

# CREATING CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE

## Programme Progress Report

*Date of report: 26 November 2008*

### 1 Overall Progress Summary

1.1 Following on from the last progress report to Scrutiny Committee in September, key achievements since then have included:

- the formation of the new Central Bedfordshire Management Team. All five Directors and 19 of the 25 Heads of Services have been appointed. Progress on external appointments is well advanced;
- services currently delivered by the County Council that are to be shared, or not shared, and which authority will host which services have been agreed with Bedford Borough Council (BBC) officers, and signed off by Portfolio Holders and Transitional Task Force (TTF) Chairman. Final BBC Member sign-off, however, may not be achieved until January;
- firm agreements have been obtained on partnership arrangements for Children's Services and Adult Social Care;
- the new corporate branding identity for Central Bedfordshire was approved by Shadow Executive in September;
- agreement was reached with Bedford Borough on the Formula and Specific Grant splits, and approval gained from DCLG.

### 2 What are the immediate and significant challenges?

2.1 There are a number of immediate and significant challenges as we bring together key areas of work. For instance:

- preparing the draft budget so that the new organisation is equipped to deliver effective services within the available budget envelope;
- agreeing the final staffing structures for all the services. This should be complete by the time that the Scrutiny Committee meets;
- defining an ICT programme plan to deliver the prioritised day one imperatives.
- focusing on the inter-dependencies and associated impact that staffing structures have on the budget, the accommodate plan and on the ICT deliverables for day one.

Any delays in achieving the above will be critical to achieving a successful transition to the new council.

2.2 Other issues that need to be tackled include:

- releasing internally appointed Heads of Services from their current day-job immediately to enable them to lead the final design of the business plans and staffing structures for their services;

- recruiting Interim Heads of Services for the Social Care, Health and Housing Directorate to plug the gap, alongside the process of external recruitment.
  - resourcing HR to complete the mapping of staff to posts exercise, within the planned timeframe, and ensuring transparency of the process;
  - the decision to disaggregate the BCC customer contact centre has resulted in additional cost and time impact on the ICT programme of work.
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### **3 What else have been achieved so far?**

#### **3.1 Strategic leadership and governance has been put in place, including –**

- a new Portfolio Holder has been assigned to the Business Transformation Directorate;
  - a Strategic Plan (2009 – 2011) for Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) has been agreed by the Shadow Executive;
  - weekly Management Team meetings have replaced the Officer Programme Board (OPB) meetings.
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#### **3.2 Operational and strategic co-operative working across the affected authorities and with partners, including –**

- negotiations on service level agreements (SLAs) and detailed hosting arrangements are well advanced;
- discussions to finalise the disaggregation of BCC assets are on track;
- all the disaggregated data on BCC posts have been received. County staff have been informed of which authority it is proposed that they should work for and an appeals process is underway;
- an agreed Bedfordshire and Luton Compact will provide support for local community and voluntary organisations;
- the first meeting of the Shadow Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Board has taken place and will lead to the creation of a new CBC LSP Board.

#### **3.3 Designing services to meet the aspirations and strategic objectives of CBC, including :**

- refined Directorate Plans and Business Plans for each of the main service areas within each Directorate;
- day one imperative lists being firmed up with each Head of Service;
- a series of three challenge days, for senior management in October and November, to refine and agree realistic staffing structures that are affordable within the constraints of the budget envelope;
- community stakeholders' meetings and consultations to develop a feasible Community Area Network model to provide the essential foundation for engaging and empowering the community;
- a planned timetable for prioritised work on improving and harmonising some of the key business processes, arising from the Business Harmonisation project carried out by Modena.

#### **3.4 Communications with staff and external stakeholders, including –**

- an approved Communications Strategy for CBC;
- a series of roadshows, led by Cllr Mrs Tricia Turner and Jaki Salisbury,

completed over July / mid-August. These were well received and further roadshows will take place in the New Year;

- staff communication events for December through to February 2009;
- fortnightly staff newsletters to all staff across BCC, MBDC, and SBDC.

### 3.5 Other notable achievements, include -

- agreement has been reached on the notional (2008/09) budget requirement, notional council tax requirements and notional Band D council tax figures.
- approval of the pay grading and remuneration report by Shadow Executive in October.
- approval of the multimillion pound BEaR project and subsequent submission to DEFRA, as part of Central Bedfordshire's energy-from-waste initiative.

## 4 **What were some of the causes for the issues that have led to the current situation?**

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- a prolonged and extended period in arriving at an agreement on shared services with BBC has led to delays in finalising the business plans for some of the services;
  - the decisions by BBC not to use SAP, and not to share the SWIFT social care application system, have led to a significant impact on time and cost for CBC and the ICT workload;
  - key work streams have had to run in parallel rather sequentially. This has led to a number of inconsistencies which are now being addressed through the revised officer governance structure and increased focus on dependencies;
  - some of the appointed Directors and Heads of Services have yet to be released to work on the programme and senior management capacity is stretched as these officers are still managing their current job.

Links to some of the key documents relating to the Creating Central Bedfordshire transitional implementation programme can be found in [www.centralbeds.gov.uk](http://www.centralbeds.gov.uk)