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**Meeting:** Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
**Date:** 28 February 2012  
**Subject:** Central Bedfordshire All Age Skills Strategy  
**Report of:** Cllr Ken Matthews, Executive Member for Sustainable Communities - Strategic Planning and Economic Development

**Summary:** Attached as appendix A is a draft Executive report (March 2012) which presents the Central Bedfordshire All Age Skills Strategy for consideration and seeks approval of the role of the Council in supporting the delivery of the strategy. The Committee is asked to comment on the draft Executive report.

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**Advising Officer:** Gary Alderson, Director of Sustainable Communities  
**Contact Officer:** Kate McFarlane, Head of Community Regeneration and Adult Skills  
Liz Wade, Assistant Director, Economic Growth, Regeneration and Skills

**Public/Exempt:** Public  
**Wards Affected:** All  
**Function of:** Council

<b>CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS</b>
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<b>Council Priorities:</b>
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1. The vision of the Sustainable Communities Strategy is “To ensure Central Bedfordshire is Globally Connected, Delivering Sustainable Growth to ensure a Green, Prosperous and Ambitious Place for the Benefit of All”.

The Strategy will be delivered through two underpinning key themes of creating the conditions for economic success and community prosperity and raising standards and tackling inequality in order to deliver 26,000 new homes and 27,000 new jobs by 2026.

The All Age Skills Strategy will underpin the Economic Development Plan (EDP) themes by supporting business to grow and thrive, getting our residents into work and increasing the supply of our skilled people. It will also support the implementation of the 2012/13 Economic Development Plan priorities of youth unemployment and employer engagement. The strategy will build on the educating, protecting and providing opportunities for Children and Young People as stated in the Children and Young People’s Plan.

The All Age Skills Strategy supports the emerging Central Bedfordshire Council targets for the medium term by:

- Enhancing Central Bedfordshire as a place, through increased jobs
- Improving educational attainment
- Promoting health and well being and protecting the vulnerable
- Offering value for money by maximizing the impact of Council Skills investments

#### **Financial:**

2. The development of the All Age Skills Strategy and the costs of consultations have been met through the 2011/12 Economic Development, Skills and Regeneration budget. Future activities in delivering the strategy will be funded through a mixture of direct support through the Council’s existing budgets, re-aligning partners’ core budgets, seeking to maximise private sector funding and leverage of external funding.
3. The Council is in receipt of significant external grants to support the delivery of skills activity and into work activity including Skills Funding Agency (SFA) allocation of £1.6M in 2011/12, European Social Fund (ESF) 2007-2013 co-financing programme of £4.4M, and Department for Education and Skills. Each grant scheme has its own allocation criteria and the Council will need to recognise the possibility of changes in the future to funding streams and associated activities.
4. As the All Age Skills Strategy outlines three priorities there will be a need to optimise the level of resourcing amongst the three areas. The medium term outlook for the economy is for relatively low growth and the implication is that governmental funding may remain uncertain, less than demand or targeted to specific purposes. The Council and its partners will need to remain alert to funding opportunities, and to continue to enhance its reputation for successful delivery so as to remain at the forefront of accessing funds. The success of executing the All Age Skills Strategy is highly reliant on accessing external funds and influencing and organising the various partners and delivery agents. There is some risk that funding restrictions over the medium term may impede the delivery of aspects of the All Age Skills Strategy.

**Legal:**

5. There are no statutory requirements for the Council to produce an All Age Skills Strategy. However, the Council will be able to demonstrate its leadership and being open for business on the economic development and skills agendas under Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 to promote or improve the economic well-being of its area.
6. Within the 2008 Education and Skills Act, the Council has a statutory duty to secure sufficient suitable education and training opportunities to meet the reasonable needs of young people in the Council area. This includes all young people up to the age of 18 by 2015 as defined within the Raising of the Participation Age.

**Risk Management:**

7. Risk of doing nothing: Would perpetuate the disconnect between the needs of the economy, employers and aspirations of our residents. There has been a significant level of skills partner engagement to date and lack of progress moving forward could reflect negatively on the Council as the organisation who has led the work to date
8. Failure: Risk of failure to deliver the priorities identified in the All Age Skills Strategy due to lack of engagement of employers, skills partners unwilling to move to taking a more central role in driving the agenda forward in the future.

**Staffing (including Trades Unions):**

9. No implications are directly raised by the adoption of this policy. However, the priorities, and implementation of this strategy will shape the further review of direct services provided by the Council. This could result in there being future staffing implications. In these circumstances the Council is required to undertake consultation with our recognised Trade Unions and affected employees and will be taken forward in accordance with the Central Bedfordshire Council's Managing Change policy.

**Equalities/Human Rights:**

10. Public authorities have a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and to foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
11. In developing the All Age Skills Strategy the findings from the Local Economic Assessment on equalities considerations and target groups have been utilised to inform key priorities. A full thirteen week public consultation process has been implemented to maximise engagement with the development of the strategy as has a series of workshops, focus groups and meetings with individuals, providers, stakeholders and employers.

12. A comprehensive Equality Impact Assessment has been completed. The target groups identified within the Local Economic Assessment and the Equality Impact Assessment as requiring additional support to access the labour market and develop their skills are: 18-24 year olds and over 50s, disabled people and ethnic minorities, especially gypsies and travellers. These groups have been prioritised within priority 3 of the strategy “Raising Individuals Aspirations and Achievements” which proposes to promote the benefits of learning to individuals of all ages, promote the opportunities available and to support the provision of opportunities that are appropriate to the needs of particular groups and areas.

### **Public Health**

13. There is a strong relationship between skills and employment and health and wellbeing. Those who are more highly skilled are more likely to secure employment and to enjoy higher standards of living, contributing to better physical and mental health. Concurrently, poor health and disability can contribute to lower attainment and economic inactivity. The All Age Skills Strategy recognises the need to support individuals for whom health issues and disabilities represent a barrier to accessing learning opportunities.

### **Community Safety:**

14. Access to skills, training and employment are key factors in preventing offending behaviour and breaking historic patterns of offending for individuals and within families. The Council has a statutory duty to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area. The All Age Skills Strategy, particularly in relation to the priority around raising individuals’ aspiration and achievements by working with partners such as Youth Offending Services, Bedfordshire Probation Trust, Integrated Youth Support Services and Community Safety Teams, will help to fulfil this duty.

### **Sustainability:**

15. Fundamentally matching employment with the needs of our growing resident population is directly addressing the longer term sustainability of Central Bedfordshire by reducing out commuting. The All Age Skills Strategy is aligned to the Economic Development Plan which fits with the Council’s Climate Change Strategy.

### **Procurement:**

16. Where necessary the services required to support this strategy will be exposed to competition in accordance with the procurement procedure rules 2012.
17. Any engagement with partner organisations or external service providers will be formalised through an appropriate agreement (prepared in accordance with the procurement toolkit) which contains a statement of requirements (or specification), a set of contract terms and conditions, performance metrics and remuneration arrangements.

### **RECOMMENDATION(S):**

**The Committee is asked to:-**

- 1. To recommend to the Executive the adoption of the All Age Skills Strategy together with any comment the committee would like to make on the draft Executive report.**

**Appendices:**

Appendix A – Draft Executive Report – 27 March 2012 – Central Bedfordshire All Age Skills Strategy