

IMPLEMENTATION EXECUTIVE17 June 2008

**DELEGATION TO TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS –
PROGRESS REPORT**

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1. Objective

1.1. The overall objective of the project is to encourage the delegation of key local services to town and parish councils (T&PCs) according to local needs.

2. PID

2.2. The PID has been written.

3. Phases

3.3. Phase 1 (to end of 2008)

- Initial consultation with town and parish councils about aspirations – bilateral discussions, forums of T&PCs and Meet & Greet sessions
- Refining the menu of appropriate services – in conjunction with T&PCs and service departments in the existing County and District Councils
- Developing criteria (see below)
- Developing mechanisms for their delivery see below).

3.4. Phase 2 (from 2009)

- Implementing delegations during the first years of Wiltshire Council

4. Schedule of Services

4.1. Some functions that might be considered for delegation to town and parish councils are given below. This list is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive:

- Allotments (those owned currently by district councils as appropriate)
- Control of markets
- Issue of bus and rail passes and other transport voucher schemes (e.g. taxi vouchers)
- Litter collection and litter control measures
- Maintenance of open spaces, verges, footways and footpaths
- Noise and nuisance abatement
- Off-street car parking
- Public conveniences
- Recycling provisions
- Road safety measures
- Some aspects of leisure and tourism provision (e.g. bowling greens, playing fields, issue of leisure permits)
- Street cleaning
- Street lighting (other than principal routes) and furniture
- Street naming
- Taxi, street trading and public entertainment licensing

5. The Case for Delegation

5.1. Factors that support the case for delegation include:

- Existing Town/Parish Plans
- Opportunities for more localised employment
- More precise monitoring of quality
- Opportunities to work in partnership with other parishes or local organisations

6. Criteria

6.1. Outline, draft criteria could be

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| • Meeting needs | Can the council show that the proposed standards and method of service delivery meet local needs? |
| • Value for money | Does the delegation demonstrate value for money compared to the existing situation vis-à-vis economies of scale? Perhaps the town/parish council can deliver a service cheaper? |
| • Adequate financial arrangements | Have realistic funding profiles and safeguards against double taxation been put in place? |
| • Equity | Will the delegation of a service disproportionately skew the balance of services in a Community Area? |
| • Capacity and capability | Does the council have, or plan to have, adequate staff capacity, knowledge and skills to deliver, or manage the service |
| • Attitude to liability | To what degree is the council prepared to take on liability, e.g. recruitment and employment of staff, insurance, funding of legal challenges |

7. Methodologies

7.1. Typical models for delegation are:

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| • Delegate full service with its associated asset | Transfer both freehold (with or without covenants) and management |
| • Delegate the service but without its associated asset | WC retains freehold but transfers the management of whole or part |
| • Transfer service/asset to third party | e.g. to a Development Trust |
| • Transfer operational tasking of service | WC retains ownership and liability but gives 'receiving' council power to direct service operation (as in the Parish Steward scheme) |
| • Augmented service | 'Receiving' council receives (and funds) an uplift on the current service; at marginal cost; using current labour and equipment; to receiving council's specification |
| • Delegate to cluster of parishes | Cluster takes on service as in all models above; one local councils (typically the Town Council in a Community Area) acts |

as head agent and manages the service on behalf of the others

8. Work to date

8.1. All 256 T&PCs have been invited to consider delegations in principle. No detail has yet been worked up. They have been asked send a return by of:

- those services that they would definitely like to take on
- those that they are not sure about
- those that they definitely do not want to take on

8.2. Although a deadline for this returns was given as 1 July, we have taken a highly relaxed approach and some parish councils will not send their return until August.

8.3. These returns will then be analysed with a view to holding detailed discussions with service delivery officers and receiving T&PCs in due course, if feasible

8.4. A database of all T&PCs has been set up, populated with information about their aspirations for delegated services. This will also be particularly useful for Area Development Managers

8.5. Discussions have been held with the Frontline Services workstream owner, manager and project managers (less Social Care, Education, Child protection and Passenger Transport),

8.6. The project manager has held face-to-face meetings (to clarify the project) with all 18 town councils and over 30 parish councils, with a further 10 invitations outstanding.

8.7. There is a strong link with the Area Board development project and a programme of mutual working will be established.

9. Initial findings

9.1. Initial findings from submitted returns and face-to-face meetings show:

- The majority of towns are expressing a strong appetite for transfer of ownership of open spaces, play areas, sports facilities (not leisure centres) and allotments (where appropriate) – all with delegated maintenance and cleaning services
- Some towns wish to take on public toilets and car parks – again with associated delegated services
- The majority of parishes do not wish to take on any assets or services
- Some parishes have expressed an interest in working in clusters either within the framework of Community Areas or on an ad-hoc basis
- Many parishes and some towns are enthusiastic about extending the Parish Steward model

10. Future work

10.1. Engagement

- Continue to engage with T&PCs, but increasingly in conjunction with Area Development managers

10.2. Service Development

- Analysis of the costs and operations of delegable services

10.3. Workshop

- A workshop is planned for mid-July (actual date tbc) to investigate the feasibility, implications, criteria, methodologies and processes involved in possible delegations to town and parish councils
- The objective is to establish indicative protocols and draft templates that will inform workstream managers, service and functional departments in the Unitary Authority in the development of delegations to town and parish councils
- Participants will be project staff, County and District service officers and functional officers (finance, procurement, etc) and staff of Corsham Town Council who have shown strong support for the principle of Unitary council and wish to engage at this operational level at the earliest opportunity. Services to be exercised will be the delegation/transfer of: grass cutting, off-street car parking, and a public convenience.
- This will be a notional exercise – no true negotiations or delegations will be realized