

# Creating Central Bedfordshire Council

## **Sustainable Communities Directorate Plan 2009/10**

September 2008

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### 1. Introduction

The Council's Vision is to improve the quality of life of all in Central Bedfordshire, and enhance the unique character of our communities and our environment. The five priorities of the Council are:

- Supporting and caring for an aging population;
- Educating, Protecting and Providing Opportunities for children and young people;
- Managing Growth Effectively;
- Creating Safer Communities;
- Promoting healthier lifestyles.

The Sustainable Communities Directorate comprises six divisions:

- Community Safety and public protection;
- Development Management;
- Economic Growth, Regeneration, Tourism and Delivery;
- Highways;
- Strategic Planning, Housing Strategy and Transportation;
- Waste.

The Directorate's aim is: *"To be an exemplar of delivering sustainable communities through national influence and high quality, cost effective service delivery"*. In doing this, the Directorate will contribute significantly to the achievement of the Council's Vision and the delivery of its priorities.

### 2. Key Drivers

By 2031 the population of the Central Bedfordshire area will have grown to over 325,000 people<sup>1</sup>. This must be managed well, as the impact of this scale of growth in a relatively short timescale will place additional pressures on local services and infrastructure.

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies provide the overall spatial vision for the entire region and provide the regional framework against which local participation in creating Sustainable Community Strategies, Core Strategies, Local Transport Plans and Housing Strategies takes place.

Through the East of England Regional Assembly we will ensure Central Bedfordshire has a strong voice at the highest levels of spatial planning, housing and transportation strategy. The Directorate will seek to strongly influence the development of Central Government policy for the benefit of local communities.

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<sup>1</sup> "Population Estimates & Forecasts 2007" from Luton BC/Beds CC estimate of 325,600 in 2031

The need to boost economic prosperity to balance new housing growth, whilst protecting the character of our communities and high quality of the countryside is a particular challenge. The priorities for the Directorate are outlined below:

### 3. Directorate Priorities

The remit of the Directorate is especially broad. It is therefore important to establish high level service priorities. For 2009/10 these will be:

- Establishing Central Bedfordshire's influence on policy nationally and regionally.
- Establishing successful partnerships across all areas of activity.
- Ensuring that services reflect best practice and that we have suitably trained and skilled staff in all key roles.
- Procuring a Sustainable Waste Management solution.
- Progressing the Local Development Frameworks to adoption.
- Progressing the development of the Building Control Service into a cross boundary trading unit.
- Creating excellent regulatory services and meeting the better regulation challenge.

Each of the Directorate's service divisions has a significant contribution to make and the following sections of this plan look at each of the service divisions within the Directorate in more detail.

### 4. Community Safety and Public Protection

The prime responsibility of this division is to work towards the achievement of cohesive, strong and safe communities, thereby enhancing the attractiveness of the area to people and businesses. It also will strive to provide a regulatory environment that is supportive to business growth whilst protecting public health and consumers. In terms of the Council's priorities, this division takes the corporate lead for priority "creating safer communities".

In general, Central Bedfordshire is a relatively safe area. The reduction of crime continues to be high on the Partnership's agenda as is tackling the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour. Some communities are much more likely to suffer from the impact of crime and disorder than others.

The newly created Community Safety Partnership for Central Bedfordshire will exceed the Government's new minimum standards for partnerships in its new structure, and will strengthen our approach and accountability in tackling these issues.

Our partnership priorities are to tackle prolific and priority offenders, ensure effective drug treatment programmes, reduce the number of repeat victims of domestic violence, tackle acquisitive crime, and reduce fear of crime and anti-social behaviour.

## **5. Development Management**

This division is concerned with managing the delivery of development in Central Bedfordshire in accordance with the strategic vision set out in the Local Development Framework Core Strategies as they replace existing local plans. This is achieved through consideration and determination of all types of planning and related applications. Defending the decisions of the authority on appeal and enforcement of planning controls.

Through pre-application advice, guidance, negotiation and enforcement, the division seeks to ensure development is sensitive to the local context, is of a high quality and safe. A significant contribution to ensuring sustainable development is securing through section 106 planning agreements the necessary infrastructure to meet the development's needs.

## **6. Economic Growth, Regeneration, Tourism and Delivery**

This division will work to ensure that the area is prosperous with a range of job opportunities and skills training to support the growing population as a significant contribution to the corporate priority of "managing growth effectively". Through Economic Assessment, a strong evidence base and analysis of the District will be used to inform the Sustainable Community Strategy and secure government funding and inward investment.

Town Centre Renaissance, covering the physical refurbishment of outworn and poorly functioning parts of the urban fabric; and the enhancement and improvement of public places, existing and growing communities will benefit from vibrant local centres.

The delivery of significant local employment growth will provide a diverse range of opportunities to balance population growth and constrain need for out commuting.

## **7. Highways**

This division's prime purpose is to enable delivery of a wider range of sustainable travel options and increased capacity to support the growth of the District.

The role of the division extends from the strategic to the operational. With significant cross boundary working to improve transportation routes and deliver major schemes through to maintenance of highways and pavements. The division is responsive to local issues, such as speeding and inconsiderate parking, which are repeatedly raised through local community safety fora, tackling these through the Casualty Reduction Partnership and ensuring effective, on street parking enforcement.

## 8. **Strategic Planning, Housing Strategy and Transportation**

This division takes the corporate lead for the Council's priority of "managing growth effectively". The Strategic Planning, Housing Strategy and Transportation division is responsible for influencing the development of the national and regional strategy and for the production of those strategies specific to Central Bedfordshire. This work is carried out with extensive, meaningful, public and partner organisation consultation through the Community Network Model and is coordinated through a number of sub-regional and cross boundaries partnership arrangements. These include the [Central Bedfordshire and Luton Joint Committee]<sup>2</sup>, Renaissance Bedford covering the Bedford and Northern Marston Vale Growth Area; the Bedfordshire and Luton Planning & Transportation Joint Member Panel; and the Bedfordshire & Luton Sub Regional Housing Partnership. Oversight of the developing proposals for an Eco Town is provided through the [Marston Vale Joint Committee]<sup>3</sup>. These are in turn supported by officer working groups.

## 9. **Waste**

This division will work to deliver a sustainable waste management system, which minimises waste generation and the use of landfill, whilst maximising the re-use, recycling and composting of waste. Environmental cleanliness is one of the main signifiers of the safety of an area and is often cited as a public priority. We will maintain high standards of cleanliness, and provide an effective response to incidents of fly tipping, littering and graffiti. These services will be delivered in close cooperation with Highways to ensure a seamless service in maintenance of high quality public places.

## 10. **Business Plans**

This Directorate Plan is supported by six detailed Business Plans setting out how each service will contribute to the Council's vision and priorities. A brief summary of each service is given overleaf:

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<sup>2</sup> This is an indicative name for the existing Luton and South Bedfordshire Joint Committee. A report will be brought to a future meeting of the Central Bedfordshire Shadow and Luton Councils on the future make up of this committee

<sup>3</sup> This is an indicative name for early proposals to remodel the existing Wixams Joint Development Control Committee to cover this role

<b>Community Safety and Public Protection</b>	
Nature & scope <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Safety</li> <li>• Environmental Health</li> <li>• Trading Standards</li> <li>• Emergency Planning</li> </ul>	Major projects 2009-12 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harmonisation of services</li> <li>• Excellent regulatory services</li> <li>• New partnership arrangements</li> <li>• Building resilience</li> </ul>
<b>Development Management</b>	
Nature & scope <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development Control</li> <li>• Building Control</li> <li>• Landscape &amp; Conservation</li> <li>• Albion Archaeology</li> </ul>	Major projects 2009-10 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harmonisation of services</li> <li>• Implementing Planning White Paper reforms</li> <li>• Development of Building Control Commercial Trading Unit</li> <li>• Strategic site applications</li> </ul>
<b>Economic Growth, Regeneration, Tourism and Delivery</b>	
Nature & scope <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic Assessment</li> <li>• Strategic Site Delivery</li> <li>• Town Centre Renaissance</li> <li>• Business Growth &amp; Development</li> </ul>	Major projects 2009-12 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Securing Major Growth Area Infrastructure Funding</li> <li>• Delivery of key sites and inward investment projects</li> <li>• Establishing a strong role for Central Bedfordshire in the LDVs</li> </ul>
<b>Highways</b>	
Nature & scope <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrated Passenger Transport</li> <li>• Highway Policy</li> <li>• Highway Maintenance</li> <li>• Traffic and road safety</li> </ul>	Major projects 2009-12 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Congestion Strategy</li> <li>• Highways Capital Programme</li> <li>• Casualty Reduction Programme</li> <li>• Guided bus way scheme</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic Planning, Housing Strategy and Transportation</b>	
Nature & scope <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spatial Planning</li> <li>• Housing Strategy</li> <li>• Transport Policy</li> </ul>	Major projects 2009-12 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influencing Regional Strategy</li> <li>• Adoption of LDFs, Housing and Transportation Policies</li> <li>• Supporting new Sustainable Community Strategy</li> </ul>
<b>Waste</b>	
Nature & scope <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Waste collection &amp; disposal</li> <li>• Waste minimisation, recycling and recovery</li> <li>• Environmental Cleanliness</li> </ul>	Major projects 2009-12 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procurement of a PFI supported waste disposal solution</li> <li>• New Municipal Waste Strategy</li> <li>• Responding to national Waste Strategy 2007</li> <li>• Harmonisation of services</li> </ul>

## 11. Performance

Across the breadth of the Sustainable Communities Directorate performance is good. We will improve on this and, except where there is a specific decision to do otherwise, we will plan to deliver above average performance for below average cost. This will be supported through the use of high quality performance and risk management systems with sufficient resources provided to ensure Directorate systems integrate fully with corporate needs.

Achievement of outcomes will be measured through relevant Local Area Agreement Indicators and National Indicators where these apply. In addition there are a range of measures within LDF Annual Monitoring Reports and other local measures are set out in the six detailed business plans supporting this document.

Effective service delivery relies upon suitably skilled and trained staff. The Directorate will play a full part in tackling the chronic national shortage of professionally qualified officers in many key disciplines within the Sustainable Communities range of activities through effective workforce planning to ensure future service delivery.

## 12. What will success look like?

The success of the Directorate will be seen in a Central Bedfordshire which is thriving, prosperous, attractive and clean. It will be an inclusive district with a distinctive character where people can do business, enjoy leisure time and can afford to live. It will be an area where growth has made communities more sustainable and cohesive, and where strong and safe local communities feel the benefits of low levels of crime and anti-social behaviour. People of all ages will be engaged and confident in working with the Council and its partners to improve and manage their local area.

## 13. Summary

The Sustainable Communities Directorate is at the heart of delivering the Council's priorities, particularly those relating to the management of growth and the creation of safer communities. The people of Central Bedfordshire expect and deserve to live in communities which are safe, clean, well planned and where there is easy access to employment and leisure opportunities. Our challenge is to ensure that this happens.