

SHADOW EXECUTIVE
28 OCTOBER 2008

SUBJECT	PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS IN CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE (To consider the Partnership arrangements and Community Network Model and delegate authority to the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) for the Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement)
REPORT OF	Director of Business Transformation
<i>Contact Officer: Ian Porter Tel: 01234 276067</i>	

IMPLICATIONS

SUSTAINABILITY	Yes, in line with the Vision and Priorities for Central Bedfordshire.
FINANCIAL	Yes, potentially the Community Network Model will need resources to operate which are being accommodated in the base budget build for Central Bedfordshire.
LEGAL	Yes, statutory requirement for the Council to publish a Local Area Agreement (LAA).
PERSONNEL/EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES	Yes
COMMUNITY DEV/SAFETY	Yes, the community safety existing forums will be part of the Community Network Model.
TRADE UNIONS	No
HUMAN RIGHTS	No
KEY ISSUE	Yes
BUDGET/POLICY FRAMEWORK	No

OTHER DOCUMENTS RELEVANT TO REPORT
Existing Local Area Agreement (LAA)

RECOMMENDATIONS:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To agree to discharge Central Bedfordshire's statutory responsibilities in relation to the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Local Area Agreement to the Central Bedfordshire Local Strategic Partnership. 2. To endorse the proposed Community Network Model, in particular:- <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The Terms of Reference for the LSP Board and its membership (b) The Terms of Reference for the Strategic Implementation Group and Thematic Partnerships (c) The Terms of Reference for the Growth Sub Committee (d) The principles for the Community Area Networks and to delegate the further development of these to the LSP in consultation with communities. 3. To discharge the responsibility for acceptance of the Community Network Model to the Central Bedfordshire LSP once 2 (d) is complete.

4. To note the timetable and process for the review and refresh of the SCS and LAA.

Reason for Recommendation: To ensure that Central Bedfordshire Local Authority has the appropriate partnership framework in place so that it is in a position to discharge its statutory responsibilities to the Central Bedfordshire LSP in relation to the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Local Area Agreement.

Background

1. Both in the proposal for a Central Bedfordshire unitary and in the recently adopted Strategic Plan (2009-11) Central Bedfordshire has identified providing strong community leadership, powerful partnerships and empowering communities through community networks as key to delivering its aspirations. The Council also notes in its strategic plan that in order to deliver on priorities it 'needs to encourage greater involvement and engagement in local communities and to further strengthen partnership working'.
2. Central Bedfordshire sees progress on this agenda as key to delivering the vision of improving the quality of life of all and enhancing the unique character of our communities and our environment and making a difference to the way we deliver services and engage communities. The Local Strategic Partnership, Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement are key to driving forward these ambitions.
3. In accordance with the Local Government and Involvement in Public Health Act 2007, Central Bedfordshire Council will become the accountable body for the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Local Area Agreement. Its role and responsibilities as the accountable body include:
 - (a) a statutory duty to develop a Sustainable Community Strategy;
 - (b) a statutory duty to produce a Local Area Agreement (LAA);
 - (c) a statutory duty to involve residents, stakeholders and communities (from April 2009);
 - (d) enhanced powers of scrutiny, to hold partners to account under the statutory duty to co-operate;
 - (e) financial management of the Area Based Grant (ABG) and the LAA;
 - (f) performance management, including ensuring there is clear leadership and accountability for each target; and
 - (g) ensuring that outcomes and targets reflect the needs of disadvantaged neighbourhoods and communities.

Progress to date

4. In order to deliver on the Council's ambitions officers and members have been working on developing a partnership framework to drive this forward. Our first draft of the Central Bedfordshire's Community Network Model set out initial proposals for the overall local strategic partnership arrangements and started our engagement journey.
5. We have shared this discussion document with a wide range of partners and stakeholders so that they have had the opportunity to inform the approach and contribute to the design of the overall strategic partnership arrangements to be embedded across Central Bedfordshire. We
 - (a) consulted with Town and Parish councils as part of a wider survey. Consultation ended 19 September 2008 and results and an explanation of how this was being taken on board and next steps were fed back at the first Central Bedfordshire Rural Conference held on 11 October 2008;
 - (b) invited representatives of key statutory partners, business and the voluntary and community sector to join the Community Engagement 'Stakeholder Sounding Board'. First two sessions held on 23 July and 18 September. A further workshop was held on the 15 October 2008. As the sounding board includes representatives of the many different groups and foras operating across the Central Bedfordshire area they have also been encouraged to seek wider input from the sectors they represent;
 - (c) held drop in sessions at the three main Council offices (12, 23 and 27 August) for members and staff to find out more about the model and give their comments;
 - (d) are meeting with key stakeholders to get direct feedback and also explore opportunities to work towards a joint Community Engagement Strategy in the future; and
 - (e) are meeting regularly with Go East to ensure the detail of the proposals for the partnerships and the LAA refresh approach are fit for purpose and align to the Government's latest guidance Creating Strong Safe and Prosperous Communities.
6. A joint Mid/South Beds LSP meeting was held on 11th September. This provided an opportunity for members of both LSPs to further influence the proposed model for the Central Bedfordshire partnership. Support was given to establishing a Central Bedfordshire LSP Board and it was agreed that both the Mid and South Beds LSPs will have one final meeting before the end of October 2008.
7. We have had very positive anecdotal feedback from a range of partners and stakeholders on our approach to engaging them developing these proposals. This should stand us in good stead as we move forward in implementing the partnership arrangements being proposed.

Proposed way forward

8. The feedback from all stakeholders has now been considered and the proposed principles, structures and ways of working for our Community Network Model are attached in the terms of reference and diagrams at Appendix A.
9. There has been a wide-ranging debate around a number of the issues set out in the Terms of Reference. Some of these issues and options considered have been set out below for members' information and comment.
10. **LSP Board Terms of Reference:** The key issue that has been debated at some length by stakeholders and over which there have been differing views has been the membership of the LSP Board.
11. The following option which set out 12 members for the LSP board was proposed in the initial consultation documents:
 - (a) The Leader - Central Bedfordshire Council
 - (b) Chief Executive - Central Bedfordshire Council
 - (c) Bedfordshire Police
 - (d) Bedfordshire Police Authority
 - (e) Beds & Luton Fire Service
 - (f) Bedfordshire PCT
 - (g) Business Sector Representative
 - (h) Director of Public Health
 - (i) Third Sector Representative
 - (j) Learning Sector Representative
 - (k) Representative for Town Councils
 - (l) Representative for Parish Councils
12. We had some conflicting feedback in relation to this. Some partners felt that it was not inclusive enough and that in particular the third sector representation was inadequate, whilst others felt that the above was the right approach as the board needed to consist of a tight and focused membership that did not become a talking shop.
13. The following proposal was put forward in response to the above and consisted of a core membership of 20, consisting of five equitable groups, each with four members, as follows:
 - (a) Central Bedfordshire Council (Local Authority Sector)
 - Leader
 - Chief Executive
 - Stronger Communities Portfolio Holder (or equivalent)
 - Local Councillor
 - (b) (Wider) Public Sector

- Bedfordshire Police [we do not see the need for the Police Authority to also be included]
- Bedfordshire and Luton Fire and Rescue Service
- Bedfordshire PCT
- Director of Public Health

(c) Town and Parish Council Sector

- 2x Town Council representatives
- 2x Parish Council representatives

(d) Third Sector

- Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity
- Voluntary and Community Action and/or Community and Voluntary Service
- 1 or 2 frontline voluntary and community sector organisations (with strategic remit)

(e) Business Sector

- The Chamber
- Dunstable College and/or The Learning Partnership
- 2 x local businesses

14. In trying to achieve a balance between these options and arrive at a membership that would be fit for purpose yet address concerns, the following third option of a core membership of 14 was presented alongside the two above to the joint meeting of the Mid and South Bedfordshire LSPs:

- (a) Leader
- (b) Chief Executive
- (c) 1x Town Council representative
- (d) 1x Parish Council representative
- (e) Bedfordshire Police or Police Authority
- (f) Bedfordshire and Luton Fire and Rescue Service
- (g) Bedfordshire PCT
- (h) Director of Public Health
- (i) 1 Voluntary and Community Sector representative
- (j) 1 Rural communities representative
- (k) 1 frontline voluntary and community sector organisation with strategic remit
- (l) The Chamber
- (m) HEFE (Higher Education and Further Education) representative
- (n) 1 x local business with strategic remit

15. Members of both LSPs agreed that the third option with 14 members should be recommended to Central Bedfordshire Shadow Executive as the preferred way forward. At the meeting there were however requests for us to consider a number of amendments to this membership. These included:

- (a) an additional place for another Town Council representative to ensure that there was representation from both a large town and a medium/market town on the board;
 - (b) a request from Aragon Housing that they had a place on the board;
 - (c) a request that the HEFE representative represented the skills issues.
16. In response to the above requests for additional places we are recommending that the third option should remain with a core membership of 14 as we feel this represents the best balance and compromise in achieving inclusiveness as well as remaining strategic and focused. Partners and stakeholders have key roles to play in the strategic implementation group, thematic partnerships and the community area networks.
17. In response to the request that skills issues are represented on the Board we have written to the Learning Sector and asked them to nominate a representative bearing this in mind.
18. **Strategic Implementation Group (SIG).** Again the major issues in relation to this aspect of the partnership framework revolved around the membership of this group and the feedback we got in relation to the role and responsibilities of the SIG has been incorporated to strengthen the terms of reference.
19. The key membership issue was again the balance of membership and a concern that there could be a lack of wider representation on the SIG if the majority of the members were from the local authority. To address this concern we have amended the membership to include non local authority LSP Board Representatives and forum chairs or nominated representatives from the Community Area Networks.
20. **Growth Sub Committee.** At the joint meeting of the South and Mid Beds LSPs another issue that received a significant level of debate and support was the proposal that a Growth Sub Committee be incorporated into the partnership framework for the Central Bedfordshire LSP.
21. The Growth Sub Committee is currently a key mechanism that South Bedfordshire LSP has developed to ensure that its vision is being delivered through the Local Development Framework. Members of both LSPs felt that it was vital that we did not lose our existing level of influence in the growth agenda, as housing growth is a significant issue for Central Bedfordshire.
22. Partners from both LSPs are therefore recommending that the Growth Sub Committee be incorporated into the partnership framework for Central Bedfordshire and this has now been reflected in the latest Terms of Reference.
23. **Thematic Partnerships.** The key feedback we had in relation to this part of the partnership structure was the need to:
- (a) consider whether the environment and economy theme should be merged;
 - (b) clarify the role and responsibilities of the thematic leads;

- (c) be more specific about the core membership.
24. In response to this we have merged the themes and strengthened the terms of reference in relation to the specific suggestions in (b) and (c).
25. **Community Area Networks.** We had a wide range of feedback in relation to our proposals for Community Area Networks. The key messages from stakeholders included:
- (a) Not one size fits all;
 - (b) Need a jargon free explanation of what their role is, how they will work with existing structures and how all partners can get involved;
 - (c) Need co-terminosity with key partners to assist with joint community engagement and service delivery;
 - (d) Welcome of the inclusion of the voluntary and community sector.
26. The terms of reference for the community area networks set out in principle our ideas about how these geographic clusters could become established. Initially a key purpose is to engage local communities and over time as we build confidence we see this as a key mechanism for empowering local communities through participatory budgeting. We have tried to set out a flexible approach that can accommodate the diversity of communities in Central Bedfordshire. We acknowledge that we need to work with communities and partners on the implementation of these ideas and that buy in is key to ensuring their longer term success and vibrancy. These specific terms of reference therefore reflect our starting point and over the coming months we will be working with communities and partners to explore how we roll these out in different communities and in different ways.
27. **The Community Network Model.** Having considered all aspects of the model, members are being asked to comment on these proposals and endorse them as fit for purpose in order that Central Bedfordshire Unitary Authority can discharge its statutory responsibilities to the partners of the Central Bedfordshire LSP to:
- (a) develop a Sustainable Community Strategy;
 - (b) produce a Local Area Agreement (LAA);
 - (c) involve residents, stakeholders and communities;
 - (d) manage the Area Based Grant (ABG) and the LAA;
 - (e) be responsible for performance management, including ensuring there is clear leadership and accountability for each target; and
 - (f) ensure that outcomes and targets reflect the needs of disadvantaged neighbourhoods and communities.

Implementing the approach and key milestones

28. In order to be in a position to support the refresh of the Local Area Agreement and take on the necessary statutory responsibilities the Central Bedfordshire LSP needs to be up and running before April 2009.

29. With this in mind we have informally approached key partners to discuss the implementation of the proposals. This is specifically in relation to:

- (a) identifying the members of Shadow LSP Board;
- (b) identifying thematic partnership leads;
- (c) holding the first meeting of the Central Bedfordshire Shadow LSP on the 11 November.

30. The development of the Central Bedfordshire Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) is programmed for year 1, 2009/10. The Mid Bedfordshire SCS was endorsed in January 2008 and the latest South Bedfordshire SCS was launched in July 2008 and both are fit for purpose. GO have confirmed we have two years to create the first Central Bedfordshire SCS which will then be the driver for the LAA 3 and will also ensure that the eventual joint LDF has a refreshed SCS to support it. Development will start in May 2009 and we will consult widely on this and aim to have this agreed early in 2010.

31. Below are the proposed timescales and process for implementing our approach:

End October/Dec	Collate evidence base and specific LAA targets for Central Bedfordshire
11 November	<p>First meeting of the shadow Central Bedfordshire LSP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nominations of chair and vice chair • Signing up of partners to the TOR in the Community Engagement Model • Endorsing nominations to thematic partnerships and representatives to other bodies and strategic working groups • Review the disaggregation and refresh of the LAA process and timescales • Consider any recommendations and issues coming from existing South and Mid Beds LSPs • Comprehensive Area Assessment and implications for partners
Nov	<p>Shared third sector approach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote sign up to Compact • Outline our funding commitment and plans for fundamental review • Confirm support for proposed Sector Assembly
December	<p>Establish shadow Strategic Implementation Group (working group supporting LSP board)</p> <p>Membership will include Chair of the Board, Thematic Leads Chairs and in the future nominated representatives of the Community Area Networks.</p>
Up to March 2009	Share plans for Community Area Networks with local communities and get their input and ideas
March 2009	Develop our Community Engagement Strategy to be endorsed by the Shadow Executive and signed up through the LSP

Local Area Agreement Review and Refresh

32. The Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) has confirmed its desire to carry out a review and refresh of all LAAs by the end of March 2009.
33. Early guidance from GO-East (GO) states: *“Refresh is not about re-opening discussions that have already been concluded. It is important that the scope is restricted only to those issues that are genuinely agreed unfinished business”*.
34. GO have also stated that due to the complex LGR situation in Bedfordshire, the impact it is having on local capacity and the fact that elections will not be taking place until May/June 09, they are keen to ensure that the LAA refresh is conducted in a proportionate manner.
35. **Timetable.** The timetable below sets out the process and timescales which need to be adhered to in order to meet CLG deadlines:

KEY DATES	ACTION	
September 08	Initial development of evidence base to support refresh	GO
10 September published– closing 31 October	Revised indicator definitions published for consultation	CLG
October 08	Review & Refresh guidance published	CLG
October 08	Target negotiation briefs published	CLG
October 08	Disaggregation of existing LAA	Countywide Partnership Team
November – December 08	Final indicator definitions published	CLG
11 November 08	First Shadow LSP meeting: considering issues in relation to refreshing the LAA	Shadow CB LSP
November - January 08	Negotiation on deferred indicators and new priorities	GO/ Central Beds
January 08	Shadow LSP meeting: receive and recommend refreshed LAA to Shadow Executive	Shadow CB LSP
2 March 09	Submission of refreshed LAA by GO to CLG (at this point LAAs should be in final or near-final form though possibly not yet formally adopted)	GO
Throughout March	Negotiations to be concluded on any outstanding issues.	GO/Central Beds
26 March 09	Formal adoption process to be completed by this date and ‘Legal’ draft LAA to have been submitted to GO	Central Beds
Early April 09	Formal ministerial sign-off by Secretary of State	CLG

Feedback from GO-East

36. In preparing for the review and refresh process, GO-East has shared a draft report to Whitehall departments on the progress Bedfordshire is making on its new LAA, including: delivery planning; partnership arrangements and structures; skills and capacity; cross boundary working; communication with partners and stakeholders; and indicators and targets.
37. The report does raise three queries that will need to be addressed during the refresh process:
 - (a) how the LAA will be managed in the LSP structures for the new authorities;
 - (b) what data collection systems will be in place post April 2009, including any arrangements for data sharing; and
 - (c) how the work to develop delivery plans is feeding through into the business planning processes for named partners.
38. Initial informal feedback from Go-East on our plans has been positive and they have been engaged as a key stakeholder throughout our consultation on the Community Network Model. As we implement our model we will have to ensure we address the queries raised above.

Background Papers: Central Bedfordshire Council, Strategic Plan 2009-11

Location of Papers: N/A

File Reference: N/A