



TOTAL PLACE BRIEFING NOTE **Central Bedfordshire and Luton pilot**

12 February 2010

WITH its final report now delivered to Whitehall, the Central Bedfordshire and Luton Total Place pilot has come up with over 50 proposals to cut crime and improve the welfare benefits system. The project has also paved the way for future profitable collaboration between public services – local councils, central government and voluntary organisations - in this area.

Recommendations include customer data sharing between council tax benefits offices and JobCentre Plus, together with a far simpler process for claiming benefits to speed up payments and reduce administration costs. Crucially, the proposals could remove many of the hurdles that discourage people from coming off benefits and getting into work.

The project also proposes a new way of dealing with prolific offenders that could greatly cut crime and the costs of crime. Total Place research indicates that a quarter of the offences in Central Bedfordshire and Luton is committed by a very small group – around 250 - of persistent offenders whose activities cost the taxpayer as much as £112 million a year .

A combined local taskforce of council, police, probation, government benefits agencies and voluntary organisations have worked together intensively over the past six months to address these issues and come up with cost-effective solutions. Project chiefs believe that a large number of service improvements are available locally, some at little or no additional cost, others requiring further investment. Many proposals are capable of being rolled out, or 'mainstreamed', nationally but some will require central government decision or even legislative change.

Project director Robin Porter said: "Our Total Place pilot has embraced an entirely new way for central government, local authority and voluntary agencies to address key community issues. Its recommendations present challenges, some for us locally and others for central government, but we are confident this project is a forerunner to the way all public authorities will do business in the future."

The Total Place project was one of 13 pilots across the country, set up last year by communities secretary John Denham to transform public services through improved working between central and local government agencies and a better alignment between community needs and all available resources.

Each pilot had a different theme but the common objective was to examine how effectively all public services – central government agencies, councils and third sector organisations - could work together locally on key issues, taking a particularly close look at *total* public spending and the outcomes.

Central Bedfordshire and Luton's pilot used some leading edge change-management techniques to map out, in detail, existing systems and capture all ideas for improvement in a coherent, practical way. It also deployed powerful social research and data gathering techniques to ensure all recommendations were built solidly around the customer's perspective. Groups of benefits claimants and offenders took part in a number of working groups to help identify problems and also to comment on the proposed solutions.

The project has delivered other benefits too: project partners now have a clear, robust methodology for addressing other complex local issues and other joint working and cost-saving proposals are already being investigated.

Central Bedfordshire Council and Luton Borough Council are the joint leads for this pilot. Partners also include: Bedfordshire Police, the Probation Service, Ministry of Justice, Crown Prosecution Service, Her Majesty's Courts Service, Luton and Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, NHS Luton and NHS Bedfordshire, the Chamber, Department of Work and Pensions, JobCentre Plus, HM Revenues and Customs, together with a wide range of local third sector agencies and organisations.