
Meeting: Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date: 13 September 2011
Subject: A new Plan-making Programme for Central Bedfordshire
Report of: Cllr Ken Matthews, Executive Member for Sustainable Communities - Strategic Planning and Economic Development
Summary: The report sets out the scope and timetable for the production of future development plans for the Central Bedfordshire area, including specific reference to a new "Development Strategy" document and a Gypsy and Traveller Plan. These documents will, as necessary, refresh, update and roll forward the existing planning policy framework in Central Bedfordshire. Members are recommended to endorse the attached programme of work.

Advising Officer: Alan Fleming, Acting Director of Sustainable Communities
Contact Officer: Richard Fox, Head of Development Planning and Housing Strategy
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Executive

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

The Council's priority to manage growth effectively relies on an overarching plan to direct development to the most appropriate areas and to set the principles by which development will be managed. The proposed Development Strategy and other elements of the plan-making programme will therefore be a key part of the Council's approach to new development.

Financial:

As previous experience shows, plan-making is expensive and considerable resources will need to be devoted in order to achieve a sound plan. However, the scale of the Council's investment should be seen in the context of the scale of new investment into Central Bedfordshire that a Development Strategy will enable and the new infrastructure that it can help deliver. It should also be seen against the cost of the alternative approach of fighting public inquiries against inappropriate development. It is also worth noting that the previous plan-making work for Central Bedfordshire will provide an excellent foundation from which to start and will help minimise the extent of new work necessary.

In terms of new budget provision, producing the suggested new plans is likely to cost in the region of £300,000 per year for the next three years. This cost has been

identified as a budget pressure in the Medium Term Financial Plan from 2012/13 onwards for three years. Provision will also be needed to allow for the varying profile of costs throughout the period such as the high start-up costs of beginning evidence creation and the high final cost of the Planning Inspectorate's Public Examination costs.

Legal:

Once adopted the documents included within the plan-making programme will form part of the statutory Development Plan and will be the basis for consideration of planning applications. Until this happens the existing adopted documents will continue to set the planning framework.

Until 31st March 2012, the Joint Planning Committee, (and not Central Bedfordshire Council) is the 'plan-making' authority for the Luton and southern Central Bedfordshire area and it will therefore be necessary to seek the agreement of the Joint Committee to this new programme of plan-making in the south of the Council area.

Risk Management:

The process of producing a Development Strategy and other planning policy documents is long and complex and high quality project management and risk management skills will be required. A project team is being put together to oversee the work.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

Staff resources to undertake this project are largely in place. Any additional resource required can be accommodated within the existing staff structures and budgets.

Equalities/Human Rights:

The plans listed in the programme of plan-making will be subject to a specific Equalities Impact Assessment in order to comply with the relevant regulatory requirements.

Community Safety:

Planning policy can have an indirect influence on community safety through coordinating appropriate provision of community infrastructure and ensuring that individual development proposals take account of community safety issues.

Sustainability:

The new Development Strategy will have as its underpinning basis the achievement and facilitation of sustainable development. The plans listed in the programme of plan-making will be subject to a specific Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment in order to comply with the relevant regulatory requirements.

RECOMMENDATION(S):**The Committee is asked to:-**

- 1. Comment on the new Plan-making Programme for Central Bedfordshire**

Introduction

12. The attached report is due to be presented to Executive on 4 October. It relates to a new Plan-making Programme for Central Bedfordshire. This new Programme will be formally known as the Local Development Scheme for Central Bedfordshire but in the interests of transparency and accessibility a new title has been given that more clearly explains the purpose of the document.
13. The new Programme has been prompted, in part, by the intended withdrawal of the joint Core Strategy for Luton and southern Central Bedfordshire, as resolved by the Joint Committee on 29 July 2011. At the time of writing formal confirmation of the withdrawal had not been received from the Secretary of State. Consideration of this report is therefore on the assumption that withdrawal takes place as expected. It is hoped that formal confirmation will have been received by the time Executive consider the issue on 4 October.
14. Members' views on the report and the attached Programme are sought, prior to consideration by Executive.

Appendices:

Appendix A – draft Executive report for 4 October 2011

Appendix B – Plan-making Programme for Central Bedfordshire