**Council proposals to refocus regeneration on jobs, skills and improving life chances**

**Labour-led Milton Keynes Council will move away from regeneration that could involve wholesale demolition, and refocus the project on employment opportunities, improving skills and estate renewal, if proposals being considered are agreed by the Council’s Cabinet before Christmas.**

Last month MK Council passed a new Council Plan with a promise to review the existing regeneration strategy that priorities 7 estates for regeneration.

Now the MK Council Cabinet Member Nigel Long has said the continued focus and concerns of residents about wholesale demolition of estates has held the project back for too long, and the council will therefore be consulting over the next few months on a new strategy to change the story from one of demolishing homes to building stronger communities. The new strategy will be put before the Cabinet to approve in December.

Proposals being considered will specifically remove the threat of wholesale demolition on priority estates with more targeted work on specific sites and longer term investment. Physical changes will still be possible, but on a more gradual basis with the emphasis instead placed on improving existing stock and small scale rebuilding and remodelling, if approved by residents as part of a masterplan.

Work on the Lakes Estate and Fullers Slade will continue as planned, with the current schemes already a significant way into the process, but in future the council will be looking for a lighter touch on physical changes, and more focus on working with residents to improve skills, find better jobs and estate improvements.

Cllr Nigel Long, Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration said:

***“Regeneration in the old Your:MK model will end. We will be consulting on a new way forward that will give residents certainty that wholesale demolition will not happen, and so hopefully we can change the focus to skills, jobs and estate renewal. Investment will be the proposed priority now.”***

He continued:

***“Over the past two years, as we have moved forward with plans for the Lakes Estate and Fullers Slade, it has become fairly obvious that the current process is too slow and that the word “regeneration” has become mired in negativity around demolition no matter what the council says. It is very clear that after the current work on the Lakes Estate and on Fullers Slade, we need to change things. The people on those two estates have done amazing work, and we will continue with those plans as we don’t want to lose what they have done.”***

***“However we need to draw a line under one era, and start a new one that is free from the fear of wholesale demolition. We will be bringing forward our proposals for consultation soon, both with our communities and within the council. We are clear that we want to move forward with regeneration, but move to a focus on jobs, skills and better life chances. Yes, we will improve estates, yes we will build new houses and yes, we will be spending £165m on improving our housing stock But the clear and overwhelming message from residents is that if we want to change the conversation to other things we need to be clear to people that M wholesale demolition is not an option and regeneration is about more than bricks and mortar. We will be investing in people and your estates, not destroying them.”***

He concluded:

***“Regeneration should be about building stronger communities. If we are serious about regeneration we need to stop the focus on demolition of specific estates and start talking about a renewal of MK, better jobs and improved life chances, and I look forward to listening to people’s views before we make any decisions.”***

***Contact:*** Cllr Nigel Long 07799035756.