

Developing a Farm Strategy

Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee
March 2017

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Developing a Farm Strategy

Reports to Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September 2012 and October 2013

However no strategy has been produced to date; progress interrupted by change in leadership and revised priorities

Issues still the same:

Why do we have a Farm Estate?

The farm estate was largely inherited from Bedfordshire County Council.

Assembled in response to the Smallholdings and Allotments Acts of 1907 and 1908:

‘requirement to meet the demand of applications by young persons to enter into farming’

and the Agriculture Act of 1970 which required Local Authorities:

‘to make it their general aim to provide opportunities for persons to be farmers on their own account...by letting holdings to them’

Context

Central Bedfordshire Council's farm estate:

- 2250 Hectares (5560 acres)
- 44 Tenancies
- Book value of £ 69 million
- Annual revenue income of £ 831,000

Context:

- Average CBC tenancy = 40 hectares
- Average age of tenant = 59
- The estate carries a lot of buildings with a history of underinvestment
- 105 Hectares sold / under development in past 2 years
- £ 8 million capital 'land purchase fund'

The Need for a Farm Strategy:

Central Bedfordshire Council's farms can help us meet our wider economic, countryside and environmental objectives.

A new strategy needs to be a robust, defensible planning document which will direct the Assets Services' work in:

- Delivering viable farm holdings,
- Preserving the landscape and access to the countryside
- Making land available for housing and employment

With a commitment, and funding, to renew our farm estate we need to consider what we want from the Estate in the future and develop a Strategy in support of these outcomes.

Developing a Strategy

1. Setting out the aims and objectives:

- Understanding the value of the estate
- Evaluate demand
- Support high quality management
- Identify farms contribution to wider agendas and Council policies

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2. Establishing the context:

- Legislation
- National policy
- Local policies and plans
- Best practice
- Data gathering – what we own
- Commercial / financial

Developing a Strategy

3. Issues and Options:

- Identify issues arising from evidence gathering
- Establish key themes
- Identify options to address / deliver themes
- Review each issue and option against outcomes
- Identify key options

Developing a Strategy

4. Consultation:

- Officers, Members, public
- Draft strategy

5. Governance & Reporting

- Assets & other relevant services
- CMT, Portfolio Holder, OSC, Executive
- Implementation

Proposed development timetable

Audit & Assessment	Data gathering	2 months
Context	Legislation / impact	1 month
	Direction – what's possible	3-4 months
Issues & options	Emerging themes	1 month
Consultation	CMT/ OSC steer & direction	1 month
	Draft strategy	2 months
Governance & Reporting	Action plan – align with MTFP	1 month
	Final Strategy	1 month