

Wards Affected:

All Wards

ITEM 5**DELEGATED DECISION****20 FEBRUARY 2018****A DRAFT FRAMEWORK FOR PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS TO HAVE AN INCREASED ROLE IN SERVICE DELIVERY**

Responsible Cabinet Member: Councillor Gifford, Cabinet Member for Place

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Executive Summary:

Local Government has changed significantly over the last few years. The Localism Act 2011 and the Open Public Services White Paper supported a national drive to shift power away from central government to local government, communities and individuals. Reduced central government funding and increased demands for services mean that principal authorities (like Milton Keynes) are now (more than ever) needing to work alongside their local council partners (Parish and Town Councils) in a collaborative, different and creative way to ensure that our residents continue to receive services that are important to them.

Milton Keynes is fully parished in both rural and urban areas. There is an established tradition of working together on a range of matters. A Milton Keynes Association of Local Councils' (MKALC) conference, supported by Milton Keynes Council (MKC), was organised in March 2017 to look at how this tradition could stimulate new ways of working. One result of this is the development of a joint framework to provide information and opportunities for greater involvement of Parish and Town Councils as they see fit and as appropriate for their communities.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 That the framework be jointly developed, owned and valued by both Milton Keynes Council and the Parish and Town Councils.
- 1.2 That development should be ongoing so the framework can be a living document, able to capture information and opportunities as circumstances and aspirations change
- 1.3 That progress to date be noted and the approach be continued.

2. Issues

- 2.1 Milton Keynes has 48 Parish and Town Councils) and is fully parished in both rural and urban areas. This is fairly unique for a unitary authority. Milton Keynes Parish and Town Councils range in size, with the largest having

responsibility for some 10,250 properties / households and the smallest having responsibility for less than 15 properties/households. Parish and Town Councils raise different precepts to their residents, with the largest precept for a local council in 2017/18 being around £870,000 and the smallest precept being around £500 (4 do not precept at all). Each of the 48 Parish and Town Councils make a significant and important contribution to enhancing the experience and environment of our residents.

- 2.2 Parish and Town Councils are uniquely placed – they are the closest level of local government to our communities. The reality of the financial challenges within Milton Keynes over the coming years, means that many community based services will only be able to continue if P&TC's are encouraged and supported to play a more active role in their local design and delivery.
- 2.3 The Draft Framework sets out how Parish and Town Councils can engage at a **level that suits them**, from service monitoring and shaping / influencing existing contracts through to enhancing / topping up services or taking over services.
- 2.4 The Draft Framework aims to develop a 'holistic' long term place based approach (as opposed to a short term single service based approach), which recognises Milton Keynes eclectic mix of parish communities and their needs.

The Framework objectives are to:

- maintain community access to services that might otherwise be at risk
 - increase satisfaction with services;
 - provide greater local influence over services and where possible maintain and/or enhance standards
 - maintain community access to services that might otherwise be at risk
 - increase satisfaction with services;
 - provide greater local influence over services;
 - where possible maintain and/or enhance standards;
 - enhance the role of local councils in their communities;
 - generate greater community pride in local areas;
 - promote engagement of local communities in local government; and
 - achieve value for money
- 2.5 The development of the Draft Framework is ongoing, and seen as a 'living document' which must be regularly reviewed and updated to reflect any government guidance, changes in legislation, and 'local' changes. It is anticipated that in the short term, there will be a quarterly review.
 - 2.6 The Draft Framework has been developed with the Parish Advisory Group (PAG), a further review group consisting of clerks and councillors, and has then been circulated to, and invited comment from, all 48 P&TC's. MKALC has also worked with its members and significantly contributed to the development of the Draft Framework.
 - 2.7 The Draft Framework is contained in the Annex.

3. **Options**

- 3.1 There are 3 options for consideration.

- (a) Do nothing – this is not a recommended option. As MKC’s budgets reduce, and services are reduced, or stopped, the Council needs to find ways of working collaboratively with Parish and Town Councils, and supporting them to continue to deliver services as they see fit, that meets the needs of their communities.
- (b) Continue with current arrangements - whilst this could be an option to consider, continuing to receive ad hoc approaches by Parish and Town Councils to become more involved (which have to date been from larger P&TC’s with significant capacity), without an overarching strategic, supported and communicated approach to become more involved in delivering local services, potentially leaves smaller Parish and Town Councils vulnerable, unable to establish where and how to obtain support if they want to become more involved or at the point they need to become more involved.
- (c) Adopt the principles and approach detailed in the Draft Framework and allow it to evolve as a living document, as the Council continues to work collaboratively with Parish and Town Councils - this is the recommended option

4. Implications

Policy

- 4.1 The Draft Framework approach and objectives are firmly embodied within the current version of the Council Plan (2016-2020). ‘...We want to engage our communities...maximise social value; promote community based solutions and innovate new ways to deliver services people value...’ ‘....Supporting parishes, the voluntary sector and communities to get things done.....’
- 4.2 The Draft Framework further provides an approach to enable medium term changes to be developed in accordance with the co-operative Council principles.

Resources and Risk

- 4.3 MKC is facing the most difficult budget period it has ever had to deal with. Government cuts and a rise in demand for some of our services means it faces difficult times and some tough choices. **The council spends about two thirds of its overall budget on adult and children’s care, and costs have grown by £18m.** So far it has been managing this through:
 - reducing costs
 - employing fewer people
 - putting more services online
 - sharing some of its services with other Councils.
- 4.4 While it is clear the Council cannot continue running a wide range of services as it has done in the past, changes need to be made by working with key partners such as Parish and Town Councils, to redesign service delivery and find alternative solutions.

As published in MKCs draft budget in December 2017 - [here](#) , the Council must address a financial gap of £22.7m from 2018/19 to 2021/22. The 22.7m is split as follows:-

2018/19	£0.0m
2019/20	£7.1m
2020/21	£12.1m
2021/22	£3.5m

- 4.5 By taking a delegated decision to agree to the general principles and approach contained in the Draft Framework and agreeing to continue the joint development of it, there is an opportunity for all P&TC's to take an increased role in service delivery and shaping the future, and do so under a strategic umbrella that provides transparency and equality across P&TC's, as the Council reduces or ceases to provide services that residents have previously enjoyed.

N	Capital	Y	Revenue	N	Accommodation
N	IT	Y	Medium Term Plan	N	Asset Management

Carbon and Energy Management

- 4.6 There are no carbon and energy management implications in this proposal..

Legal

- 4.7 The Draft Framework has been developed making reference to the principles that were established in the Localism Act 2011.
- 4.8 Representatives from the Councils Legal Team have been part of the Internal Project Board that has, amongst other things, overseen the development of the Draft Framework. There are some historic / existing 'devolution arrangements' with 6 Parish and Town Councils to deliver their own landscaping services, that commenced in 2014, and the Legal Team have overseen the contract development of the renewal of these agreements.
- 4.9 Legal Service support, as appropriate, will be sought at the point of any arrangements with P&TC's that are developed. General advice on TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings – Protection of Employment) implications has already been sought and distributed to P&TC's, in anticipation of alternative working arrangements at points in the future.

Other Implications

- 4.10 Milton Keynes' Parish and Town Councils vary significantly in their
- working ways and leadership
 - culture
 - ideas
 - behaviours
 - financial ability
 - appetite and ambition
 - capacity and staffing

- capability and technical knowledge

4.11 Such variables present their own challenges for each Parish and Town Councils in terms of responding to the opportunities that the Draft Framework presents.

4.12 In the absence of an approach as set down in the Draft Framework, there is a likelihood that smaller parishes without capacity will get 'left behind', and will not be able to respond to future challenges in a sustainable way at a point in the future.

4.13 Equality issues have been considered and there are no impacts.

N	Equalities/Diversity	Y	Sustainability	N	Human Rights
N	E-Government	Y	Stakeholders	N	Crime and Disorder

Background Papers:

Devo + - A report by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC)

Modelling devolution – working together to deliver local services – A joint report by the Local Government Association (LGA) and NALC

Devolution & Localism – are we going forwards or backwards – A discussion paper for the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) and NALC by Lilian Burns

Various examples of good practice – other principal authorities

Annex:

Working Locally - Parish and Town Councils Draft Framework