

# Town & Parish Council Conference

27 November 2012  
Post Conference Report



**“Enabling communities  
to do more for themselves”**

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## INTRODUCTION

Thank you to all who were able to attend this, our eighth conference, which saw our highest turnout to date. It was the first event we have held specifically for parish councils, and it was very encouraging that so many of you attended and contributed to this important agenda.

Based on your previous feedback, we decided to change the format of this conference – with varying results! We adopted a workshop approach to focus on four topics, which you told us had the greatest impact in most areas: traffic management; street cleaning; grass and landscape management; and dog fouling.

There were open and positive discussions in the workshops about what worked and what didn't work in local areas, what support you need to help you achieve your ambitions and what you are doing yourselves to tackle these issues in your own communities. This is what 'localism' is all about; enabling communities to do more for themselves.

The workshop format we adopted for this event has been popular and successful for seminars with different audiences, but we realised after the first change over that you wanted the opportunity to get into more detail in the workshop discussions. We also acknowledged the logistical problems with moving such large numbers between the workshop venues. In response to this we changed the agenda to enable a much longer discussion time in a workshop of your choice. Overall, feedback from the event has been very positive and it indicates that, with some refinement on our part, you prefer a workshop style approach to the more traditional conferences we have run in the past.

We continue to encourage you to consider how you would like to work in partnership with us, so that we can all achieve the best outcomes for Central Bedfordshire's residents. You might achieve this by influencing the way services are delivered, or perhaps you are interested in monitoring or taking on the delivery of a service yourselves. Whatever you choose, please get in touch with us and we will work with you to see how we can best realise that ambition together.

We look forward to hearing from you.



**Councillor David Hopkin**

Deputy Executive Member for  
Corporate Resources and  
Lead Member for Localism,  
Central Bedfordshire Council

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Hopkin', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

## THE CONFERENCE

The objectives of the conference were:

- To identify local solutions to common issues;
- To share best practice and learn from local experiences; and
- To enable communities to do more for themselves.

The conference was targeted specifically at parish councils, and was made up of workshop sessions. The workshops focused on the following four areas identified by parish councils as most important and relevant to them:

- Traffic management;
- Street cleaning;
- Grass and landscape management; and
- Dog fouling.

## WELCOME

Attendees were welcomed by Councillor David Hopkin, Deputy Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Lead Member for Localism, Central Bedfordshire Council. Councillor Hopkin set out the agenda and objectives of the conference.

Before the workshops began, Councillor Hopkin updated delegates on issues raised by parish councils, but not included in the workshop sessions:

### Superfast broadband

CBC Executive is due to consider a paper on the implementation of superfast broadband across Central Bedfordshire on 4<sup>th</sup> December. The aim is to ensure that by 2016, 90% of premises in our area are able to access superfast broadband speeds of at least 24 megabits per second, and the remaining 10% in the more hard to reach areas are able to access a minimum speeds of at least 2 megabits per second.

Approximately £1.8 million of public sector funding has been secured for this project in Central Bedfordshire, and it is expected that this will be matched with private sector funding.

The next stage is to select a suitable provider, and we are working in partnership with Milton Keynes Council and Bedford Borough Council to progress this using the procurement processes of Broadband Delivery UK. The process is likely to start in April 2013 and we hope to have selected a provider by June – August 2013.

## **Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan**

Work is currently underway to develop a Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan. A six week consultation on the proposed structure of the plan ended on 29 October. Many town and parish councils responded to this consultation, and your comments will be taken into account as the plan is developed.

Publication of potential sites can only take place once the assessment process, which includes a sustainability appraisal, has been completed. The draft Plan, including sites, will be considered at CBC's Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee in February 2013, followed by Executive in March 2013 and full Council in April 2013.

The next opportunity for public involvement in the process will be in May 2013 when there will be a six week consultation period for interested parties to comment on the published Plan. The Plan is expected to be adopted by April 2014.

## **Council Tax Reform**

Following consultation on the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for Central Bedfordshire, our draft scheme will be presented to CBC Executive on 8 January 2013.

We had nearly 1,700 responses to the consultation, which ended on 14 November 2012. We wrote to all of our 17,000+ claimants and anyone else that would be affected, held 20 face-to-face meetings with vulnerable groups, and carried out 500 telephone interviews.

The scheme will be implemented from 1 April 2013. On the morning of the conference we received a letter from the Secretary of State about the national reforms. It is important that we consider the content of that letter and fully understand the implications for Central Bedfordshire and our own local scheme, and will contact you about this as soon as possible.

## **Precept setting process**

Delays by central government in publishing the regulations and guidance on how we should be calculating next year's tax base means that we will not be able to advise you of your tax base figures until 21 December 2012\*.

(\*This has since been revised to 14 December 2012.)

To give you the time you need to work on your own budgets and precepts, we have put back the deadline for you to send your precept information to CBC to 23 January 2013, which is a week later than last year.

We recognise that this may cause some inconvenience, but hope you understand that we are working to find the best solution under circumstances that are not of our making.

## WORKSHOPS

Councillor Hopkin introduced the facilitators for each of the four workshops. They were:

Workshop	Facilitator
Traffic management	<b>David Bowie</b> Head of Service – Traffic Management, Central Bedfordshire Council
Street cleaning	<b>Craig Siddle</b> Service Manager, Operations Waste Services, Central Bedfordshire Council
Grass and landscape management	<b>Clive Parker</b> Landscape Manager, Bedfordshire Highways, Amey
Dog fouling	<b>Steve Barrett</b> Community Safety Operations Manager, Sustainable Communities, Central Bedfordshire Council

Delegates were also directed to use the question cards in their delegate packs if they had a question to ask that could not be dealt with during the event. Questions submitted in this way will receive a full written response.

Each workshop focused on three questions:

1. What works well and what would you like to see improved?
2. What can your parish council and community do to achieve the outcome you want?
3. What can you do to make this happen?

### Workshop 1 – Traffic Management

**Facilitator notes:**

#### **Traffic Management Services**

The Traffic Management service delivers a mix of statutory and non-statutory council functions, which include:

- Traffic Management operations;
- Parking Management & Enforcement;
- School Crossing Patrol;
- Operational Maintenance Policy; and









































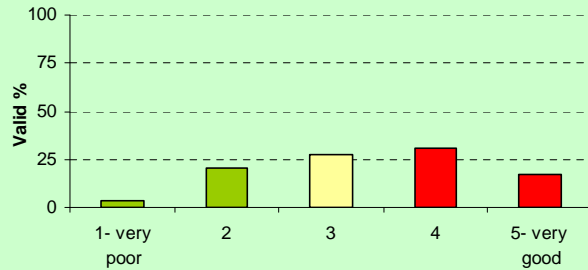




## Organisation of the event

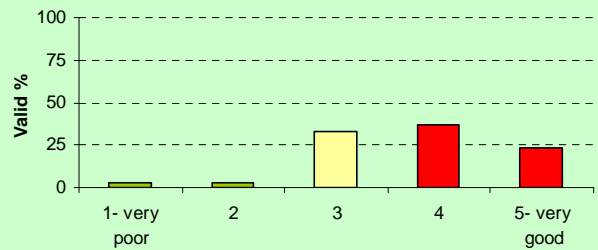
### Information sent to you before event

	Count	%
1- very poor	1	3
2	6	19
3	8	26
4	9	29
5- very good	5	16
Total	29	94
Missing	2	6
Total	31	100
Mean score	3.38	



### Venue

	Count	%
1- very poor	1	3
2	1	3
3	10	32
4	11	35
5- very good	7	23
Total	30	97
Missing		0
Total	30	97
Mean score	3.73	



### Catering

	Count	%
1- very poor	0	0
2	0	0
3	13	42
4	9	29
5- very good	6	19
Total	28	90
Missing	3	10
Total	31	100
Mean score	3.75	

