



# Public Realm

## Position Statement and Operating Model

July 2020

### Introduction

This paper sets out the background to developing a Public Realm scheme for Central Bedfordshire and builds on the example of the successful Town Ranger scheme in Dunstable. It outlines the key elements and milestones to create and implement a scheme to benefit the whole of Central Bedfordshire.

### Background

In February 2019 Central Bedfordshire Council allocated capital funds of £400,000 for the purpose of pump priming and developing a town ranger / public realm partnership scheme with Town and Parish Councils.

Town and Parish Councils were invited to join a task group to co-design the scheme and in October 2019 colleagues from Blunham & Houghton Parish Councils and from Sandy, Leighton Linlade and Shefford Town Councils joined Central Bedfordshire representatives to brainstorm ideas.

### What are the public realm issues that we want to address?

*Public realm embraces the external places in our towns and villages that are accessible to all. These are the everyday spaces that we move through and linger within, the places where we live, work and play.*

The Unitary Council has statutory or service responsibilities to deliver, including ensuring the Highways are kept clear, removing fly tipping, street cleaning and grass cutting.

Although Towns and Parishes are largely content with current services. Under a new contractual arrangement, CBC's Environment Service new supplier, FCC, may be able to support Town and Parish activities such as litter clearance, and the new contract will enable the unitary to deal with most issues and requirements on CBC land and highways.

Over and above the CBCs services, there are numerous additional areas of activity which local Councils want to get involved with to make a difference to their communities and there is an opportunity to work collaboratively about how such activities could be supported and delivered.

The types of issues that town and parish councils may want to address include :

Removal of graffiti, Tidying untended graves, Removal of chewing gum, Cleaning of play equipment  
Keeping smaller roads and alleyways clear of leaves & rubbish, getting rid of unsightly weeds,  
maintaining window boxes and hanging baskets in town centres.



**How might we collaborate on a new public realm scheme?**

The Town and Parish Council community across Central Bedfordshire has enormous collective capacity, knowledge and expertise and varying levels of resources. Collaboration between Central Bedfordshire Council, Town Councils and smaller parish councils could enable a joined up approach to tackling some relatively small scale local issues but which do make an enormous difference to the quality of the public realm , civic pride and resident experience.

By looking to develop a more collaborative approach we could enhance our collective capacity by:

- Coming together on our common requirements
- Pooling our knowledge, skills and experience
- Increasing our impact and community benefit

**The Proposal**

We are looking to work together to create and equip a network of Hubs that would be hosted by one or more of the larger Town Councils who would host the equipment, share equipment or resources and develop new services that could be offered on a value for money basis to surrounding parishes

The Hubs could be located as follows.

Sub region	Public Realm Hub	Surrounding parishes
Chiltern Vale	Dunstable and Houghton Regis Town Councils	Caddington, Slip End Hyde Kensworth Whipsnade Studham Totternhoe Chalgrave Chalton Sundon Streatley Tilsworth Toddington* / Harlington*
Leighton	Leighton Linslade TC	Billington, Eggington, Stanbridge, Hockliffe, Heht and Reach, Battlesden, Potsgrove, Milton Bryan, Woburn, Aspley Heath, Asply Guise, Husborne Crawley
Mid West Beds	Amphill and Flitwick TC's	Amphill, Flitwick, Hulcote and Salford, Brogborough, Cranfield , Marston Moreteyne, Lidlington, Maulden, Clophill, Houghton Conquest, Haynes, Tingrith, Toddington, Harlington Westoning, Gravenhurst, Pulloxhill, Silsoe, Shillington, Barton le Clay*, Shefford* Campton and Chicksands* Meppershall*

East Central Beds	Sandy and Biggleswade TC's	Tempsford, Potton, Northill, Southill, Sandy , Biggleswade, Dunton. WCH, Eyeworth, Sutton, Blunham, Moggerhanger, Everton, Old Warden, Langford, Astwick, Clifton, Henlow, Arlesey, Stotfold, Stondon, Fairfield.
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\*Parishes could purchase from a different Hub

## Operating Model - options

### Option 1- Centralised

#### Role of Central Bedfordshire Council

Central Bedfordshire Council would purchase the equipment for use by the Hub to assist Town and Parishes to progress public realm improvements in their areas and support surrounding parishes to look after their public realm;

#### a) Equipment

- Backpack/Handheld cordless blowers
- Handheld cordless hedge trimmers
- Handheld cordless long-reach hedge trimmers
- Handheld cordless brushcutters
- Handheld cordless strimmers
- Heavy-duty rotary self-propelled mulching mowers (None collecting)
- Heavy-duty rotary self-propelled collection mowers
- Ride on lawnmower AWD None collecting (Grillo)
- Commercial self-propelled wheeled vacuum (Billy Goat)
- Industrial cold pressure washer
- Tiller/Cultivator's
- General purpose external generator
- Horticultural tools – Trowels, handheld forks, edging knives, hoes, axes, loppers, shears, rakes secateurs and pruning saws (long and short).
- Insulated digging tools – spade, long-handled spade, trench fork, shovel, chisel ended breaking bar.
- Wheelbarrows

- Minor traffic control equipment (Not for highway use)
- Ladders – Tripod, combi-ladders, step ladders
- Litter picking equipment
- Grime Buster / Saddle tank hot pressure washers
- Kersten powered sweeper/ weed brushes
- Johnston/Karcher Sweeper
- Appropriate trailers if required
- Safety signs
- Hard hats, ear and eye protectors, overalls, gloves and reinforced boots.

**(indicative list only)**

**b) Sub lease**

- The equipment would remain in the ownership of Central Bedfordshire Council and an appropriate lease agreement would be put in place with the lead Council(s) regarding access, insurance, maintenance and security.
- Responsibility for updating or renewing the equipment would lie with the Public Realm Hub.

**c) Contractor liaison**

- CBC would facilitate joint working with the contractor FCC to ensure services are delivered timely and collaboratively.

**Role of the Town / Parish Public Realm Hubs**

The Town and Parish Councils leading the Hub would need to

- Provide appropriate staffing (voluntary or other) within the Town councils/hubs
- Provide appropriate and secure storage for the equipment
- Ensure that the equipment is properly insured and maintained
- Ensure that those who are involved in the use of such kit are appropriately trained in order to use it and to oversee its use by others (i.e. volunteers).
  - *Safe systems of work for the required activity*
  - *Maintenance of plant and equipment*
  - *Safe use, handling, storage and transport of substances that may be hazardous to health, eg pesticides, weed killers and fertilisers*
  - *Information, instruction, training and supervision*
  - *Safe access to and egress from working area*
  - *Waste handling and disposal*
  - *The use of warning signs and personal protective equipment*
  - *Noise levels*
  - *Consultation with staff and volunteers*
  - *Employment of competent contractors where work can not be undertaken by staff and volunteers*
- Price, market and deliver a town ranger / public realm service to surrounding parishes.

- Service delivery
  - All directly employed grounds maintenance staff and volunteers must work safely at all times, both for their own protection and for the protection of staff, volunteers and member of the public. In particular:
  - pedestrian routes and traffic routes should be separate from works traffic related to grounds maintenance
  - gardening and grounds maintenance tools must be supervised at all times and never left lying about
  - when not in use, tools should be locked away in a shed or secure area or taken away by grounds maintenance staff and volunteers.
  - special attention should be paid to ladders, to sharp tools such as secateurs, and to power tools, eg lawnmowers, chainsaws and strimmers
  - whenever major work is being done, eg mowing lawns, lopping trees or cutting hedges, appropriate safety signs and access restrictions should be used.

## Option 2 – devolved model

### Role of Central Bedfordshire Council

- Allocate an amount to each Hub circa £100,000 each to purchase the relevant and appropriate equipment.
- Terms and Conditions of the arrangement would be set out in a Memorandum of Understanding

### Role of the Public Realm Hub

- Provide appropriate staffing (voluntary or other) within the Town councils/hubs
- Purchase the equipment deemed necessary to deliver a service to the town and surrounding parishes
- Responsibility for updating or renewing the equipment would lie with the Public Realm Hub
- Provide appropriate and secure storage for the equipment
- Ensure that the equipment is properly insured and maintained
- Ensure that those who are involved in the use of such kit are appropriately trained in order to use it and to oversee its use by others (i.e. volunteers).
  - *Safe systems of work for the required activity*
  - *Maintenance of plant and equipment*
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### **Next steps**

CBC would like to move forward and secure agreement from town / parish councils as to a preferred model.

**Town and Parish Councils are asked** to consider the options outlined above, agree the preferred model and express their interest with CBC, including the following :

- Commitment
- Working with partner town / parish council
- Agreement to proceed.

### **CBC will**

- Prepare draft Agreements
- Price equipment
- Prepare report to Executive.

### **Contact us...**

by telephone: 0300 300 8000

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on the web: [www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

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