

Draft for consultation

# Delivering your Priorities

Our Plan for Central Bedfordshire

2012-2016



Security classification:  
Protected

## **Contents (to be included once Plan is finalised)**

## **Our ambitions for Central Bedfordshire**

I chose to become a Councillor because I felt passionately about the community in which I lived. I'm not a native Bedfordshire man. I moved here about 25 years ago with my wife because of its proximity to London. We've stayed, raised our family and have enjoyed the advantages of Bedfordshire life. We love it here and I know my friends and neighbours share this view. I was delighted to be elected as the Leader of Central Bedfordshire last year, and since then have been reflecting on how we as a council can make sure that we are able to keep Central Bedfordshire as a great place to live and work.

We've been listening to the public, getting feedback about what matters most and what needs to be improved. We've also been reviewing our finances. In the context of cuts in our resources and increasing demands on our services, we've been considering how we can balance our spending and savings to maintain critical services without putting additional financial pressures on the public.

This document, together with our medium term financial strategy, represents the culmination of the work we've done. We now have clear and explicit ambitions for Central Bedfordshire, informed by residents' views. We're committed to a series of priorities, which collectively will help our communities to progress and prosper.

This will not happen without the co-ordinated effort of all of us who work in and for the Council. This document is designed to clarify exactly what we are seeking to achieve, our approach and, crucially, our plan of action.

We will be rightly held to account by the public of Central Bedfordshire if we fail to deliver our priorities, but with our focus and shared commitment, I'm confident we'll succeed.

**James Jamieson, Leader of the Council**

# Central Bedfordshire – Key facts and challenges for the area

## The Facts

Central Bedfordshire is a unitary authority serving a growing population of around 255,000. It is a largely rural area with over half the population living in the countryside and the rest in a number of market towns. The largest of these are Leighton Buzzard, Dunstable, Houghton Regis, Biggleswade, Flitwick, Sandy and Ampthill.

The area is generally prosperous, with above average levels of employment. This could mask the few areas where we do have pockets of deprivation and, greater need (some households in Dunstable and Houghton Regis for example).

The area has excellent transport links with the A1 and M1 running through it, three main rail lines and two international airports, Luton and Stansted, on our doorstep.

It is in the centre of an academic 'golden triangle' between Oxford, Cambridge and London Universities and also benefits from its own academic institutions at Cranfield University, the University of Bedfordshire and other further education colleges.

It is a great place to live and work. It is a relatively safe, green and affluent area which has attracted major investment. People living in Central Bedfordshire earn more than the national average; this is in part influenced by some residents commuting out of the area – primarily to London, Luton, Milton Keynes and Hertfordshire.

## The Challenges

There are significant challenges to the Council and our residents which will impact on the way we deliver our services in the future:

- We anticipate continued reductions in Government grant to the Council over the coming years.
- We predict further economic difficulties as the national economic climate is driven by UK debt and weak recovery from recession.

### Demographic Pressures

- As our population is set to grow (from 255,000 to 276,500 by 2016) we need to ensure we are able to provide for this 8.5% increase by supporting affordable housing developments and working with businesses to help them to create local jobs.
- As our residents are enjoying longer lives, rising numbers of older people will need our services.
- We have had a 65% increase in the numbers of children requiring a child protection plan.
- Technology is transforming the way that our customers want to access services, 73% of our households already have access to the web and this will increase as the area becomes a hub for faster broadband.
- And there are significant changes to the services the Council will manage now and in the future.
  - Over 50% of pupils will be educated in schools that are Academies by September 2012 with more moving to this new model by March 2013, resulting in 90% being educated in an Academy at some stage in their school education in

Central Bedfordshire. The overall aim will be for most schools to become Academies during the lifetime of this plan.

- The implications of the Health and Social Care Bill, which will see responsibility for public health transferring from NHS Bedfordshire to the Council by March 2013.

## **The Customer Perspective:**

In developing this plan, the views and priorities of the public have been central. More than 2,000 residents took part in market research which included a survey and workshops in the autumn of 2012. We asked for their feedback on the area, what is important to them and what needs improving. We also asked for their views on the Council and its services.

Feedback from this exercise demonstrated that high levels of satisfaction with the area as a place to live, with 81% responding positively.

Residents do have strong views about areas for improvement:

- 49% believe that roads and pavement repairs are necessary,
- almost twice as many residents expressed a need for improved job prospects compared to respondents to the last survey in 2008,
- satisfaction levels with the Council are improving
- value for money remains a concern and a majority of residents (76%) would prefer for Council Tax to be frozen, with any savings being found from the costs of running the Council rather than front line services,
- the importance of tackling crime and anti social behaviour was a priority,
- there was a strongly held view that services for vulnerable people should be protected from reductions,

Respondents were supportive of proposals to change the way the Council delivers services, such as combining services with other public sector organisations, outsourcing and inviting Town and Parishes Councils to provide local services.

## Responding to these challenges

The Council's response to the economic and service challenges is set out in this plan. This document explains how our resources and our services must be aligned to deliver the priorities that matter most to you.

We intend to build on our strong track record of delivering efficiency savings as we have done year on year since the Council was created. Since 2009 the Council has saved £42m and we plan to save a further £36m by 2016.

## Our Priorities

Our residents have given the Council clear and consistent feedback about their attitudes to the authority and the area.

In response to this, Central Bedfordshire Council is committed to six key priorities which are;

- Enhancing Central Bedfordshire – creating jobs, managing growth, protecting our countryside and enabling businesses to grow.
- Improved education attainment.
- Promote health and wellbeing and protecting the vulnerable.
- Better infrastructure – improved roads, broadband reach and transport.
- Great universal services – bins, leisure and libraries.
- Value for money – freezing council tax.

To deliver this with fewer resources we need to change – both what we do and how we do it.

## Our Approach

To deliver our priorities with fewer resources we need to change – both what we do and how we do it. A series of principles underpin how we will manage change at Central Bedfordshire.

As a Council we will ....

- Be focused on customer experience
- Be open and transparent
- Value our people
- Work as one organisation
- Excel at partnerships
- Focus on efficiency and value
- Adopt a "can do" culture
- Recognise the impact of our work on others

## Working with our partners

Central Bedfordshire Council recognises that we will not be able to deliver our priorities unless we work collaboratively with other organisations with an interest in our communities.

So whilst this plan is explicit about how Central Bedfordshire Council will deliver its priorities, we recognise that it doesn't stand in isolation.

## Our Plan

The Council already operates a wide range of plans and strategies, many of which will contribute to the delivery of the priorities.

However, this document brings all such existing strategies together.

It explains:

- how the plans work together to support the delivery of the priorities
- how the success of the plans will be measured
- what targets we are aiming to achieve
- timescales for delivery.

A new operating model is also proposed which will see the shape of the Council change considerably.

Public accountability at the front line is imperative so the Council will focus on direct management of the customer experience at their initial point of contact. As we transform our on line services, more and more customers will be incentivised to do business with us on line and will experience a seamless service, based on our knowledge of our residents and the area.

At the core of the Council, a streamlined team of officers will enable delivery of our priorities and key services.

Services will be delivered in the way which is most fit for purpose and appropriate to deliver value for money and quality, with a focus on innovation.



The following pages present our priorities with the targets we will be seeking to achieve over the next four years and the impact you will see.

If you want further information on any of the priorities or on the plans for delivery please contact us at: *contacts to be added*.

## **Enhancing your local community – creating jobs, managing growth, protecting our countryside and enabling businesses to grow:**

### **Targets**

- To increase the percentage of residents who find Central Bedfordshire a nice place to live. Currently 81%, we want 85% of you to be satisfied with the area by 2016.
- To ensure the current employment rate of central Bedfordshire remains 5% higher than the national average (currently 72.6%).
- To ensure the availability of high quality, appropriate housing, supported by suitable infrastructures.
- To ensure 100% of approved applications for residential developments of 10 or more units have excellent design (measured against the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) building for life design criteria).
- To reduce the levels of crime e.g. burglary, robbery, vehicle crime and theft from 3312 in 2010/2011 by 10% to 2980 by 2016.
- To decrease the levels of anti social behaviour from the 2011/12 recorded incident figures by 10%.

### **The difference you will see over the next 4 years**

We will increase satisfaction with the area as a nice place to live year on year and we will continue our programme of enhancements to the area.

We will maintain the current rate of employment by working with local businesses.

Our developing Economic Development Plan will outline our strategy for growth in the area.

Our planning policy quality standards will ensure that no applications will go forward for 10 or more houses which don't meet the CABE design criteria.

We will work with the new Police and Crime Commissioner and Bedfordshire Police to deliver our Community Safety Partnership priorities to:

- Reduce anti social behaviour year on year until we reach our target.
- Reduce reoffending through the sustainability of the Integrated Management Offender Programme, which will lead to a reduction of crime and reoffending of prolific offenders.
- Increase support given to Domestic Abuse victims and ensuring there is an increase of cases presented at the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference.



## Improved Educational Attainment

### Targets:

- To be in the top 25% nationally of key stage 4 results for the measure 5 x A\* - C outcomes including English and Maths at GCSE.
- To limit the number of young people on a year by year basis who are not in education or employment (NEET).
- To make public annually the number of education and training opportunities made available by our partners during the crucial autumn period, and the number of young people actively accessing them.

### The difference you will see over the next 4 years

We have a robust Children and Young People's plan 2011-2014 (CYPP) that was the subject of consultation with all schools, governors and over 4000 young people. The targets in that plan are challenging to the Council and its partners and we aim to achieve them.

We have schools that are making the transfer to become academies to reflect local and national political ambitions and we will offer those schools support to make the conversion.

We will continue to work alongside schools to ensure that we meet our priority of being in the top 25% nationally for 5 x A\* - C GCSE outcomes including English and Maths for the next 4 years.

We agreed an education vision with Central Bedfordshire schools to drive improvement. This involves:

- The development of a teaching school to lead good practice in the Central Bedfordshire area.
- School to school support through groups of academy chains, learning partnerships and federations and a talent map of support on our Council website that schools can commission.
- Development of an alternative provision school led by headteachers for those middle and upper age pupils who find the school environment difficult, which will help these pupils, find alternative pathways to learning, training and employment and reduce permanent exclusions.
- The role of the Council as a champion for vulnerable pupils will be strongly supported.
- The role of school governors as school and community leaders will be developed.

We have agreed our All Age Skills Strategy which will see us increase the opportunities for learning for young people.

Through the implementation of our strategy from Poverty to Prosperity we will be working with local businesses to increase the number of apprenticeships available for young people which will enable us to continue to keep our NEETs below the national average.

We will work with our partners to increase the number of apprenticeships and support school and college governors to meet their responsibilities to provide careers advice to young people.

## **Promote health and well being and protect the vulnerable.**

### **Targets**

- We are committed to a zero tolerance approach to those who abuse vulnerable adults and we will continue to report our involvement in safeguarding activity.
- Provide an additional 50 extra care flats by 2014.
- Maintain the decent homes standard at 100% for the Council's landlord service.
- All 40 - 70 year olds will have been offered a health check by 2017.
- 30 (100% coverage) Village Care schemes in operation by 2014.
- 60% of Council commissioned dementia care should be of 'good' or 'excellent' by 2014,
- Statutory performance indicators on children's safeguarding are consistently in the upper quartile compared to national statistics
- Proposed new Government targets to be introduced in 2012 on speed of adoption procedures are met.
- Actions identified in the Ofsted Report published in April (2012/2013) are subject to an action plan, agreed with the Children's Trust, the Central Bedfordshire Children's Safeguarding Board and relevant health organisations for the re-inspection of children's safeguarding late 2013.
- The annual report of the Local Safeguarding Board will be presented as required in the soon to be published 'Working Together' national guidance on children's safeguarding.

### **The difference you will see over the next 4 years**

We will be developing an accommodation and care strategies for older people to provide a wider range of support services, such as extra care schemes, and a focus on dementia support.

We will work with our partners in health to improve the health and well being of our local communities.

There will be an expanded adult social care market that provides choice for local people in how their care and support needs are met.

We will have addressed the concerns raised in the Ofsted Report on Looked After Children and Safeguarding of 2012 via an action plan in 2012/2013.

We will have had an improved Children's Services re-inspection of safeguarding in autumn 2013. This inspection will have criteria linked to impact and outcomes and will be different to the criteria used in 2012 to assess the Council and its partners.

We will have met any additional performance indicators issued by the Government and will have measured the impact of our activities and published progress on outcomes for our children, young people and their families.

The Safeguarding Board of both adults and children will continue with their programmes of work.

## **Better infrastructure - Improved roads, broadband reach and transport**

### **Targets**

- By 2016 to complete the delivery of a series of infrastructure projects and set out aspirations for further significant transport improvements.
  - Luton – Dunstable Guided bus way to be in service by Spring 2013.
  - Biggleswade South roundabout and feeder roads completed by end 2013.
  - M1- A5 link construction commenced Spring 2014 and completed by 2016.  
(subject to a planning enquiry)
- To complete the production of all Town Centre Master Plans and demonstrate delivery on the ground of all 5.
- To achieve above national average satisfaction with road and pavement repairs from 26% to 36% by 2016.
- To achieve 90% access to superfast broadband by 2015/16.
- To achieve 100% access to at least 2MB broadband by 2015/2016.

### **The difference you will see over the next 4 years**

Works are already underway on the Luton – Dunstable Guided bus way to enable it to be in service by April 2013.

By 2015 there will be significant improvements as a result of the implementation of Town Centre Plans. Including:

- Dunstable development of a new health centre.
- Biggleswade completion of street improvements. New transport interchange at the station and market street.
- Leighton Buzzard development at land south of high street.
- Flitwick development underway on land at Steppingley Road.
- Houghton Regis completion of High Street improvements.

We will be investing heavily in our roads over the next 4 years we have agreed to invest an additional £4m each year until 2016.

Plans are in place to implement broadband to achieve our targets.

## Great Universal services – Bins, leisure and libraries

### Targets

- To fully deliver our BEaR project which will include the renovation and rebuilding of all Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) by 2016.
- To maintain high rate of recycling and make progress towards 60% target by 2020.
- To ensure the number of adults in Central Bedfordshire taking part in sport and physical activity remains above the national average (Active people Survey CBC 22.6% and national 22%)
- Maintain 93% satisfaction of adults with the library service
- Increase the usage of libraries by 20%.

### The difference you will see over the next 4 years

To deliver the top two targets we have a programme for our HRWC sites at Ampthill, Biggleswade, Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard by 2016. We are in the process of appointing a contractor and will be seeking planning permission in 2013 ready to begin building works in 2014.

We are developing a leisure strategy to help increase take up in sport and physical recreation focussing on our leisure facilities, including greater use of our countryside and participation in the arts supporting active lifestyles and improving public health.

An £8 million investment in leisure facilities (on an invest to save basis) and activities over the next 4 years.

We have programmes in place to increase participation including walking and cycling.

We have just completed the “Big Library debate” with the public and have agreed a programme of improvements which should help us to meet our targets. We will be changing the way we provide services including:

- moving to self service;
- undertaking a programme of remodelling of our libraries in the next two years to improve the standard of our service and to meet your expectations;
- in the next 3 years we will be looking to relocate some of our libraries in Dunstable, Flitwick and Biggleswade.

## Value for Money – freezing council tax

### Targets

- We will endeavour not raise council tax for the next three years
- We will work hard with our staff to ensure they provide high quality service and are proud of the organisation they work for.

### The difference you will see over the next 4 years

Council payments will be the same for all Central Bedfordshire residents.

No increase in your council tax payments levied by the Council.

We will continue to work on making efficiency savings, limiting impact on existing services by exploring different ways of providing services.

### Planning Assumptions

The ambitions expressed through the priorities and targets in this plan have been developed on the basis of some planning assumptions. In other words, we've based the plan on what we expect to happen over the next four years in the economy, in our own finances and in society.

On the economy, we have assumed that interest rates will remain low with growth limited to between 1% and 2%. We also anticipate inflation to be pegged at 1% on pay and 2% on our supplies, services and income.

On our own resources, we have assumed that government will continue with its grant to support local authorities to freeze council tax until 2015/16 and that it will not reduce further other grants or put additional responsibilities on us.

Beyond this, we have based the plan on current predictions about the nature of our population, in terms of size and nature.

Should our projections turn out to be inaccurate or the government change its plans, the nature of our targets may also need to change.

#### Contact us...

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