

# 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.

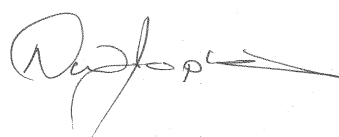
We continue to encourage you to consider how you would like to work in partnership with us, so that we can all achieve the best outcomes for Central Bedfordshire's residents. You might achieve this by influencing the way services are delivered, or perhaps you are interested in monitoring or taking on 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, Councilor 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
<b>Traffic management</b>	<b>David Bowie</b> Head of Service – Traffic Management, Central Bedfordshire Council
<b>Street cleaning</b>	<b>Craig Siddle</b> Service Manager, Operations Waste Services, Central Bedfordshire Council
<b>Grass and landscape management</b>	<b>Clive Parker</b> Landscape Manager, Bedfordshire Highways, Amey
<b>Dog fouling</b>	<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

<b>Facilitator notes:</b>
<p><b><u>Traffic Management Services</u></b></p> <p>The Traffic Management service delivers a mix of statutory and non-statutory council functions, which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traffic Management operations;</li> <li>• Parking Management &amp; Enforcement;</li> <li>• School Crossing Patrol;</li> <li>• Operational Maintenance Policy; and</li> </ul>

- Road Safety Engineering, Education, Training & Publicity.

The purpose of the service is to:

- Ensure optimum use of the network for all road users;
- Enforcement activity to keep the network safe and efficient;
- Provision of school crossing patrols where there are no other safe places for children to cross the road; and
- Road safety education, training and publicity to the all road users with an emphasis most vulnerable road users.

### **Parking Restrictions and Enforcement**

Each area receives equal enforcement based upon the amount of restrictions in those areas. The introduction of Automated Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) 'camera car' enforcement has significantly improved parking enforcement efficiency.

However, there are parking issues that, without specific traffic orders, we are unable to enforce:

- Vehicles parked in contravention of Highway Code 243 – parking opposite or within 10 metres (32 feet) of a junction, except in an authorised parking space; and
- Parking on footways and verges.

### **Traffic Problems**

Cars and lorries are part of our lives, for better or worse. Maintaining and protecting the quality of life against a background of growing traffic volumes is perhaps the greatest challenge facing most communities. Both urban and rural life depends on the highway network for connections and communication.

Many villages lie along the route of busy country roads. Modern travel patterns and transport place huge pressures on the historic form and qualities of the rural landscape.

Town centres also come under pressure from high volumes of traffic with the competing needs of local businesses, commuters, residents and those accessing the local town centre amenities.

Speed in both rural and urban areas can create significant problems, not only noise & pollution but increased numbers of road traffic accidents.

Whilst Central Bedfordshire Council is not the Enforcement Agency we do carry out the following works on a prioritised needs basis:

- Setting local speed limits – school 20mph zones;

- Accident Remedial Engineering works;
- Traffic Calming;
- HGV bans; and
- Road Safety Education, Training and Publicity Campaigns.

## Feedback from discussion

### What can the parish or community do?

- Issue warning letters for parking offences
- Implement measures with match funding
- Join Speedwatch

### What works well?

- Speed signs that flash
- 40mph buffer zones
- Speed watch
- Chicanes
- Humped zebra crossings
- Camera vans enforcing parking restrictions

### What would you like to see improved?

- Police speed enforcement
- Lorry enforcement
- Parking enforcement (areas without orders)
- Traffic schemes such as Court Drive
- More yellow lines
- More speed cameras
- Measures to mitigate planning decisions
- List of measures that work well and costs (speed)
- A6 traffic from Wixams – Clophill Roundabout
- Would like to know the criteria for qualifying for a crossing
- Re-send letter from Cllr Hopkin (Attached as Appendix 1 to this report)
- Traffic calming such as rumble strips

### What can you do to make this happen?

- Contact David Bowie for copies of letters and guidance notes to issue parking letters
- Make requests through the Local Transport Plan process
- Join Speedwatch – speak to Police
- Raise funding towards measures (50%)



Some parishes commented that they had not seen the letter from Cllr Hopkin, dated 17 August 2012, setting out how they can work with CBC on this and other issues. A copy of the letter can be found in Appendix 1 of this report.

## Workshop 2 – Street Cleaning

### Facilitator notes:

#### **Working Together to achieve a cleaner, greener, safer environment.**

##### **Background**

Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to control litter on Highways, and land maintainable at public expense which fall under the responsibility of the Council.

Central Bedfordshire Council delivers street cleansing activities with Biffa Municipal Ltd who are contracted to carry out this service as part of the Waste and Recycling collection contracts. These run until 2016 in the North and 2019 in the South. The Waste Team, which includes a team of Contract Officers, monitor and manage these contracts.

We regularly empty more than 1100 litter bins and 600 dog bins across CBC. Resources allocated to the authorities' area comprise 8 mobile vans; two litter task force crews; 14 static operatives and three road sweepers.

Cleansing activities differ depending on the type of area, particularly between urban and rural locations. Cleansing includes all main, rural and residential roads and paved footpaths.

##### **Activities of our Contractor include:**

- Cleansing of areas maintainable at public expense, including paved footpaths and Council-owned open amenity spaces;
- Emptying litter and dog bins;
- Removal of fly-tipping, including those classed as hazardous (i.e. asbestos/clinical waste/tyres/oil);
- Manual sweeping and collection of leaf and blossom fall;
- Mechanical Road Sweeping;
- Removal of litter, detritus, loose chippings, small animal carcasses, dog waste and other deposits;
- Disposal to authorised facilities in the correct manner;
- Diversion and reallocation of work across the CBC area; and
- Adherence to Health and Safety requirements.

##### **As we have done in other areas, we are able to offer:**

- Involvement with community litter picks, providing equipment, collection and disposal;
- Close liaison with our Officers on local issues;
- Litter and Dog bins at a contracted cost for their supply and maintenance;
- Review and reallocation of resource (within the constraints of primary functions);
- A member of staff involved with communication and promotion of waste-related community activities;
- Promotional information regarding littering;
- A member of the Environmental Protection team involved with schools and interest groups for education on littering;
- 'Recycle on the Go' in some towns; and
- The EPT team is able to pursue littering issues, primarily through prevention, education/persuasion and then enforcement.

### **Legislation**

Environmental Protection Act 1990 and Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005.

The Acts place duties on local authorities in relation to abandoned vehicles, fly tipping, litter, waste, graffiti, and dog control orders, including the use of fixed penalty notices.

The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act empowered parish and community councils and the Environment Agency with more effective powers and tools to tackle poor environmental quality.

### **Who to contact**

Please contact your Contract Officer direct (a list of Contract Officers has been circulated to all clerks), by email to: [wasteservices@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:wasteservices@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk), or by phone on: 0300 300 5873.

## **Feedback from discussion**

### **What are your objectives?**

- Actions to reduce rats
- Nip things in the bud to prevent a problem
- Make it easy to keep the area litter free
- Fly tipping
  - responding
  - keep it affordable
  - flexibility re permits at Household Waste Recycling Centres (for exceptions eg bed packaging)
- Closer working relationship with Contract Officers

- Pre-adoption – closer liaison and better maintenance
- Clarity about frequency and specification
- Flexibility and responsiveness to service planning
- Review policy in light of BeAR
- Flexible specification / outputs –planning and monitoring
- Keep streets clear of A Boards to assist cleaning
- Fly tipping surveillance
- Communication about leaf fall

### **How can your parish council and the local community assist in achieving the outcomes you want?**

- Provide extra resources / provide holiday cover in liaison with CBC
- Caddington Parish warden cleans road signs
- SLA to set expectations
- Install 'swift' bins to increase recycling
- Involve other groups (paid volunteers such as scouts) to undertake additional litter picking
- Report problems and poor service so we can respond
- Email detail of when cleaning will occur
- Cadets could clear and CBC can provide pickers / bags/collection.
- Houghton Conquest has a litter picker- e.g of tailoring resources to need
- Groups sponsor bits of roads to fund litter picks in exchange of advertising 'sign'
- Schools organise litter picks of area around their schools – use school forum

### **How can we best engage and communicate with each other to deliver these services?**

- Keep talking – feedback – monitor
- Work together to agree times
- Eyes and ears on the ground (without losing the personal touch)
- Closer communication to understand needs and respond better to priorities

### **Communicating effectively**

- Feeding back on what has worked
- List of what we do and who to contact
- Links on website useful
- Info pack for new members – electronically
- Workshop interaction very useful

## Workshop 3 – Grass and landscape management

### Facilitator notes:

#### Highway Grass Cutting

Type of Grass	Frequencies	Quantity & Notes
<b>Rural Network (outside 30mph)</b>	3 times per year (1 full width cut). Also, current trial concerning swath cut. 1.2m swath.	Approximately 2.75M/m2 CBC
<b>Urban Cutting (inside 30mph)</b>	6 times per year	40,000/m2 county wide 21 parishes currently opted in
<b>Urban Flail Cutting (inside 30mph)</b>	If within 30mph for specific areas e.g. banks etc.	As per specification
<b>Roadside Nature Reserves</b>	1per year – cut and collect	By instruction from the ecologist

**Safety:** Risk assessments, method statements, Traffic Management (TM), roadspace, insurances, training and certification, Personal Protective Equipment, type of mower and guards

#### **Why we cut rural grass:**

We undertake rural grass cutting to:

- Maintain at least a 1 metre swath for pedestrians to walk along (refuge);
- Maintain sight-line visibility at highway junctions for highway users;
- To prevent obstruction of traffic signs and bollards;
- To control brushwood and scrub within the swath and splays; and
- Maintain and enhance the biodiversity of road side verges (where compatible with road safety).

**Issues:** Weather, growth rates of various grasses, growth rates of weeds and wildflowers, seasonal, weed and self set cutting.

#### Highway Weed Spraying

#### **Operations:**

- **Urban Areas** treat from kerb edge to R/O footway e.g. normally inside 30mph (once per year).
- **Treating Obstacles** e.g. highway furniture signs, posts, trees, comms boxes, lighting columns etc. 250mm maximum (at beginning of grass cutting season).
- **Injurious and Invasive Weeds** – JKW, GHW, Ragwort, Himalayan Balsam (reactive service but have key hotspots mapped out. Also,

most of these must be undertaken in the 'growing season').

**Herbicides:** Currently only Roundup (Bioactive Glyphosate). Intend to undertake a trial using Chikara (a residual herbicide) for a one stop shop on certain areas and out of season.

**Methods:** Hand held applicators (knapsacks), CDAs (Controlled Droplet Applicators), quad bikes and compact tractors with boom.

**Issues:** Legislation (FEPA), training and certification, HSE/DEFRA Code of Practice, safety and highway working, asset replacement.

**Why we spray weeds:**

- Reduce the risks from strimming;
- Prevent obscuration;
- General appearance; and
- Damage to infrastructure.

**Amenity Grass Cutting**

**Operations:** 2 million m2 grass cut across CBC. Council owned Open Space/Amenity Land, Private Sector Housing Land and Housing Association Land. Highway verges, mainly in the South and main towns in the North, within the 30mph or in some cases 40mph signs.

Area	Frequencies
North Grass	15 cuts per year- approx every two weeks in the growing season
South Grass	13 cuts per year- approx every two and a half weeks in the growing season

**Safety:** H&S is the responsibility of both CBC and the contractor. Inspections, risk assessments, method statements, insurances, training and certification, PPE, type of mower and guards.

**Why we cut amenity grass:**

- Maintain general appearance
- Maintain use of open space/ amenity land by residents
- Maintain sight-line visibility at highway junctions for highway users
- To prevent obstruction of traffic signs and bollards

**Issues:** Wet and warm weather increasing growth and preventing scheduled cutting operations and reducing the quality of cuts, varying growth rates of different grasses and weeds.

### **Amenity Weed Spraying (South Only)**

**Operations:** Spraying via hand held applicators (knapsacks) and quad bikes. Use systemic herbicide which is taken in by the leaves and kills the plant at the root.

Area	Frequencies
<b>Urban Areas</b> Treat from kerb edge to rear of footway e.g. normally inside 30mph.	Twice per year, 3 times in town centres
<b>Obstacles</b> e.g. highway furniture signs, posts, trees, comms boxes, lighting columns etc.	Twice per year, 3 times in town centres
<b>Injurious and Invasive Weeds</b>	Reactive service at key hotspots

**Safety:** H&S is the responsibility of both CBC and the contractor. Inspections, risk assessments, method statements, insurances, training and certification, PPE, type of quad.

#### **Why we spray weeds:**

- Maintain general appearance and use of space
- Prevent obscuration of street furniture etc.
- Avoid damage to infrastructure

**Issues:** Wet and warm weather increasing weed growth, wet weather inhibiting action of herbicide by washing from leaves, training and certification, HSE/DEFRA Code of Practice, safety and highway working.

### **Feedback from discussion**

#### **Current Issues**

- Overhanging trees / hedges are the responsibility of the landowner , their permission is required before it can be cut back, report it through the Highways helpdesk
- Field entrances – these are the farmers responsibility
- Countryside Access are responsible for cutting hedges on footpaths 2x a year
- Frequency of cuts - Number of cuts is insufficient but severely hampered by weather conditions.
- A PC has recently considered opting out but for financial reasons decided to stay in
- Frequency of weed control only 2-3 times a year –insufficient to control encroachment of weeds onto pathways particularly in areas surrounding villages e.g. hamlets.
- Accurate up to date maps identifying the grass that is cut
- Verges should be litter picked after cutting.

- Quality of staff doing the cutting
- Collection of cut grass (arising)

#### **What can parishes do to help?**

- Send in photographic evidence
- Monitoring quality and frequency
- Raise issues with landowners (general opinion is that a letter from CBC has more impact)
- T&PCs can help with updating the maps of grass, what and where it is

#### **What could be improved?**

- Dealing with overhang
- Overgrown grass / weeds at bus stops
- Quality of cutting
- Communication re frequency of cutting put a schedule on the website along with street cleansing too
- Being able to monitor the status of enquiries made through the Highways Helpdesk

### **Workshop 4 – Dog fouling**

#### **Facilitator notes:**

#### **Bag it and Bin it!**

#### **Dog Fouling – Promoting responsible dog ownership**

#### **Our approach**

Central Bedfordshire Council promotes responsible dog ownership and seeks to change the behaviour through awareness raising and education of the minority that do not clear up after their dogs.

#### **Issues to consider if you have a dog fouling problem:**

- Awareness raising – through local papers, newsletters and websites
- Local campaigns – there is some useful information and free posters available on the Keep Britain Tidy website
- Dog fouling signage – is there sufficient signage and is it in the right areas?
- Dog bins – are there enough dog bins and are they located in the right places? Are they emptied frequently enough? Are residents aware that dog mess can also be placed in a standard public bin?
- Education visits by the Council's Dog Warden – there are two wardens covering Central Bedfordshire. Whilst their primary responsibilities are in meeting our statutory obligations around stray dogs, they have

capacity to carry out patrols in hot-spot areas to give advice and guidance.

### **Legislation**

The Dogs (Fouling of Land Act) 1996 and its regulations make it an offence to allow a dog to foul in public spaces, land that the public has access to, and verges. Offenders may be issued with a £50 fixed penalty notice by a Dog Warden or other authorised Council officer.

### **Who to contact**

To discuss dog fouling signage or dog bins, contact your CBC Contracts Officer on 0300 300 5873.

To report dog fouling and request a visit by the dog warden, send an e-mail to [wasteservices@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:wasteservices@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

To discuss campaigns, legislation, or general enquiries, contact Steve Barrett, Community Safety Operations Manager on 0300 300 5639 or e-mail [steve.barrett@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:steve.barrett@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

## **Feedback from discussion**

### **What works well and what would you like to see improved?**

#### **Works well:**

##### **Operational**

- Sufficient bins
- Tackling hotspots

#### **Like to see improved:**

##### **Enforcement**

- More / improved enforcement
- No Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) issued – toothless.
- Need more dog wardens
- Need a well publicised prosecution
- Make examples of offenders
- Should have no dogs anywhere near play areas / sports facilities etc
- Signage – bigger / better / robust
- PCSOs to issue FPNs?
- Flexibility – new contract – TPCs to get involved?
- High profile prosecutions
- CCTV



## **Operational**

- Dog waste bins not emptied and in the wrong place
- Dog warden comes round at the wrong time – should be evenings because that's when the worst offences occur

## **Communication**

- Confusion over dog mess in general waste bins
- Used bins, signs, parish newsletter etc – nothing works well
- Awareness raising
- Better idea of what Dog Wardens actually do
- National picture – need new initiatives – what works well in other areas? Bigger picture, lobbying
- Publicise fact that Dog Wardens don't just deal with dog fouling
- Just generally unpleasant
- Health risks - dangerous for children
- Raise perception

## **What can your parish council and community do to achieve the outcome you want?**

- Parish Warden out and about with a pooper scooper to clear away mess
- Similar process to highways – telephone number to report hotspots / email / info on websites
- Notices on wheelie bins – every house has a wheelie bin
- NCCZ approach – we are patrolling, watching you
- News Central Bedfordshire Council Dog Warden to spend longer periods (two weeks) in one locality to get better idea of problem
- Increase visibility – wear a uniform
- Small minority of people who allow it are totally irresponsible and won't respond to softly-softly approach (dog behaviour classes, posters etc). Need a campaign as hard hitting as the drink driving campaigns to get through, or a high profile prosecution.
- Professional Dog Walkers are also a problem in many areas, as they have 6 or 7 dogs at a time off the lead and can't control where they go and what they do, nor do they pick up after them.
- Publicity – publicise dog warden through website
- Ask the question – why DON'T people pick it up? Smell? Texture? Temperature? – detailed analysis, and then try and come up with a solution based on findings. 'What don't you like about picking up dog poo' survey.
- Identifying dog foulers – how to improve information gathered and action
- Legal position – whose liability?

## **What can you do to make this happen?**

- Sourced own deterrent signs – too early to tell what effect this has had yet
- Poster for Parish noticeboards
- Totternhoe has developed its own posters which has helped reduce incidents
- Newsletters carry messages about how dangerous it is
- Responsible dog ownership
- Education – Shock campaign among school children – especially middle school age children as they are more likely to be walking dogs after school etc and not picking up after themselves.
- Target professional dog walkers – are they licensed? Can their licenses be removed if they don't pick up?
- Better legislation / enforcement
- Share best practice
- 'Advice to T&PCs' on the website and in magazines / newsletters
- Get out round the villages and see what is happening
- Publicise prosecutions
- Develop pack for school governors / schools
- Schools are a good route
- Other stakeholders / dog organisations
- More bins - CBC to buy in bulk?
- Could T&PCs buy their own bins?

## SUBMITTED QUESTIONS

### Stondon Parish Council - James Stirling, Chairman

**Q: Recycling Facilities; how can a PC draw upon the experience and knowledge of CBC? In our Parish, a recent Village Plan has demonstrated a clear need for such facilities. Who do we talk to at CBC, to ensure that such facilities are safely, promptly and efficiently delivered?**

A: Contact the waste services team by email: [wasteservices@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:wasteservices@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk), or by phone: 0300 300 5873. Parishes can also raise issues with their Contract Officer – a list of Contract Officers and their contact details has been circulated to all clerks. Advice on recycling matters can also be sought from Ms Maggie Higton, CBC Environmental Protection team: 0300 300 5686.

**Q: Notice periods for CBC events or feedback. As with many Parish Councils our meetings are held at the end of a month. Planning & other CBC Department notices do not always arrive in good time and hence are too late to include on the PC agenda. More often than not, we could do with more notice and detail on what is required from the PC.**

A: We always try to ensure that CBC officers allow sufficient time to allow feedback from town and parish councils. For written consultations we work to the principles of a 12 week consultation period, whenever possible. We encourage parish councils to contact us if they are unable to meet the published timescale so that, if possible, we can accommodate a late response.

**Q: Can we get a better understanding or alignment on when planning applications will be considered, compared to when details are released and when PC monthly meetings are (my suspicion is most other CBC located PCs have their monthly meets towards the end of the month) held.**

A: As above we would encourage parish councils to track and monitor the status of planning applications on line: <http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/PLANTECH/DCWebPages/AcolNetCGI.gov> and to contact us if they are unable to meet the statutory consultation period of 21 days for response. This can be done by sending an email to: [planning@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:planning@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk) stating the application number, requesting an extension of time and advising when a response will be made. Alternatively, you can make direct contact with the case officer (details can be found on the consultation letter). It is usual that an extension of time to submit comments will be granted upon request. For specific questions relating to the determination process of a planning application please contact the case officer.

Our calendar of Development Management Meetings is available on our website: <http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/modgov/ieListMeetings.aspx?Committeeld=631>

**Q: Can the CBC Monitoring officer provide feedback or advice or a CBC view or position on matters that arise and are likely to be "common" to PCs with their patch. For example we could gain from a sharing best practice, dissuading misconceptions etc.**

A: The Monitoring Officer will provide feedback and advice on issues where there is a statutory responsibility to do so.

**Q: With the growth of electronic communications, web based forums, twitter etc could CBC provide and manage a centrally based Parish Council based forum to share view points?**

A: We will look into the feasibility of setting up a communications forum either virtual or actual to share ideas and good practice.

**Q: Could CBC help with identifying & bringing similar scale/complexity PCs together so they can share best practice, share solutions to common issues, achieve economy some form of scale on commonly procured items, e.g. Insurances, Grass cutting, new notice boards, benches , PC orientated providers, etc.**

A: One of the purposes of our conferences is to encourage parish councils to share best practice and learn from each other's experiences. We are aware that some neighbouring parishes are beginning to explore joint working and we would be very happy to facilitate such partnerships. We will respond to any specific requests from parish councils.

**Q: What training, guidance and support can CBC offer in connection with reviewing and assessing planning applications at a local level (i.e PC level).**

A: A series of planning events was held in 2011 and it is our intention to repeat these in 2013. We will contact you as soon as we have more details.

**Q: In connection with Play areas and the Localism Act, how can you help us in the process of reviewing adoption and delivering a plan and cost base? We have found this a difficult process as CBC seem unable to share insights, processes, best practice and good information for the PC to make an informed decision in this regard. We are considering if we can reasonably take on this burden but the associated risk to the PC is huge without all the detail.**

A: We have made a commitment in the Community Engagement Strategy to support town and parish councils seeking to take on local services and this was set out in the 'Framework to devolve services to town and parish councils' document, which was discussed at the May conference. We will contact you to progress this request.

With regards to play areas provided on new developments that towns and parishes choose to adopt, the Leisure Services team has for many years assisted councils in this process; advising them how to arrive at commuted sums, identifying issues and assisting them to make their final decision. Leisure Services continues to offer guidance in this area, please contact Siobhan Vincent or Lisa White: 0300 300 4489.

#### **Haynes Parish Council - Richard James, Chairman**

**Q: How does the Localism Bill impact on the terms and conditions of the existing CBC Highways Partnership arrangement with Amey?**

A: In the spirit of localism we are enhancing the contract management aspects of the services provided by all of our contractors. We encourage town and parish councils to work in partnership with us to monitor the quality of the services delivered as well as enhancing those services, where appropriate.

### Gypsy and Travellers' Sites in Billington

**Q: Why has there been such a long delay in identifying official G&T sites in the area (now not expected until 2014); and what action is being taken to bring agreed sites into use before and after that date?**

A: Work is currently underway on the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan for the whole of Central Bedfordshire. A six week consultation on the proposed structure of the plan ended on the 29th October. Comments are now being taken into consideration in the development of the plan. 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 Overview and Scrutiny in February 2013, followed by Executive in March 2013 and full Council in April 2013. The plan will be published in May 2013 and there will be a six week consultation period allowing interested parties to submit representations. The Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan is expected to be adopted by April 2014.

The timetable for the process is set out below:

February 2013:	Overview and Scrutiny consider the draft Plan with sites
March 2013:	Plan considered by Executive
April 2013:	Plan approved by Full Council
May 2013:	Plan published
May to April 2014:	An Independent Planning Inspector will assess the plan and the sites in a public examination
April 2014:	Plan adopted

The next opportunity for public involvement in the process will be in May 2013 when there will be a six week consultation period, when interested parties will have the opportunity to comment on the published plan.

Until the Local Plan is adopted, in the north of Central Bedfordshire we will continue to work within the principles of the existing endorsed framework of the Development Plan Document (DPD). This included an allocation of 23 pitches across 4 sites. Of those, 13 pitches have been granted permission across two sites, in line with the DPD.

Until the Local Plan is adopted, in the south of Central Bedfordshire the need for pitches will be addressed through the application and granting of planning permissions.

Information on the progress of planning applications can be found using the following link: <http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/portal/index.asp>

**Q: When will the list of residents, and the issue of licences for caravans, be completed; and what sanctions will be brought against those who refuse to comply?**

A: Mobile Home sites are required to be licensed under the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 after they have obtained Planning Approval for such use. The planning approval will stipulate how many homes etc have been given permission for each plot/site. The intention of this legislation is to enable local authorities to regulate Site Owners and provide a degree of protection to residents, who usually own their home but rent ground space on the park. Although Gypsy and Traveller sites with planning permission legally need a licence, usually the site owner is also the resident. With most of the Gypsy and Traveller sites, there are a number of separate, individual licences as opposed to one overriding licence for the whole site. This is because the site ownership has been split into the individual plots.

Site licensing can only be completed when and after the Planning permissions have

been fully resolved. Permissions are named by condition to individuals only. However, individuals actually on some sites do not correspond to those on the permission. The Council is seeking to regularise this breach of condition of the permissions as without this the licensing cannot proceed.

Consequently, the Council's Housing Service that administers site licences cannot predict when all the planning regularisation issues will be resolved. As and when individually owned plots are regularised, and confirmed as such by Planning, they will be licensed accordingly and the public register updated (held on the Council's website).

Sanctions under the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 are relatively minor in comparison to planning enforcement sanctions. A contravention of a site licence can result in a maximum penalty at level 4, which is currently up to £2,500. Two or more successful convictions can result in a licence being revoked. However, the same maximum penalty is applicable where there is no site licence; there is no sanction to remove/close down an unlicensed site.

There is no requirement under site licensing to obtain the names of all site residents. The licence is concerned only with the site owner, who is often one of the residents, but not residents that are not owners.

**Q: What actions do CBC propose to take to translate words into actions: in relation to the enforcement process; and to put pressure for action by the Environment Agency?**

A: CBC takes appropriate enforcement action in line with the regulatory framework set down for local authorities. Similarly the EA also work within regulatory frameworks that define when enforcement action can be taken. The Council and EA are working together to, where possible, address issues raised by Billington PC and Billington PC were advised of the status of this work on 19 November 2012 at a meeting with CBC.

**Leighton Linlade Town Council – Pat Kingsnorth, Clerk**

**Q: Can you advise what the legal situation is regarding cycling on pavements?**

A: it is an offence to cycle on a footway (Section 72 of the Highway Act 1835, amended by Section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1888.). The law gives a police officer the power to issue fixed penalty notices of £30 under Section 51 and Schedule 3 of the Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988. Public footpaths are treated differently in law as a cyclist riding (or even pushing her/his bike) along a footpath is committing an offence of trespass against the landowner.

A number of footways and footpaths have been designated as shared use paths or cycle tracks where cycling is legal though cyclists should obey the highway code and cede priority to pedestrians and other more vulnerable users.

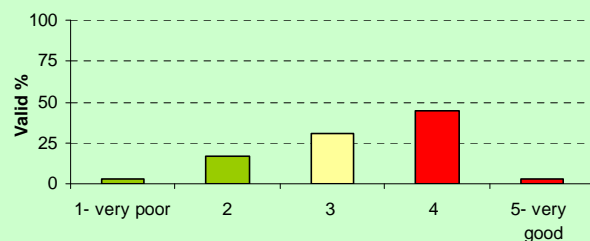
## FEEDBACK ON THE CONFERENCE

A conference feedback form was provided in the delegate packs, and below are the results from the 31 completed forms received.

### Meeting the conference objectives

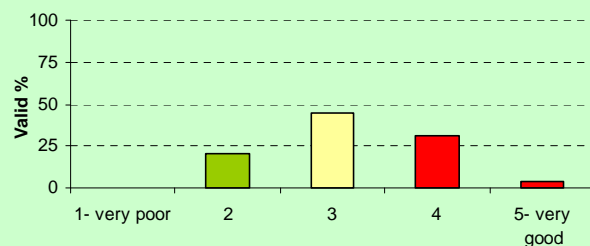
#### To identify local solutions to common issues

	Count	%
1- very poor	1	3
2	5	16
3	9	29
4	13	42
5- very good	1	3
Total	29	94
Missing	2	6
Total	31	100
Mean score	3.28	



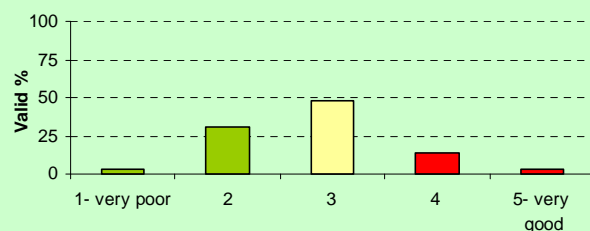
#### To share best practice and learn from local experiences

	Count	%
1- very poor	0	0
2	6	19
3	13	42
4	9	29
5- very good	1	3
Total	29	94
Missing	2	6
Total	31	100
Mean score	3.17	



#### To enable communities to do more for themselves

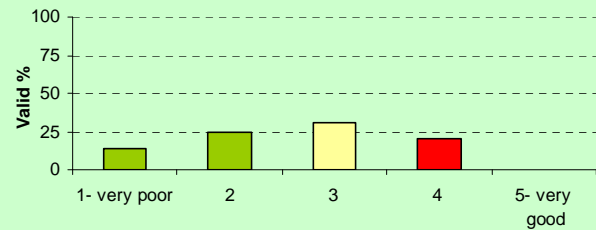
	Count	%
1- very poor	1	3
2	9	29
3	14	45
4	4	13
5- very good	1	3
Total	29	94
Missing	2	6
Total	31	100
Mean score	2.83	



## Usefulness of following aspects of the event

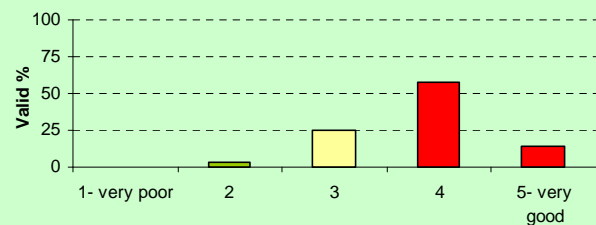
### Networking / market stalls preceding the main conference

	Count	%
1- very poor	4	13
2	7	23
3	9	29
4	6	19
5- very good	0	0
Total	26	84
Missing	5	16
Total	31	100
Mean score	2.65	



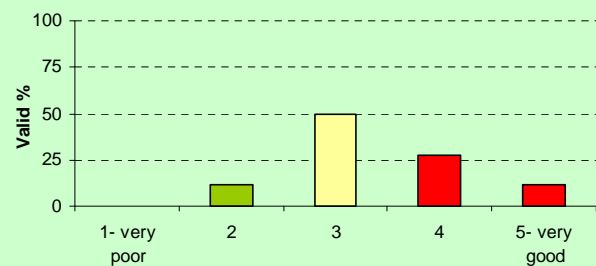
### Traffic management workshop

	Count	%
1- very poor	0	0
2	1	3
3	7	23
4	16	52
5- very good	4	13
Total	28	90
Missing	3	10
Total	31	100
Mean score	3.82	



### Street cleaning workshop

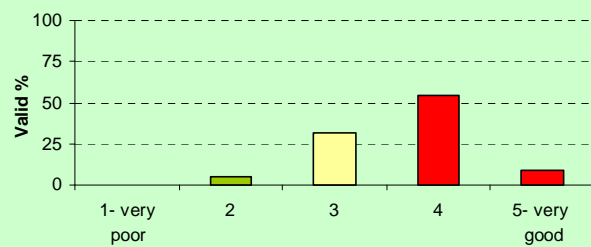
	Count	%
1- very poor	0	0
2	2	6
3	9	29
4	5	16
5- very good	2	6
Total	18	58
Missing	13	42
Total	31	100
Mean score	3.39	





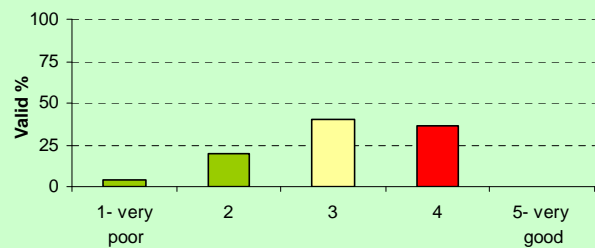
### Grass and landscape management workshop

	Count	%
1- very poor	0	0
2	1	3
3	7	23
4	12	39
5- very good	2	6
Total	22	71
Missing	9	29
Total	31	100
Mean score	3.68	



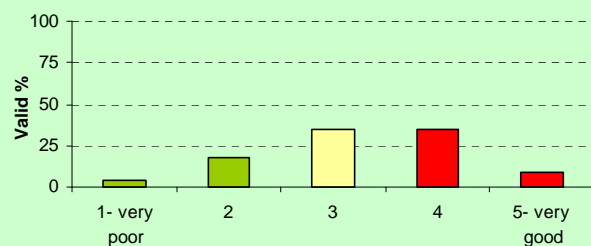
### Dog fouling workshop

	Count	%
1- very poor	1	3
2	5	16
3	10	32
4	9	29
5- very good	0	0
Total	25	81
Missing	6	19
Total	31	100
Mean score	3.08	



### Feedback from the workshops sessions

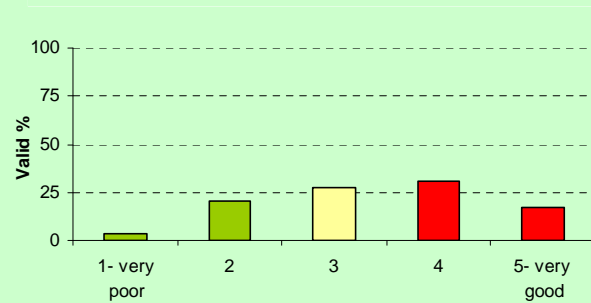
	Count	%
1- very poor	1	3
2	4	13
3	8	26
4	8	26
5- very good	2	6
Total	23	74
Missing	8	26
Total	31	100
Mean score	3.26	



## Organisation of the event

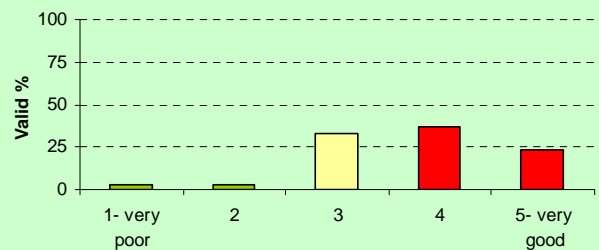
### Information sent to you before event

	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	



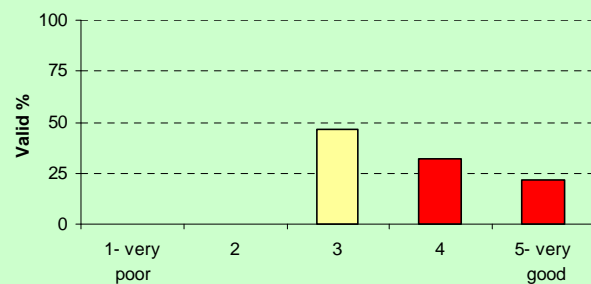
### Venue

	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

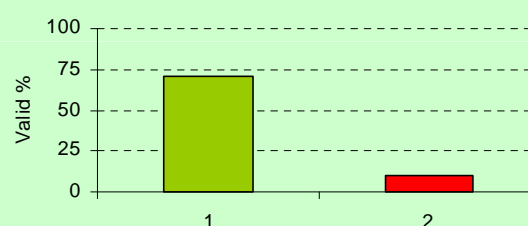
	Count	%
1- very poor	0	0
2	0	0
3	13	42
4	9	29
5- very good	6	19
Total	28	90
Missing	3	10
Total	31	100
Mean score	3.75	



## Views of the event overall

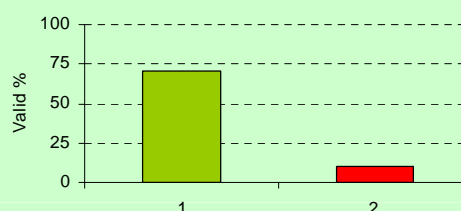
### Did you find this conference useful?

	Count	%
Yes	22	71
No	3	10
Total	25	81
Missing	6	19
Total	31	100



### Would you recommend attendance at future conferences?

	Count	%
Yes	17	55
No	1	3
Total	18	58
Missing	13	42
Total	31	100



## Feedback from delegates

### Any other comments

I found it extremely useful - encourage you to do it again.

Venue - noise problems of two groups in one area.

Rather than move 150 people around 4 times for each workshop, move the facilitators instead. Much easier and quicker, and would avoid the problem of group being sent to the wrong location with the consequent waste of time that happened tonight.

The choice of workshops was excellent, but would have liked more time for discussion on each topic. The decision to do this for the final workshop was very helpful.

Badly run format which meant one workshop was missed. Moving 40 people to different rooms is like moving sheep and takes time. What would have worked is attendees staying the 4 rooms and presenters moving between rooms. Also 2 groups in one room did not work!

Pity time did not allow attendance at all 4 workshops. Perhaps the event should be more segmented to allow fewer delegates to go into more depth. Whilst successful in attracting delegates, clearly there were too many to attend a 20 minute workshop and have their say.

More positive attitude from delegates would be beneficial. More of a willingness to work together, rather than just an excuse for 'council bashing'. Not helpful, not constructive, and puts obstacles in the way of moving forward.

Timetable unclear. Workshops briefing unclear. Little time for other questions – e.g. issues of gypsies and travellers.

More time in workshops would have been better to allow all questions to be answered. Information sheets on the workshops to be issued with agenda to give time to look over what service provides. Future agenda item: Info on the new Community Infrastructure Levy and how it works would be useful.

The groups were far too big. The ambition for participants to attend 4 workshops was unrealistic.

Despite some technical issues it was a very good event. The topics were appropriate,

also the theme - enabling communities to do more for themselves. It will take time to facilitate the necessary change from PC dependency on CBC services and a will to do more themselves.

More time spent on specific items - more interaction between subject leaders and parishes. Separate rooms.

Chaos! Insufficient time in first workshop (dog fouling) to share anything. Couldn't hear much in second workshop (grass cutting) due to dog fouling one noisy and overlapping. No real opportunity to discuss between Ts and Ps councils on how we can work together.

Suggest community forum where Ts and Ps can talk together and tell CBC how best practice could be achieved.

Very poorly organised.

Separate vegetarian option (ie not mixed with meat).

Future events need to be better structured with perhaps more time and less zones.

Too rushed. Not sure what the positive outcomes will be? Would be better to do associated parishes together in smaller teams and do over 2 days! And see comments made by other teams!

Workshops in separate rooms! We make a choice of 2 from the 4 to give at least 30 minutes each (as most PC have sent 2 reps all 4 are covered) and quite possibly not all 4 are relevant to our PC.

Catering unnecessary.

Why move large groups of delegates in unfamiliar surroundings from place to place when officers who know the venue could move from each session instead.

It would have been helpful to have handouts prior to the event so time for informed discussion - more constructively used. Most discussions were inevitably anecdotal.

Specific ongoing concerns raised by residents in Haynes "Deadmans Cross" speeding - and traffic calming for Haynes West End! David Bowie sessions were excellent!

### **What other individuals, groups or organisations would you like to see at future events?**

Planning

Planning department. Enforcement department.

Police

Highways

Legal

Highways maintenance

Sharing best practice and "successful" projects and strategies/measures!

If discussing traffic and roads - the police and Amey.

The subjects under discussion are recurring particularly in rural areas. One-off sessions cannot meet ongoing revisions in practices and services provided by CBC.

Workshop dedicated to Highways and speed controls.

Make the next workshop only for Highways.

## CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

Despite some technical and logistical problems on the night, your feedback indicates that you liked the workshops and felt the event was useful; particularly in helping to identify local solutions to common issues, sharing best practice and learning from local experiences.

We acknowledge the need to send you more information in advance and to enable more time for discussion. We will bear these things in mind when planning future events.

We realise that we cannot tackle these issues in a one-off conference and will seek to repeat some of these workshops (in response to demand). You have also told us you would like future workshops on planning and highways issues and I will make these the priority for the next conferences. We will also consider changing the timings to 6.00–9.00pm to enable more meaningful dialogue.

I will contact you as soon as possible with details of the next event. In the meantime, please contact me or Peter Fraser if you have any further comments or suggestions: [peter.fraser@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:peter.fraser@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk).

A full copy of this report, the presentations and the draft framework can be found on the Council's website:

<http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/local-government-in-central-bedfordshire/town-parish-councils.aspx>

## Appendix 1



To all Town and Parish Councils

Your ref:

Our ref: 0812TPCPF/DH

Date: 17/08/2012

Dear Chairman and Clerk

### Information for Town and Parish Councils

It has come to my attention that a number of parishes have some issues that they would like to address with us in the context of our commitment to localism and the principle of enabling communities to do more for themselves.

This letter addresses some of the more common enquiries we have received, but please do contact us should there be any other area you would like to talk to us about.

### Grassland and wild flowers

Many of our towns and parishes have areas of grassland in their parish either along the highway or in open space that they value because of the presence of wild flowers; particularly in spring and early summer. Some requests have been made to leave these areas uncut or to reduce the number of cuts to allow the wildflowers to seed.

We would be happy to accommodate a request for areas to be left uncut or to have a reduced number of cuts. In doing so we would need to have regard to the following:

- For road safety reasons, some roadside verges require cutting more frequently than others. We would not be able to leave a verge uncut if this created a potential hazard. For verges which are designated as Roadside Verge Nature Reserves, we are currently in the process of agreeing cutting regimes with our contractors to preserve their wildlife value.

Central Bedfordshire Council  
Priory House, Monks Walk  
Chicksands, Shefford  
Bedfordshire SG17 5TQ

Telephone 0300 300 8xxx  
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- The contractor would have to make a judgement depending on the size of the area to be left uncut as to whether the whole surrounding stretch of grass would also have to be left uncut.
- The town or parish council would need to take full responsibility for ensuring that local residents are fully aware and understood why certain areas of verge / open space are not being cut, to avoid unnecessary complaints.

If you have identified areas in your parish that you would prefer to leave uncut or that would benefit from a reduced number of cuts, please let me know. We will assess the volume of requests and discuss any implications with our contractors and contact you with our decision.

### **Dog fouling**

A significant number of our towns and parishes tell us that they have an ongoing problem with dog fouling and would like to know how they can get involved in reducing this nuisance.

The Dogs (Fouling of Land) Act 1996 and its regulations make it an offence to allow a dog to foul in public spaces (land that the public has access to) and verges. These regulations were adopted by the legacy authorities and are still valid today. In addition, the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 enables you to work with us in using dog control orders to manage dogs in our public places and take action against those that flout the law. Dog Control Orders will be replaced next year by Community Protection Notices. These feature in the Home Office White Paper 'Putting Victims First', which was published in May 2012. We await the precise details of how these will work. In the meantime, the Dogs (Fouling of Land) Act remains in force and will probably remain so under the new legislation.

Having said all of the above, our approach should be about education and prevention more than enforcement.

We have five Contract Officers covering the Central Bedfordshire area, who deal with issues relating to street cleansing, litter, waste collection, graffiti, grass cutting and dog fouling. Details of the Contract Officer covering your area have previously been sent to you.

Please get in touch with your Contract Officer to provide information on dog fouling hot spots and areas where you have particular concerns. Issues that should be considered include:

- Signage – is there sufficient signage and is it in the right places?
- Awareness raising – through local papers, newsletters and websites etc.
- Local campaigns – there is some useful information on the Keep Britain Tidy website.

**Central Bedfordshire Council**  
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 Chicksands, Shefford  
 Bedfordshire SG17 5TQ

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**www** [www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

- Dog bins – are there enough dog bins and are they located in the right places? Are they emptied frequently enough?
- Education visits by a Dog Warden - there are two Wardens covering Central Bedfordshire. Whilst their prime responsibilities are in meeting our statutory obligations regarding stray dogs, this resource can be managed to organise patrols in specific locations. Wardens can also issue Fixed Penalty Notices for dog fouling.

If the above does not solve / reduce the problem our Environmental Protection Team can look to use enforcement action where there is sufficient evidence.

Any local issues can be taken up directly with your Contract Officer or reported via email to: [wasteservices@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:wasteservices@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk).

### Parking

We are often asked by town and parish councils about what can be done to manage local parking issues.

Central Bedfordshire Council's draft 'Approach to Parking' strategy outlines our intent to work much more closely with you to manage parking enforcement in your areas, which could include:

- **Co-location** – You could offer your premises for enforcement officers to take their tea / lunch breaks. This would mean they could discuss any immediate enforcement needs required on that day, and provide daily interaction on local issues.
- **Enhanced engagement** - Specific 'parking meetings' could be arranged every quarter where all parking issues can openly be discussed and worked upon.
- **Lines and signs** marking parking restrictions - It would be very helpful to have your assistance with lines and signs as these are constantly vandalised or fall into disrepair making it difficult for us to enforce the restrictions. Your assistance in identifying defects and potentially rectifying them would be invaluable.
- **Warning notices** – You could also assist with issuing Council warning notices in instances where there are no restrictions and a parking fine cannot be enforced - e.g. where a vehicle is parked on a footway or verge.

We welcome the opportunity where possible to discuss some of these or any other suggestions you may have.

### Traffic Regulation Orders

Finally, I wrote to you in March regarding the process and timescale for dealing with Permanent Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs). My letter referred to a new policy of batching and advertising all non-urgent TROs on a quarterly basis to

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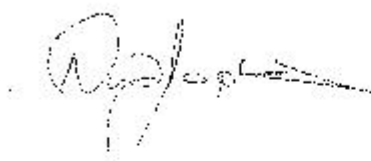
reduce the cost of advertising. This included the requirement for town and parish councils to contribute the proportionate costs of advertising for any schemes they have raised. Whilst Central Bedfordshire Council will pay the costs of implementing the works of small schemes, town and parish councils will be expected to pay for the design, consultation and preparation work that forms the costs of advertising the order.

These arrangements apply to low cost schemes only, such as single and double yellow lines, residents' parking zones and signage.

I have attached an example showing the financial breakdown of the costs for a very basic TRO to paint 100 metres of double yellow lines on each side of a road and erect four warning signs on poles. The same model would apply to other low cost schemes. The main costs and time-consuming elements of the process relate to: the design work; the statutory consultation process; preparing papers and reports for the Traffic Management Committee; and commissioning contractors to carry out the work. Please note that the time and costs can escalate depending on the objections raised. Therefore, it is important that you can demonstrate community consent for any schemes before they are submitted.

If you would like to talk to us about any of the issues I have mentioned above or if you have other ideas in mind, please contact Peter Fraser, Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement on 0300 300 6740, email [peter.fraser@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:peter.fraser@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Yours sincerely



**Councillor David Hopkin**

Deputy Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Lead Member for Localism

Central Bedfordshire Council  
Priory House, Monks Walk  
Chicksands, Shefford  
Bedfordshire SG17 5TQ

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**Specimen TRO costs for 100m of double yellow lines on both sides of a road**

activity	Cost to T / PC	Cost to CBC	Total
undertake initial drawing	£270.00		
prepare detail plan and notice	£250.00		
advertise in press	£150.00		
advertise on site	£100.00		
review objections and write report	£230.00		
write works order		£50.00	
publish final notice in press		£150.00	
undertake works		£700.00	
completion check (site visit)		£100.00	
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,000.00</b>	<b>£1,000.00</b>	
<b>Overall Total</b>			<b>£2,000.00</b>