confidence in being able to influence what goes on locally through councillors for a variety of reasons. These include:

- A lack of visibility within communities
- Difficulty accessing councillor surgeries
- A lack of clarity about the link between councillors and the Local Authority

As such, participants supported the idea of receiving information from their councillors and of having more contact – informal or formal – with them.

Councillors taking the lead role on engagement activity in their wards is fundamental to this strategy.

Through surgeries and other contact with the community Councillors can help in raising greater public awareness of the opportunities to engage in local decision-making and encourage more people to put themselves forward for civic roles.

In their role as community leaders, Councillors will be provided with the following specific support:

7. **Ward-based intelligence, information and customer insight:** Ward profiles will be provided annually to all Councillors.

In addition, Councillors will be provided with a monthly update about what is

happening in each ward. Both Local Authority officers and key partners will ensure that Councillors are informed of issues, initiatives, changes and success stories relating to their ward.

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9. **Support for scrutiny, Councillor Call for Action and response to petitions:** Central Bedfordshire is committed to a robust, collaborative, outward facing model of scrutiny for each of its four committees – contributing to both policy development and performance management. Overview & Scrutiny will provide councillors with further opportunities to engage with the community and involve more people to influence Local Authority decisions.

Legislation enables Overview and Scrutiny Committees to be able to review the actions of all public sector providers, including those in the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), and hold them to account. The exception to this is the Children's Trust which is a statutory body where partners hold each other to account. The Children's Trust will publish an annual report each year which will be the subject of Scrutiny. In addition, the Scrutiny Committee of the Council can call to account relevant partners as to their contribution to the Children and Young People's Plan. The Lead Member for Children's Services and the Director of Children's Services will bring the Children's Trust annual report to Scrutiny. The local authority leader and Chief Executive must sign off annually that partnership arrangements in Children's Services are working well. The Local Authority and Councillors should consider involving residents, voluntary and community organisations, businesses and service users in identifying issues for scrutiny and develop a work programme which has the input of local communities and LSP partners.

Councillor Call for Action (CCfA) gives all Councillors the powers to require local service providers to respond to an issue of concern. Where a response is not adequate, Councillors can refer the matter to Overview and Scrutiny.

Councillors also have a role to play in relation to petitions. The upcoming Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 proposes a duty on local authorities to respond to all petitions, including e-petitions, that relate to services they are responsible for and services where they share delivery responsibility. If Overview and Scrutiny decide there has been inadequate response to a petition, then the matter will be referred to the full Council for a public debate. And if five percent of the local population sign a petition, then it must be debated in full Council. Petitions will be noted as one of the evidence sources for the Comprehensive Area Assessment.

10. **Greater role and involvement in partnerships:** It is accepted that Councillors need support to act as 'connectors' between communities, the Local Authority and partners/partnerships. Councillors need recognition of their role to influence strategic decisions and take action in support of their ward interests.
11. **Establish links with Third Sector organisations:** The sector recognises that there is a clear distinction between the representative role of elected Councillors and their own role as Third Sector representatives, which is supportive of local democracy and adds value to the work of local Councillors.

12. **Case management system for Councillors:** Central Bedfordshire Council is preparing to implement a Member case management system to enable Councillors to respond to individuals more efficiently. The system should also be able to provide reports on issues and trends so that issues can be addressed more generally.
13. **Member development of community engagement skills:** The Member Development Strategy will include training to build on Councillors' engagement skills such as facilitation skills, consensus building skills, equality training, chairing community forums and public meetings. It will also build on Councillors' knowledge of their communities and the new statutory duties to involve, promote democracy and ensure equality.
14. **Dedicated officer support:** To support ward Councillors, a dedicated telephone number for the helpdesk, will be put in place to speed up response times.

Principle Three: Enhancing the role of Town and Parish Councils

This strategy seeks to empower communities at the neighbourhood level. This includes:

15. **Community- led planning (Parish Plans, Town Plans and Neighbourhood Plans):** Community-led planning is a step-by-step structured process of creating a vision and priorities for the future of a community or neighbourhood. The process and outcomes are owned by the whole community. Community-led planning provides communities with the means to tackle specific issues locally themselves, to voice their concerns and to outline their aspirations for public authorities to address.

The LSP through the Stronger Communities Thematic Partnership, will ensure they receive an annual progress report on community led planning across Central Bedfordshire. The LSP will use analysed community led planning data to inform the delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy.

Community-led planning leads to service areas having a greater understanding of individual localities. It provides evidence for Councillors of local conditions, priorities and issues and provides an opportunity for closer participation at a very local level. The process can also bring together different communities in the locality, thereby improving cohesion.

There is already a well developed process for parish planning. There are 71 Town and Parish Councils and seven Parish Meetings in the Central Bedfordshire area. Of those, over half are currently active in the process of creating, finalising or showing an interest in parish plans. Where a Town or Parish Council wants a Plan this will be encouraged.

The Local Authority recognises that there is no one size fits all approach to the management of town centres. The decision on whether a town has a Town Centre Management Committee, or a broader Town Committee, will be determined by the relevant Town Council. Thereafter, the option for this to be a Joint Committee and part of Central Bedfordshire Council's constitution will be subject to joint discussion and agreement by both parties. The benefits of being included in the constitution are:

- a common understanding of the key issues;
- shared ownership and decision-making; and
- strong links with the Local Authority's Executive to influence policy and strategy.

Where a Town Council decides not to have a Town Centre Management Committee, the Local Authority will continue to work in partnership with the Town Council on developing its retail centre.

For each Town Centre Committee/Partnership, upon request, a senior officer from the Local Authority will be identified to attend meetings on a regular basis and be the single point of contact for Town Centre issues. Each Partnership will be encouraged to develop a Town Centre Action Plan. The format and direction of this will be led by the partnership but, if required, assistance in developing the plans will be provided by Local Authority Officers. The Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth & Regeneration, assisted by relevant Local Authority Officers, will meet with the Chairs of the Town Centre Committees/Partnerships on a quarterly basis. This group will discuss common issues and ensure direct access to all of the Local Authority's service areas.

Neighbourhood Plans have been developed for the three priority areas of Downside, Parkside and Tithe Farm.

16. **Town and Parish Council Conferences:** The Local Authority has committed to hosting two Town and Parish Council Conferences each year. This will enable two way dialogue and agreement on any joint plans.
17. **Identifying opportunities for devolving services, and budgets, to Town and Parish Councils:** The Local Authority and its partners will work closely with Town and Parish Councils to devolve budgets for 'quality of life' services to those who want them and where the service will be enhanced by doing so. Each application to deliver a devolved service must be supported by a robust business case that demonstrates improved value for money.

Devolved budgets would be distributed by allocating the pro-rata costs for delivering the same service on a broader area-wide basis.

18. **Supporting clusters of Town and Parish Councils working together to resolve common issues:** Town and Parish Councils will be supported to work together on finding local solutions to common issues.
19. **Provide a key contact from Central Bedfordshire Council for each Town and Parish Council:** A key contact from the Local Authority will be named for each Town and Parish Council. Appropriate senior-level representation will be provided in response to requests for Local Authority attendance at Town and Parish Council meetings.

Principle Four: Building the capacity of local people to engage

To achieve effective engagement we need to ensure that, where necessary, we develop our citizens and communities to have the knowledge and skills to influence decision-making.

20. **Community Development - helping people to form or join groups that influence decisions:** Community development is the process of building people's knowledge, skills, confidence and therefore a sense of empowerment. It enables people to act together on their common priorities, usually through the development of independent community organisations and networks, and with the support of community development workers within statutory or Third Sector organisations.

Disadvantaged communities need additional support to help them to access services though the complexity of public services and structures in their neighbourhoods and to tackle exclusion and poverty. Without active intervention and investment in community development the danger is that community engagement will reinforce unequal access and could lead to tensions.

The Stronger Communities Thematic Partnership will lead with the Community Engagement Delivery Group to develop a common approach to community development work, which can be provided by BRCC, Voluntary and Community Action, Groundwork and other organisations.

21. **Support the development and implementation of a Volunteering Strategy with the aim of increasing participation:** One of our Local Area Agreement (LAA) targets is to increase volunteering. This involves partners working together to develop and implement a volunteering strategy.

Volunteers could provide a useful resource for the community and partners in realising the vision of this strategy. Volunteers working alongside community engagement officers would provide capacity and local knowledge to design and deliver engagement activities. Officers working with volunteers will need training as will the volunteers working on community engagement. This training can be provided by Voluntary and Community Action, who will lead on developing the volunteering strategy. They are also able to support statutory, and other, partners to develop their own volunteer programmes.

The Local Authority will also be developing a volunteering strategy for young people as part of the Positive Contribution section of the Children and Young People's Plan.

22. **Three-year funding agreements with Third Sector organisations:** Third Sector organisations are already involved in local activities, and the new duties for authorities to respond to petitions and provide enhanced powers for overview and scrutiny will give third sector organisations increased opportunities to involve local people in influencing Local Authority decisions.

Third Sector organisations also encourage communities to take action themselves. This can range from informal activity, such as self-help groups for older people, to managing a community asset. These organisations can help to improve and fill gaps in public services.

Third sector organisations can also act as a useful conduit for contacting and engaging with vulnerable and marginalised groups, specifically the more hidden communities (e.g. transgender people).

Third sector groups should continue to be funded appropriately for their community engagement and development activities, particularly those able to reach out to marginalised and vulnerable communities.

Three-year funding agreements will enable Third Sector organisations to plan ahead, recruit, retain and train staff, and provide business continuity. In addition, Third Sector organisations are able to draw down central and regional funds directly and contribute in their own right to the partnership and the actions of this strategy.

23. **Support the development of a Third Sector Assembly:** This strategy supports the creation of a Third Sector Assembly. The Assembly will facilitate community involvement and consultation with the LSP and other partners. It will also have a role in empowering the Third Sector to have a strong voice and an active involvement in influencing strategic planning and service delivery decisions that shape the communities in which they operate.
24. **Pilot a learning programme for local people interested in civic participation and engagement:** We will identify under-represented groups of the community and the barriers to their participation and develop and pilot a modular learning programme that is experiential, flexible and learner-centred, and will develop the following competencies among participants:
- Knowledge of 'how the public sector world works' – including specifics around local governance and decision-making processes across all public sector agencies
 - Understanding power & influence
 - Principles of citizenship and civil society
 - Collaboration and co-operation
 - Participatory budgeting
 - Practical skills development
 - Self-confidence
 - Assertiveness and making yourself heard
 - How to influence decisions and policies
 - ESOL with a citizenship core agenda

The programmes will be based on the national Take Part framework, and we will learn from Pathfinder Hubs. Opportunities will include shadowing, mentoring, interactive workshops and visits to see local governance in action. The programme will also signpost participants to available active citizenship opportunities.

25. **Projects to develop the engagement capacity of young people:** Young people need to be encouraged to participate as they are often underrepresented in engagement activities. It is important to encourage their participation from an early age so as adults they continue to feel able to engage. A number of projects designed to increase the capacity of young people will be delivered as part of this strategy and the Children and Young Peoples Plan. These include, Local democracy week, Black History Month, youth thematic conferences and youth elections.
26. **Community Asset Transfer:** Public authorities are being encouraged to revitalise localities by passing buildings over to community control. This follows recommendations by the Quirk Review that showed the risks were worth it and that it empowered communities. Government has set up an Asset Transfer Unit to raise the profile of asset transfer, and offer information, advice and expert support to people across England.

The LSP partners will prepare a policy framework for asset transfer to build on current experience and best practice and provide a clear policy framework for responding to any requests for asset transfer. It should also include what safeguards will be put in place to adequately protect those assets, and the capacity building measures to enable local communities to manage assets effectively.

Principle Five: Ensuring a strategic and joined-up, coordinated partnership approach

By sharing opportunities, resources and learning with partners and across directorates, we will save money, avoid duplication, and reduce engagement fatigue for our communities. In doing so we will also develop a clear and consistent 'One View' about what our communities really want.

27. **Implement the partnership's communication plan:** The LSP has agreed a communications strategy to ensure that key audiences are informed and involved in its work. The strategy was developed with representatives from the Bedfordshire Communications Network, including the Local Authority, Police, Fire, Health, Higher Education and the Third Sector. The strategy sets out a series of communications objectives and a range of actions for implementation.
28. **Develop a joint toolkit for consultation and engagement work:** This will involve building on the key principles set out above and consolidating any guidance already in place. Professionals working with the community have asked for a toolkit based on best practice nationally.

A network of community engagement practitioners in Central Bedfordshire will be established and they will meet twice per year to share good practice and learning and feed into the joint consultation and engagement plan.

29. **Joint consultation and engagement plan:** Individual partner organisations and Local Authority service teams will retain responsibility for specific consultations as part of a joint consultation plan, which will be developed and coordinated by the Community Engagement Delivery Group. The plan will be produced annually and continuously reviewed and updated.

Statutory sector partners should work together to develop and maintain a consultation database showing actual or anticipated start and end dates for planned consultation exercises, and contact details of those leading the exercise. This database could also be used to record participation levels (including minority and vulnerable groups) and evaluate the effectiveness of different approaches.

A shared consultation database will enable the partners to identify opportunities for joining up on consultation activity; reduce duplication and therefore consultation fatigue; share learning and consultation findings. The database should also be made available to the public via the internet to enable residents and stakeholders to find out about future consultations and how they can get involved and to also find out about the findings and outcomes from past consultations.

Each partner organisation will have its own communication plan and own programme of public engagement. However under this strategy the Community Engagement Delivery Group will identify which elements of the engagement programmes could be integrated or coordinated with others. The Delivery Group will publish a joint public engagement calendar of activities including dates of forthcoming consultations.

30. **Coordinating representation at community events:** The role of the Community Engagement Officers will be to coordinate community engagement activity within the Local Authority and with partners. Opportunities to promote the Local Authority, its services, partner services and engage with the public should be maximised. The officers will identify the main community events in their area and coordinate Local Authority service representatives to ensure that the three frontline directorates are always represented. The Councillors will be notified of all events in their wards and

invited to attend. Partners will also be notified. The team will also coordinate an exhibition/stand as often as possible at each of the seven main town centres.

31. **Shared stakeholder database:** Partner organisations have a number of stakeholder and community contact databases held separately. The Community Engagement Manager will lead on building a consolidated stakeholder database, which is updated automatically whenever the individually held databases are updated.

As part of this project partners will investigate the possibility of implementing a suitable software system, which will enable community organisations to access the database and communicate more easily with partner organisations.

32. **Shared community intelligence, information and customer insight:** It is recommended that partner organisations consider investment in a joint system to share appropriate data, information and intelligence relating to Central Bedfordshire and its communities. This central repository will improve access to information and promote the consistent use of intelligence to support our strategic decision-making. Parts of the system could be accessed by the public (as appropriate) whilst secure access could be made available to partners as necessary. This system could be developed into an interactive website for residents to provide local information.
33. **Partner learning programme:** When commissioning external training on consultation and engagement skills, partners will be asked to consider inviting other partners to join to maximise the benefits of training and provide better value for money on training.
34. **Reporting to residents on the impact of engagement:** In addition to other communication and feedback, there will be an annual consolidated report to residents on the nature, scale and outcome of engagement activities in the previous year.
35. **Pilot an approach for joint and devolved partnership working that tests the delivery of collaborative working between the partners:** Engagement should reflect what our communities want to influence and include a clear, published framework that explains how we will enable them to do so. This should include key issues residents have told us are the most important to them, such as crime, roads and growth (jobs and housing density). The LSP Board should identify a key local theme and use this to set up and test a local consultation approach.

7. Structures to support community engagement

Coordination of Community Engagement Work

To deliver this strategy effectively it is proposed that a Community Engagement Manager be appointed to work with officers and partners involved in community engagement. The focus of this work will be to:

- manage the day-to-day implementation of this strategy;
- monitor quality and evaluate the impact of consultation and community engagement;
- share/disseminate learning and build capacity to deliver effective community engagement;
- coordinate consultation and engagement activities with partners and across Local Authority directorates;

- assist (as appropriate) with the design and delivery of community engagement activities; particularly in setting up and supporting mechanisms to engage with minority or vulnerable groups; and
- support ward Councillors in carrying out their community leadership role, including the provision of appropriate information, intelligence and community insight.

8. How success will be measured

The Local Strategic Partnership is committed to engaging with local communities and has agreed the following, to measure the success of this strategy:

- Evaluating all engagement and consultation activities, including accessing participation levels and involvement of minority groups, and those disadvantaged by deprivation eg. poverty.
- Annual residents' survey (including the biannual Place Survey) to measure achievement of three of our Local Area Agreement targets:
 - To increase the percentage of residents who participate in civic activities from 12.6% to 16.2% (*National Indicator 3*);
 - To increase the percentage of residents who feel that they can influence decisions affecting their locality from 23.8% to 28% (*National Indicator 4*);
 - To increase the percentage of people who say that they participate in regular volunteering from 24.3% to 27.1% (*National Indicator 6*).
- National Place Survey every two years.
 - In the 2008 Place Survey (a postal survey with 2,828 responses), residents told us that:
 - 60% do not feel informed about how to make a complaint;
 - 57% do not feel informed about how to get involved in local decision making;
 - 34% agree Central Bedfordshire Council listens to the concerns of residents;
 - 33% agree Central Bedfordshire Council act on the concerns of local residents; and
 - 30% agree that they can have an influence on local decision (*National Indicator 4*), 60% disagree;
 - 60% said they do not know the name of their local Councillors.
- Comprehensive Area Assessment.
- Evaluating the outcome of local participatory budgeting projects.
- Feedback from ward Councillors and Town and Parish Councils.
- National and local Third Sector survey data.
- Scrutiny by the Local Authority's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, including monitoring the use of Petitions and Councillor Calls for Action and participation of the public in scrutiny work.
- Evaluating customer feedback.

9. Our values in delivering the strategy

This strategy provides for a consistent approach for consultation on Local Authority and partner activity whilst recognising that one size will not fit all when engaging communities. We recognise that people are busy and life can be stressful and we want to make sure that engagement is meaningful and rewarding.

We want to ensure that public engagement is undertaken with a clear sense of purpose. We will use the best practice methods for gathering the views of our communities. We want to build on the skills and knowledge of all those currently involved in engagement work including Councillors, partners and officers of the Local Authority. We want to ensure that there is a commitment to learning for continuous improvement.

With this in mind all community engagement work in Central Bedfordshire should be:

- **Planned:** engagement and consultation activities should be well planned in terms of the approach, principles and methods used.
- **Timely:** engagement and consultation should be timely, begun at the earliest appropriate time and that all who express an interest have the time to ensure their views are heard.
- **Transparent:** the rationale for engagement and consultation and what is and is not open to influence and change should be made clear. Engagement and consultation should be genuinely open to influence and change, be meaningful and undertaken without preconceptions.
- **Inclusive:** engagement should be broadly representative of those that would be affected by the decisions that might result from engagement. Careful consideration should be given to who will be engaged, so as to be as inclusive as possible, whilst bearing in mind the need to take proactive steps to genuinely engage minority and vulnerable sections of the community.
- **Proportionate:** the nature, scale and scope of each engagement and consultation activity should be proportionate to the resources available and the scale of the outcomes.
- **Resourced:** careful consideration should be given, on a case by case basis, to any resource implications and the most appropriate methods used to avoid duplication and ensure value for money.
- **Evaluated:** review and evaluation will be built in to all engagement and consultation work.
- **Published:** outcomes of all engagement and consultation work will be publicised and participants given feedback on the outcomes.

These principles are consistent with the Bedfordshire and Luton Compact¹ (*Getting it right together*).

¹ The Compact is the agreement between local statutory organisations and the local voluntary and community sector to improve their relationship for the benefit of each other and the communities they serve. The Compact was adopted by the LSP in April 2009.

Delivery Plan - Community Engagement Strategy, Implementation

Purpose:
 The aim of this Community Engagement Strategy is to deliver greater added value to our citizens by understanding their needs and issues, and giving them a greater involvement in the decision-making process and access to public sector services. The strategy is based on five key principles, and this delivery plan outlines the deliverables for each principle.

Contact name	Peter Fraser Head of Partnerships & Community Engagement
Email address	peter.fraser@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

PRINCIPLE: Giving more people more opportunities to influence decisions

	Key Activities (Description)	Deliverables (Output)	Lead Officer	Milestones	Outcomes
1	Develop a joint E-Panel for Citizens	Recruit circa 800 residents to a new electronic citizens panel.	Consultation Manager	Year 1 Recruitment completed by September	Will provide a source of people to feedback to the public services re prevailing issues via online surveys and discussions. Active involvement and engagement in local issues by residents.
		This panel could be extended to include all of the major public agencies and Bedford and Luton authorities.	Consultation Manager	Years 2-3	Better use of resources and coordination of cross border engagement.
2	Petitions and E Petitions	Information about Petitions their purpose and how local people can use them will be circulated by a variety of means, newsletters/ website etc.	Head of Democratic Services, External Comms Manager	Year 1- by 15 th December 2010	An opportunity for local people to raise concerns and raise local issues. Opportunity for local people to set agendas that matter to them.

		Mechanisms will be put in place to receive and respond appropriately to any petitions coming forward.	Democratic Services team		Residents feel better able to influence decisions.
3	Scrutiny	Explore the best ways for the community to contribute to the overview and scrutiny function of the local authority.	Corporate Scrutiny Manager	Year 2	Residents feel better able to influence decisions.
4	Specialist Forums and Citizen Governance	Map and provide an analysis of existing forums their remit and purpose.	Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement and Voluntary Sector Leads	Year 1	A clear picture of what currently exists within Central Bedfordshire. Identification of any gaps that may exist and recommendations about other activity that could be put in place to ensure that all have opportunities to contribute.
		Implement the six national standards set out by the Tenants Services Authority	Tenant Involvement Manager	Year 1 June-Sept Consultation October Annual report	Identification of any duplication within the current arrangements.
5	Sustainable Communities Act	Publicise the use of the Act in the Local Authority (and amongst other partners) via newsletters and publications. Prompt suggestions from residents, community groups and others on how it could be used. Seek the views of councillors about issues in their communities. Identify an appropriate panel of local representatives to review the proposals.	Consultation Manager, Engagement Manager, External Comms Manager, Assistant Directors in Sustainable Communities	Year 1 – depending upon national policy	Communities have information which they can act upon if they choose, and are involved in the design of those opportunities. Local Community champions engaged in the process. Community reviews and sets the agenda for any issues to be taken forward.

6	Social Networking	Establish a partnership website/ social networking place where online forums can gather views and generate discussions about prevailing local issues. This could be extended to include other partners.	Consultation Manager	Year 1 June - December	Further opportunity and way for local people to be engaged and contribute views.
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PRINCIPLE: Enabling Councillors to be leaders in and for their communities					
	Key Activities (Description)	Deliverables (Output)	Lead Officer	Milestones	Outcomes
7	Provide Councillors with relevant ward-based intelligence, information and customer insight	Issue and update Central Bedfordshire crib sheet (area profile).	Customer & Community Insight Manager	Updated quarterly	Enables consistent use of facts and figures about the area to inform decision-making, particularly at a ward level.
		Issue and update ward based profiles.	Customer & Community Insight Manager	Updated annually (April)	
		Monthly update by email to all Councillors to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • completed, current and future Local Authority consultations; • complaints to the Local Authority; • community events (e.g. fetes and shows); • Town and Parish Council meetings; • Key partnership meetings; • Grants available to communities; and • Partner consultation & engagement activities. 	Customer & Community Insight Manager and Engagement Manager	Pilot with a small number of Councillors before a full roll out from September 2010	Ensure Councillors are well informed about activities taking place, or planned, in the wards they represent. Enable Councillors to play a lead role in and for their communities.
		Develop a web page for each ward to include all ward specific information listed above.	Web Content Manager, Customer & Community Insight Manager and Engagement Manager	By Dec 2010	

		Issue a “handy guide” to the main Local Authority services (particularly Planning and Highways).	Engagement Manager and HOS Highways	By Sept 2010	Ensure Councillors understand how communities can influence those things that matter to them most.
8	Individual Councillor budgets	Identify sources of discretionary spend from within the Local Authority that could be diverted to fund Individual Councillor Budgets.	Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement	Year 2	Enables Councillors to play a lead role in supporting their local communities.
		Issue guidelines to help Councillors in their decision making about how to spend the money.			
		Develop a record keeping system for recording how the budgets have been sent.			
		Review budget allowance and process.			
9	Support for scrutiny, Councillor Call for Action and response to petitions	Develop a “handy guide” for Councillors and the public on the variety of methods communities can use to raise issues with the Local Authority (e.g. CCfA, petitions, SCA).	Engagement Manager and Democratic Services	By Sept 2010	Ensure Councillors understand how communities can raise issues.
10	Greater role and involvement in partnerships	Develop a “handy guide” to key partnerships in Central Bedfordshire.	Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement and Engagement Manager	By Sept 2010	Enable Councillors to understand what partnerships exist, what their remit is and how they can get involved.
		Develop a partnership newsletter and include all ward Councillors in the distribution list.	Partnership Adviser	Quarterly, starting in May 2010	

		Ensure the early involvement of Councillors in the major decisions made by the LSP, such as the LAA and Sustainable Community Strategy.	Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement	From April 2010	Improved partnership working, delivering better outcomes for local people.
		Ward members to be invited to Central Bedfordshire Forum meetings.	Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement	Date of next Forum to be agreed	
11	Establish links with Third Sector organisations	Develop a “handy guide” to the third sector in Central Bedfordshire and the Compact Agreement.	Engagement Manager, and Voluntary and Community Action	By Sept 2010	
		Keep members informed of key issues affecting the third sector (to be included in the partnership newsletter).	Partnership Adviser	From May 2010	
12	Case management system for Councillors	Continue to research a case management system and present to Councillors for a final decision.	Customer Relations Manager	Years 2-3	

13	Member development of community engagement skills	<p>Develop Councillor briefing sessions on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT skills (email, calendar, internet, PDA); • Statutory duties and role of Members in community engagement; • How to scrutinise consultation / community engagement; • Understanding cultural differences; • Listening skills; • Conflict resolution; • How to say no; • Facilitation skills; • Chairing public meetings; and • Consensus building. 	Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement and Head of Democratic Services		
14	Dedicated officer support	Set up a dedicated telephone number for the helpdesk for Councillors to use to ensure a fast response.	Head of Customer Services	Year 1	

PRINCIPLE: Enhancing the role of Town & Parish Councils					
	Key Activities (Description)	Deliverables (Output)	Lead Officer	Milestones	Outcomes
15	Community-led planning, including Town Centre Management and Neighbourhood Plans for Priority Estates	Encourage and support the development of community-led plans (Town & Parish Plans).	Community Involvement Team Leader	Year 1	Involve residents in determining local priorities for their own communities.
		Develop a mechanism to ensure community issues raised in the plans are used to inform local strategies, policies and plans.	Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement	Year 1	Develop community insight to inform policies and plans.
		All Town Councils to be formally contacted by Central Bedfordshire Council by end of May 2010 to invite them to develop a Town Centre Partnership.	Business Growth Manager	Year 1	Town Councils will be able to determine the best approach to town centre management in their areas.
		Options for constitutional links to Central Bedfordshire Town Centre Action Plans in place by end of July 2010, for those that wish to have them.			
Where necessary, Officer Groups will be set up and the first meetings scheduled by September 2010.					

		<p>Existing Neighbourhood plans (Downside and Parkside /Tithe Farm) are linked to LSP plans and targets and in particular the work of thematic/statutory partnerships.</p> <p>Specific targets in the plans to be monitored by the LSP's thematic/statutory partnerships.</p>	<p>Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement and Engagement Manager</p>	<p>Year 1 from October 2010</p>	<p>Helps reduce inequality by integrating the work in the neighbourhood plans into that of the LSP strategic planning and delivery.</p> <p>Ensures that the most deprived areas in the authority are included in mainstream planning and delivery.</p>
16	Town & Parish Council Conferences	<p>Two Town and Parish Council conferences will be held each year.</p> <p>A detailed report will be provided following each event. Feedback on any actions taken will be provided at subsequent events.</p>	<p>Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement</p>	<p>Year 1, 2, and 3</p>	<p>Engagement between partners and Town and Parish Councils Issues of joint concern raised and discussed.</p> <p>Integrates local level activity with the vision and priorities in the Sustainable Community Strategy.</p>
17	Identifying opportunities for devolving services and budgets to Town & Parish Councils	<p>Work with Town/ Parish Councils to test and pilot the viability of service and budget devolution.</p>	<p>Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement</p>	<p>Year 1</p>	<p>Enables communities to determine for themselves how services in their area should be delivered.</p>
		<p>Further opportunities for devolving services identified and would build upon lessons learned from pilot / case study.</p>	<p>Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement</p>	<p>Year 2 and 3</p>	

PRINCIPLE: Building the capacity of local people to engage					
	Key Activities (Description)	Deliverables (Output)	Lead Officer	Milestones	Outcomes
20	Community Development – helping people to form or join groups that influence decisions	Identify opportunities for people to be involved in, inform and influence decision making.	Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement	Year 1	Directory of forums and structures that exist within the authority area.
		Identify people who are or want to get involved in local decision making activities/ opportunities through volunteering.	Third sector partners	Year 1	Poll of people to engage or include in local consultation and engagement activities.
		Explore the option of establishing an active citizen hub which coordinates and supports the involvement of local people in the work of partners and the partnership.	Third sector partners	Year 2	
21	Support the development and implementation of a Volunteering Strategy with the aim of increasing participation	Create a volunteering strategy for the partnership.	Director, Voluntary and Community Action	Year 1	Framework that sets out the partnership’s aims in recruiting and involving volunteers.

22	Three Year funding agreements with Third Sector organisations	Agree three year funding agreements.	Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement	Year 2	More secure and sustainable core funding for third sector organisations. Medium term investment in staff and resources. Secure funding for organisations which carry out engagement and development activities.
23	Support the development of a Third Sector Assembly	Continue to support the programme of the Third Sector assemblies. Use the Assembly to promote and facilitate opportunities for joint activity between and across organisations.	Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement and Voluntary & Community Action	Year 1, 2 and 3	Broaden the structured engagement of third sector organisations. Mechanism for bringing forward broad and inclusive representation from the third sector to the LSP.
24	Pilot a learning programme for local people interested in civic participation and engagement	Identify learning needs of those people and organisations involved in local decision making structures.	Head of Partnerships and	Year 2	Basis for pilot programme established.
		Design a pilot programme and seek funding to meet those needs.	Community Engagement with the Stronger Communities Partnership Theme Lead and Community Engagement Delivery Group	Year 3	Programme tested and evaluated Lessons learned are used to put in place future programmes.

25	Projects to develop the engagement capacity of young people	Links made and support provided to the Children’s Trust and others working with young people in both formal and informal environments (e.g. Youth Parliament).	Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement	Years 1, 2 and 3	Young people included in partnership deliberation, their voices heard and influence felt in activities and service delivery.
26	Community Asset Transfer	Town and Parish Councils and third sector organisations to identify if there are local assets in their community that may benefit from transfer to community management. Feasibility process undertaken as to whether proposals brought forward are viable and tenable for transfer, and ensure appropriate safeguards are put in place to protect those assets.	Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement and Head of Integrated Youth Support	Year 1,2 and 3	System established to test the viability of any transfer opportunity.

PRINCIPLE: Ensuring a strategic and joined up, coordinated partnership approach					
	Key Activities (Description)	Deliverables (Output)	Lead Officer	Milestones	Outcomes
27	Implement the partnership's communication plan	Produce an implementation plan.	Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement and AD Communications	Year 1 September – December 2010	Communication plan is owned by and will reflect the views of all partners.
28	Develop a joint toolkit for consultation and engagement work	Review current local practice, including the skills of local practitioners and arrangements for training to use licensed products.	Community Engagement Delivery Group and Engagement Manager	Year 1 September-December 2010	Acknowledge good local practice.
		Review good engagement practice in other places.	Community Engagement Delivery Group and Engagement Manager	Year 1 September – December 2010	Make use of relevant good practice elsewhere.
		Develop and devise a toolkit appropriate to Central Bedfordshire.	Community Engagement Delivery Group, Engagement Manager and Consultation Manager	Year 1 January - March	A toolkit for all partners to ensure quality and a consistent approach.

29	Joint consultation and engagement plan	Produce an annual plan that sets out planned Local Authority and partner organisation's key consultation and engagement activities.	Community Engagement Delivery Group	Year 1	A joined up and coordinated approach amongst key partner organisations, leading to greater efficiency and effectiveness.
		Establish a shared consultation database	Consultation Manager	Year 2	Ensure coordination of consultation activity.
30	Coordinating representation at community events	Develop a directory of events and update as new events are programmed.	External Comms Manager	Year 1, 2, 3	Ensures that the right staff / officers attend the appropriate meetings through the year. Consistent approach to community relations.
		Coordinate representation at appropriate events.	Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement		
31	Establish Shared stakeholder database	Create a shared database that links engagement across the Local Authority.	Consultation Manager and External Comms Manager	Year 1	Having a shared database will enable the Local Authority and its partners to know who its communities are and how they can be contacted.
		Lead discussions with partners about consolidating all existing and relevant partner databases in to one and which retains links back to host partners own database.	Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement	Year 2	More efficient use of resources.
		Identify software that enables partners to make use of the contacts for engagement and consultation work.	Partner Communication Leads	Year 2	More efficient use of resources.
		Put in place a shared stakeholder database.	Partner Communication Leads	Year 2	Database will maintain records of the engagement undertaken and who has been involved so avoiding duplication and multiple targeting of groups and individuals.

32	Shared community intelligence information and community insight	Develop a joint system that is cross partnership and holds appropriate data, information and intelligence relating to Central Bedfordshire and its communities.	Customer & Community Insight Manager	Year 1 – development work Year 2-3	Improve access to information and promote the consistent use of intelligence to support strategic decision making.
33	Partner Learning Programme	Develop a learning programme for staff/ officers/ volunteers involved in engagement and partnership related work based on: Liaison with all partners about current learning needs and existing learning programme support; Identification of gaps in learning programme support; Design any additional and required joint learning programme needs and identify how they will be resourced and delivered.	Community Engagement Delivery Group, Engagement Manager and Learning & Development	Year 2-3	Upgrade the skills base of individuals across the partnership. Deliver joint training programmes (multi disciplinary) supporting the joint work undertaken on behalf of the partnership.
34	Reporting to residents on the impact of engagement	Mechanisms developed to feedback to residents on progress of engagement activity, outcomes and their involvement in the various engagement mechanisms (Cross reference to Communication Plan).	External Comms Manager	Year 2-3	Residents can see the impact of engagement.
35	Pilot an approach for joint and devolved partnership working that tests the delivery of collaborative working between the partners	Identify a key local theme (e.g. The Growth Agenda) and use this to set up and test a local consultation approach. Review and evaluate how well this works and identify lessons learned that can be fed into the Year 2 Delivery Plan.	Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement, Consultation Manager and Engagement Manager	Year 1 September 2010 – March 2011	Residents feel informed and involved in making decisions on issues that impact most on their quality of life

Meeting: Customer & Central Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Date: 14 June 2011
Subject: Treasury Management Annual Report
Report of: Cllr Maurice Jones, Executive Member for Corporate Resources
Summary: The report provides an update on treasury management activity for financial year 2010/11.

Advising Officer: Richard Ellis, Director of Customer & Shared Services
Contact Officer: John Unsworth, Interim Assistant Director Financial Services
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Executive/Council
Key Decision No
**Reason for urgency/
exemption from call-in
(if appropriate)** Not applicable

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

The effective management of the treasury management activities to optimise return and reduce associated borrowing cost, with the objective of security and liquidity of funds.

Financial:

None arising from the report.

Legal:

None

Risk Management:

Activities during 2010/11 have been undertaken in line with the Council's Treasury Management Strategy. This Strategy takes a risk based approach the manner in which borrowing and investments are managed.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

None

Equalities/Human Rights:

None

Community Safety:

None

Sustainability:

None

RECOMMENDATION(S):

- 1. That the Customer & Central Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee considers the report and submits comments to the Executive and Council if considered necessary.**

Reason for Recommendation(s): Monitoring of the treasury management performance is in line with the requirements of Central Bedfordshire's Treasury Management Strategy.

Introduction

1. Central Bedfordshire Council approved its annual Treasury Management Policy and Strategy in February 2010. This determined the treasury activity for the 2010/11 financial year. The authority approved a new Treasury Management Policy and Strategy in February 2011 for the 2011/12 financial year. This report provides details of the performance within the last financial year.
2. Attached at Appendix A is the Treasury Management Performance Dashboard that sets out the key Treasury Management data for 2010/11.
3. Attached at Appendix B is the Annual Treasury report on performance for 2010/11 covering investments, borrowing and cashflow management and the wider economic context.
4. This is the first time that treasury data has been set out in a dashboard format. Members are invited to comment on the format and contents of the dashboard, as well as the overall report. In addition, it is expected that future treasury management reports will include a review of performance in the given quarter and a treasury context for the future outlook.

Key activity and outcomes

5. The authority has participated in a CIPFA benchmark survey and has therefore been able to evaluate its treasury management activities against 69 other local authorities to gain additional understanding of its treasury management performance in a wider context. The key benchmarked information is included within the dashboard and the report.

The data set out the dashboard is summarised as follows:

Section A	Borrowing
A1	Analysis of Debt by Lender
A2	Benchmark of Average Interest Rate Paid Compared Against Other Authorities
A3	Analysis to Show Interest Rates of Long Term Debt
A4	Maturity Profile of Long Term Debt
Section B	Investments
B1	Analysis of Investments as at 31 March 2011
B2	Average Interest Rate Received on Investments
B3	Average Balance Invested in £m
B4	Maturity Profile of Internal Investments
Section C	Cash Flow
C1	Analysis of Daily Net Cash Movement
C2	Monthly Cash Flow Analysis
C3	Analysis of Amounts Held in Call and Cash Accounts
Section D	Additional Treasury Management Information

Borrowing

6. The total borrowing of the authority as at 31st March 2011 was £156m. Of this amount, £145.7m was with the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) and £13.5m was Market Debt. The profile of debt was 68% Fixed PWLB debt, 23%, Variable PWLB debt and 9% Fixed Market debt, as shown in A1 on the Treasury Management Performance Dashboard (Appendix A).
7. The Council's total average cost of borrowing in 2010/11 was 3.4% compared to benchmark authority's average of 4.9% as shown in A2 on the Treasury Management Performance Dashboard (Appendix A). This compares favourably with other benchmarked authorities.
8. No new long term borrowing was taken out by the Council in 2010/11. Internal resources, in lieu of borrowing, were utilised during the year as to fund capital commitments. The Council only borrowed for short periods of time for cash flow purposes using temporary borrowing from the market at an average cost of 0.36%, compared to benchmark authorities' average of 0.65%.

9. As a result of the UK Base rate continuing at 0.5% the Authority has continued to benefit from the conversion of long term debt from fixed to variable rate that was originally undertaken during 2009/10. This consisted of the Council repaying £35.6m of its fixed PWLB debt averaging 4.72% and replacing it with variable rated debt which averaged 0.7%. This generated revenue savings of £1.3m (£1.2m after Premium write off) in 2010/11.
10. The Council in conjunction with its external advisers continues to look into further opportunities for debt restructuring in accordance with its Treasury Management Strategy (TMS). The TMS authorises the authority to borrow up to 35% variable debt. The Comprehensive Spending Review in October increased the cost of variable debt on new borrowing by 0.90% This has restricted the opportunities regarding the restructuring of debt.
11. The authority's TMS states that no more than 20% of the authority's debt should mature in any one financial year. *A4 on the Treasury Management Performance Dashboard (Appendix A)* shows the maturity profile of the Council's debt. This demonstrates that the highest percentage of debt maturing is 10.5% in 2015.

Investments

12. The decision to use internal resources in lieu of borrowing to fund capital expenditure had a detrimental impact on investment income, The subsequent reduction in cash availability and the UK Bank Rate being maintained at 0.5%, (which meant short-term money market rates remained at very low levels), led to an achievement of £1.4m in investment income. This compares against the budget of £1.5m. The amount of investments held at 31 March 2011 was £50.1m.
13. The Council's investment portfolio stabilised in 2010/11 with new deposits being placed between 0.8% to 2.2%. The Council was able to obtain an average rate of return of 1.7% compared to benchmark authorities' average of 1.3%, as shown in *B2 on the Treasury Management Performance Dashboard (Appendix A)*.

Cash Management

14. The range of daily cash movements in 2010/11, ranged between net payments of £17M and income of £15M. The volatility of the cash movement is set out in *C1 on the Treasury Management Performance Dashboard (Appendix A)*.
15. The gross cash movement of the Council has equated between £50m to £70m within a calendar month. In order to facilitate these cash movements the Council will typically keep up to £30M in liquid cash, that is allowed to run down, and build up in the course of the month. The range of cash outflows and inflows is set out in *C2 on the Treasury Management Performance Dashboard (Appendix A)*.

Prudential Indicators

16. The authority has remained within its prudential indicators within the 2010/11. Full details can be found in Section 8 of Appendix B to the report. These include the authorities compliance with the authorised and operational Boundaries.

Appendices:

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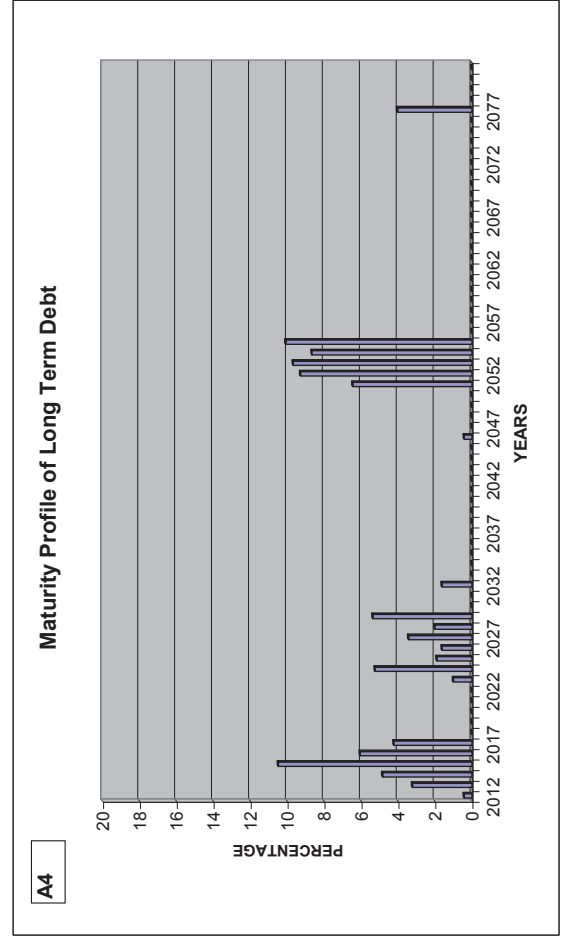
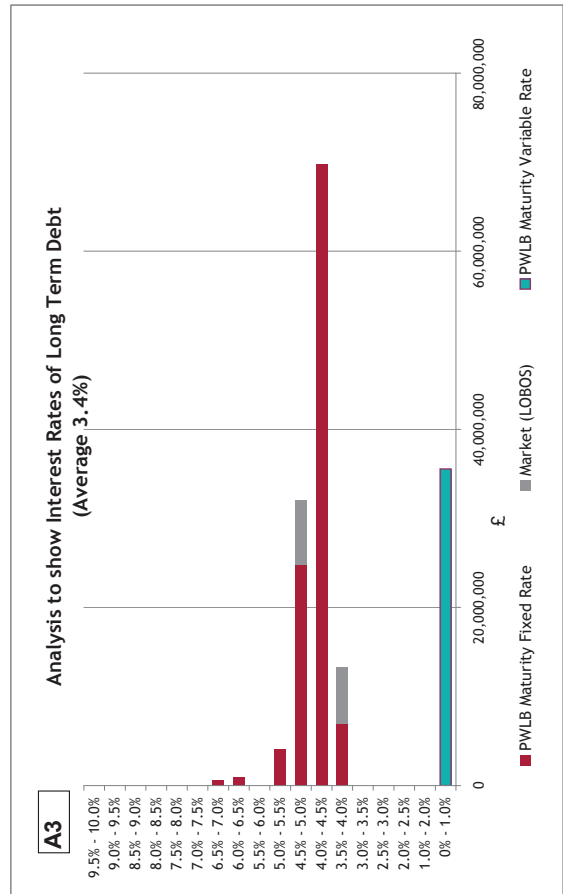
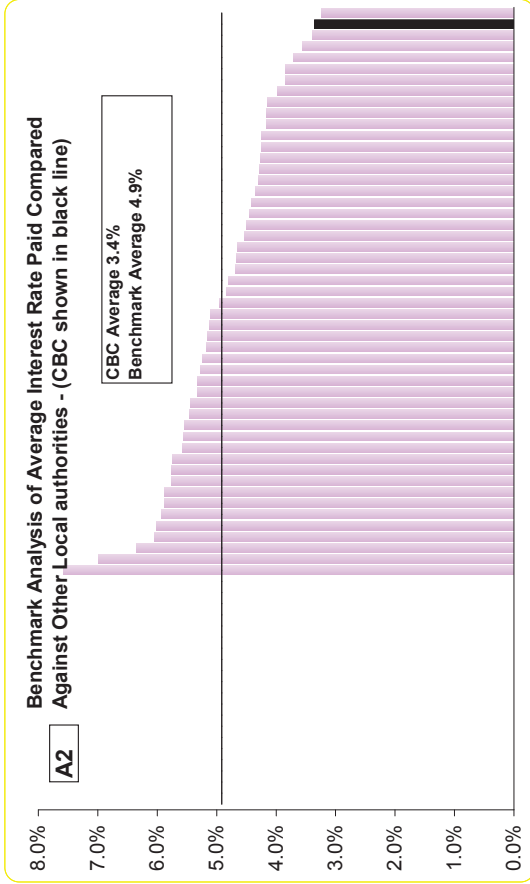
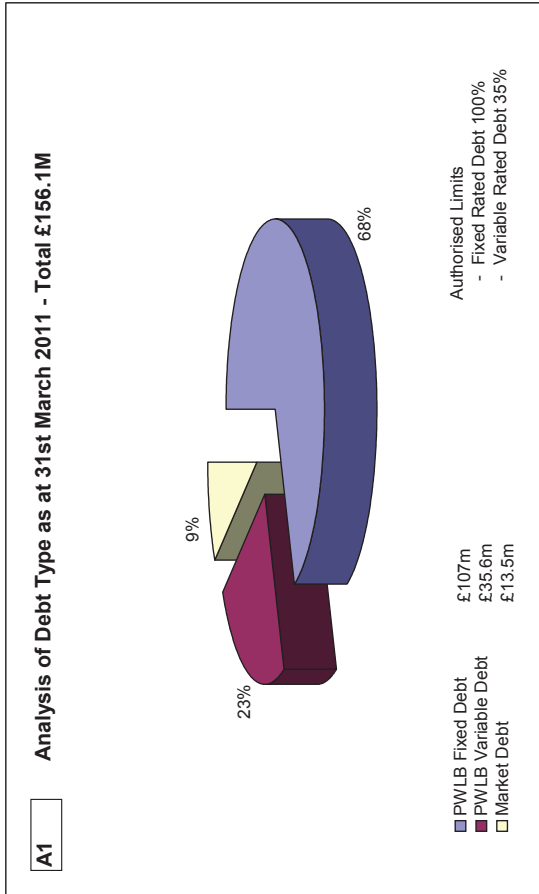
Appendix A – Treasury Management Performance Dashboard
Appendix B – Annual Treasury Management Report

Background Papers: (open to public inspection)
Treasury Management Strategy – 2010/11

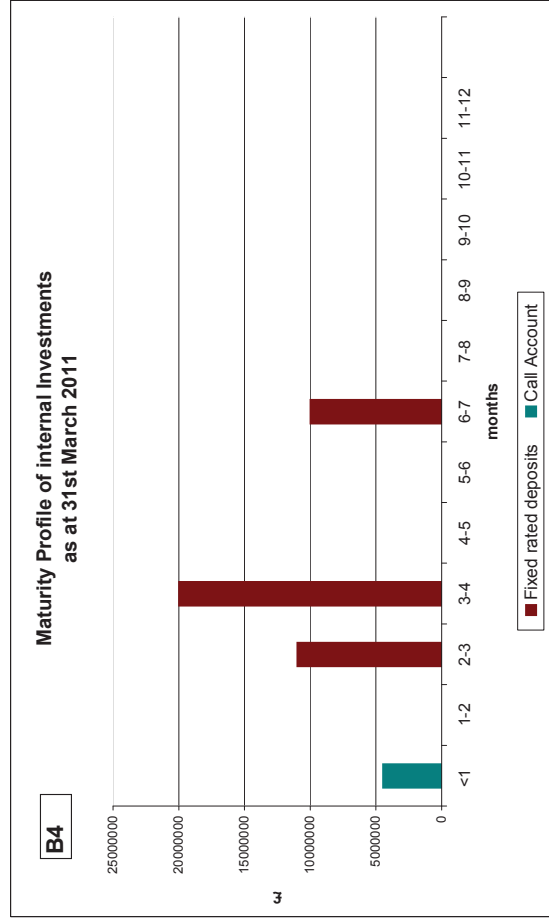
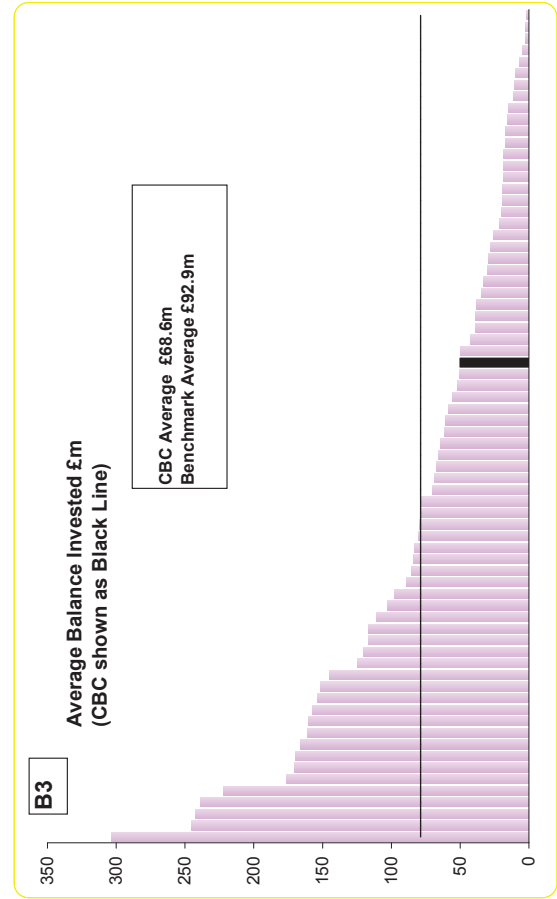
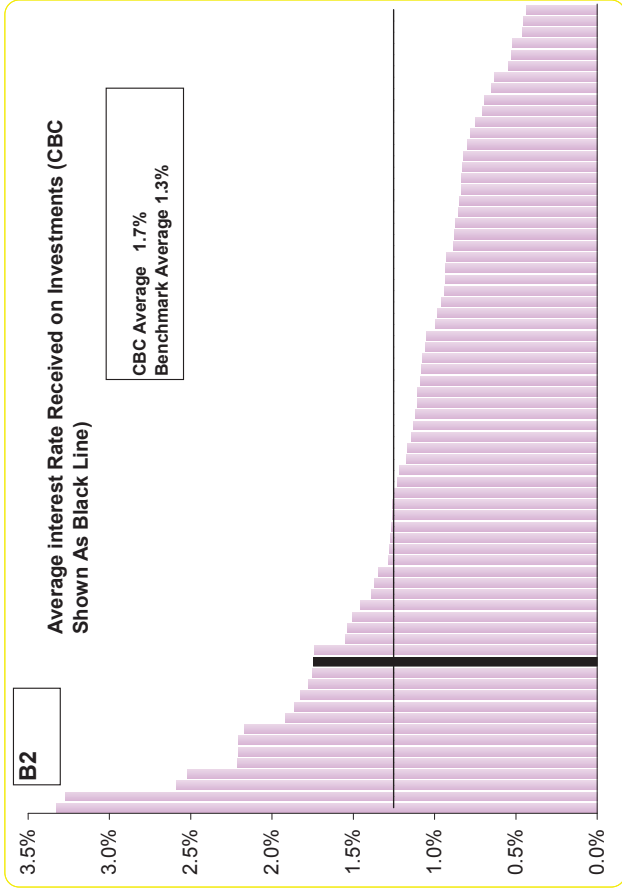
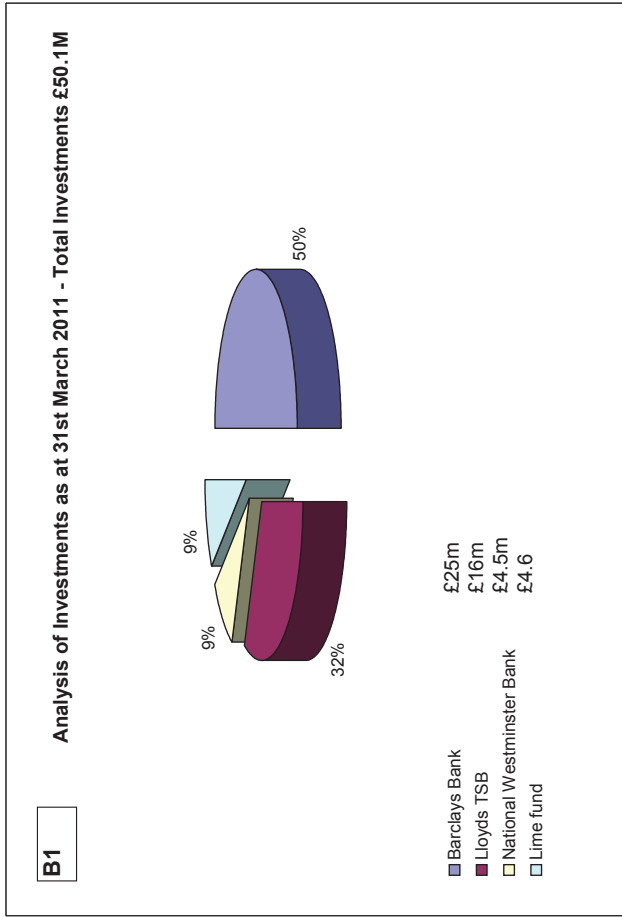
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TREASURY MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD 31st MARCH 2011

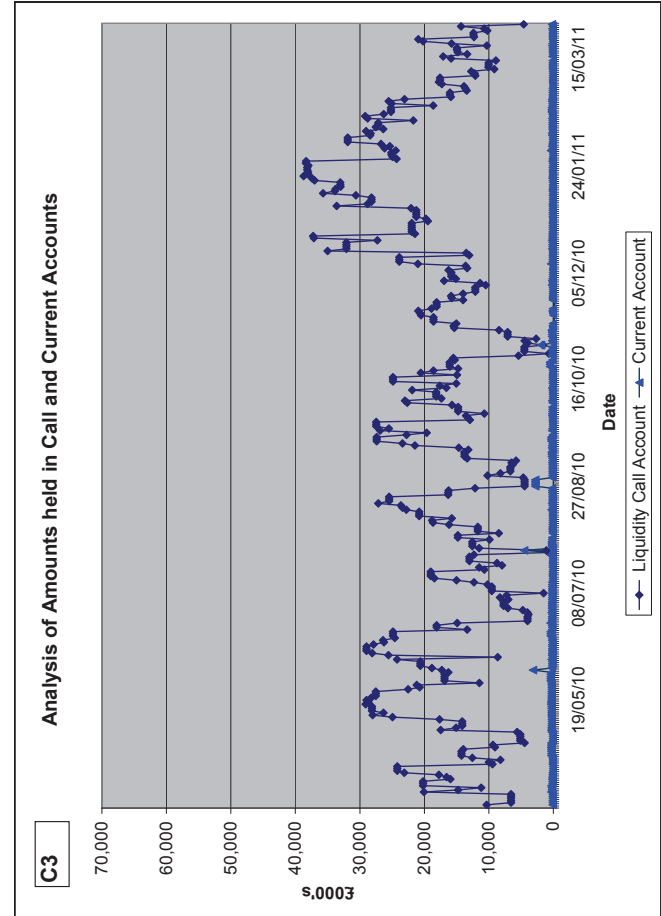
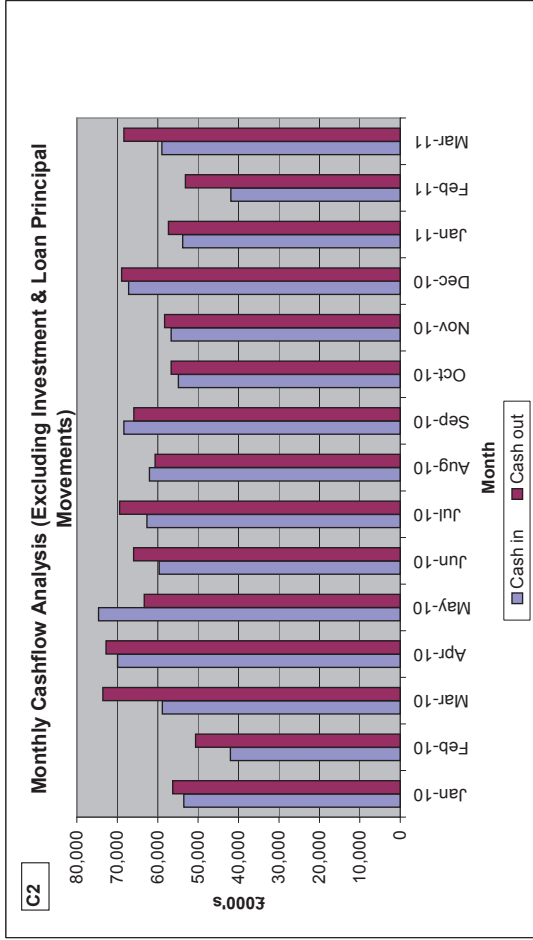
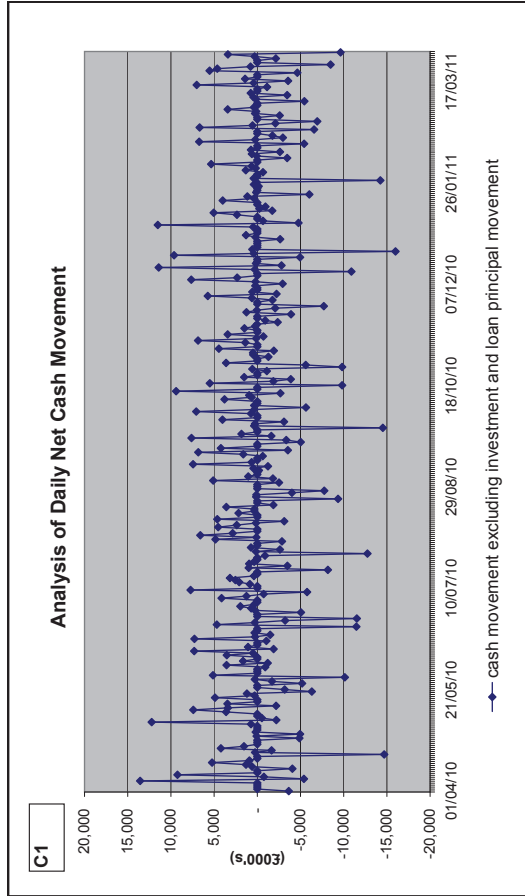
SECTION A: DEBT INFORMATION



SECTION B: INVESTMENT INFORMATION



SECTION C: CASH MANAGEMENT



Additional Treasury Information

Section A Debt

Authorised Boundary	£221m	Actual	Variance
Operational Boundary	£211m	£5.7m	£1.2m

The maturity of the councils debt is profiled in order that no more than 20% matures in any one financial year

No Breaches of Prudential Indicators

SECTION B: INVESTMENT INFORMATION

Min credit rating of counterparties A+	Budget	Actual	Variance
Max Limit with Natwest Society £30m	£1.5m	£1.4m	(£0.1m)
Max Limit with other Banks /Building Society £25m			
Max Limit with Lime Fund £10m			
Max sum invested over 364 days £20m			

No Breaches of Prudential Indicators

SECTION C: CASH MANAGEMENT

Average amount held in Liquidity	£18m
Average amount held in Current Accounts	£0.2m

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Annual Treasury Report 2010/11

1. Background

The Council's treasury management activity is underpinned by CIPFA's Code of Practice on Treasury Management ("the Code"), which requires local authorities to produce annually Prudential Indicators and a Treasury Management Strategy Statement on the likely financing and investment activity. The Code also recommends that members are informed of treasury management activities at least twice a year.

Treasury management is defined as: "The management of the local authority's investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks."

Overall responsibility for treasury management remains with the Council. No treasury management activity is without risk; the effective identification and management of risk are integral to the Council's treasury management objectives.

The report has been compiled using advice from our independent financial advisers.

2. Economic Background

At the time of determining the strategy for 2010/11, interest rates were expected to remain low in response to the fragile state of the UK economy. Spending cuts and tax increases seemed inevitable post the General Election if the government had a clear majority. The markets had, at the time, viewed a hung parliament as potentially disruptive particularly if combined with a failure to articulate a credible plan to bring down government borrowing. The outlook for growth was uncertain due to consumers and corporates trimming their spending and financial institutions exercising restraint in new lending.

The economy's two headline indicators moved in opposite directions – growth was lacklustre whilst inflation spiked sharply higher. The economy grew by just 1.3% in calendar year 2010; the forecast for 2011 was revised down to 1.7% by the Office of Budget Responsibility in March. Higher commodity, energy and food prices and the increase in VAT to 20% pushed the February 2011 annual inflation figure to 4.4%. The Bank Rate was held at 0.5% as the economy grappled with uneven growth and the austerity measures set out in the coalition government's Comprehensive Spending Review. Significant cuts were made to public expenditure, in particular local government funding.

The US Federal Reserve (the Fed) kept rates on hold at 0.25% following a slowdown in American growth. The European Central Bank maintained rates at 1%, with the markets expecting a rate rise in early Spring.

Annual Treasury Report 2010/11

The credit crisis migrated from banks to European sovereigns. The ratings of Ireland and Portugal were downgraded to the 'triple-B' category whilst the rating of Greece was downgraded to sub-investment (or 'junk') grade. The sovereign rating of Spain was also downgraded but remained in the 'double-A' category. The results from the EU Bank Stress Tests, co-ordinated by the Committee of European Banking Supervisors, highlighted that only 7 out of the 91 institutions failed the 'adverse scenario' tests. The tests were a helpful step forward, but there were doubts if they were far-reaching or demanding enough. The main UK banks' (Barclays, HSBC, Lloyds and RBS) Tier 1 ratios all remained above 9% under both the 'benchmark scenario' and the 'adverse scenario' stress tests. The tests will be repeated in the Spring of 2011.

Gilts benefitted from the decisive Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) plans as well as from their relative 'safe haven' status in the face of European sovereign weakness. 5-year and 10-year gilt yields fell to lows of 1.44% and 2.83% respectively. However yields rose in the final quarter across all gilt maturities on concern that higher inflation would become embedded and greatly diminish the real rate of return for fixed income investors.

During the year money market rates increased marginally at the shorter end (overnight to 3 months). 6 - 12 month rates increased between 0.25% to 0.30% over the 12 month period reflecting the expectation that the Bank Rate would be raised later in 2011.

3. The Borrowing Requirement and Debt Management

Following the CSR on 20th October 2010, on instruction from HM Treasury, the PWLB increased the margin for new borrowing to average 1% above the yield on the corresponding UK Government Gilt. New fixed rate borrowing increased by approximately 0.87% across all maturities and new variable rate borrowing by 0.90%. Premature repayment rates did not benefit from the increase in the margin which potentially makes future rescheduling of PWLB loans more challenging. Despite this the PWLB remained the Council's preferred source of borrowing given the transparency and control that its facilities continue to provide.

The Council's variable rate loans were borrowed prior to 20/10/2010 (the date of change to the PWLB's lending arrangements post CSR) are not subject to the higher post-CSR margin.

The extent of variable rate borrowing the Council can potentially undertake is influenced by the level of Reserves and Balances. Any upward move in interest rates and interest paid on variable rate debt is 'hedged' by a corresponding increase in interest earned on variable rate investments

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Given the large differential between short and longer term interest rates, which is likely to remain a feature for some time in the future, as well as the pressure on Council finances, the debt management strategy sought to lower debt costs within an acceptable level of volatility (interest rate risk). Loans that offered the best value in the prevailing interest rate environment were PWLB variable interest rates loans, PWLB medium-term Equal Instalments of Principal (EIP) loans and temporary borrowing from the market.

	Balance on 31/3/2010 £000s	Debt Maturing £000s	Debt Prematurely Repaid £000s	New Borrowing £000s	Balance on 31/3/2011 £000s
Short Term Borrowing	5,006	25,506	0	20,500	646
Long Term Borrowing	156,253	0	16	0	155,591
TOTAL BORROWING	161,259	25,506	16	20,500	156,237

During 2010/11 the Council used of internal resources in lieu of borrowing and bridge any cash flow requirement for short periods using temporary borrowing from the market as it has been the most cost effective means of funding of capital expenditure. This has lowered overall treasury risk by reducing both external debt and temporary investments. However, this position will not be sustainable over the medium term.

The Council continues to benefit from the debt rescheduling it did in 2009/10 which consisted of repaying £35.6m of PWLB fixed rated loans averaging 4.72% to variable rated debt averaging 0.7% this has generated a revenue saving of £1.2m in 2010/11. The interest rate risk associated with the Council's strategic exposure is regularly reviewed with our treasury advisor against clear reference points, this being a narrowing in the gap between short and longer term interest rates by 0.5%. When appropriate this exposure will be reduced by replacing the variable rate loans with fixed rate loans.

The Council's budgeted cost of financing for the year had been set at £6.9m. Due to the use of internal resources in lieu of borrowing the actual net cost of financing was £5.7m.

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4. Investment Activity

The CLG's revised Investment Guidance came into effect on 1st April 2010 and reiterated the need to focus on security and liquidity, rather than yield. It also recommended that strategies include details of assessing credit risk, reasons for borrowing in advance of need and the use of treasury advisers,

Security of capital remained the Council's main investment objective. This was maintained by following the Council's counterparty policy as set out in its Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2010/11. Restricting Investments to the following.

- Deposits with the Debt Management Office
- Deposits with other Local Authorities
- Investments in AAA-rated Stable Net Asset Value Money Market Funds
- Call accounts and deposits with Banks and Building Societies systemically important to that country's banking system (UK, Australia, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland and the US).
- Bonds issued by Multilateral Development Banks
- Pooled funds (collective investment schemes) meeting the criteria in SI 2004 No 534 and subsequent amendments.

Credit Risk: Counterparty credit quality was assessed and monitored with reference to credit ratings (Council's minimum long-term counterparty rating of A+ across all three rating agencies, Fitch, S&P and Moody's); credit default swaps; GDP of the country in which the institution operates; the country's net debt as a percentage of GDP; any potential support mechanisms and share price.

Liquidity: In keeping with the CLG's Guidance on Investments, the Council maintained a sufficient level of liquidity through the use of overnight deposits / the use of call accounts.

Investments	Balance on 31/3/2010 £000's	Investments Made £000's	Maturities/ Investments Sold £000's	Movement in fund value** £000's	Balance on 31/03/2011 £000's
Short Term Investments*	59,350	480,160	494,035	0	45,475
Long Term Investments	0	0	0	0	0
Investments in Pooled Funds Lime Fund	4,530	0	0	72	4,602
Bonds issued by	0	0	0	0	0

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Multilateral Development Banks					
Corporate Bonds	0	0	0	0	0
Funds Managed Externally	5,749	0	5,782	33	0
TOTAL INVESTMENTS	69,629	480,160	499,817	105	50,077

* Includes Liquidity account

** Due to market valuation / re-investment of interest

Internal Investments

The Council sought to optimise returns commensurate with its objectives of security and liquidity. The UK Bank Rate was maintained at 0.5% through the year. Consequently short-term money market rates have remained at very low levels. Despite this the council has made new deposits for periods up to one year between 0.8% to 2.2%. For internally managed funds the Council has been able to obtain a rate of return over its set benchmark of 3 month LIBID 0.67%, the Council's average rate of return being 1.51%.

The Council's budgeted investment income for the year had been set at £1.5m. Due to the use of internal resources in lieu of borrowing the actual investment income achieved was £1.4m

Long term Investments

The Council continues to hold its units in The Lime Fund an investment in a property fund. This continues to generate a good return for the council. Quarter 4 return is due to be distributed at the end of May but the first three quarters return saw a return on the investment of 5.8% before fees and 5.07% after fees.

As the property market picks up the fund has also continued to grow in value be it slowly. In the year it has increased by £72k in capital terms (which is unrealised) the current value of the fund is £4.6m which is below its initial investment value but it should be noted that the nature of the investment is long term.

Externally Managed Funds:

During the year following an ongoing review of the externally managed fund the Council with its advisors, decided to withdraw its fund from Investec and bring the money in-house. The reasons for this change were twofold.

Firstly the fund was structured in a way which although historically generated a good return due to changes in the market the performance of the fund over the last

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few years deteriorated significantly, and any restructuring of the funds would not be cost effective bearing in mind the size of the fund.

Secondly the increase in liquid internal funds would allow the council to use the funds in lieu of borrowing which was the most cost effective means of using the funds.

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5. Compliance with Prudential Indicators

The Council can confirm that it has complied with its Prudential Indicators for 2010/11, which were set in Feb 2010 as part of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy Statement

In compliance with the requirements of the CIPFA Code of Practice this report provides members with a summary report of the treasury management activity during 2010/11. None of the Prudential Indicators has been breached and a prudent approach has been taken in relation to investment activity with priority being given to security and liquidity over yield.

6. Reform of Council Housing Finance

In its publication Implementing self-financing for council housing issued in February 2011 the CLG set out the rationale, methodology and financial parameters for the initiative.

Subject to the Localism Bill receiving Royal Assent and a commencement order being passed, the proposed transfer date is Wednesday 28th March 2012 (this fits with PWLB timetables on the payment/receipt of funds to clear by 31st March 2012.)

The self-financing model provides an indicative sustainable level of opening housing debt. As the Council's debt level generated by the model is higher than the Subsidy Capital Financing Requirement (SCFR), the Council will be required to pay the CLG the difference between the two, which is approximately £158m. This will require the Council to fund this amount in the medium term through internal resources and/or external borrowing. The Council has the option of borrowing from the PWLB or the market.

The treasury management implications of HRA reform and an appropriate strategy to manage the process are being actively reviewed with the Council's Treasury Advisor including the issues surrounding any early prefunding of the significant settlement payment (primarily the powers to borrow and the cost of carry).

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7. Outlook up to 2011/14

Outlook for Interest Rates

	Jun-11	Sep-11	Dec-11	Mar-12	Jun-12	Sep-12	Dec-12	Mar-13	Jun-13	Sep-13	Dec-13	Mar-14	Jun-14
Official Bank Rate													
Upside risk		0.25	0.25	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50
Central case	0.50	0.50	0.75	1.00	1.25	1.50	1.75	2.00	2.25	2.50	2.75	3.00	3.00
Downside risk			-0.25	-0.25	-0.25	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50

The Bank Rate is expected to remain at its current level of 0.5% for up until the end of September 2011 when it is expected to rise to 0.75%

Consumer Price Inflation remains persistently high and surged to 4.5% in April. The Bank's Inflation Report projects higher commodity prices and weakened sterling to push inflation to 5% in 2011. CPI is forecast to remain above the Bank's 2% inflation target for the whole of 2012.

The UK economy is growing but only modestly. The outlook for exports remains positive but household purchasing power is constrained by a much needed adjustment of personal balance sheets (seen through a higher savings ratio and debt reduction) and the effect of higher consumer prices.

Consumer confidence and spending continues to be affected by modest wage increases, weak house price growth and a dearth of cheap credit. Unemployment is just under 2.5million and will increase as the public sector shrinks but private sector employment grows at only a modest pace.

The 2011 Budget is neutral in impact and maintains the Comprehensive Spending Review's framework of fiscal consolidation, reduction in the deficit and the debt-to-GDP ratio. The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) is positive on these objectives being achieved. Gilt issuance of £169bn in 2011-12 should be easily absorbed by high investor demand.

Euro zone growth of 0.8% in the first quarter allowed the European Central Bank to raise rates in April. The ECB is likely to put up rates again in response to rising inflation despite the growing divergence in the business cycles and GDP outlook for the core and peripheral countries. Questionmarks will remain over Greek sovereign debt despite last year's bail out; reprofiling its debt maturities remains an option.

S&P has revised its outlook on the long-term rating for the US to negative amidst fears that the government will not agree a medium-and long-term strategy to tackle their fiscal challenges. This has the potential to negatively impact US yields.

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8. Prudential Indicator Compliance

(a) Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary for External Debt

- The Local Government Act 2003 requires the Council to set an Affordable Borrowing Limit, irrespective of their indebted status. This is a statutory limit which should not be breached.
- The Council's Affordable Borrowing Limit was set at £221m for 2010/11.
- The Operational Boundary is based on the same estimates as the Authorised Limit but reflects the most likely, prudent but not worst case scenario without the additional headroom included within the Authorised Limit.
- The Operational Boundary for 2010/11 was set at £211m.
- There were no breaches to the Authorised Limit and the Operational Boundary during the year; borrowing at its peak was £169.3m.

(b) Upper Limits for Fixed Interest Rate Exposure and Variable Interest Rate Exposure

- These indicators allow the Council to manage the extent to which it is exposed to changes in interest rates.
- The upper limit for variable rate exposure allows for the use of variable rate debt to offset exposure to changes in short-term rates on our portfolio of investments.

	Limits for 2010/11 %
Upper Limit for Fixed Rate Exposure	100
Compliance with Limits:	Yes
Upper Limit for Variable Rate Exposure	35
Compliance with Limits:	Yes

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(c) Maturity Structure of Fixed Rate Borrowing

- This indicator is to limit large concentrations of fixed rate debt needing to be replaced at times of uncertainty over interest rates.

Maturity Structure of Fixed Rate Borrowing	Upper Limit %	Lower Limit %	Actual Fixed Rate Borrowing as at 31/03/2011 £000's	% Fixed Rate Borrowing as at 31/03/2011	Compliance with Set Limits?
under 12 months	20	0	646	0.41	Yes
12 months and within 24 months	20	0	5,038	3.22	Yes
24 months and within 5 years	40	0	23,930	15.32	Yes
5 years and within 10 years	100	0	16,058	10.28	Yes
10 years and within 20 years	100	0	32,128	20.56	Yes
20 years and within 30 years	100	0	2,521	1.61	Yes
30 years and within 40 years	100	0	646	0.41	Yes
40 years and within 50 years	100	0	68,973	44.15	Yes
50 years and above	100	0	6,297	4.03	Yes

(d) Total principal sums invested for periods longer than 364 days

- This indicator allows the Council to manage the risk inherent in investments longer than 364 days.
- The limit for 2010/11 was set at £20m.
- The Council's policy response since the onset of the credit crunch in 2007 was to keep investment maturities to a maximum of 12 months. No investments were made for a period greater than 364 days during this period.

Meeting: Customer & Central Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Date: 14 June 2011
Subject: Work Programme 2011 – 2012 & Executive Forward Plan
Report of: Chief Executive
Summary: The report provides Members with details of the currently drafted Committee work programme and the latest Executive Forward Plan.

Contact Officer: Bernard Carter, Corporate Scrutiny & Research Manager
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Council

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

The work programme of the Customer & Central Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee will contribute indirectly to all 5 Council priorities.

Financial:

n/a

Legal:

n/a

Risk Management:

n/a

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

n/a

Equalities/Human Rights:

n/a

Community Safety:

n/a

Sustainability:

n/a

RECOMMENDATION(S):

1. **that the Customer & Central Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee**
 - (a) **considers and approves the work programme attached, subject to any further amendments it may wish to make;**
 - (b) **considers the Executive Forward Plan; and**
 - (c) **considers whether it wishes to add any further items to the work programme and/or establish any Task Forces to assist it in reviewing specific items.**

Work Programme

1. Attached at Appendix A is the currently drafted work programme for the Committee.
2. Also attached at Appendix B is the latest version of the Executive's Forward Plan so that Overview & Scrutiny Members are fully aware of the key issues Executive Members will be taking decisions upon in the coming months. Those items relating specifically to this Committee's terms of reference are shaded in light grey.
3. The Committee is now requested to consider the work programme attached and amend or add to it as necessary. This will allow officers to plan accordingly but will not preclude further items being added during the course of the year if Members so wish and capacity exists.

Task Forces

4. In addition to consideration of the work programme, Members will also need to consider how each item will be reviewed i.e. by the Committee itself (over one or a number of Committee meetings) or by establishing a Member Task Force to review an item in greater depth and report back its findings.

Conclusion

5. Members are requested to consider and agree the attached work programme, subject to any further amendments/additions they may wish to make and highlight those items within it where they may wish to establish a Task Force to assist the Committee in its work.

Work Programme for Customer & Central Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee 2011 – 2012

Ref	Indicative OSC Meeting Date	Report Title	Issue to be considered	Comment
1.	14 June 2011	Executive Member Update Community Engagement Update Treasury Management	To receive a brief verbal update from the relevant Executive Member. To receive a report regarding current work refreshing the Community Engagement Strategy and how it links into the localism agenda. To consider the Annual Treasury Management report for 2010/11	
2.	25 July 2011	Executive Member Update Recovery Programme for Customer & Shared Services Directorate Pensions	To receive a brief verbal update from the relevant Executive Member. To consider the full recovery programme of the Customer & Shared Services Directorate and its progress to date. To receive and consider a report regarding the Local Government Pension Fund and Council options	

Ref	Indicative OSC Meeting Date	Report Title	Issue to be considered	Comment
		Quarter 4 Performance Monitoring	To consider performance monitoring information for the last quarter of 20010/11	
		Quarter 4 Budget Monitoring	To consider corporate budget monitoring information for the last quarter of 20010/11, together with specific budget monitoring information for the Office of the Chief Executive and the Customer & Shared Services Directorate.	
		2012/13 Budget Process & Timetable	To receive and consider details of the 2012/13 budget process and timetable	
		Sickness Absence Management	To receive a presentation regarding the Council's approach to managing sickness absence	
3.	5 September 2011	Executive Member Update	To receive a brief verbal update from the relevant Executive Member.	
4.	17 October 2011	Executive Member Update	To receive a brief verbal update from the relevant Executive Member.	
		Quarter 1 Budget Monitoring	To consider corporate budget monitoring information for the first quarter of 20011/12, together with specific budget monitoring information for the Office of the Chief Executive and the Customer & Shared Services Directorate.	

Ref	Indicative OSC Meeting Date	Report Title	Issue to be considered	Comment
		Quarter 1 Performance Monitoring	To consider performance monitoring information for the first quarter of 20011/12	
5.	28 November 2011	Executive Member Update	To receive a brief verbal update from the relevant Executive Member.	
6.	19 December 2011	Executive Member Update	To receive a brief verbal update from the relevant Executive Member.	
7.	16 January 2012	Executive Member Update	To receive a brief verbal update from the relevant Executive Member.	
		Quarter 2 Budget Monitoring	To consider corporate budget monitoring information for the second quarter of 20011/12, together with specific budget monitoring information for the Office of the Chief Executive and the Customer & Shared Services Directorate.	
		Quarter 2 Performance Monitoring	To consider performance monitoring information for the second quarter of 20011/12	
8.	27 February 2012	Executive Member Update	To receive a brief verbal update from the relevant Executive Member.	
9.	16 April 2012	Executive Member Update	To receive a brief verbal update from the relevant Executive Member.	

Ref	Indicative OSC Meeting Date	Report Title	Issue to be considered	Comment
		Quarter 3 Budget Monitoring	To consider corporate budget monitoring information for the third quarter of 20011/12, together with specific budget monitoring information for the Office of the Chief Executive and the Customer & Shared Services Directorate.	
		Quarter 3 Performance Monitoring	To consider performance monitoring information for the third quarter of 20011/12	
10.	21 May 2012	Executive Member Update	To receive a brief verbal update from the relevant Executive Member.	
Other Items to be Considered – Date to be Determined				
11.		People Strategy	As agreed at the Corporate Resources OSC meeting of 1 March, to consider the underpinning action plans supporting implementation of the Council's People Strategy.	
12.		Shared Services	To receive and consider the final report of the Shared Services Task Force	
13.		Medium Term Accommodation Strategy	To receive a report on progress with the Medium Term Accommodation Strategy	

Ref	Indicative OSC Meeting Date	Report Title	Issue to be considered	Comment
14.		Corporate Asset Management Plan	To consider the Council's Corporate Asset Management Plan	
15.		Fees & Charges	To review fees & charges to ensure wherever possible full cost recovery	
16.		Customer Services	Update on the progress of transferring back office functions to Customer Services	
17.		IT Time Recording	Update on the Council's IT time recording project	

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**Central Bedfordshire Council
Forward Plan of Key Decisions
1 June 2011 to 31 May 2012**

- 1) During the period from **1 June 2011 to 31 May 2012**, Central Bedfordshire Council plans to make key decisions on the issues set out below. “Key decisions” relate to those decisions of the Executive which are likely:
 - to result in the incurring of expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant (namely £200,000 or above per annum) having regard to the budget for the service or function to which the decision relates; or
 - to be significant in terms of their effects on communities living or working in an area comprising one or more wards in the area of Central Bedfordshire.
- 2) The Forward Plan is a general guide to the key decisions to be determined by the Executive and will be updated on a monthly basis. Key decisions will be taken by the Executive as a whole. The Members of the Executive are:

Executive Member

To be appointed at the Council’s AGM on 19 May 2011

- 3) Those items identified for decision more than one month in advance may change in forthcoming Plans. Each new Plan supersedes the previous Plan. Any person who wishes to make representations to the Executive about the matter in respect of which the decision is to be made should do so to the officer whose telephone number and e-mail address are shown in the Forward Plan. Any correspondence should be sent to the contact officer at the relevant address as shown below. General questions about the Plan such as specific dates, should be addressed to the Head of Democratic Services, Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford SG17 5TQ.
- 4) The agendas for meetings of the Executive will be published as follows:

Meeting Date	Publication of Agenda
15 March 2011	03 March 2011
05 April 2011	24 March 2011
31 May 2011	19 May 2011
12 July 2011	30 June 2011
23 August 2011	11 August 2011
4 October 2011	22 September 2011
15 November 2011	3 November 2011
6 December 2011	24 November 2011
10 January 2012	22 December 2011
14 February 2012	2 February 2012
27 March 2012	15 March 2012
15 May 2012	3 May 2012

Central Bedfordshire Council

Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1 June 2011 to 31 May 2012

Key Decisions

Date of Publication: 13.05.11

Ref No.	Issue for Key Decision by the Executive	Intended Decision	Indicative Meeting Date	Consultees and Date/Method	Documents which may be considered	Portfolio Holder and Contact officer (method of comment and closing date)
1.	Local Economic Plan -	To approve the Central Bedfordshire Local Economic Plan.	12 July 2011		Draft final Local Economic Plan	Executive Member for Sustainable Communities – Strategic Planning & Economic Development Comments by 11/06/11 to Contact Officer: James Cushing, Head of Economic Policy Email james.cushing@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 4984
2.	Biggleswade Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan -	To consider and formally adopt the Biggleswade town centre strategy and masterplan as a supplementary planning document.	12 July 2011	Non statutory consultation – July 2009 comprising public exhibition Non statutory consultation – 3 July to 27 August 2010, 4 public exhibitions in addition to web and print consultation methods Formal statutory consultation – Early November 2010 for a period of four to six weeks	Biggleswade town centre strategy and masterplan	Executive Member for Sustainable Communities – Strategic Planning & Economic Development Comments by 11/06/11 to Contact Officer: Liz Wade, Assistant Director Economic Growth and Regeneration Email: liz.wade@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 6288

Ref No.	Issue for Key Decision by the Executive	Intended Decision	Indicative Meeting Date	Consultees and Date/Method	Documents which may be considered	Portfolio Holder and Contact officer (method of comment and closing date)
3.	Award of Contract: 24/7 Community Alarm and Emergency out of hours telephone call handling service -	To award the contract.	12 July 2011		Tender report	Executive Member for Social Care, Health & Housing Comments by 11/06/11 to Contact Officer: Basil Quinn, Housing Asset Manager Performance Email: basil.quinn@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 5118
4.	Post 16 Transport Policy -	To approve the draft policy to be implemented from September 2012.	12 July 2011	Consultation to run between 9 May 2011 and 24 June 2011. Workshops to be held with schools, colleges, neighbouring authorities and Youth Parliament.	Report Consultation forms and feedback Draft policy Equality Impact Assessment	Executive Member for Children's Services Comments by 11/06/11 to Contact Officer: Sylvia Gibson, Interim Assistant Director, Learning and Strategic Commissioning or Ben Pearson, Head of Joint Strategic Commissioning Email: sylvia.gibson@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 5522 or ben.pearson@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 5679

Ref No.	Issue for Key Decision by the Executive	Intended Decision	Indicative Meeting Date	Consultees and Date/Method	Documents which may be considered	Portfolio Holder and Contact officer (method of comment and closing date)
5.	Business Case for Integrated Children's System Improvement -	To consider the business case for the procurement of a replacement Integrated Children's System and improvement of related processes and workflows.	12 July 2011		Report	Executive Member for Corporate Resources Comments by 11/06/11 to Contact Officer: Clive Jones, Assistant Director Customer and Systems Email: clive.jones@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 4168
6.	Consultation on Central Bedfordshire's draft Approach to Parking Management -	To consider the consultation on Central Bedfordshire's draft Approach to Parking Management.	12 July 2011	Members and Town and Parish Councils Exhibitions at Priory and Watling House Tuesday 6 June 2011	Draft Approach to Parking Management	Executive Member for Sustainable Communities Services Comments by 11/06/11 to Contact Officer: Basil Jackson, Assistant Director Highways & Transport Email: basil.jackson@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 6171
7.	Budget Management - Provisional Outturn 2010/11 -	To provide information on the budget outturn as at 31 March 2011.	12 July 2011		Report	Executive Member for Corporate Resources Comments by 11/06/11 to Contact Officer: John Unsworth, Interim Assistant Director of Finance Email: john.unsworth@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 6147

Ref No.	Issue for Key Decision by the Executive	Intended Decision	Indicative Meeting Date	Consultees and Date/Method	Documents which may be considered	Portfolio Holder and Contact officer (method of comment and closing date)
8.	Community Engagement Strategy -	To endorse the refresh of the Community Engagement Strategy.	23 August 2011		Report	Leader of the Council Comments by 22/07/11 to Contact Officer: Ian Porter, Assistant Director Policy, Partnerships & Performance Email: ian.porter@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 6529
9.	Transforming learning and our relationship with schools - Review of school places in Leighton & Linslade -	To consider the responses to the consultation on the preferred option(s) and to authorise the publication of statutory notices.	4 October 2011		Education Vision, Children and Young People's Plan, Learning Transformation Dunstable and Houghton Regis Review Protocol	Executive Member for Children's Services Comments by 03/09/11 to Contact Officer: Sylvia Gibson, Interim Assistant Director, Learning and Strategic Commissioning Email: sylvia.gibson@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 5598
10.	Budget Management Report - Quarter 1 -	To consider the quarter 1 budget management report.	4 October 2011		Report	Executive Member for Corporate Resources Comments by 03/09/11 to Contact Officer: John Unsworth, Interim Assistant Director of Finance Email: john.unsworth@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 6147

Ref No.	Issue for Key Decision by the Executive	Intended Decision	Indicative Meeting Date	Consultees and Date/Method	Documents which may be considered	Portfolio Holder and Contact officer (method of comment and closing date)
11.	Transforming learning and our relationship with schools - Review of school places in Leighton & Linslade -	To approve the statutory proposals and financial commitment to implement the chosen option.	15 November 2011		Education Vision, Children and Young People's Plan, Learning Transformation Dunstable and Houghton Regis Review Protocol	Executive Member for Children's Services Comments by 15/10/11 to Contact Officer: Sylvia Gibson, Interim Assistant Director, Learning and Strategic Commissioning Email: sylvia.gibson@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 5598
12.	Central Bedfordshire Approach to all Age Skills -	To approve Central Bedfordshire's approach to All Age Skills in order to: A: establish the priorities and actions requirement to ensure the skills challenges facing Central Bedfordshire can be met; and B: demonstrate the Council's commitment to demonstrate leadership in driving the skills agenda forward.	15 November 2011	Workshops and focus groups will be held throughout May/June with partners, stakeholders and individuals. From July – September the Council will be running a formal consultation for a minimum of 13 weeks.	Local Economic Assessment	Executive Member for Sustainable Communities – Strategic Planning and Economic Development Comments by 14/10/11 to Contact Officer: Kate McFarlane, Head of Community Regeneration & Adult Skills Email: kate.mcfarlane@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 5858

Ref No.	Issue for Key Decision by the Executive	Intended Decision	Indicative Meeting Date	Consultees and Date/Method	Documents which may be considered	Portfolio Holder and Contact officer (method of comment and closing date)
13.	Budget Management Report - Quarter 2 -	To consider the quarter 2 budget management report.	6 December 2011		Report	Executive Member for Corporate Resources Comments by 05/11/11 John Unsworth, Interim Assistant Director of Finance Email: john.unsworth@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 6147
14.	Review of Central Bedfordshire Council Library Service -	Approval is sought to: A: agree the Central Bedfordshire vision for the Libraries Service; and B: agree a sustainable model of future Library Service provision.	6 December 2011	Throughout May/June a series of focus groups and workshops with service users and partners and stakeholders. From July – September/October a formal consultation for a minimum of 13 weeks on the vision and potential service delivery models.	Emerging vision, core service offer and aspiration Libraries Service Review Report Outcomes from consultation process Equality Impact Assessment	Executive Member for Sustainable Communities Services Comments by 05/11/11 Kate McFarlane, Head of Community Regeneration & Adult Skills Email: kate.mcfarlane@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 5858

Ref No.	Issue for Key Decision by the Executive	Intended Decision	Indicative Meeting Date	Consultees and Date/Method	Documents which may be considered	Portfolio Holder and Contact officer (method of comment and closing date)
15.	Gypsy & Traveller DPD -	To recommend to Council the adoption of the Gypsy & Traveller DPD.	10 January 2012	Statutory LDF consultation process and Examination by Planning Inspector.	Gypsy & Traveller DPD (DLF North)	Executive Member for Sustainable Communities – Strategic Planning and Economic Development Comments by 09/12/11 to Contact Officer: Richard Fox, Head of Development Plan Email: richard.fox@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 4105
16.	Award of the Housing Responsive Maintenance and Void Repairs Contract -	To award the housing responsive maintenance and void repairs contract.	10 January 2012		Report	Executive Member for Social Care, Health & Housing Comments by 09/12/11 to Contact Officer: Basil Quinn, Housing Asset Manager Performance Email: basil.quinn@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 5118
17.	Community Safety Partnership Priorities and the Community Safety Partnership Plan for 2012-2013 -	To adopt the Community Safety Partnership Priorities and the Community Safety Partnership Plan for 2012-2013.	27 March 2012	Strategic Assessment & Partnership Plan will be considered at the Community Safety Partnership Executive meeting in November/December, Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Local Strategic Partnership.	Strategic Assessment Priorities & Community Safety Partnership Plan 2012-2013	Executive Member for Sustainable Communities Services Comments by 26/02/12 to Contact Officer: Jeanette Keyte, Community Safety Manager Email: jeanette.keyte@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 5232

Ref No.	Issue for Key Decision by the Executive	Intended Decision	Indicative Meeting Date	Consultees and Date/Method	Documents which may be considered	Portfolio Holder and Contact officer (method of comment and closing date)
18.	Food Law Enforcement Service Plan 2012-2013, Age Restricted Sales Plan 2012-2013 and the Health and Safety (as a Regulator) Service Plan 2012-2013 -	To approve the Food Law Enforcement Service Plan 2012-2013, Age Restricted Sales Plan 2012-2013 and the Health and Safety (as a Regulator) Service Plan 2012-2013.	27 March 2012		Central Bedfordshire Enforcement Policy; FSA Framework Agreement on Local Authority Food Law Enforcement; Food Law Code of Practice (England); HSE Section 18 Standard on Enforcement	Executive Member for Sustainable Communities Services Comments by 26/02/12 to Contact Officer: Susan Childerhouse, Head of Public Protection (North) Email: susan.childerhouse@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 4394
19.	Budget Management Report - Quarter 3 -	To consider the quarter 3 budget management report.	27 March 2012		Report	Executive Member for Corporate Resources Comments by 26/02/11 to Contact Officer: John Unsworth, Interim Assistant Director of Finance Email: john.unsworth@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 6147

Ref No.	Issue for Key Decision by the Executive	Intended Decision	Indicative Meeting Date	Consultees and Date/Method	Documents which may be considered	Portfolio Holder and Contact officer (method of comment and closing date)
NON KEY DECISIONS						
20.	Quarter 4 Performance Report -	To highlight key Quarter 4 performance for Central Bedfordshire Council.	12 July 2011		None.	Executive Member for Corporate Resources Comments by 11/06/11 to Contact Officer: Ian Porter, Assistant Director Policy, Partnerships & Performance Email: ian.porter@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 6529

Postal address for Contact Officers: Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford SG17 5TQ

**Central Bedfordshire Council
Forward Plan of Decisions on Key Issues**

For the Municipal Year 2011/12 the Forward Plan will be published on the fifteenth day of each month or, where the fifteenth day is not a working day, the working day immediately proceeding the fifteenth day, or in February 2012 when the plan will be published on the fourteenth day:

Date of Publication	Period of Plan
15.04.11	1 May 2011 – 30 April 2012
13.05.11	1 June 2011 – 31 May 2012
15.06.11	1 July 2011 – 30 June 2012
15.07.11	1 August 2011 – 31 July 2012
15.08.11	1 September 2011 – 31 August 2012
15.09.11	1 October 2011 – 30 September 2012
14.10.11	1 November 2011 – 31 October 2012
15.11.11	1 December 2011 – 30 November 2012
15.12.11	1 January 2012 – 31 December 2012
13.01.12	1 February 2012 – 31 January 2013
14.02.12	1 March 2012 – 28 February 2013
15.03.12	1 April 2012 – 31 March 2013