

Full Council – 20 November 2025

Motion proposed by Councillor Holland-Lindsay

Regeneration-first approach to support our town centres

Our town centres are at the heart of our communities, both urban and rural, in Central Bedfordshire, but they are facing huge challenges. Loss of banking facilities and high street stores, as well as rising rents and business rates, and competition from online retail mean that too many of our town centres are struggling.

This Council has time and again shown its support for our town centres. Since 2023 members have voted to pass motions encouraging the development of a town centre strategy, to support creative ‘meanwhile’ uses for vacant spaces, and to encourage Council to play its part in supporting communities faced with the loss of banking facilities.

In recent years our area has seen large amounts of housing growth, often without a focus on delivering infrastructure and regeneration to our town centres to enable them to continue to thrive and support a growing population.

This motion calls on Council to take a strategic approach to this agenda by embedding a ‘regeneration first’ approach across all its work in order to support and develop successful and vibrant town centres.

It also calls on the Council to consider what immediate action can be taken to support high streets and town centres to help support vital businesses and community and cultural groups that need our support more than ever if our town centres and high streets are to continue to thrive.

Motion

This Council recognises the increasing pressures on our high streets and town centres, and declares a High Streets Emergency.

This Council will:

- Promote a regeneration-first culture across the whole Council, to ensure the benefits of growth and inward investment support vibrant town centres. This strategic approach will guide all policy development and the approach to new initiatives, so that the potential for regeneration benefits are front and centre.
- Develop a High Streets and Town Centres Action Plan setting out the actions and levers the Council will take to help support businesses, community groups and cultural activities to thrive.
- Request the Leader of the Council write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer expressing concern about the growing challenges faced by town centre and high street businesses in Central Bedfordshire, and requesting support from government to help them thrive.