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Central  
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## Appendix A

# Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report (2011/12)

"challenging, influencing, making a difference"



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If you have any comments on this report, or would like to see any of the papers that are referred to, please contact Bernard Carter, Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Manager on **0300 300 4175** or [bernard.carter@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:bernard.carter@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

## Foreword

### Foreword by Councillor David McVicar, Chairman, Overview & Scrutiny Co-ordination Panel

I am very pleased to introduce this Annual Report to full Council that reflects on those issues the Overview and Scrutiny Committees (OSCs) have considered during 2011/12 and looks ahead to some of the issues we will consider in 2012/13. This report outlines some of the outcomes of our work during 2011/12 and the value the overview and scrutiny process has added.

Throughout 2011/12 the OSCs have continued to receive proposals that focus on improving efficiency whilst asking how we can provide better quality services and facilities for our residents. One such proposal concerned highways and transportation, which necessitated the establishment of a Task Force to review our contract with Amey LG to ensure it delivered value for money. The review also made recommendations that resulted in an additional £4million a year being included in the highways maintenance budget for the next four years. Due to the cessation of the Luton and Southern Bedfordshire Joint Planning Committee, the Council's Development Strategy Task Force has however ceased operation - the Council now has a process of briefings that engage a wider range of Members on planning and development matters and all future reports, where appropriate, will be considered by the Sustainable Communities OSC. The work of Task Forces undertaking discrete reviews is still highly valued by all OSCs however and will continue to be a feature in 2012/13 and beyond.

We have also recently considered the Medium Term Plan that sets out the Council's key strategic priorities for 2012-16. These priorities will determine the programmes we put in place to deliver on the outcomes of greatest importance to residents.

In 2012/13 the OSCs will engage in several other major pieces of work. The Council has been appointed as one of fifteen 'scrutiny development areas' leading nationally on the most effective means of undertaking scrutiny in relation to various health and social care matters. A major review of hospital discharge in the area will engage partners across Central Bedfordshire and from neighbouring areas and a major review of strategic changes in housing and welfare reforms will also engage all of the Council's directorates.

The extent of national reforms presents opportunities and challenges, such as the way we scrutinise and engage with the Police and Crime Panel, the Shadow Health and Well-Being Board or our approach to public health scrutiny. The OSCs will strive to be at the forefront of these issues and develop approaches that promote an effective critical-friend challenge.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who attended or contributed to overview and scrutiny over the year. Input from Members, the public, officers and representatives of organisations have all been invaluable in assisting our approach to challenging proposals and reaching our conclusions.

*Cllr David McVicar*

Councillor David McVicar

Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordination Panel

## 1. What is Overview & Scrutiny?

### A Quick Explanation

Effectively, the Scrutiny process is like the Council having its own 'watchdog'. It is a process that provides a chance to get a second opinion on key decisions made by the Council's Executive. It can also be used to inform and review any of the Council's plans, policies or strategies or question existing practices of the Council or any other public services causing concern.

Overview & Scrutiny Committees (OSCs) make recommendations and scrutinise the policies, decisions and performance of the Executive. The Executive in turn consults with and responds to Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommendations.

### A More Detailed Look

OSCs have 2 main roles: to help develop new policies and to hold the Executive and its partners to account. They therefore monitor decisions taken by Executive Members and examine the provision of services supplied by Council directorates, contractors and external agencies within the Central Bedfordshire area.

O&S is therefore a common sense approach to informing and reviewing decisions and policies, and considering whether they are right for the area. Not only does it provide a means to review the Council's own achievements against its priorities but it also enables reviews to be carried out in relation to services provided by other public organisations on issues causing public concern. It does all this with a view to involving local people.

The O&S process also provides the opportunity for Members to examine the various functions of the Council, to ask questions about why decisions have been made, to consider whether service improvements can be put in place and make recommendations to this effect. It can also provide the opportunity for Members to champion issues of local concern to residents and to participate in the development of new policy.

O&S Members decide the areas they wish to review and invite those who they believe can help with their investigations to give "evidence". The public attending are welcome to participate in asking questions of those making submissions.

The Committees' work falls into a number of broad areas:-

- **In-Depth Reviews:** Each Committee can undertake detailed, evidence-based assessments of Council services, plans, policies or issues, which affect the lives of local people. At the end of each review the Committee produces a report making recommendations to the Executive and other partner agencies as to how things could be improved. During the course of a review Members speak to the Executive, Council Officers and external witnesses to assist them in their information gathering. This type of review is normally conducted by a Task Force on behalf of a particular committee.
- **Light-Touch Reviews:** In addition to conducting in-depth reviews, Committees often want to conduct a quick, one-off review of a topic. Typically a Committee will ask Executive Members, Council Officers or external agencies to come and speak to them about a service or issue before making recommendations to the Executive.

- Scrutiny of the Council's Performance and budget: A core role of each Committee's work involves the detailed examination of key performance indicators and the action plans flowing from Council policies and strategies to ensure the Council is meeting, or exceeding, its targets and objectives. The Committees also monitor the Council's budgets on a regular basis to ensure sound financial management.
- Call-in: Each OSC is charged with ensuring that the decisions taken by the Executive are appropriate and within the Council's policy framework. If the Chairman, 2 members of the Committee or 3 Members of Council feel that a decision should be reviewed they can 'call the decision in' after it has been made to prevent the decision taking immediate effect (an individual member can also call in a decision if it has particular significance for that Member's ward). They can then interview the Executive Member or Council Officers and make recommendations to the decision-maker suggesting improvements to the decision.

The Committees conduct their work at regular Committee meetings or alternatively, they can appoint time-limited Task Forces (small, informal Member groups) to undertake work on their behalf. This usually happens when there is a need to review a topic in greater depth.

## **How Overview & Scrutiny complements the work of the Council**

Whilst the Council's O&S arrangements have been set up to provide an independent process for informing and reviewing Council decisions and policies, 'scrutiny' is not intended to be a confrontational or divisive process. It is not a process that questions every decision the Council makes for example. If it was, clearly this would be counter-productive to Council business and the subsequent delays would win little thanks from our community.

Instead, all those involved in O&S are aware that its purpose is to complement and add value to the work of the Council.

## **How Overview & Scrutiny Adds Value**

Central Bedfordshire Council is not only committed to making best use of its resources to meet local needs and priorities, but it is also committed to making sure the decisions made by the Council are the right decisions for Central Bedfordshire and that the process for doing this is seen as an open one.

The Council is also keen to provide the opportunity for local people to contribute and give views on service provision and policies and to be able to challenge decisions made by the Executive.

When working well, O&S can add value to the work of the Council by playing an important role in:-

- Supporting policy development;
- Raising the quality of debate;
- Improving decisions;
- Teasing out complex issues;
- Engaging the local community and key stakeholders;
- Strengthening accountability;

- Developing new ideas; and
- Monitoring and improving performance.

### **And Finally...**

The importance of O&S within a local authority cannot be understated. Those involved with its work are uniquely placed to be **challenging, influencing, and making a difference** because they:-

- Are **independent** of the decision making process.
- Can set their **own agenda** according to the needs of the residents of Central Bedfordshire.
- Can be asked to investigate issues by the Council, providing independent and objective reviews, with strong, **evidence-based** conclusions and recommendations.

## 2. What Overview and Scrutiny Committees does Central Bedfordshire have?



Throughout 2011/2012 the O&S Structure consisted of 4 OSCs. Each was aligned to a directorate of the Council and the former Customer and Central Services OSC was aligned to both the Customer and Shared Services directorate and the Office of the Chief Executive, and latterly to the People and Organisation and Resources divisions of Corporate Services. Each of the Committees had scheduled between 8 and 10 meetings. There is also an Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordination Panel consisting of the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the OSCs, which meets on a quarterly basis. For 2012/13 the Customer and Central Services OSC has been renamed the Corporate Resources OSC to reflect the changed title of the Executive portfolio.

In addition to the main Committees each of the OSCs can appoint task forces to conduct in-depth investigations. The following task forces were established during 2011/12, and further details on several of these can be found throughout this report:-

Task Force Reviews	Parent Committee
Development Strategy	Sustainable Communities
Disabled Children's Services	Children's Services
Highways and Transportation	Sustainable Communities
Let's Talk Together	Former Customer and Central Services

Full Membership details of the main Committees for 2011/12 are included at **section 11** of this report. In addition to the elected Members appointed to the OSCs, there have also been 3 parent governors and 2 diocesan representatives of the Church of England and Roman Catholic churches appointed to the Children's Services OSC.

The remainder of this Annual Report is organised into sections that set out how the work of the OSCs has addressed each of the Council's strategic priorities. The report will look at each of the priorities in turn and provide an overview of some of the outcomes achieved by the OSC whilst undertaking detailed reviews.

### **3. Supporting and Caring for an Ageing Population**

The Council wishes to see a Central Bedfordshire where services for Older People are delivered sensitively and effectively and where people are supported to exercise choice over their care and enjoy independent living. The Social Care, Health and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee has contributed to Transforming People's Lives by assisting officers in scoping the way forward towards meeting the challenges of the changing model of care for adult social services.

#### **Proposals for Crescent Court, Toddington**

At its meeting on 23 January 2012 the Social Care, Health and Housing OSC considered proposals relating to the future of the Crescent Court Sheltered Housing Scheme. The Council had consulted with residents on proposals and undertaken research to develop options for the future of Crescent Court as it was not considered to be fit for purpose, and feedback from residents had highlighted issues that included configuration of bedsits, poor access and heating.

The OSC received the outcomes of public consultation and several Members of the public, residents and representatives on behalf of residents groups attended the OSC meeting to present views and advocate the development of a new residents' option, which had not been part of the consultation.

Following detailed discussion of the options and consideration of the views of those in attendance, the Committee agreed that further work was needed prior to any proposals being approved by the Executive. The Executive were recommended to review the proposals, undertaking a further feasibility analysis of several options and carrying out further detailed discussion of the residents' option. These recommendations were accepted in full by the Executive and as a result of the recommendation regarding resident involvement, officers have worked alongside the Friends of Crescent Court to develop the two options for the future of Crescent Court and assess their feasibility and viability. A report will be presented to the OSC in June detailing the assessment of the two options and recommending a preferred option.

**The informative discussion at OSC has proved to be very useful in the shaping of the Councils emerging strategy on housing for older people.**

#### **NHS 111 Service**

At its meeting on 05 March 2012 the Social Care, Health and Housing OSC received a presentation relating to the NHS 111 telephone service. The NHS 111 Programme was a joint NHS and Department of Health initiative to deliver a national number to access urgent but non-life threatening healthcare by 01 April 2013.

As a result of the presentation Members raised several concerns with regards to the proposals and the impact on residents in Central Bedfordshire. The principal concerns were that co-ordination was needed with the police to prevent confusion for residents when the police launched its new 101 number. It was recommended that health and police services needed to collaborate to ensure that callers could be transferred appropriately. It was also



stressed that collaboration with Central Bedfordshire Council was essential to ensure that callers could be advised appropriately of services that were offered by the Council and could be directed as necessary.

**As the local health economy changes in the coming months, with the Clinical Commissioning groups leading development, it was a pleasure to see that our organisations are sharing, engaging and supporting initiatives.**

Following the OSC meeting the specification for the procurement of the NHS 111 service was reviewed to expand the development section for a single point of access (SPOA) number for each authority. The service is likely to launch in Bedfordshire in February 2013. The 111 team are presently engaging with the Police to review how the 111 and 101 numbers can link and the associated marketing. The development of the local Directory of Services is also continuing and there is full engagement across all three authorities.

### **Other items...**

As well as the items detailed above the OSCs have considered other reports relating to supporting and caring for an ageing population. These reports included:

- Harmonisation of Housing Needs Services in Central Bedfordshire
- Local Account of Performance in Adult Social Care (2010/11)
- Private Sector Property Accreditation Scheme
- Review of Fairer Charging: Phase 2 Telecare Charging
- Review of NHS Continuing Healthcare in Central Bedfordshire

## **4. Educating, Protecting and Providing Opportunities for Children and Young People**

The Council wishes to see a Central Bedfordshire where children are better educated and their care and health is improving across the board. This priority involves improving educational attainment in areas of underperformance as well as working with partners to develop the Children's Trust and to develop a Children and Young People's Plan.

### **Outcomes of the review of Transforming Teaching and Learning in Dunstable and Houghton Regis**

At its meeting on 24 May 2011 the Children's Services OSC received a report seeking their views on a review of school organisation in Dunstable and Houghton Regis as informed by the Council's Education Vision. The proposals presented different options by which the aspirations of the vision could be achieved and explained the rationale behind a preferred option. During consideration of the issue, the Committee received a representation from a parent governor of a school in Dunstable, which raised concerns regarding the consultation process used.

The Committee raised various issues regarding the merit of the various options, which included the following:-

- The freedom of schools and academies to choose their own delivery structures and the need for the local authority to trust parents, governors and teachers in making those choices;
- The financial constraints facing the local authority and the need to be realistic within these constraints; and
- The perceived lack of serious consideration of Option 4 (and other two tier options) due to financial constraints;

As a result of their detailed consideration, the Committee considered that the preferred option 1 did not to meet the needs of children in Central Bedfordshire. The Committee recommended to the Executive that a two tier 5-11 Primary and 11-19 model, closing all Middle schools, converting Upper schools to Secondary but limiting each new Secondary in size to the pupil capacity of the former Upper school, had more merit in raising educational standards than the preferred option. The Committee also recommended that two further options be considered by the Executive and that educational reasons be given why they should not be favoured over the preferred option.

The Council's Executive considered the report on 31 May 2011 and decided to apply option 1, which reflected a continuation of the current pattern of provision, whilst also encouraging schools to actively engage formally in hard federations, Academy chains and/or trusts with a 0-19 age focus. Whilst the option recommended by the OSC was not agreed in full by the Executive, receipt of the report ensured that all Members had a thorough understanding of the Council's evolving role in school organisation, school improvement and the impact of increasing independence from the Council of many local schools. The report ensured there was absolute clarity in terms of the deliverability of each of the options in the report and helped to manage expectations.

As a result of the Executive decision, a number of Houghton Regis lower schools have brought forward proposals to change age ranges and become Primary schools, driven by parental demand and a desire to raise standards. These proposals have now been approved for implementation in September 2013. This adds to an evolving two tier pattern of education in the Houghton Regis area with a number of Academies proposing to change age ranges to create primary/secondary phases.

## Children Centres: Delivery in Central Bedfordshire

At its meeting on 29 November 2011 the Children's Services OSC received a report seeking views on the reconfiguration of Children Centres in Central Bedfordshire from April 2012 in light of a public consultation. The report presented Members with a preferred option to 'reconfigure all existing Centres into 9 clusters, with an enhancement of resources available in areas of greatest need', which would ensure that no centres would close as a result of reconfiguration. Prior to the meeting Members had visited the Orchard Children's Centre at Shefford Lower School to see how Children Centres worked in practice.

Members debated the proposals and questioned the Executive Member and officers on various issues including the following:-

- How the hub and spoke model would operate in practice and what effect the preferred option would have on those Centres not designated as a hub.
- The need for reassurance that the preferred option would not spread services too thinly on the ground, particularly in rural areas;
- How Children Centres in Central Bedfordshire were performing currently in terms of best practice;

Members also raised further questions on which they sought a written response to be provided prior to the Executive meeting. As a result of their detailed discussion the Committee endorsed the preferred option to reconfigure all existing Centres into 9 clusters, with an enhancement of resources available in the areas of greatest need.

**The input from the OSC ensured all perspectives were considered and those Members that visited centres were able to identify their purpose and value in the community.**

The Executive received the recommendations of the OSC at its meeting in January 2012 and approved the preferred option for implementation. A tendering process was undertaken for the reconfigured Service Delivery Model of 9 Hubs with spokes or satellites and the new configuration, with new management organisations began on 01 April 2012. The remodelling and recommissioned children centres have enabled the release of some funding to enhance their service provision in areas of greatest need. This includes qualified social workers and speech therapy.

## Review of Children's Services to Disabled Children, Young People and their Families

At its meeting on 6 September 2011 the Children's Services OSC agreed to establish a Member Task Force to review services in Central Bedfordshire for children with disabilities. The Task Force met on two occasions between October and November to monitor the outcomes of the review on an ongoing basis and to provide a broader perspective. The Task Force visited resources, met with staff and examined the evidence of the review proposals during their development.

The contributions of the Task Force were taken into account in the formation of proposals to the Executive, which recommended changes to two main areas of work:-

- that a hub and spoke model be adopted for the delivery of services; and
- the closure of the Poppies, community support team, with support to families being delivered within the proposed hub and spoke model.

Members raised particular concerns regarding the need to ensure there would be no diminution in the overall level of service offered as a result of the proposed implementation of the "hub and spoke" model. Assurance was provided by the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services albeit acknowledging the need for flexibility with regard to individual elements of service provision. The proposals were approved by the Executive on 10 January 2012. Since approval of the proposals a document has been agreed that details how the transformation of disabled children's services will be implemented throughout 2012-2014. The plan outlines 8 key work streams required to implement the recommendations of the review and clear governance, reporting and monitoring of the plan is being undertaken by a Joint Disability Strategy Group. A detailed specification for each hub has been developed and agreed, with the first hub becoming operational in September 2012. Work is underway to identify a suitable hub base in the west of the County.

**The value and support offered by Members of the OSC together with their useful input, ensured the review and subsequent findings were fully understood by the community and users.**

### Other items...

The Children's Services OSC received several other items that related to this priority. These included:

- Alternative Future Provision of the Pupil Referral Unit
- The Children's Trust Annual Report
- The Corporate Parenting Annual Report
- The Future of Special Schooling in the South of Central Bedfordshire
- Post 16 Transport

## 5. Managing Growth Effectively

The Council aims to ensure that growth in Central Bedfordshire is handled sensitively for the benefit of local people and that the quality of the local environment is maintained or improved. This priority includes giving residents a voice in shaping the future of Central Bedfordshire, maximising the proportion of affordable new homes that are available and encouraging and supporting opportunities for creating and facilitating sustainable living and tackling climate change.

### New Plan Making Programme for Central Bedfordshire

At its meeting on 13 September 2011 the Sustainable Communities OSC received a report that set out the scope and timetable for the production of future development plans for Central Bedfordshire, including a Development Strategy and a Gypsy and Traveller Plan. This programme was required in light of the intended withdrawal of the joint Core Strategy for Luton and southern Central Bedfordshire. In addition to the report a member of the public raised questions in relation to Gypsy and Traveller issues, which were considered as part of the discussion.

Members challenged the Executive Member and discussed various issues. Whilst Members supported the proposal to create combined plans for the whole of Central Bedfordshire they were concerned about the interval between consultations on a new Gypsy and Traveller Plan beginning in 2012 and the plans being adopted in 2014 and asked that the interval be kept to a minimum. As a result of its discussion the Committee recommended:-

- That the submission draft Gypsy and Traveller Document for the north of Central Bedfordshire together with the underlying evidence base be endorsed.
- That all practicable means be taken to shorten the plan making programme for the production of a Gypsy and Traveller Plan for Central Bedfordshire to the minimum necessary to comply with legislative requirements.
- That further details be provided of the budget pressure of £300,000 identified in the Medium Term Financial Plan from 2012/13 per year for the next three years to produce the plans set out in the programme.

Following consideration of the report, the draft Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan Document (DPD) was accepted by the Executive and further financial details were provided to the Executive Member prior to the Executive Meeting. This included why contingency funds were required and a risk assessment of not including the budget pressure. However, as a result of national policy and local circumstances the Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan Document (DPD) for the North has subsequently been withdrawn from the LDF process but continues to support officers with their development management decisions. The timescales for the plan making programme will be shortened where possible during the production of the Central Bedfordshire Gypsy and Traveller Plan. The OSC recommendations led to a significant change in approach to planning for Travellers in Central Bedfordshire.

## **Gypsy and Traveller Plan: Pitch Numbers and Site Assessment Methodology**

At its meeting on 10 April 2012 the Sustainable Communities OSC received a report that set out the target for pitches to 2031 for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople in Central Bedfordshire. The report also set out a methodology for assessing sites for allocation to accommodate these pitches.

The proposals were challenged by several Members, who raised queries in relation to why the Council had identified allocations to 2031 rather than just setting targets for no more than 15 years supply. The Committee also queried the work that was ongoing to integrate Gypsies and Travellers into local communities and how the new plan would be informed by the sites previously identified in the Gypsy and Traveller Plan for the North of Central Bedfordshire.

In addition to endorsing the total number of pitches for allocation in the Gypsy and Traveller Plan for consultation purposes, Members recommended the following additional considerations for officers when assessing sites;

- that access to public facilities be determined by safer routes;
- that access to public transport be judged in relation to the frequency of the service as well as the distance to the service.

The recommendations were received by the Director for Sustainable Communities (under delegated powers) and the approval of pitch numbers and site assessment criteria enables officers to progress with the site assessments for the Gypsy and Traveller Plan. The additional assessment criteria will be considered as part of the scoring process. The OSC will consider the plan and specific sites proposed for allocation later in 2012.

### **Other items...**

The Sustainable Communities OSC has considered a further range of items relating to the effective management of growth that have included:

- Biggleswade Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document
- Development Brief for Land at Stanford Road, Shefford
- Library Services Strategy for Central Bedfordshire
- The Minerals and Waste Core Strategy
- Planning and Development Briefs for Bridge Meadow and Land South of High Street, Leighton Buzzard.



## 6. Creating Safer Communities

Creating safer communities involves making sure that Central Bedfordshire is safe and that people feel safe. This priority involves working with partners to reduce crime and the fear of crime and also working with communities in priority estates to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour.

### Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment: Identified Priorities for 2012-13

At its meeting on 24 January 2012 the Sustainable Communities OSC received a report that informed Members of the three priorities that had been identified through the Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment. These priorities had been subject to consultation and assessed through a scanning exercise that determined the high risk priorities. These priorities were:-

- **Anti-Social Behaviour;**
- **Reduce Reoffending; and**
- **Domestic Abuse**



The consideration of this report fulfilled the Committees' responsibility as the designated crime and disorder Committee for Central Bedfordshire Council. Whilst Members scrutinised the proposals, representatives of the Bedfordshire Police Authority, Bedfordshire & Luton Joint Fire Authority, and Bedfordshire Probation Trust also attended to present views and answer questions on behalf of their organisations. During its discussion of the proposals the Committee raised comments in relation to the importance of (i) encouraging greater reporting of incidents of domestic abuse; (ii) encouraging offenders to be personally responsible for their offences; and (iii) the importance of agencies providing feedback to victims, particularly in relation to anti-social behaviour, in order to increase public confidence.

The OSC recommendations were incorporated into the Central Bedfordshire Together (CBT) report recommending approval of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Priorities for 2012/13.

The recommendations of the OSC helped to inform CBT in its decision making process and in recommendations that they may make to Executive. Consideration of the priorities by the OSC ensured that the views and concerns of Central Bedfordshire residents were considered and addressed in the priorities recommended by the CSP. The OSC also ensures that the work of the CSP is challenged and reviewed appropriately, and provides the opportunity for the CSP to respond to OSC concerns and issues.

## Highways and Transportation Task Force

At its meeting on 21 June 2012 the Sustainable Communities OSC agreed to establish a Highways and Transportation Task Force to review roads and footways maintenance and the managing agent contract (MAC) with Amey LG. It was also agreed that the Task Force would review the Council's approach being developed in relation to car parking. The Task Force met on five occasions between July and October 2011 to challenge proposals, receive the outcomes of surveys and consider whether the MAC with Amey was value for money.



To inform the concerns of Members, the Task Force looked at the operation of a resident parking zone (RPZ) in the Prince Regent area of Dunstable and commissioned a survey of residents to determine whether they felt the scheme represented value for money or solved problems with parking. As a result of the survey the Task Force concluded that controlled parking zones (CPZs) should be used instead, although it was noted that small areas of RPZs could be created as part of those wider CPZs if they were considered appropriate. In addition to the issues relating to RPZs the Task Force also concluded that the MAC with Amey LG operated well and offered good value for money. The Task Force agreed 13 recommendations in total, all of which were approved by the Sustainable Communities OSC for recommendation to Executive, covering areas including:-

- The endorsement of the draft approach to parking as the basis for developing parking services in Central Bedfordshire, including the application of parking standards and increasing the use of CPZs.
- The positive nature of the MAC with Amey LG.
- Additional funding in the highways maintenance budget.
- Mechanisms for tracking highways queries.
- Developing centralised information to better inform Members.

Following the receipt of recommendations and consideration by the Executive, the draft approach to parking was approved. A number of changes in the way that the Council operates have also been developed:-

- The MAC is now the basis for the highways and transportation teams research of future contract models.
- Feedback to AMEY has positively reinforced the good work, which the contract delivers for Central Bedfordshire Council.
- A capital business case has been approved providing an additional budget of £4million per year for four years.
- The use of tools to ensure officers provide centralised information to Members in relation to the forward plan of highways works in their wards, road closures and mapping of the forward plan of highways works.
- Methods for ensuring that Amey colleagues are well appraised of future S106 expenditure and the methods for gathering and retaining 'highways intelligence'.



## 7. Promoting Healthier Lifestyles

The Council wishes to see a Central Bedfordshire where children are healthier and the gap between the healthiest communities and others is narrowing. This priority involves working in partnership with a range of partners, particularly NHS Bedfordshire, to ensure care services reflect the changing demographic profile of the area and that care services work effectively together.

### Healthier Together: Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Review



At its meeting on 12 December 2011 the Social Care, Health and Housing OSC received a report regarding the Healthier Together programme, a review of acute services provided in Northamptonshire, Bedfordshire and Milton Keynes. The Healthier Together vision is

to move as many tests, treatments and appointments into local settings, reducing the need for people to travel to hospital. The programme also considers how best to improve patient outcomes by creating centres of excellence. People should find they can access a wider range of health services closer to home however. they may need to travel further for some more specialist or 'one-off' procedures.

In response to the report the Committee raised several concerns relating to the need to consider the stress caused to patients by having to travel to receive treatment and the importance of retaining patient choice whilst also improving service quality. As a result of the report the Committee resolved that the Healthier Together programme was a substantial service variation and agreed to establish a Joint Health OSC with Bedford Borough, Luton Borough, Northamptonshire County and Milton Keynes Councils, with Bedford Borough as the host authority.

The Joint Health OSC is ongoing throughout 2012-13 and provides the opportunity to consult a wide range of stakeholders and enhance transparency, challenge and accountability in the proposals. The OSC will engage with the NHS throughout the process of developing proposals and add value by ensuring that outcomes are responsive of the views of local residents as well as providing the most appropriate means of improving service quality. The Committee has already reviewed early proposals for consultation, providing input into the issues that Members would like to see included, and will continue to provide critical friend challenge throughout the review process.

### Other items...

The Social Care Health and Housing OSC received other items relating to the promotion of healthier lifestyles. These items included:

- The Implications of the Health Reforms for Central Bedfordshire.
- The Transition from Bedfordshire Local Involvement Network (LINK) to a Healthwatch organisation.
- Updates on NHS Bedfordshire's Quality, Innovation, Productivity and Prevention programme.
- Views of Care and Nursing Home Managers on Hospital Discharge Procedures.

## 8. Cross-Cutting Issues

Complementary to the work O&S has undertaken during the year in helping to support delivery of the Council's 5 key priorities, the function has also played a significant part in reviewing strategically important issues that cut across the whole organisation and beyond. Much of this work has been undertaken by the former Customer and Central Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee but all of the Committees have contributed to a variety of corporate issues. Detailed below are some of the key issues that have been considered by the Committees.

### All Age Skills Strategy

The All Age Skills Strategy sets the strategic direction for the Council and its partners in addressing the skills needs of employers and individuals in Central Bedfordshire. As this issue cut across both the Children's Services and Sustainable Communities OSCs, all Members of the Sustainable Communities OSC were invited to attend a meeting of Children's Services on 28 February 2012 where the item was considered, and the Chairman of the Sustainable Communities OSC led on the consideration of the item.

Members of the Committee discussed the strategy and raised comments covering a wide range of areas that included:-

- The strategy would benefit from a robust timeframe for delivery, SMART outcomes, performance indicators and greater detail regarding accountability.
- The importance of recognising the role of schools and the fundamental importance of the role of parents.
- The need to ensure the Strategy linked with other work streams and contributed towards improving performance in other areas.
- The need to ensure the Strategy reflected the needs of all residents of all ages.

As a result of their consideration of the report the Committee agreed to endorse the draft All Age Skills Strategy subject to the inclusion of a robust timeframe for delivery, SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely) outcomes, performance indicators and greater detail regarding accountability. It was also agreed that a progress report be submitted to a joint Children's Services and Sustainable Communities Committee within one year, allowing Members to comment on the delivery of the Strategy against stated objectives and outcomes.

The recommendations of the OSC were accepted by the Executive and the final version of the All Age Skills Strategy, which was approved included a timeframe for delivery, SMART outcomes and performance indicators with a clearer set of next steps. Officers welcomed the opportunity to report back progress to Members in one year given the importance of skills in successfully growing our local economy in order to deliver sustainable growth, build stronger communities and promote social mobility and delivery of Council's Medium Term Plan priorities.

**Real value was derived from the fact that the All Age Skills Strategy was discussed at a joint Children's Services and Sustainable Communities Committees, which brought a real richness, depth and insight into the discussion to raise the opportunities and challenges on this agenda.**

## Review of Let's Talk Together

Let's Talk Together (LTT) meetings were introduced by the Central Bedfordshire Together partnership as a new approach to community engagement. Meetings were held throughout Central Bedfordshire in seven safer neighbourhood areas to provide opportunities for the council and other partners, such as the Fire and Rescue Service or the NHS, to engage directly with the community on various issues. At its meeting on 19 December the former Customer and Central Services OSC unanimously supported a review of the LTT meetings, expressing concerns about the lack of public attendance and the areas in which the meetings took place. The Committee agreed to establish a Task Force to support the review and report back to the Committee.



During the review a considerable amount of feedback was analysed to determine the main issues with the meetings and to determine what needed to change in order for the meetings to become more effective and enhance outcomes. The Task Force review provided recommendations relating to frequency, format, branding and partnership. The outcomes were reported to the former Customer and Central Services OSC who advised the Central Bedfordshire Together partnership that they would prefer future LTT meetings to “piggyback” existing major community events and Town & Parish Council AGMs, supplemented by a “rapid response” team to deliver ad hoc meetings when important and topical local issues arose.

The recommendations of the Task Force were considered by the Board of Central Bedfordshire Together (CBT), who valued the analysis and insight provided. CBT accepted the recommendations of the Committee, whilst supporting the concept of the LTT meetings and acknowledging the importance of an issue based model that focused on outcomes rather than the process. The Board of CBT decided to form a small task and finish group itself, involving partners, to further analyse the data and feedback and develop an alternative model of face to face community engagement. The CBT task and finish group met in May 2012. The final recommendations of CBT's review will be reported to the CBT Board at its meeting on 28 June.

## Medium Term Plan Consultation

The Medium Term Plan is a key Council document that sets out the strategic direction for the Council over the period 2012-16. At their meetings throughout April each of the OSCs received the draft Medium Term Plan (MTP) from the Leader of the Council in order to discuss and debate the six key priorities for Central Bedfordshire for 2012-16. Under each priority the report also identified tangible targets and the difference that would be visible to residents during 2012-16. The OSCs received the report as part of a formal public consultation on the priorities and targets contained within the draft plan.

Whilst all 4 OSCs endorsed the draft MTP, the following specific comments were made, which will be considered by full Council in June 2012 when it receives the final draft for approval :-

- The need for clarity in relation to some of the targets and the differences that would be visible to residents.
- The Council's ability to achieve its educational attainment targets when set against its diminishing influence as a result of the increasing prevalence of academy schools.

- The Council's ambitions relating to people not in education, employment or training (NEET) and education & training opportunities, and some concern regarding the lack of any quantifiable targets to measure these.
- The need for the Council to provide appropriate opportunities for customers who wished to engage with the Council by phone or face to face, as well as by other means.
- References should be added regarding the provision of affordable housing.

The consolidated response of the OSCs is scheduled to be received by Council in June 2012. Consideration by the OSCs provided an opportunity for non-Executive Members to influence the strategic priorities of the Council prior to their approval by full Council.

## 9. Call-ins, Petitions and further involvement

Overview and Scrutiny Committees have a statutory power to review Executive decisions that have been made but not yet implemented. Any decision of the Executive, an individual Member of the Executive or a committee of the Executive or a key decision made by an officer under delegated authority is subject to call-in. The Constitution also provides opportunities for elected Members or members of the public to get involved in meetings by requesting an item or submitting questions, statements or deputations.



Number of questions, statements or deputations during 2011/12. This is the same number as 2010/11.



Number of requested items during 2011/12. This is the same number as 2010/11.



Number of call-ins during 2011/12. In 2010/11 there were 2 call-ins and 5 petitions considered by the OSCs.

### Questions, Statements or Deputations

There were a total of nine questions or statements raised at meetings of the OSCs. Six of these were presented to the Sustainable Communities OSC and related to the Development Strategy Task Force, Gypsies and Travellers or the budget. One series of questions was received by the former Customer and Central Services OSC relating to the budget. The final two questions were received by the Social Care, Health and Housing OSC relating to proposals at Crescent Court, a sheltered housing scheme.

### Requested Item: Review of electoral arrangements

There was one item requested to be considered during 2011/12. At its meeting in June 2011 Cllr Nigel Aldis requested that the former Customer and Central Services OSC review the arrangements for the Council elections from when the election was first announced to post results stage. As a result it was announced that a review had already been commissioned by the Chief Executive, in his role as Returning Officer, to review concerns. The outcomes of this were presented to the General Purposes Committee in August 2011, where it was agreed that a letter should be written to the Chief Counting Officer raising concerns about the micro-management of the electoral process, reflected by the number of directions issued.

## 10. How to Get Involved

The residents of Central Bedfordshire are Overview and Scrutiny's most useful resource for finding out what the key issues are. Residents, community groups, local businesses and others that live or work in the area can make valuable contributions to much of the work Overview and Scrutiny does.

The work programme of Overview and Scrutiny can be flexible, so if there is an issue that you would like to see tackled or if you would just like to find out more about Overview and Scrutiny at Central Bedfordshire Council please contact the Overview and Scrutiny team.

Details regarding forthcoming meetings, including copies of the reports and a list of future meeting dates can be obtained from the Overview and Scrutiny website at the following link:

<http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/committees-and-decision-making/overview-and-scrutiny.aspx>

All OSC meetings are open to the public and a list of future meeting dates is available from the above website. Residents are also welcome to come and speak and provide their views at meetings. If you would like to attend a meeting and speak please contact us in advance.

### Contact Us:



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## 11. Further Information and 2011/12 Membership:

**Agenda papers, reports and the Minutes** of the meetings of each Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) can be viewed on the Central Bedfordshire Council Website at the link provided below or on request from the officers whose contact details are provided below:

<http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/modgov/ieDocHome.aspx?bcr=1>

### Customer and Central Services OSC (Former)

Councillors	<b>P Duckett (Chairman)</b>	
	<b>Miss A Sparrow (Vice-Chairman)</b>	
	L Birt	R W Johnstone
	J A E Clarke	J Murray
	Mrs R Drinkwater	Mrs M Mustoe
	Dr R Egan	
Substitutes	Mrs C F Chapman MBE	J A G Saunders
	K Janes	I Shingler
	D Jones	
Contact:	Bernard Carter, Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Manager (Email: <a href="mailto:bernard.carter@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk">bernard.carter@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk</a> or Telephone: 0300 300 4175)	

### Children's Services OSC

Councillors	<b>Mrs D B Gurney (Chairman)</b>	
	<b>N B Costin (Vice-Chairman)</b>	
	P N Aldis	P Hollick
	D Bowater	K Janes
	Mrs s Clark	I A MacKilligan
	A L Dodwell R B Pepworth	
Co-opted Voting Representatives	Mrs Beattie (Parent Governor)	
	Ms Copley (Parent Governor)	
	Ms Image (Roman Catholic Diocese)	
	Mr Landman (Parent Governor)	
	Mr Reynolds (Church of England Diocese)	
Substitutes	P A Duckett	A Shadbolt
	Mrs S A Goodchild	N J Sheppard
	Ms C Maudlin	
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## Social Care, Health and Housing OSC

Councillors	<b>Mrs R Drinkwater (Chairman)</b>	
	<b>N Sheppard (Vice-Chairman)</b>	
	A L Dodwell	K Janes
	Mrs R B Gammons	I A MacKilligan
	Mrs S A Goodchild	M A Smith
	Mrs D B Gurney	
Substitutes	D Bowater	P Hollick
	Dr R Egan	J Murray
	C C Gomm	Miss A Sparrow
Contact:	Jonathon Partridge, Scrutiny Policy Adviser (Email: <a href="mailto:jonathon.partridge@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk">jonathon.partridge@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk</a> or Telephone: 0300 300 4634)	

## Sustainable Communities OSC

Councillors	<b>D McVicar (Chairman)</b>	
	<b>A R Bastable (Vice-Chairman)</b>	
	M C Blair	J Murray
	Mrs C F Chapman MBE	B Saunders
	Mrs R B Gammons	P Williams
	Ms C Maudlin	
Substitutes	D Bowater	Mrs M Mustoe
	R W Johnstone	A Shadbolt
	D Jones	I Shingler
Contact:	Jonathon Partridge, Scrutiny Policy Adviser (Email: <a href="mailto:jonathon.partridge@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk">jonathon.partridge@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk</a> or Telephone: 0300 300 4634)	





## **Contact us...**

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