

LOCALITIES - WORKING OPTIONS

Accountable Officers: Laura McGillivray (Head of Policy and Communications)

John Moffoot (Head of Corporate Administration)

Author: Martin Small (Environmental Projects Policy and Sponsorship Manager) - MK252257

1. Purpose

1.1 To report the outcome to date of consultation with Parish, Town and Neighbourhood Councils on options for locality working arrangements in Milton Keynes.

2. Summary

2.1 The range of arrangements for locality working has been the subject of consultation with a deadline for replies by 31 March 2000. The consultation was based on proposals and principles determined by the Democratic Structures Working Group.

2.2 Possible models for three pilot working arrangements have been prepared and tested against the range of parish circumstances throughout the Borough.

2.3 The financial implications and arrangements will be addressed once the pilot models are established on the basis of the responses received.

3. Recommendations

3.1 That the Committee notes the consultation responses, adopts the three models for locality working and approves the pilots proposed.

4. **Background**

- 4.1 The Working Group considered the devolution of responsibilities to Local Councils at its meeting on 8 February 2000. There was general support for the principle of devolution, also recognition that consultation is vital to securing workable options, and, finally, recognition that amongst other alternatives, if consultation supports it, pilot schemes in urban and rural areas might be undertaken.
- 4.2 All the Town, Neighbourhood and Parish Councils were consulted on this issue and the responses to date will be circulated to Members of the Committee as soon as possible, before the meeting. Any other responses will be reported verbally.
- 4.3 The three main models which could be piloted are

(a) Consultative Forum

This might be appropriate for rural areas where a number of parishes are grouped together within one Council ward. The Consultative Forum would include representatives from the parishes, the Ward Councillor and co-optees from the locality. Its function would be a sounding board for liaison and consultation on a wide range of council services and related issues. It would not have voting or budgetary powers.

In essence this pilot might be an adaptation of the current Rural Affairs Consultative Assembly and the eventual outcome might be a system of two or three consultative assemblies which would cover the rural parts of the Borough.

(b) Area Committee

This model might be appropriate for some of the older town areas within Milton Keynes. A combination of Councillors from the Town Council in question plus Borough Councillors would meet both as a liaison body for the area and, also, to determine particular service issues for the locality. For the latter the Parish Councillors would be co-optees but could not legally vote on issues of service provision and budgetary expenditure.

(c) Devolution to Parish Councillors

This model would propose a greater devolution of Milton Keynes Council service responsibility (and budgets) to existing Parish Councils to determine service provision levels in their areas. This model might be appropriate for urban parishes in Milton Keynes.

The existing parish partnership convention sets out the range of service and potential partnership, or agency, arrangements which are available and this model would anticipate an expansion of the current terms and within these schedules.

The Parish Partnership Convention would need to accommodate the implementation of the pilots and any long-term solution.

- 4.4 The proposed Parish areas for the initial pilots will be circulated before the Committee meeting.
- 4.5 The Parish Partnership Convention is the basis for consultation, service delivery and support for Parishes in Milton Keynes. The move to greater locality working would mean alterations to the Convention depending upon the results of the consultation and the pilots.
- 4.6 It is anticipated that the timetable for implementing the pilots subject to discussions and the final resolution of outstanding issues, could start in June this year. The outstanding issues might include the frequency of meetings, the arrangements for co-optees, budgetary devolution, determination of precise delegated responsibilities and arrangements for servicing the pilots – from an administrative and a technical support perspective.

5. **Issues and Choices**

- 5.1 The Council, through the Parish Partnership Convention, is committed to closer working with the parishes and the Neighbourhood Councils.
- 5.2 As part of the review of political management structures, consideration needs to be given to how decisions which have impact on local areas only are taken at officer or Member level.

6. **Implications**

6.1 Environmental

The proposal provides opportunities for local community representatives to enhance the environment of their areas.

6.2 Equalities

The proposal also provides opportunities for local equalities issues to be addressed.

6.3 Financial

The Council will need to divert funds which are currently used for the matters which are to be covered by the scheme so that appropriate financial provision is available.

6.4 Legal

The Council may arrange for the discharge of its functions by a Committee or Sub-Committee of Members or by an officer. Under the current Local Government Bill there will be the opportunity to delegate authority to individual executive Members. A formal decision-making process will be necessary to support the local scheme.

6.5 Staff and Accommodation

Some of the groups may require administrative support from the Council, and a process of monitoring and implementing decisions will be required.

7. **Conclusions**

7.1 The models described in paragraph 4.3 above represent the most likely formats at this stage for increased locality working. The final results of consultations will allow Committee to determine the working arrangements for the pilot schemes.

Background Papers: None