

Summary of Evidence provided by attendees at the Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on the 27th September 2009

Currently Draft

RESPONSE OF THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, 29 SEPTEMBER 2009 TO:

Item 11 Town Centre Management

- 1.1 At its meeting on 29 September 2009 the Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee (SCOSC) considered the report of the Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth and Regeneration, which sought Members views on a suggested process for town centre management.
- 1.2 The report set out proposals for the allocation of revenue resources to town centres and constitutional arrangements of Town Centre Management Committees.
- 1.3 At the meeting Members received evidence from a number of Town Council representatives. The responses provided by these representatives are detailed at **Annex A**.
- 1.4 Members commented, and evidence was received, that the previous experience of Town Centre Management Committees in the areas of Dunstable, Houghton Regis and Leighton Linlade had been positive and it was not clear why those areas would want to change the arrangements that they currently had in place. It was however commented that ward Members were not currently engaged in Town Centre Management Committees and this was something that should be addressed by the proposals. Whilst there was scope to make changes to present arrangements this should not be to the detriment of Town Councils.
- 1.5 Whilst Members accepted that the proposals might enhance partnership working it was felt that if the Town Centre Management Committees were not included in the constitution this would lessen the amount of effective partnership working. Town Centre Management Committees had been successful to date and it was not clear why Central Bedfordshire Council would change a process that had worked so well in the past.

RESOLVED

1. **That the Executive be recommended to fully incorporate the process for town centre management in Central Bedfordshire into the emerging Central Bedfordshire Community Engagement Strategy**

- 2. That the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends to the Constitutional Working Group that the Town Centre Management Committees in Houghton Regis, Leighton Linlade and Dunstable remain incorporated in the Central Bedfordshire Constitution under section J2 pages and that Officers of the Sustainable Communities Directorate be asked to incorporate a similar formally constituted structure for the larger Towns (after proper consultation with those Towns).**
- 3. That the Executive be recommended in the medium term, following a feasibility study and after appropriate consultation and receiving the appropriate reports from the Sustainable Communities Directorate, that the smaller Towns be incorporated into a formally constituted structure in Central Bedfordshire under section J2 pages.**
- 4. That the Executive be recommended in the medium term, following a feasibility study and after appropriate consultation and receiving the appropriate reports from the Sustainable Communities Directorate, that the Parishes be similarly incorporated into a formally constituted structure in Central Bedfordshire under section J2 pages.**
- 5. That the Executive be recommended to enlarge the proposed Town Centre Partnership Panel membership to include the Chairs of the Town Centre Management Committees.**

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1.
 - **Ms P Kingsnorth** (Leighton Linlade Town Council)
 - **Councillor K Sharer** (Leighton Linlade Town Council)
 - **Councillor B Sadler** (Leighton Linlade Town Council)
- 1.2 The Town Council was supportive of the concept of creating action plans to guide Town Council and partner funding for Town Centre development and working with Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) to support this. It was commented that relationships between the Town Council and CBC had been positive under previous arrangements and it was important that there were processes in place to promote the continued effective communication between partners, which could include a Town Centre Manager.
- 1.3 It needed to be ensured that views provided to CBC by partners and the Town Council were taken into account and informed strategies being developed. There were examples of best practice locally in gathering resident's views and obtaining feedback in order to determine how strategies were formulated and this needed to be enhanced.
2. **Mr P Mackin** (Shefford Town Council)
 - 2.1 There was support for the Annual Economic Health Check for each Town Centre and advocating increased partnership working and co-ordination with partners and stakeholders. It was however commented that any changes in the organisation of Town Centre Management Committees needed to be fit for purpose and we should be sure this was the most effective way to go forward.
3.
 - **Councillor S Goodchild** (Houghton Regis Town Council)
 - **Councillor D Jones** (Houghton Regis Town Council)
- 3.1 It was commented that Houghton Regis had valued the links with South Bedfordshire District Council under the previous arrangements and the previous partnership approach to Town Centre Management Committees had worked well and delivered some positive local events. There were reservations about the future process if it was agreed to remove Town Centre Management Committees from the Constitution. It was suggested that the proposals contained in the report did not enhance the previous arrangements and should not be adopted.
- 3.2 A comment was also raised that there was no mention in the report of previous mechanisms in the former Mid-Bedfordshire area

4. **Mr D Ashlee** (Dunstable Town Council)

- 4.1 It was commented that the Town Council was supportive of the process outlined in the report for an annual economic health check, preparation of both an individual and a Central Bedfordshire town centre and retail management plan as this would promote better performance management and would ensure that resources were used effectively. It was also suggested that the proposed arrangements would improve partnership working and enhance discussion between officers of Central Bedfordshire Council and the Town Councils regarding the way in which services are delivered.
- 4.2 It was stated it was not clear why Town Centre Management Committees should be removed from the Constitution as this placed a requirement on organisations to work together, if they were not included in the Constitution it may reduce the level of partnership working. If Town Centre Management Committees were left in the constitution it would enable better performance management, allocation of resources and links to be made to Comprehensive Area Assessment.
- 4.3 It was also commented that there was no 'one size fits all' approach so it was important that a suitable approach was taken in the case of each Town Council, but that Town Centre Management Committees should remain in the Constitution.