

Cllr Nigel Young – statement 22 June 2010
Sustainable Communities OSC

We are pleased to have received a clear message from the new Government that they intend to return to local councils the power to make local decisions on the issues that matter most to our communities.

Central Bedfordshire looks forward to the new legal framework that will make this possible.

For too long, councils have had their authority over the important issues such as planning eroded as unelected and remote regional bodies assumed increasing powers.

At the same time as the real power was being sapped away from us by expensive and undemocratic quangos, Councils have been bombarded with overwhelming regimes of audit and inspection that have by necessity created significant industries in box ticking.

It is great news that many of these restrictions will be removed.

However, we are realists and understand that delivering on this promise will take time. Until the new legal framework is in place, we recognise that we have to work within the existing law of the land.

Anyone who lived through the experience of the early nineties will know how important this is.

During that period, local authorities found themselves in the unenviable position of having no robust planning law with which to contest speculative planning applications or deal with illegal gypsy and traveller encampments.

We have no intention of falling into the trap of allowing this situation to arise in Central Bedfordshire and will work within existing processes until we have more information from the Coalition about the process of change.

I don't believe there is a single councillor at Central Beds who underestimates the strength of feeling that local people have about protecting the quality of life that they treasure.

We have urged the Government to act quickly on their commitment to abolish regional targets and confirm our freedom to act locally. We believe this will happen this Autumn. At that point we will develop our recommendation to the Executive on the way forward through our usual process of the task force and this committee.

And I know that every one of us looks forward to the time when we are able to defend this at a local level!