

SHADOW EXECUTIVE

10 JUNE 2008

SUBJECT	Emerging Priorities and Vision for Central Bedfordshire To work towards a vision and priorities for the new authority developed in consultation with stakeholders that will establish what the area and the council should look like in the future and in order to guide detailed business planning.
REPORT OF	Interim Chief Executive
<i>Contact Officer: Jaki Salisbury (Tel: 01462 611004); Jon Ruddick (Tel: 01462 611147)</i>	

IMPLICATIONS

SUSTAINABILITY	Sustainability is at the heart of what the new council will want to achieve.
FINANCIAL	None specific but value for money is a key objective in the proposal for Central Bedfordshire.
LEGAL	None
PERSONNEL/EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES	None
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT/SAFETY	Community development and safety will be key objectives for the new council.
TRADES UNIONS	None
HUMAN RIGHTS	None
KEY ISSUE	Yes
BUDGET/POLICY FRAMEWORK	No

OTHER DOCUMENTS RELEVANT TO REPORT

“Central Bedfordshire, A Joint Proposal for Unitary Local Government” Volumes 1 and 2, December 2007.
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RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. To agree the interim vision and emerging priorities set out in this report;**
- 2. To receive a report back on the vision and priorities for Central Bedfordshire at the meeting of the Shadow Executive on 5 August 2008.**

<i>Reason for Recommendation:</i>	<i>To make progress towards establishing a long term vision statement and priorities shared by all major partners in Central Bedfordshire that will guide more detailed business planning.</i>
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Background

1. The Joint Proposal for Central Bedfordshire (December 2007) sets out the basis for a clear vision for the area and the new council. That vision now needs to be confirmed by the Shadow Executive so that it can guide detailed work on business planning and implementation. Experience from previous local government reorganisation shows that new councils do better the clearer their vision is.
2. The Joint Proposal is the starting point for developing the vision for Central Bedfordshire. The Minister for Local Government, John Healey, wrote to the Leader of the Shadow Executive on 31 March and said:

“You are also required by the Order to have regard throughout the implementation process to the information supplied to the Secretary of State with the unitary proposal about how it will deliver the outcomes on strategic leadership, neighbourhood empowerment and value for money services.”
3. In order to help develop the vision an IDeA run workshop took place on 13 May. A summary report from the workshop prepared by IDeA is at Appendix “A”. The workshop was the first element in a three part series of events called “Compass” that will not be completed until 11 July. The timescales in the proposed Implementation Plan (reported elsewhere on this agenda) mean that work must be progressed now on business planning and cannot wait for the vision to be finalised. Preparatory work must, therefore, be based on an interim vision and emerging priorities. It is suggested that the Shadow Executive adopt an interim vision and emerging priorities now and receive a further report on vision and priorities at the scheduled meeting on 5 August.

Interim Vision

4. The workshop on 13 May identified addressing the growth agenda as the top priority. Alongside this, Members present identified enhancing the natural environment, attracting the right jobs and putting in place the necessary infrastructure as key issues associated with the growth agenda. This set of issues is consistent with the Central Bedfordshire proposal and the Prospectus for Bedfordshire “Getting Growth Right” which is a vision shared by all major partners in Bedfordshire and was produced by the Countywide Partnership.
5. For the purpose of an interim vision, officers therefore suggest that the vision set out in the December 2007 submission which focuses on sustainable growth should be confirmed, namely that:

“Our vision is that people living working and thriving in Central Bedfordshire will benefit from sustainable growth and improved quality of life”.
6. The ambitions set out in the three paragraphs below are taken from the December 2007 proposal and say how the new council will work towards its vision. Shadow Executive is invited to confirm this approach.

7. The new council will work towards its vision by:-
 - providing strong leadership
 - empowering communities
 - being financially viable
 - having a clear identity
 - being customer responsive
 - having high quality members and officers
 - placing children's services at the heart and make them a priority
 - aspiring to national recognition and external validation of services.

8. Through partnership working the Local Area Agreement will determine how Central Bedfordshire responds to the key challenges facing the area as the population and urban density grow, namely to:-
 - boost economic vitality and prosperity;
 - build strong communities with a shared identity and sense of belonging;
 - raise the aspirations and achievements of our children and young people;
 - provide for vulnerable children and adults;
 - improve the health, safety and well-being of all our residents by attacking disadvantage and health inequalities, tackling anti-social behaviour, and reducing the fear of crime in our communities.

9. Central Bedfordshire Council will be a catalyst for the delivery of flourishing and confident communities. The new council will deliver for those communities:-
 - more **choice** in accessing services;
 - more **information** on the work of the council;
 - more **say** in shaping services and the way they are managed;
 - more **equity** in the way services are delivered;
 - more **dialogue** when communities demand action;
 - more **power** to scrutinize local performance and deliver local services;
 - more **support** to enliven and empower local communities and strengthen the democratic process.

Emerging Priorities

10. The Compass workshop provided a useful opportunity to discuss the vision and values of Central Bedfordshire but did not provide a robust means of determining relative service priorities. Prioritisation is clearly essential in guiding the preparation of business plans and the budget. That means identifying what are not priorities as well as what are priorities.

11. In 2006/07 each local authority was required by Government to carry out a Best Value Performance Indicator postal survey of residents. The sample size of around 1,200 in each district was such that the results can be considered to be statistically robust. Whilst much of the survey was focused upon satisfaction with services, the questionnaire also asked residents to choose (from a list of 20 pre-defined factors) those five that they felt had the greatest impact on their quality of life. From the same listing, residents were also asked to identify those in most need of improvement locally. The results for Central Bedfordshire are set out in the two tables attached at Appendix “B”.
12. Some issues are rated by residents as both important and requiring improvement locally. Those that feature within the “top ten” for both importance and need for improvement are:
 - the level of crime
 - health services
 - clean streets
 - affordable, decent housing
 - the level of traffic congestion
 - shopping facilities
 - public transport.
13. In addition to the priorities identified by residents, Members at the first Compass workshop identified a number of strategic priorities which the new council will need to take into account, namely, waste disposal, education, transport and social care. These emerged strongly in the Compass Workshop and need to feature in the unitary agenda.
14. The preparation of the Countywide community strategy and the Bedfordshire Local Area Agreement, required the compilation of a very significant evidence base identifying local need. This evidence base, and discussions with stakeholders, has identified a range of priorities. These are summarised at Appendix “C”.
15. As might be expected, in many cases the factors identified by residents as important and requiring improvement also appear as priorities within the current Bedfordshire community strategy, the main exception being “clean streets”.
16. The analysis of priorities above does not include any consideration of cross cutting organisational issues such as value for money, which are central to the bid document. The Compass workshop summary at Appendix “A” gives an indication of cross cutting priorities which will be further developed during the next two parts of the Compass programme.

17. The December 2007 proposal for Central Bedfordshire provides an important starting point for the development of cross-cutting priorities. The proposal says that the new council will:-

- be focussed on driving up customer satisfaction ratings;
- increase accessibility to all council services for all members of our communities;
- modernise our back and front office processes;
- innovate and streamline customer interactions with the council, including ideas such as a single membership card for libraries, leisure and cultural opportunities.

18. Taking into account all of the above, officers suggest that the Shadow Executive consider the following emerging priorities:-

Short term

- Ensuring robust service delivery with effect from day one

Medium term

- Transforming service delivery in order to improve access for customers, increase value for money and reduce pressure on council tax

Longer term

- Growing the local economy
- Achieving sustainability in waste management
- Raising the aspirations of children and young people
- Reducing crime and the fear of crime
- Reducing health inequality.

Next Steps

19. By the time Shadow Executive considers this report it will also have been considered by the Central Bedfordshire Implementation Team which includes key stakeholders. Officers will report orally on the views of that meeting.

20. Following this meeting of the Shadow Executive the following stages are planned:-

- Compass workshop 2 on 6 June looks at the process of setting up the new authority
- Compass workshop 3 on 11 July includes stakeholders and focuses on priorities
- Shadow Executive on 5 August considers a draft strategic plan
- Shadow Executive on 5 August adopts a vision statement and priorities
- Shadow Executive on 30 September adopts a strategic plan.

Background Papers:	Letter from Minister for Local Government to Leader of Central Bedfordshire Shadow Executive, "Delivering the New Unitary Authorities", 31 March 2008.
Location of Papers:	Deputy Chief Executive's office, Priory House, Shefford.
File Reference:	CG3