



Appendix **D**

# Development Strategy Task Force

Terms of reference and guidance for the Development  
Strategy Task Force



# Guidance for the Development Strategy Task Force

## 1. Terms of reference

The Development Strategy Task Force is responsible for considering all non-strategic matters in relation to the Local Development Framework and Housing Strategy policy preparation.

### 1.1 The remit of the Task Force will include:

- a. **Local Development Framework for the North (former Mid Beds) area** - to oversee the production of draft Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). This will include considering detailed policy and strategy wording, the allocation of specific sites using criteria agreed by Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee, relevant supporting technical reports, draft consultation documents prior to consultation and responses to consultation documents.
- b. **Local Development Framework for the South (former South Beds) area** – to consider issues raised in consultation documents and to consider all Joint Planning Committee (JPC) Member Steering Group reports prior to their presentation to the JPC.
- c. **Housing Strategy** - to consider the detailed wording of strategy and policy documents and draft consultation documents prior to consultation and to agree formal responses to consultations.
- d. **Council Response to consultations** – to consider all non-strategic consultation documents that have a lesser impact on Central Bedfordshire

### 1.2 The Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) will maintain responsibility for considering all strategic matters in relation to the above matters. **Appendix A** sets out guidance on those matters that are considered 'strategic' and 'non-strategic'.

Where there is uncertainty as to whether an item is strategic or non-strategic this will be agreed by the Chairman of the Sustainable Communities OSC in consultation with officers and the Chairman of the Task Force.

## 2. Membership of the Development Strategy Task Force:

- 2.1 The Membership of the Task Force will be agreed by the Chairman of the Task Force and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Sustainable Communities OSC. The Membership of the Task Force is to be confirmed.
- 2.2 Named substitutes have been permitted for the Task Force, whom are also to be confirmed.
- 2.3 Training will be arranged for Members on matters relating to the work of the Task Force as required during the year. All Task Force Members are strongly

encouraged to attend all training that is provided in relation to Task Force matters.

- 2.4 The work programme for this Task Force is expected to be onerous, both in volume and complexity. In inviting Councillors to be members of this Task Force, the Chairman of the OSC was explicit about the workload involved in carrying out this function. Membership of the Task Force is dependent on a willingness to undertake the considerable preparation and full contribution to the work of the Task Force. Should Members feel unable or unwilling to play a full part in that work, the Chairman of the Task Force and the Chairman of the OSC will consider making an alternative appointment.

### **3. Working Principles for the Task Force:**

- 3.1 The Task Force should be responsive in order to provide advice in a timely manner, it should be able to reach rapid outcomes in light of the evidence received in meetings.
- 3.2 Outcomes reached by the Task Force should be formal and robust in order to provide definitive advice to officers and the Executive Member(s).
- 3.3 Members will be required to declare any personal or prejudicial interests they may have in regard to the business to be transacted by the Task Force and take appropriate action with regard to that interest. Guidance on what constitutes a personal or prejudicial interest will be provided to Members.
- 3.4 The working principles of the Task Force may be amended by the Sustainable Communities OSC as appropriate.

### **4. Meetings**

- 4.1 Agendas and reports will normally be distributed to Members of the Task Force at least 5 clear working days before the meeting.
- 4.2 Meetings will be held as they are required depending on the business to be considered. Where possible they will be held approximately three weeks prior to a meeting of the Sustainable Communities OSC, to ensure effective and timely input to meetings of the Sustainable Communities OSC, the Luton and South Bedfordshire Joint Committee and other bodies as necessary. The Task Force may be required to meet more frequently at times to ensure that milestones are met. A timetable of meetings and items for discussion will be maintained, which will be reported to the Sustainable Communities OSC on a regular basis.
- 4.3 It is important that the Task Force be able to provide advice to the Luton and South Bedfordshire Joint Committee in a timely manner so that considerations can be taken into account in the decisions the Committee makes. In developing the work programme for the Task Force the work programme of the Joint Committee will be taken into account.

## **5. Reporting and Progress**

- 5.1 Four-monthly reports on progress, where appropriate, and the work programme of the Task Force will be made available via the Council's Overview and Scrutiny website for information purposes. This is in addition to copies of notes of meetings and the recommendations of the Task Force also being provided on the website. The work programmes will be agreed as far in advance as possible but officers will be able to amend the work programme of the Task Force in consultation with the Chairman of the Sustainable Communities OSC and the Chairman of the Task Force.
- 5.2 All recommendations agreed by the Task Force with regard to the Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan Document will subsequently be considered by the Sustainable Communities OSC.
- 5.3 All recommendations agreed by the Task Force that are considered to be controversial, by which Members feel there is substantial public interest in the matter which merits discussion in public session, will be received by the OSC to ensure full public scrutiny of important matters.

## **6. Elected Member and Public Involvement**

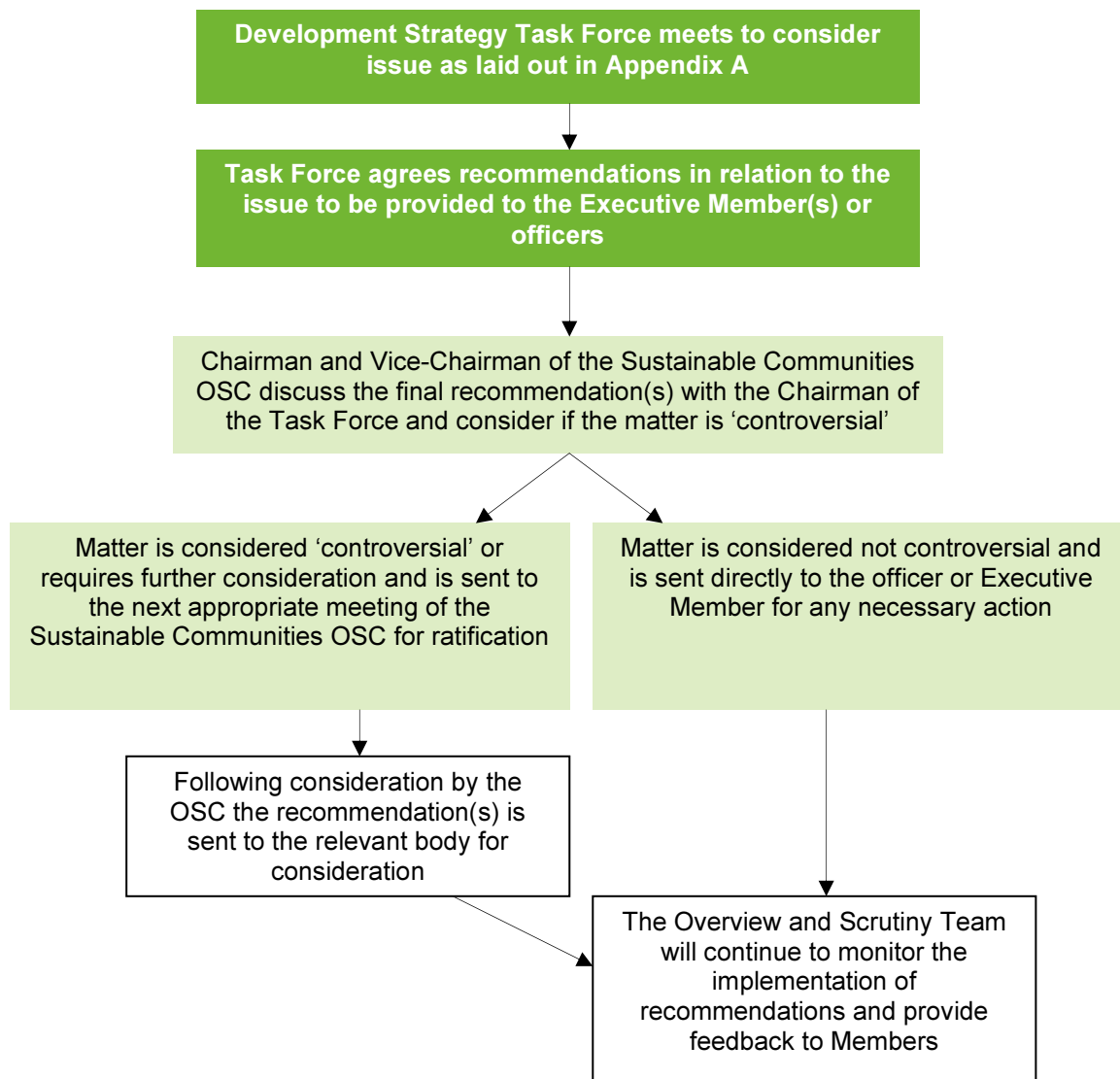
- 6.1 In accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules in the Council's Constitution any elected Member will be permitted to attend meetings but will only be permitted to speak at the discretion of the Chairman. It is anticipated that the relevant Executive Member(s) will be invited to provide guidance at every meeting but the Task Force will not be bound by the advice they are given.
- 6.2 Meetings will not normally be held in public but the Chairman of the Task Force will have discretion to ask people to attend to give evidence on issues at meetings where he considers this might be helpful. Agendas, reports and notes of the Task Force meetings will usually be published within 10 working days following the meeting except where they are considered confidential or exempt under the Council's Constitution (Part G2). Where the Chairman of the Task Force feels it is appropriate the Chairman of a relevant Town or Parish Council will be invited to attend the meeting to provide evidence on behalf of residents within their area.
- 6.3 Those items that are considered to be controversial (*see section 7*) will be submitted to the Sustainable Communities OSC for consideration. Members of the public will have an opportunity to comment on proposals and recommendations agreed by the Task Force if those proposals are subsequently agreed to be brought to the Sustainable Communities OSC. In some cases items will not be presented to the OSC but will be submitted to the Executive prior to a decision being taken. Meetings of the Executive are held in public unless there is such reason that they should be held in private.

## **7. How will the Task Force agree Recommendations?**

- 7.1 The Task Force will have powers to make recommendations to officers or the Executive Member(s) as it deems necessary. Where recommendations are made by the Task Force the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Sustainable

Communities OSC will be responsible for agreeing these recommendations in consultation with the Chairman of the Task Force. If the Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the Sustainable Communities OSC deem that the issue to which the recommendation refers is controversial or requires further consideration those recommendations will be provided to the Sustainable Communities OSC as laid out in figure 1.

- 7.2 If the issue to which the recommendation refers is not considered by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Sustainable Communities OSC to be controversial the recommendation will be sent directly to the relevant person or body for which it is intended. A record of these recommendations will be maintained for information and circulated to Members of the Sustainable Communities OSC.



**Figure 1: Process for agreeing Recommendations of the Development Strategy Task Force**

**Appendices:**

**Appendix A:** A guide to strategic and non-strategic items

**Appendix B:** A guide to communication regarding the Task Force

**Appendix A: Schedule of ‘strategic’ and ‘non-strategic’ business for the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) and the Development Strategy Task Force**

Example project	Strategic issues (for OSC)	Non-strategic issues (for Task Force)
<b>Site Allocations DPD (for former Mid Beds area)</b>	Approval of site selection criteria and sign off of final draft submission DPD prior to consideration by Executive.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Application of site selection criteria and selection of sites.</li> <li>• Consideration of detailed wording of draft consultation documents and agreement for consultation.</li> <li>• Consideration of formal response to consultation documents.</li> </ul>
<b>Gypsy and Traveller DPD (for former Mid Beds area)</b>	Approval of site selection criteria and sign off of final draft submission DPD prior to consideration by Executive.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Application of site selection criteria and selection of sites</li> <li>• Consideration of detailed wording of draft consultation documents and agreement for consultation.</li> <li>• Consideration of formal response to consultation documents.</li> </ul>
<b>Core Strategy</b> or other policy document <b>(for former Mid Beds area)</b>	Consideration of headlines/key themes emerging from consultation, “direction of travel” reports and sign off of final draft submission DPD prior to consideration by Executive.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consideration of detailed policy and strategy wording</li> <li>• Consideration of detailed wording of draft consultation documents and agreement for consultation.</li> <li>• Consideration of formal response to consultation documents.</li> </ul>
<b>Supplementary Planning Documents</b>	Consideration of scope of SPD, broad objectives and overall approach, ‘direction of travel’ etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consideration of detailed SPD wording prior to consultation</li> <li>• Consideration of consultation responses and sign off of draft final SPD prior to consideration by Executive.</li> </ul>
<b>Technical Reports</b> e.g. landscape studies, employment land studies	None	Consideration of technical reports

Example project	Strategic issues (for OSC)	Non-strategic issues (for Task Force)
<b>Council's response to consultations</b> e.g. regional planning and transport consultations	Consideration of consultation documents for key strategic issues for Central Bedfordshire e.g. review of the East of England Plan etc	Consideration of non-strategic consultation documents that have a lesser impact on Central Bedfordshire but that still warrant a Council response e.g. East West Rail, regional transport consultations from Highways Agency etc.
<b>Local Development Scheme</b> (the timetable for producing LDF documents)	Consideration of overall timetable for LDF production and potential new DPDs (would require Executive approval following OSC)	None
<b>Development Plan Documents (DPDs) (covering the former South Beds area) produced by the Joint Planning Committee</b>	Consideration of all DPD documents published for formal consultation prior to consideration by Executive.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-consideration of issues raised in the consultation DPD documents prior to formal consideration by OSC.</li> <li>• Consideration of reports to Joint Planning Committee Member Steering Group (MSG) prior to their formal presentation to Joint Planning Committee.</li> </ul>
<b>Housing Strategy</b>	Consideration of headlines/key themes emerging from consultation, "direction of travel" reports and sign off of final draft Strategy prior to consideration by Executive.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consideration of detailed policy and strategy wording</li> <li>• Consideration of detailed wording of draft consultation documents and agreement for consultation.</li> <li>• Consideration of formal response to consultation documents.</li> </ul>



## **Appendix B: Development Strategy Task Force Communication Protocol**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 It is proposed that this document **be appended** to the 'Purpose and Guidance for the Development Strategy Task Force' document.
- 1.2 The development process requires the Task Force to give consideration to an issue and make recommendations to their 'parent' Overview and Scrutiny Committee, who in turn make recommendations to the Council's Executive to make a decision.

### **2. Scope of the Protocol**

- 2.1 All forms of communication involving the 'Development Strategy Task Force'.
- 2.2 Communication with officers and elected Members of Central Bedfordshire Council.
- 2.3 The protocol does not describe the process of communication where legislation or policy exists to manage it for other purposes, eg Freedom of Information Act requests. However, it does attempt to signpost enquiries in a list of contacts in section 8.

### **3. Over-arching Principle**

- 3.1 Members of the Task Force fully appreciate that public engagement in the decision making process is crucial. As a new Council, Councillors and officers have the opportunity to increase and improve public engagement. This protocol will set out how members of the public can get involved and contribute to the process of the Development Strategy Task Force.
- 3.2 It assumes a responsibility on the part of the Council, through officers and elected members, as well as a responsibility on members of the public to engage in an honest and non-confrontational, emotional or intimidating way.
- 3.3 The document is intended to be kept up to date to suit changing needs. As such, officers welcome feedback and suggestions for development.

### **4. Public engagement**

- 4.1 The Council considers that there is merit in members of a working group being able to seek advice, take evidence and ask questions away from the scrutiny and challenge of non-members and particularly the press. The Council intends to provide the opportunity, where necessary, for Task Force members to have an open discussion, to explore ideas and concepts with confidence. Only by doing so, can members learn and reach a viewpoint that is robust and objective.

- 4.2 To ensure a full and frank exchange, toward the development of an informed viewpoint, Task Force meetings will not normally be held in public. However, the decision to invite or allow attendance (by an individual or open invitation) at the Task Force meeting is at the discretion of the Task Force Chairman.
- 4.3 Where there is the need to understand the potential impact of development on a community, representation of that community will be sought. In the first instance, the Chairman of the local Town or Parish Council will be invited as the representative best placed to reflect the potentially contradictory range of local views. Ward members can attend any Task Force or Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting without invitation. Other views will be sought as necessary.

## **5. How the Task Force and OSC will work**

- 5.1 The Council will provide different ways for you to make representation and listen to suggestions you have about improvements.
- 5.2 The Council will publish information on the web site, so that you don't have to ask for it. [Notes of Task Force meetings and recommendations](#) are available on the Council's website.
- 5.3 Our communication will be timely, accurate and in Plain English.
- 5.4 The Council will identify officers by name with full contact details and nominate a named individual for communication where that is helpful. 'Blind copy' emails will not be used.
- 5.5 The Task Force will provide a narrative around the recommendations made to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 5.6 Officers will answer all enquiries within 5 days and acknowledge those that will take longer, advising when a reply is due and who it will come from.

## **6. Helping us to help you**

- 6.1 The Council promise to be professional and helpful at all times, asking in return that you treat our staff politely and with respect. If you are unhappy about the way your request has been dealt with or the answer you have received, please ask to make a complaint, rather than vent your anger or frustration on our staff.
- 6.2 The Council ask that you make your requests or representation as clearly and as succinctly as possible. We ask that you allow the published time to elapse before chasing for responses and communicate with the identified officer in the first instance.

## **7. When it may not be possible to assist you**

- 7.1 When you engage in the debate, please do so with openness and honest intent. Officers will not respond to correspondence that is disingenuous or mischievous.

- 7.2 When you make a request of council officers, they will do their best to provide you with the information or service you have asked for. If you make unreasonable requests that by their nature or frequency overwhelm officers, there is an impact on our ability to provide that service to other people.
- 7.3 Senior managers have a responsibility to maintain services to all users and must make decisions about the allocation of public money needed to do so. A senior manager may consider that a request (or series of requests) is going to have a disproportionate impact on our ability to continue a minimum level of service delivery to other people. In those circumstances, officers will discuss with the person whether, or to what extent, the Council can meet their request.

## **8. Other ways of making representation or requesting information**

### **8.1 The formal Planning and LDF consultation processes**

Central Bedfordshire Council is required by Government to produce specific strategic planning documents. They specify exactly how we should consult to ensure that the documents take full account of people's views. They require the Council to consult on and write a [Statement of Community Involvement](#).

The main documents must be assessed by an Independent Planning Inspector, who can take evidence from interested parties. There is further information on the internet about the Governments consultation process in [planning policy statement 12](#).

### **8.2 Representation by Ward Member**

If you live in Central Bedfordshire, your address will fall in a Ward, or area. Each Ward is the responsibility of one or more Councillors. Councillors are elected by residents to represent their interests. Councillors make a lot of the decisions about what services you receive and will take into account the fact that residents often hold different views. So, if you want your interest to be taken into account when decisions are being made by Central Bedfordshire Council, you should let your Ward Member know your view.

To find out who your Ward Member is and how to contact them, ask at your local library, **phone 0300 300 8301** or look up [your Councillor](#) on the council's website.

### **8.3 Lobbying other Elected Members**

The full Council is made up of all of the elected Ward Members. Amongst their duties, full Council sets the Budget (and Council Tax) and policy framework within which all decisions must sit. It appoints the Leader of the Council, who then selects other Members to form the Council's Cabinet,

collectively known as the Executive. It also appoints Members to each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

The Executive, consisting of the Leader and Executive Members, takes decisions on the Council's services. Each Executive Member has their own portfolio area for which they are responsible. They will seek the views of Ward Members before taking decisions. However, there might be times when you would prefer to discuss an issue directly with an Executive Member.

To find out who the Executive Members are, their areas of responsibility and how to contact them, ask at your local library, **phone 0300 300 8301** or view a [list of Executive Members](#) on the council's website.

#### **8.4 Member's code of conduct**

Central Bedfordshire Council is committed to ensuring that its Councillors maintain the highest possible standards of conduct and has adopted a Code of Conduct which sets out the standards of behaviour it expects all Members of the Council to observe whenever they are carrying out Council business. The Council's Code of Conduct is available on the Council's website or can be obtained using the telephone and e-mail contacts below.

If you are unhappy about the way that a Councillor of Central Bedfordshire Council has behaved you can make a complaint about it. The web site also provides [guidance](#) on who you can complain about, what you can complain about and how your complaint will be dealt with. If you would like to make a complaint about a Member please contact the Monitoring Officer:-

**Phone:** 0300 300 6255

**Email:** [john.atkinson@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:john.atkinson@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

**Website:** [www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

#### **8.5 Customer Relations**

Central Bedfordshire Council welcomes all feedback, including complaints, when you consider our service has not been of an acceptable standard. Information and advice about making a complaint is available on our web site or can be obtained using the telephone and e-mail contacts below.

In the first instance you can telephone or write to the manager of the service you are giving feedback about, or contact Customer Relations:

**Telephone:** 0300 300 8301

**Email:** [customer.relations@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:customer.relations@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

**Post:** Customer Relations, Business Transformation, Central Bedfordshire Council, PO Box 1395, Bedford, MK42 5AN

If you wish to raise a concern about a policy this should be recorded as a 'representation' and those who have made the policy, very often Councillors, will be informed. Customers will receive feedback on their representations.

The Council has a policy for dealing with complaints that are [vexatious or unreasonable](#). Officers will take all reasonable steps to ensure complaints are dealt with fairly but there may be times when the Council needs to take steps to manage difficult behavior or repeated complaints.

## 8.6 Local Government Ombudsman

If your complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction you can take the complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman. This is an independent body who can investigate complaints about the Council. The Ombudsman will normally expect you to have given the Council the opportunity of resolving your complaint, so in the first instance you should address your complaint to the Council. However, you can seek the view of The Ombudsman at any time:

**Advice Line:** 0300 300 8301 or 0845 602 1983.

**Email:** [advice@lgo.org.uk](mailto:advice@lgo.org.uk)

**Post:** The Local Government Ombudsman, PO Box 4771, Coventry, CV4 0EH

**Fax:** 024 7682 0001

Further information can be found online at the [Local Government Ombudsman](#) website.

## 8.7 Freedom of Information or Environmental Information Request

The Freedom of Information Act gives all members of the public the right to request information that the Council may hold. All information held by the Council, both paper and electronic documents (including email), is considered to be publicly available. All information, unless subject to an exemption, will be released if requested.

The Council's website contains [more information](#) on access to information and how to make a request.

**Email:** [accesstoinfo@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:accesstoinfo@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

**Phone:** 0300 300 8301

**Post:** Access to Information, Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, Bedfordshire, SG17 5TQ.



## Contact us...

Për Informacion Per Informazione Za Informacije नगरवारी लयी  
المعلومات معلومات کے لئی তথ্যের জন্য Za Informacja برای اطلاع

by telephone: 0300 300 8301

by email: [customer.services@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:customer.services@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

on the web: [www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

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

