

Taking Locality Working Forward – Development of Three Tier Forums

Lancashire County Council and Ribble Valley Borough Council will continue to work together to develop and deliver the concept of **Integrated Locality Working**, this will aim to:

- Develop shared priorities and sense of direction
- Agree retained, shared and delegated services
- Listen and respond to local communities
- Empower councillors to take an active role in their communities
- Ensure councillors make decisions on shared and delegated services and are able to influence decisions on retained services
- Stimulate active and engaged town and parish councils

The concept is underpinned by a set of agreed principles namely that:-

- Shared services can create opportunities for councils to maximise financial benefits.
- Local knowledge and expertise helps improve services and reduce costs.
- Economies of scale and better procurement should be explored.
- A "criteria for delegation" should be applied to devolved decision making and/or service delivery, covering :
 - Improved value for money or efficiencies.
 - Agreed councillor engagement
 - Agreed Parish and town council engagement.
 - Community engagement.
 - Capacity to deliver.
 - Achievable outcomes and timescales
 - In line with approved policies and budgetary frameworks.
 - Agreed governance arrangements, including clarity around accountability/responsibility/legal liabilities.
 - Effective performance management and monitoring agreements are in place.

The Next Stages

Work will continue to scope and agree the most efficient and effective form of integrated local service delivery and decision making, including budgets, roles and responsibilities, capacity, technical capability, risks and liabilities. Once agreed, ongoing governance and future development will be provided by "Three Tier Forums".

The concept of 'the forums' was discussed by the County Council's Cabinet at their meeting on 4 November 2010. It was agreed that 'the Forums' will initially be piloted in three districts (Wyre, Burnley and South Ribble) on the following basis.

- The Forums will be joint meetings of County/District/Parish Councillors

- The membership of each Forum will be all local County Councillors and an equal number of District Councillors appointed by the District Council, and one Parish/Town Council representative nominated from the Parish Councils within the District area.
- In respect of the service areas and joint working arrangements referred for consideration, the Forum will reach agreement by consensus, failing which the issue will be referred to the Leaders of the County Council and District Council to be resolved.
- Decisions taken by Forums will be reported annually to Joint Leaders Meetings.
- The Forums are not formal committees of County, District or Parish Councils, therefore Access to Information provisions do not apply.
- The Chair and Deputy Chair will be appointed by each Forum and will rotate annually between the County Council and District Council.
- The Forums will meet on a quarterly basis to review progress against agreed priorities and agree in-year adjustments where necessary.

Given that the services of the County Council's Environment Directorate are those which have a particularly strong interface with the District and Town and Parish councils, especially highways, 'public realm', waste, public transport, public protection (trading standards, etc) and rights of way, commissioned services in these areas will constitute the initial business of the pilots. This will involve resource allocation and prioritisation within the context of policies and statutory obligations.

Beyond the Pilots

The intention is to introduce the roll out as soon as practicable on a district by district basis, reflecting the pace of development of integrated joint working arrangements in each district. The remit of the Forums will also be broadened to provide political oversight of the full "locality offer" in each district. It is also expected that the districts will bring relevant service delivery issues to the Forums for consideration by members, to enable us to jointly agree priorities in the round.

The Forums would not be subject to the same constitutional framework that limited the remit of the Lancashire Local Committees. Their remit would vary according to the priorities for joint working agreed between the councils, and they would have flexibility as to when and where meetings took place, District Council membership etc. Appropriate governance arrangements may have to be agreed for each Forum as their remits develop.

Should any district not want to pursue any joint working activity with the County Council, the proposed model could operate as a County Council/Parish Council or County Council only group, ensuring that all County Councillors are able to participate in determining priorities for County Council service delivery in their area.

In preparation to establish the three tier forums, the Lancashire Association of Local Councils (LALC) has agreed to facilitate the process in allowing all town and parish councils within each district to contribute to the discussions and decision to agree their representative on the forum. The Ribble Valley Area Committee tabled this for the meeting of 18th January 2011.

Ribble Valley Borough Council, as yet, has not confirmed participation in the Forum and has also expressed initial concern that there would be only one parish representative for all the Ribble Valley. This issue has already been raised in other parts of the county, which included a request to consider increased numbers of town and parish representatives. This has been considered by the Leadership of the County Council and it is suggested, that the focus should be on the role of that representative rather than the number, size or position of councils. As such It is felt that an individual or position, with an ability to promote a generic advocacy role and provide two-way communications channels would probably be the most effective representative. The Borough Council continues to see the Parish and Town Councils Liaison Committee as the main body to discuss and agree issues with parishes.