
Meeting: Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 7 July 2009

Subject: Sustainable Communities Policy Development

Report of: Director of Sustainable Communities

Summary: The report provides an introduction to the key issues and challenges facing the Council and an opportunity to discuss how we can work together to achieve the best results for residents.

Contact Officer: *Sally Wileman, Service Improvement Manager*

Public/Exempt: Public

Wards Affected: All

Function of: Council

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. that the report of the Director of Sustainable Communities be noted**
- 2. that members' views of the suggested Work Programme be shared, such that they can be reflected in future reports**

Introduction to Sustainable Communities Directorate

1. This is the first meeting of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Central Bedfordshire Council. As such, it is an opportunity to discuss why and how we undertake the work that we do. It will illustrate the extent of the impact of these services on residents.
2. As a new Unitary Council, Central Bedfordshire brings together functions, some of which will be new to officers and members. Jointly developing a depth of knowledge and understanding will enable Overview and Scrutiny members to complement the work of the Executive by guiding policy and enhancing that impact.
3. The Sustainable Communities Directorate comprises six divisions:
 - Planning and Development Strategy
 - Development Management
 - Economic Growth and Regeneration
 - Highways and Transport
 - Community Safety and Public Protection
 - Waste Services

4. In addition, the Directorate hosts the Bedfordshire Energy and Recycling (BEaR) project to procure a sustainable waste disposal solution for the three unitary councils of Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton Borough.

The Directorate's aim

5. The 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.

The Directorate Priorities

6. The remit of the Directorate is especially broad. It is therefore appropriate to establish high level service priorities. On 30 September 2008, Executive approved the following priorities for Sustainable Communities, for 2009/10:
 - 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 (Managing Growth Effectively)**
 - Progressing the development of the Building Control Service into a cross boundary trading unit
 - Creating excellent regulatory services and meeting the better regulation challenge
 - *** Reducing crime, anti-social behaviour and fear of crime (Creating Safer Communities)**

Strategic Context

7. 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.
8. * Responsibility for 2 of the Council's 5 Strategic Priorities, lies with the Sustainable Communities directorate:

(a) Managing Growth Effectively

Principally this concerns progressing the Local Development Framework (LDF), allowing for 60k new houses, 50k new jobs and all of the associated infrastructure, by 2031. It means ensuring growth while maintaining local distinctiveness and not overwhelming existing communities.

A raft of other strategies supports the LDF, including the Housing Strategy, Local Transport Plan and Waste Strategy.

(b) **Creating Safer Communities**

This involves working with local communities to identify problems and deliver solutions. It concerns crime rate reduction, but also means reducing the impact of anti-social behaviour and of the fear of crime.

9. Sustainable Communities covers the main community front line services that deliver the quality of place and the management of growth. It will have a leading role in preparing and contributing to the Comprehensive Area Assessment alongside the wide range of partners engaged in our planning and delivery.
10. The Directorate also leads on both the Environment and Economy and the Community Safety themes of the Sustainable Community Strategy. This includes taking a leading role in delivery against half of the priority national indicators across the area working in close partnership in co-ordinating and agreeing actions.

Challenges and Opportunities

11. By 2031 the population of the Central Bedfordshire area will have grown to over 325,000 people. This growth must be managed well as its impact in a relatively short timescale will place additional pressures on local services and infrastructure. In delivering sustainable development, the directorate will make a full and appropriate response on climate change across all areas of activity.
12. 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, Local Economic Assessment, Core Strategies, Local Transport Plans and Housing Strategies takes place.
13. 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.
14. 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.

Suggested Work Programme - Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

15. The suggested Work Programme for Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (appendix A) will reflect the Forward Plan prepared for the Executive. The suggested items are key policies with significant impact and those where members' understanding and direction is critical. In line with the guiding principles, they are developments with the potential to add real value and make a difference to residents.
16. The report proposes a work programme for the forthcoming 18 months and invites members to discuss and amend the content.

17. At this first meeting, members are invited to give direction to officers on the development of the Work Programme.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

See the main report for details of how OSC Policy Development is expected to impact on Council priorities.

Financial:

None

Legal:

None

Risk Management:

None

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

None

Equalities/Human Rights:

None

Community Safety:

None

Sustainability:

None

Appendices:

Appendix A – Suggested Work Programme for Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2009 – 2011