

Creating Central Bedfordshire

Compass Workshop 3: Priorities and Practicalities

Friday, 11th July 2008

SUMMARY REPORT

1. The third Compass Workshop gave councillors and some senior managers an opportunity to:
 - focus the vision and values statements for the new council;
 - draw together the priorities that should shape the Budget and Services;
 - identify practical implications in taking other stakeholder groups through the transition
2. Throughout the workshop seven tables were used to group a cross section of members and some officers to discuss and offer views.

Experience from elsewhere

3. A number of points drawn from experience elsewhere were made by Councillor Dale Birch, Deputy Leader of Bracknell Forest and ourselves during the day. Key ones that may have relevance to your circumstances and the topics of the day were;
 - Focus on limited objectives that residents want.
 - Be careful not to miss the 'hard to reach' and manage 'the hard to avoid' groups
 - Do a smaller number of things very well that exemplify the new Council
 - Ensure you are media savvy
 - Make minimum system changes as this can be unsettling and can cause major problems (eg payroll)
 - Ensure data is accurate and up to date from all bodies
 - Monitor budget & performance monthly
 - Ensure the same advice is given to all councillors & officers
 - Be determined in getting the right people for each job; managerially and politically.

Vision, Values and Priorities

4. Councils use a variety of words to express what they do. What has emerged for Central Bedfordshire are statements of:

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| Vision | - a short statement of what you will strive to achieve for Central Bedfordshire |
| Values | - expressions of how you do this in your behaviour as a Council |
| Priorities | - expressions of what you see as particularly important to give extra resources, energy and commitment to in shaping the budget, service planning and management of the new Council. |

5. Members were asked to test the initial expressions of the new Councils' vision and values (Briefing Paper 1) using a **'doorstep test'**. This test was used to assess what would be understood on the doorsteps of Central Bedfordshire. Although somewhat artificial it was an attempt to be more direct with these public statements.
6. The results from the eight tables are set out in Annex 1. A summary of the vision and values suggestions are set out below. The priorities are in the next section.

Vision

7. An alternative vision statement emerged from one group which built in several groups' concerns to stress 'putting the customer first', 'value for money' and 'providing high quality services'. Slightly edited (shown in lighter case) it is:

"We will put you, the people who live and work in Central Bedfordshire, first, work with you and support you by providing high quality services that are overall better value for your money."

This is distinct from the original:

"Our vision is that people living, working and thriving in Central Bedfordshire will benefit from sustained growth and improved quality of life."

There needs to be a decision as to which best expresses your ambition for the new council.

Values

8. The ideas emerging on values reflected the mixed nature of the original list – both values and service priorities. Service priorities suggested here are incorporated in the priorities listed below and are therefore excluded from the set of values.

The following core values emerged with considerable support: **we will**

- be approachable and listen to your concerns
- keep you informed
- not promise what we can't deliver and explain why
- be fully accountable for our actions
- work as one Council and as a team joining up your services with health, the police and other partners
- be fair to all no matter where you live or who you are
- be proud of where we live and what we offer
- seek to build your trust in us.

Priorities

9. Groups were asked to examine three sets of priorities that have begun to emerge:
- Potential priority list from Compass Workshop 1 (Briefing Paper 3a)
 - Bedfordshire Community Strategy Priority Areas (Briefing Paper 3b)
 - Resident survey results 'most important'/'most in need of improvement' (Briefing Paper 3c)

They were asked to choose five priorities. These results are in Annex 2.

10. The themes from all the groups were drawn together and everyone was asked to cast three votes. The results are below and they revealed four strong front runners (votes in brackets).

1. Support the ageing population

- provide choice of care
- work to an affordable budget (24)

2. Restrain council tax through value for money

- streamline, avoid duplication and business process re-engineer (19)

3. Strengthen our children's future

- raise achievement, e.g. GCSE results
- provide opportunities for young people/ fulfil potential
- provide activities for teenagers
- provide learning opportunities/ school pyramid/ community learning (18)

4. **Manage the growth of Central Bedfordshire** through:
 - affordable housing for local people
 - adequate infrastructure
 - handling the increased waste
 - tackling traffic congestion
 - balancing town and country issues

(incorporating the housing and congestion votes - 18)

5. **Strengthen our partnership working** (7)

6. **Promote safer communities**
 - reduce crime
 - reduce fear/ misperception of crime
 - tackle ASBs, damage
 - police/CSO's on the beat

(5)

7. **Create viable and functioning communities**
 - enable participation in community life

(4)

8. **Attract jobs**
 - wealth creating
 - environment for job creation

(4)

9. **Promote healthier life styles**
 - access to health, social care and well-being services

(4)

10. **Tackle the condition of pavements and roads** (3)

'Local buses in rural areas' and 'green issues' received one vote each.

Lower Priorities

11. Groups were asked for low priority services. The full results are in Annex 3 but those mentioned by more than one group were:
 - tourism
 - museums
 - countryside access
 - theatre
 - parks
 - cemeteries
 - buses/ public transport

12. It was suggested that two other processes need to be used in parallel with cuts to low priorities when budgets are tight (as they will be);
 - increasing revenues
 - investing to save.

Engagement with other stakeholders

13. There are a range of potential resistances to change that the new council needs to address. Some of the most common are:

- 'We don't do things like that that around here'
- 'What's this new council going to offer me?'
- 'We don't know what's going – there's too much/too little communication'
- 'We're not consulted or have any say'
- 'We're going to lose out' – the roller coaster
- 'We're scared of the scale of the exercise'
- 'We don't have a mandate to do any of this, there's an election coming up'
- 'The king is dead ... er, things are still the same'
- 'We have our say but it doesn't make any difference'

14. The last session examined how the new council needs to engage various stakeholder groupings, and their potential resistances, if they are to support and adapt to the Council's change. Six groups each tackled one of the following:

- parish and town councils
- neighbourhoods and citizens
- partner organisations
- voluntary and civic groups
- politicians and groups
- staff

15. A range of very useful and practical ideas were generated appropriate to each group (Annex 4). These ideas need discussing in full and consolidating into the communications and change management strategies.

Overall

16. The Workshop pulled together some of the current thinking and makes proposals on:

- **Vision and values** that should drive the new council (para.7,8);
- **Priorities** that should drive the new council's budget and service planning (para. 10)
- **Communication and change management strategies** for engaging stakeholders (para 15, Annex 4)

The Workshops have made large demands on the members of the Shadow Council and their views need to be reflected in the hugely demanding task of the transition year.

Andy Holder, Judi Billing and Malcolm Grimston, IDeA, 17 July 2008

RESULTS FROM THE MIXED GROUPINGS AT THE TABLES

ANNEX 1: VISION/VALUES

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| <p>Table 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We're responsible • We're approachable • We're one team • Here to make life better for you • Trust – future not the past • Value for money • Learning • Children's future • Healthier Lifestyles • Safer Communities • Green Issues • Sustainable Growth/Town & Village Growth <p>Table 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stopping too much housing growth • Helping people get an affordable/social home • Getting a job • Infrastructure: roads, services, facilities • Villages & urban: Council, Clearly, Responsible, Answerable, Accessible • Safer Communities • Crime (including perception) • Sort out the pavements, easements & roads • CCTV • Quality of life • Congestion • Young people etc; ASB • Activities for teenagers • Fear of crime • Participation in society (getting involved) <p style="text-align: center;">Table 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver & Improve your services • Listen to your concerns • Keep your Council Tax down • Keep you informed • Work with NHS/Police/Fire | <p style="text-align: center;">Table 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Champions (representing * leading) • High quality value for money services • Get REAL - One Council! • One team "we" • Proud about where we live <p>Table 6</p> <p>Residents priorities don't touch on major services/spending</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Care • Corporate • Short Pointed ? • One council – joined up <p style="text-align: center;">Table 7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Champions • Not necessarily politicians may be single issue advocates • Potential for conflict • Fair Access • Who you are • Where you live • Where you've come from • Customer first • Be held to account and responsible for actions • Not promising what you can't deliver and explaining why <p style="text-align: center;">Table 8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key words • Take out sustainable growth (does not "mean" anything) • Take out quality of life FOR • High quality services • Value for money • Customer first • We want to put you (our customers/resident)first, to work with you and support you by providing high quality services that are overall better value for your money |
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ANNEX 2: PRIORITIES FOR BUDGET

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| <p>Table 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VFM • Learning - Childrens Futures • Healthier Lifestyles • Safer Communities • Green Issues • Town and Village Growth <p style="text-align: center;">Table 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longer term priority to reduce Council Tax • Managing the Growth Agenda • Housing • Facilities/infrastructure • Jobs/economy <p style="text-align: center;">Table 3/4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better value for money <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streamlining/avoid duplication Business Process Reengineering • Supporting an ageing population-choice of care • Improving the opportunities for young people to fulfil potential <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activities for teenagers Improving GCSE results • Reduce fear of crime <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bobbies/CSO's on beat Communicate real level of crime • Manage growth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affordable housing - (impact of poor housing on ASB) Infrastructure Traffic congestion Managing waste <p style="text-align: center;">Table 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restraining Council Tax to a justified level • Attract wealth creating jobs • Meet the challenge of an ageing society, Social Services is top priority | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising educational achievements • Affordable housing for local people • Children (Attainment in education) • Assisting in the reduction of crime <p style="text-align: center;">Table 6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission statement • Can't do everything – priorities • Delivering your priorities • Efficiently • Locally • Affordably <p style="text-align: center;">Table 7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASB and criminal damage • Planning of physical & social infrastructure via LDF • Educational performance & learning opportunities • Effective operation of school pyramid • Community Learning • Ageing population • Enable to participate in community life • Keep council tax low by re-allocating spend to priorities • Creating functional viable communities • Affordable housing • Employment opportunities • Community heart • Transport - Local Bus in rural areas <p>Table 8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 priorities of SCS and the specifics • Tackling infrastructure • Waste treatment • Looked After Children • Sustainable Housing • Access to health, social care and well-being services |
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ANNEX 3: LOW PRIORITIES

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| <p>Table 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soft targets; leisure, tourism; coroners, theatres, parks, museums • BUT - Savings realised Quality of life • Consequences - Robbing Peter, paying Paul..... • Housing • Public Transport <p>Table 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cemeteries - Crematorium/TC • Archeology - Use Civic groups /History groups • Museums • Theatre • Parks <p>Table 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Race relations/equality/diversity • Tourism | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landlord services • Grants/subsidies • Business & employment grants • Museums <p>Table 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable communities have major priorities but others are lower • Climate • Countryside access • Tourism <p>Table 6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce/cease & invest to save • Increase income & investments • Green; SFM/do things differently • Countryside right & access, footpaths • Arts & culture • Buses |
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ANNEX 4: ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHERS
Working with partners to get best delivery and outcomes

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| <p>Parish/Town engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly Newsletter • District/County Councillor attendance at town/parish meetings giving update reports • Town/Parish meeting in district/county offices (happens x pg in SBDC) • E-mail to parish clerks on key issues • Let them do the job/supply the funding <p>Neighbourhoods & Citizens</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personality of engagement • Go out to community • Use comfortable locality • Build local knowledge • Do what works – own communication (ie. Facebook) • Use existing magazines, newsletters etc. • Determine definition of community- one of most difficult is commuters <p>Partner Org</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder partners workshop • Wide engagement workshops • Officer working groups • S/h forum • Regular update • TTF & OSG • CB to countrywide partner • Commitment already in place • No central communications – officers require update from OPB, similar for residents | <p>Voluntary and Civic Groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern re funding • Special interest groups • Open Day • 1st challenge is to identify "others" (database) • Use information and existing forums <p>Political</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand to Group Leader • Deputy Group Leader • Base on fortnightly newsletter • Base on Group meeting • TF notes • Newsletter hard & elec • Member section on intranet • Use exist meeting • Specify member brief • Scrutiny brief <p>Staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must to better - JS & JR agree • So far 4 x cx letter to all colleagues • Weekly e-mail delay (want agreed structure) start 14/7 • Senior staff next week JS, MW & CX • Start cascade of key milestones • List people know aware lack of communications • Usual channels being used • Opportunity throughout district/area • Col must do better |
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