

LOCALITY WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

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1. Purpose

1.1 To report the outcome 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 involving different degrees of devolved responsibility from this Council to the Parishes has been the subject of consultation based on proposals and principles determined by the Democratic Structures Working Group. Seven consultation responses have been received.

2.2 Possible models for three pilot working arrangements have been prepared - a Consultative Forum, an Area Committee or further devolution to Parish Councils. These models would provide a means of locality working throughout the Borough to enhance the current Parish/Town and Neighbourhood Council arrangements.

2.3 The financial implications and arrangements of the models will be addressed once the pilots are approved.

3. Recommendations

3.1 That the Committee notes the consultation responses.

3.2 That negotiations be offered:

(a) over further devolution to:

(i) a rural Parish Council - Emberton, Lavendon, or Woburn Sands;
and

(ii) an urban Parish Council - Campbell Park or Bradwell Abbey.

(b) over further devolution, plus a consultative forum to Newport Pagnell Town Council and Broughton and Milton Keynes or Hanslope Parish Councils.

- 3.3 That how the current arrangements for the Parish and Neighbourhood Consultative Assembly could respond to the points raised, be reviewed.
- 3.4 That the issue of pilot Area Committees be reviewed.

4. **Background**

4.1 The Democratic Structures 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 have been summarised in **Annex A**. Any other responses will be reported at the meeting.

4.3 The three main models which are recommended as pilots 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 all the rural parts of the Borough.

(b) Area Committee

This model might be appropriate for some of the older town areas within Milton Keynes and urban parishes. A combination of Councillors from the Parish/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. (n.b. For decisions on services the Parish/Town Councillors would be co-optees and could not legally vote on issues of service provision and budgetary expenditure.

(c) Devolution to Parish Councils

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 also be appropriate for urban parishes in Milton Keynes.

4.4 These three models have been tested as options to enhance the current ward/parish/town/neighbourhood council patterns and would between them be effective throughout the Borough (**Annex B**).

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 The Parish Partnership Convention would need to be altered to accommodate the implementation of the pilots and any long-term solution.
- 4.7 There are a number of main themes within the consultation replies which will shape the pilot arrangements:
- (a) firstly, none of the responses favours an Area Committee;
 - (b) secondly, several of the local councils favour further devolution of responsibilities, subject to resources;
 - (c) thirdly, some support exists for a consultative forum, some proposing it in conjunction with further devolution of responsibilities to the local council; and
 - (d) fourthly, two consultations favoured consultative forums, but some noted the effectiveness of the current Consultative Assembly arrangements.
- 4.8 In the light of these responses (**Annex A**) the pilot arrangements recommended are:
- (a) To offer negotiations over further devolution to:
 - (i) a rural Parish Council - Emberton, Lavendon, or Woburn Sands; and
 - (ii) an urban Parish Council - Campbell Park or Bradwell Abbey
 - (b) To offer negotiations over further devolution plus a consultative forum to Newport Pagnell Town and Broughton and Milton Keynes or Hanslope Parish Councils.
 - (c) To review how the current arrangements terms of reference for the Parish and Neighbourhood Consultative Assembly could respond to the points raised.
 - (d) To reconsider the model for an Area Committee.
- 4.9 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, resources, 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 Committee 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 resources necessary to fully implement the pilots have still to be identified.

Within the pilots, increases in service specification and delivery would be resourced locally.

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 results of consultations allow the Sub-Committee to determine the working arrangements for the pilot schemes. The models described represent the formats most likely to enable greater devolved responsibility and local consideration of local issues and achieve greater locality working.

7.2 The pilots listed are proposed to test the arrangements. The outcome will allow later consideration of how to extend the arrangements.

Background Papers: None