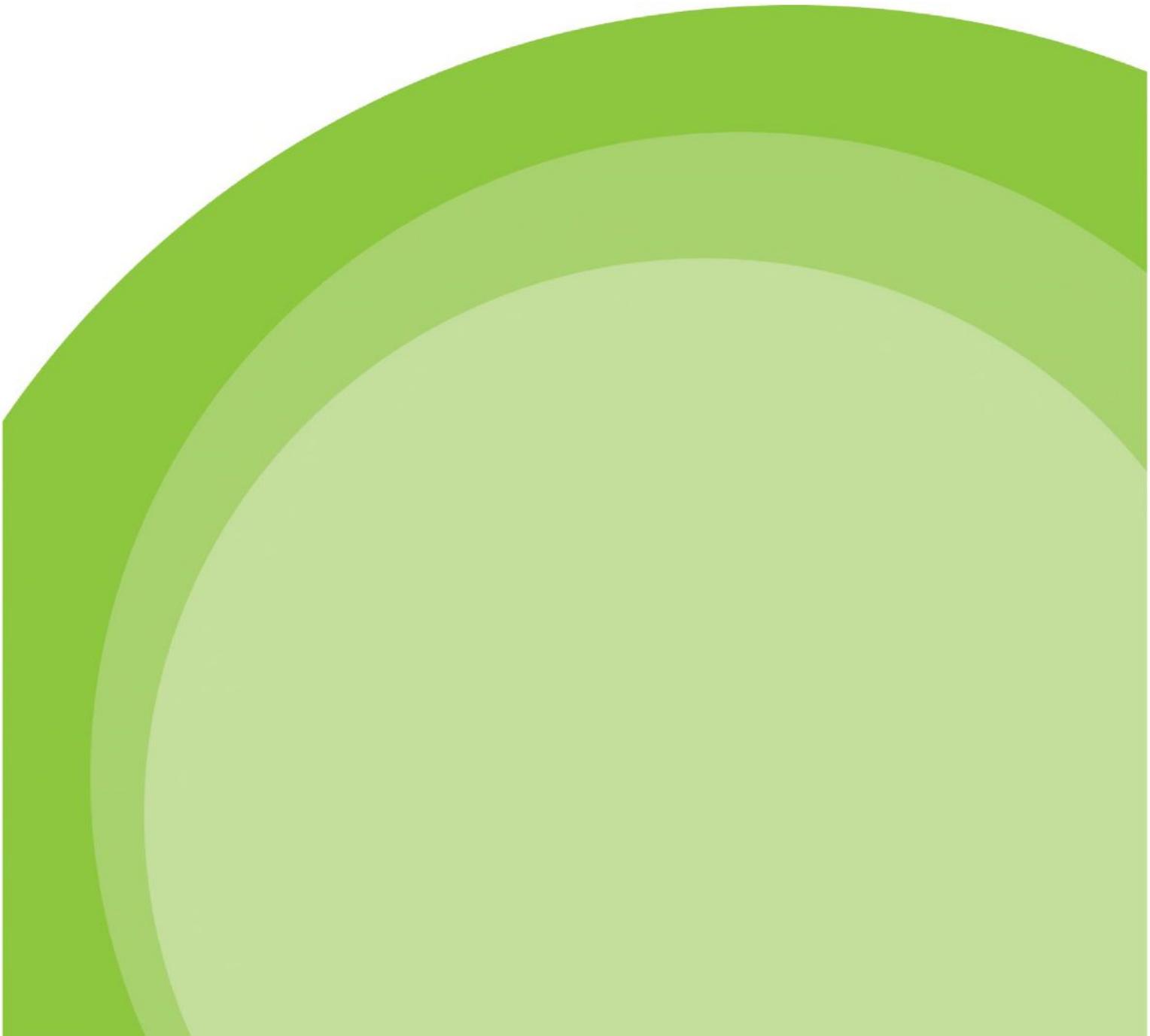




Our Five Year Plan

2015-2020



Leader's Introduction

As we enter into our eighth year as a new council, we continue to work hard to make Central Bedfordshire a great place to live and work. A key component of this is our strategic plan which outlines our key priorities and how we will achieve them over the next five years.

While both locally and nationally we face challenges, overall, I am optimistic about our future. Central Bedfordshire really is a great place to live and work and over the past four years, we have seen real improvements. There are now 10,000 more people in employment in Central Bedfordshire, with businesses both growing and moving here. As a Council we have sought to support this increased prosperity by freezing Council Tax for a five year period, whilst also developing and improving our services, such as Leisure Centres and independent living schemes for older people. But there is more to do.

We are all too well aware of the ongoing financial challenges we face nationally to balance the books, whilst at the same time meeting growing pressures on our services. These circumstances demand that the Council, all public services and our communities need to change.

Together with the National Health Service, we need to invest more in keeping people well at every age, preventing them from becoming ill and reliant on institutions such as care homes and hospitals.

Major demographic shifts, including people living longer, have implications for communities, many of which have proud traditions of local action and self help. Now there is a great opportunity to build on these foundations to support improved and resilient communities.

We have made improvements in education but have more to do, recognising as we do, that it is the key both to personal improvement and economic prosperity.

With the substantial growth anticipated for Central Bedfordshire we need to ensure we build on the strong and unique character, of a rural market town area.

And as an organisation, we need to continue to develop our ways of working. We should have a relentless focus on outcomes rather than process. We must embrace technology and work collaboratively across the Council and with our partners in towns, parishes, neighbouring authorities and other public services.

So we are looking at a challenging plan of action for the next few years, but with vision, hard work and cooperation we will take advantage of the opportunities available to deliver for our residents.

James Jamieson
Leader of the Council

About the plan

The purpose of this plan is to guide the actions of Central Bedfordshire Council for the next 5 years. It is a strategic document which sets out our key drivers and the outcomes we are trying to achieve. This will guide the actions of Members and officers of the Council.

Our progress towards achieving the outcomes set out in the plan will be monitored through the performance management arrangements of the Council.

What is driving our thinking?

□ Demography

Looking ahead, our population is set to increase from 265,000 currently to around 286,000 by 2020. These additional 21,000 people will need schools, jobs, houses, and critical Council services.

That is not the only feature of our changing population though – it is a truism that we are all getting older, but in Central Bedfordshire the average age of our population is increasing faster than in other areas. There will be a 52% increase in the number of residents who are 85 years old or over between now and 2020 (that's an additional 2,500 people) and a 33% increase in the number of residents aged between 65 and 85. That is why a key outcome for us is to enable our residents to live healthy, happy and independent lives, whilst also making sure we have great provision for those who can no longer look after themselves.

□ Technology

Our research shows us that the way in which the public communicate and transact with each other and with institutions is changing at a rapid rate. The take up of mobile technology creates great opportunity for us to change our model of service and information for the public.

Such technologies also present us with opportunities as an employer, enabling our staff to work more flexibly and efficiently as well as in meeting customer expectations.

We also know that our residents expect ever better services and customer experience.

For example, residents expect to be able to access information and services from the Council online 24/7, as they can with many other providers such as banks or travel agents. Residents going into care facilities now expect those facilities to cater for the 'Rolling Stones' generation with Wi-Fi and ensuite facilities, for example..

- **The economy**

Whilst there are many promising signs in terms of the British economy, the future of public spending budgets is unclear at this point. What is apparent, however, is that the demands of an increasingly ageing population have the potential to put huge pressure on local government and health budgets.

- **Legislative changes**

The Council is already grappling with the implementation of new laws that will profoundly affect our role. The Care Act, for example, is changing the nature of the Council's offer from focusing primarily on vulnerable adults in need, to providing advice and guidance to all older people.

Increasing integration with Health is evident in many plans, but the exact nature of the changes – and the funding regime to support them is not yet clear.

Devolution opportunities are also under discussion but their potential is equally uncertain.

- **The health and happiness of our residents**

We know that generally, our residents appreciate and are happy where they live – we want to keep it that way and if possible improve the levels of satisfaction that our residents have with Central Bedfordshire as a place. However, we are concerned that some of our residents could and should be healthier than they are; we need to do more to reduce smoking, excess weight, and increase exercise. That is why we want to work in partnership with the NHS to make sure that our health facilities are great quality, and why we are continuing to invest in leisure facilities and our beautiful open spaces and country parks.

- **Housing and other developments**

If we are to house and educate and provide work for our increasing population, then we must build many thousands of new homes over the next 5 years. Some of these must be affordable for our residents on lower incomes and who are just starting out on their careers – we have currently set a target of 30%. In response to this challenge, we will be creating some large communities in Central Bedfordshire and also developing some smaller sites as well as helping local business to grow. Inevitably, this has the potential to cause difficulties with existing residents who want to retain the look and feel of the place they love. While we cannot avoid allowing development, we want to do this in a sustainable way, building prosperous new communities, sensitive to the needs of existing residents who should expect to derive some benefit from the growth.

- **The legacy of the past**

We are a relatively new council that is now entering the next phase of our development. In the first five years we focused on building a secure financial footing, turning around some previously failing services, and building a sense of place and identity. We now consider ourselves to have entered into a second

phase of the Council's life, more outward focused and built on solid financial and service foundations. There are still some legacy arrangements that we need to deal with in these coming years – including our waste and highways contracts, the care homes that we took back from BUPA and some leisure provision. We are confident that we can both improve services and save money through working closely with customers and contractors and this is reflected in this plan.

Our vision

A great place to live and work.

By 2020, Central Bedfordshire will be a place where people help each other and themselves. Our residents, including our young people, will aspire to build successful lives and create strong communities. Those who are able to work will enjoy good employment. And for those who may need help, volunteering will create opportunities for people of all ages. We will foster self sustaining communities - where everyone has the opportunity to fulfil their potential, regardless of their age.

Our children and young people will have the best possible start to their lives, doing well at school, making friends and having strong and supportive relationships, so that when they leave school they are fully equipped to take their full place in society as happy, healthy and contributing citizens. We will build new schools and expand existing ones.

Our communities will grow. There will be thousands more good quality homes built that will meet the needs of all residents, who will feel and be increasingly safe.

We will be prosperous. Existing businesses will grow and new ventures will locate here to deliver thousands of additional jobs, which will be increasingly accessible to local people.

We will tackle the inequalities that exist in our communities, particularly in relation to health and wellbeing. Across Central Bedfordshire, local people will live in good health for longer because we will support them to have a great lifestyle, so fewer people will smoke, drink excessively or be an unhealthy weight and they will have varied opportunities to be more active if they wish.

We will have built and have in operation two new links to the M1 (A5 and Woodside) and created the conditions for a regenerated centre in Dunstable by de-trunking the road that currently cuts it in half. The East West rail link will be partly in place across our area with the route of the second phase agreed. We will have made solid progress in developing the M1 – A6 link and improving the A421 and the A428. Our market towns will be thriving with accessible and well used centres.

The universal services provided by the Council such as refuse collection, road repairs, libraries and leisure centres, will be highly rated by our residents, and we will provide great access to our beautiful countryside and our parks. We will have built a new leisure centre in Flitwick and transformed the leisure centre in Dunstable. Residents will be able to access new rubbish tips and all our services will be available on line 24/7 to residents, who will be able to access them by superfast broadband,

Our offer to residents in need of specialist support or housing will be joined up and more comprehensive.

Whether we are supporting people to live independently or making sure great quality residential care is available, we will meet the needs of our increasing population of older people. We are transforming our existing sheltered housing, building brand new independent living complexes, re-providing day centres and planning for an extra 1500 independent living places, which will meet modern and high quality standards.

All our residents will be able to access the information and advice they need to make good choices about their care and our older residents will enjoy a range of opportunities to get involved and to contribute whether on a paid or voluntary basis.

For residents who are vulnerable, we will continue to move from institutionalised to personalised models of care. We will join up with the NHS to provide 'one stop' integrated services close to where people live so that more people will be able to live in their own homes for longer.

We will invest in our own housing. Our existing tenants and those in social housing will be involved in decisions about their homes and we will work with them in shaping the development of council housing across Central Bedfordshire.

The Council will be seen as a great employer which lives its values, delivers improvements to people's lives, provides value for money and is responsive and accessible to our residents. The Council will be trusted and respected by its residents and businesses. Both our resident satisfaction levels and our employee engagement scores will be top decile. The Council will be a great organisation to work for and will be well run and managed, with employees who are able to contribute and progress in their careers. We will employ and train local people through apprenticeship schemes. Our systems and processes will be effective and efficient, with great integrated and rationalised IT and office space. Our Elected Members will be well supported to discharge their roles. We will spend our money wisely, increase our income where possible and work with our supply chain to deliver continual improvements in value and quality. We will work collaboratively across the Council and look to join up with our colleagues in Health and other public services.

Our Priorities and Programmes

What we'll achieve for the area and communities over the next five years:

A Great Place to Live and Work					
Enhancing Central Bedfordshire	Delivering Great Residents' Services	Improving Education and Skills	Protecting the vulnerable, promoting well being	Creating stronger communities	An efficient and responsive Council

- ***Enhancing Central Bedfordshire***

We want to improve Central Bedfordshire as a place to live, by enhancing prosperity with more and better jobs; to improve infrastructure, and to provide the quantity and type of housing needed by our residents while maintaining and enhancing the character of Central Bedfordshire. We will nurture housing growth that offers a range of opportunities for people to live in housing that is affordable, sensitive to their needs and of great quality. We will strive to retain the character of Central Bedfordshire that is so cherished by its residents and will address any concerns they may have around safety in their communities. Our development will be facilitated by great infrastructure, such as broadband, wifi and transport. Our Market Towns and villages will thrive and prosper, with improved town centres and facilities.

- ***Great Resident Services***

We will continue to deliver quality universal services to our residents, such as waste collection, libraries, parks, and leisure services. We will seek to continue to improve our pavements and roads. We will improve the appearance of our towns and villages through a focus on the living environment and working with our Town and Parish Councils.

- ***Improving Education and Skills***

We will support the academic and social success, and physical wellbeing of our children and young people, working with schools, parents and communities. In addition, because learning is a lifelong activity, opportunities will be available for adults to continue to develop their existing skills and learn new ones. We will have created opportunities for everyone to have the access and incentives to work, either in Central Bedfordshire or in other areas, which they will be able to get to with ease. There will be routes into employment for all ages, such as apprenticeships and schemes for older people which will result in not only in increased income, but improved health and raised self-esteem.

- ***Protecting the Vulnerable; Improving Wellbeing***

We will protect the vulnerable, be they children or adults, ensuring that they are not exploited, abused, or suffering as a result of neglect or lack of support. We will also work to improve the health and wellbeing of our residents.

We will have a particular focus on two groups:

- *Children and their families* - to provide them with the best start in life, by intervening early where necessary.
- *Older People* - enabling them to live healthily, contribute to their communities and maintain independence.

Key components of this will be providing appropriate housing, particularly for the elderly and moving care to focus more on prevention rather than cure, with services and support provided in the right place at the right time. This will require working closely with the National Health Service, to provide services locally seven days a week. Social care will continue to be developed to help people to live independently for as long as possible, either in their own homes with support or in specialist accommodation.

- ***Creating Stronger Communities***

We will work to build stronger local communities, providing a greater sense of place and participation in local affairs and services. This will help create greater resilience and reduce social isolation

People will be supported to help themselves and others. Residents of all ages and organisations, such as Town and Parish Councils will have opportunity to do more – on either a voluntary or a paid basis.

We are particularly keen to draw on the skills of our older residents to support their community and build social infrastructure, promoting social inclusion.

Community spirit will be high and the skills of residents will have grown.

- ***A More Efficient and Responsive Council***

We will continue to be focused on cost effectiveness and efficiency in all that we do, and for this to be recognised by our residents. We will continue to focus on outcomes rather than process. We will make the most of opportunities to create value from trading, from growing, and from working across the public and private sectors to deliver great solutions for our residents.

How will we deliver these outcomes? By working to our values.

Our values describe the type of organisation we want to be and the principles that will guide us in achieving our vision and priorities. These set out the way we will work and interact with our customers, members and each other.

Our values are:

respect and empowerment – we will treat people as individuals who matter to us

stewardship and efficiency – we will make the best use of the resources available to us

results focused – we will focus on delivering the outcomes that make a tangible difference to people's lives; and

collaboration– we will work closely with our colleagues, partners and customers to deliver on these outcomes.



A great place to live and work

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