

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**Decision Report**

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Decision Maker: | Cabinet |
| Date: | 26 July 2010 |
| Title: | Hampshire Local Councils Partnership Framework |
| Reference: | 1794 |
| Report From: | Chief Executive |

Contact name: Paddy Hillary

Tel: 01962 847391

Email: paddy.hillary@hants.gov.uk

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report proposes that a new Partnership Framework with the Hampshire Association of Local Councils be adopted by the County Council which recognises common objectives and sets principles for working in partnership.
- 1.2. The Hampshire Association of Local Councils (HALC) represents local councils in the county. It is a membership organisation to which the majority of parish councils, parish meetings and town councils subscribe. Hampshire benefits from having over 260 local councils which have strong local community links, particularly in rural areas. The County Council recognises and values the important role that local councils play in providing valuable links and services to local Hampshire communities.
- 1.3. As Executive Member for Policy and Resources, the Leader gives an annual grant to HALC. In 2009-10 HALC received a grant of £83,770 (plus £8855 accommodation costs). In order to achieve the best value from this funding and to improve the value of partnership working with local councils and HALC the Leader asked Cllr Kirk and Cllr Kemp-Gee to review the formal Partnership Charter from 2005.
- 1.4. The Policy Unit has been supporting this ambition by redeveloping a Partnership Framework and developing a HALC Grant Agreement for the grant to HALC.
- 1.5. A survey of local councils as approved by the Leader was conducted between October-December 2009 reviewing the existing relationship between the County Council and local councils and asking for ideas for the future.
- 1.6. The Partnership Framework clarifies what the County Council expects from HALC, it is also likely to commit the County Council to undertake some

actions which complement what the Council is doing already. Any actions will involve Cllr Kirk and Cllr Kemp-Gee through the established Steering Group (also involving Policy Unit officers, Members of the HALC Executive Board and the HALC Chief Executive).

- 1.7. The HALC Grant Agreement will be agreed with the Leader as Executive Member for Policy and Resources.

1) The Draft Partnership Framework

- 1.1. The 2005 Parish Charter confirmed the County Council's support for parish and town councils as the most local level of democratic expression of community interest. The new draft Partnership Framework at *Appendix C* updates this support by reflecting the growing use of modern communications and consultation methods, the development of new ways of joint working and changes to the national financial context.
- 1.2. The Framework is organised around six themes: trust and mutual respect, communication, consultation, advice and support, collaboration on service shaping and delivery and better value. A number of Departments and a number of County and local council Members have informed the development of the Framework, they have been consulted on its content and they are in broad agreement with it.
- 1.3. The Framework recognises that various initiatives and examples of best practice exist and aims to build upon and share them wherever possible. It is not the intention to duplicate anything which already exists, nor create unnecessary layers of bureaucracy. Neither does the Framework create any new groups or meetings and instead seeks to use existing structures and networks where available.
- 1.4. The Framework brings together in one place the activity between the County Council, HALC and local councils. It recognises the value of local councils, their integral role in local democracy and acts as a mechanism to ensure the continual improvement of this mutually beneficial relationship.
- 1.5. The processes are iterative and it is likely that the Framework and subsequent actions will be finessed over time. The appended action plan is an initial illustration of the actions which could be taken forward following the formal decision-making processes for both the County Council and HALC. The majority of these actions are already in train within Departments and the Framework helps to structure this activity. The action plan, when finalised, will identify all stakeholders for each workstream, what outcome is to be achieved and identify measures of success.
- 1.6. The Framework acknowledges that there is no additional money for implementation. However, the aspiration is that waste can be avoided by applying a more strategic and co-ordinated approach.

2) Delegated services and possible further work

- 2.1. The County Council already delegates a number of functions to local councils. For example, the County Council is currently operating two lengthsman pilots with local councils in the Winchester district, trialling a dedicated resource for parishes to undertake minor highway repair work. The type of work carried out by the lengthsman in these pilots typically includes; minor drainage work, bollard and sign cleaning, cutting back vegetation encroachment, siding out of footways, strimming, and clearing litter. The pilots will end in July 2010. Please see the decision report to the Executive Member for Environment in April 2009 for more information:
<http://www.hants.gov.uk/decisions/decisions-docs/090430-execmb-R0423125232.html>
- 2.2. In the 2009 survey, local councils were asked if there were any areas where they would like the County Council to consider delegating activities or responsibilities to them *if* the right safeguards and financial arrangements could be put in place. No commitments were made. The Council also recognised that arrangements vary considerably across the county with some councils already undertaking delegated functions whereas some do not want to or would not be able to take on any additional functions
- 2.3. The survey found that the majority of local councils do not want to implement functions on our behalf but they would like to have a stronger advisory role on these functions. Of particular interest to a minority of respondents was the delegation of minor highways functions (repair, maintenance).
- 2.4. The Steering Group looked at the survey findings and were interested in carrying out focus group work to explore the practicalities and benefits of these possible delegated tasks. This focus group work with local councils would be to get a greater understanding of the capacity, willingness, cost-benefit and geographical clustering of councils who expressed an interest. The proposal for focus group work has however been put back until later in the year as the Partnership Framework was seen as a higher priority.

3) Recommendation

- 3.1. That the Hampshire Local Councils Partnership Framework at Appendix C be adopted.

4) Conclusion

- 4.1. This Partnership Framework seeks to recognise the value of the relationship between the County Council and parish and town councils and to improve joint working. Parish and town councils are a valuable link to local communities and can provide a mechanism for improving local delivery. The financial context means that finding better ways of working together and collaborating with partners will become increasingly important. At no additional cost, this Framework puts in place a clear statement of how the two tiers will work together.

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Corporate Strategy**

| | |
|--|-----|
| Hampshire safer and more secure for all: | Yes |
| Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate): | |
| Maximising well-being: | Yes |
| Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate): | |
| Enhancing our quality of place: | Yes |
| Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate): | |

Other Significant Links

| | | |
|--|------------------|-----------------|
| Links to previous Member decisions: | | |
| <u>Title</u> | <u>Reference</u> | <u>Date</u> |
| Financial Assistance to Voluntary and Community Organisations | 1109 | 21 January 2010 |
| Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives | | |
| <u>Title</u> | <u>Date</u> | |
| None | | |

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

| | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| <u>Document</u> | <u>Location</u> |
| None | |

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equalities Impact Assessment:

1.1. None assessed

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

2.1. None assessed

3. Climate Change:

a) How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?

None assessed

b) How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?

None assessed

DRAFT Version 4: June 2010

Hampshire Local Councils Partnership Framework

Summary

The aim of this Partnership Framework is to improve joint working between Hampshire County Council and Hampshire local councils so that services are more efficient and responsive to the needs of local communities, providing best value and quality.

The key principles of the Partnership Framework are:

1. Trust and mutual respect

Building relationships that are professional, that work and achieve agreed outcomes.

2. Communication

Effective communications that foster good relationships.

3. Consultation

Meaningful, clear and timely consultation as a way to deliver relevant, high-quality services.

4. Advice and Support

Building capacity and expertise to make the most of local ambition, including support for the developing Quality Parish Councils in the county.

5. Collaboration on service shaping and delivery

Utilising knowledge and willingness to create continuously improving, customer-centred public services.

6. Better value

Developing clear processes and robust criteria to review whether services can be delivered as close to local communities as possible, while retaining or improving their quality and value for money at the same time.

Introduction and objectives

Hampshire is home to approximately 1.25 million people, living in towns, cities and many villages, all with their own traditional features and characteristics. Hampshire is a prosperous county with safe and strong communities, where people enjoy good opportunities and health, an outstanding environment, well developed infrastructure and excellent services.

The **Hampshire Sustainable Community Strategy 2008 – 2018** sets out both the vision for the county and the direction people in the county want for Hampshire now and in the future.¹

¹ Hampshire Sustainable Communities Strategy 2008 – 2018 available at: http://www3.hants.gov.uk/73496_sustain_communities_2.pdf

The vision is that Hampshire continues to prosper, providing greater opportunity for all without risking the environment.

Hampshire has set eleven long-term ambitions. These are:

1. Hampshire is a globally competitive environment for business growth and investment, where everyone has the opportunity to develop their skills and play a full part in the county's success
2. Hampshire provides excellent opportunities for children and young people
3. Infrastructure and services are developed to support economic and housing growth whilst protecting the environment and quality of life
4. Social and affordable housing needs are met, including provision to support rural communities
5. Hampshire's communities are cohesive and inclusive, and vulnerable people are safeguarded
6. Hampshire and its partners work to reduce inequalities in outcome for residents according to individual need and through a focus on specific areas of multiple disadvantage
7. Hampshire's communities feel safe and can expect not to suffer violence or anti-social behaviour
8. Hampshire's residents can make choices to improve their health and wellbeing
9. Hampshire's environment and cultural heritage are enjoyed and celebrated
10. Hampshire is acclaimed for conserving and using natural resources more efficiently, and for reducing and adapting to the effects of climate change
11. Hampshire's residents receive excellent public services and value for money

These ambitions cannot be delivered by a single agency but require all our partner agencies and other partnerships across Hampshire to co-ordinate their plans.

About this Partnership Framework

This Partnership Framework helps local councils to retain their distinctiveness while providing a framework that ensures opportunities for all communities to work towards delivering their priorities. The Framework aims to support sustainable communities and achieve continuous improvement to public services in Hampshire.

The Partnership Framework recognises the value of close, positive collaborative working between the County Council, the Hampshire Association of Local Councils and local councils themselves. Close collaboration will benefit strategic planning, sustainable service provision and will maximise the deep-rooted knowledge and community links in local councils. This style of working is closely aligned to the delivery of Hampshire County Council's three corporate priorities: *Hampshire safer and more secure for all, maximising well-being and enhancing our quality of place.*

The Partnership Framework is the start of a process of closer working. Some of the issues in the Partnership Framework will need further discussion and development and so it is a 'living' document which is flexible and open to revision. Hampshire County Council commits to refreshing the Partnership Framework as appropriate in consultation with the Hampshire Association of Local Councils.

The Partnership Framework includes an action plan at *Appendix 1* which sets out the main areas for further work.

Partnership Framework

The six principles of the Partnership Framework are outlined below and are described through roles and responsibilities of Hampshire County Council and Hampshire local councils.

1. Trust and mutual respect

Citizens and customers expect local government to work together for the benefit of local communities. There is a desire to foster a strong and professional working relationship between Hampshire County Council and Hampshire local councils. Better knowledge and understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities, together with a willingness to work together, will help to build trust and mutual respect.

2. Communication

Citizens and customers benefit from easily accessible local information on services available to them. Effective communication is essential in fostering a good relationship between local government partners and other agencies so they can provide local information. The aim of this section of the Partnership Framework is continually to improve communication.

Role of Hampshire County Council

- ✓ Explore opportunities for differentiating local council communication when it comes into the County Council in order to highlight it for special attention and processing
- ✓ Share documents in a timely manner (electronically whenever possible)
- ✓ Develop internal protocols regarding information provision, responses and setting timescales
- ✓ To facilitate communications between county Members and local councils in their electoral divisions
- ✓ Recognise the Hampshire Association of Local Councils as the collective voice of Hampshire local councils (and continue engagement with individual parishes when appropriate)
- ✓ Support parishes in the provision of .gov email address and website hosting where required
- ✓ Ensure that Hampshire Action Teams (HATs) take account of the diversity of local councils in information and consultation provision, and that they ensure the timely distribution of communication materials such as HAT Highway Bulletins, HAT leaflets and Parish Plans, when received, to ensure Members are up to date
- ✓ Encourage HATs to invite the Chairman of the Association of Parish and Town Councils in that area to each public meeting. In addition, some HATs may choose a more comprehensive approach

Role of Hampshire local councils

- ✓ Work with the County Council to provide local community information. The Clerk and the Chairman will be recognised as the interface for communications activity. The Hampshire Association of Local Councils will maintain a database to be used in all County Council communications with local councils

- ✓ Represent the views of all local communities at county level in formal partnerships such as the Hampshire Senate and to act as two-way conduits of local government information

3. Consultation

Citizens and customers will benefit from co-ordinated, partner consultation so they are not overburdened. Similarly, local councils need coordinated, considered consultations from the County Council which are focussed and relevant, are not over-burdensome and are differentiated from general communication. Effective and meaningful consultation is essential in facilitating a good relationship between Hampshire County Council and Hampshire local councils.

Role of Hampshire County Council

- ✓ Engage local councils at an early stage so they can help shape strategic partnership thinking (electronically wherever possible).
- ✓ Provide collaborative opportunities to discuss issues for information sharing and participation through a range of engagement methods
- ✓ Provide timely feedback on issues consulted on
- ✓ Ensure adequate timescales are allowed where possible (between 8 - 12 weeks) when the County Council is consulting with local councils. Wherever possible August/school summer holiday and December holiday periods will be avoided. Please note that this period may be determined by statutory consultation requirements over which the County Council has no control
- ✓ Explore possible parish/district/county liaison function, linked to broader community engagement

Role of Hampshire local councils

- ✓ Maintain ongoing active engagement with local communities, reflecting their diversity, and with local Voluntary and Community sector organisations
- ✓ Ensure the Hampshire Association of Local Councils is representative of all Hampshire Parish and Town Councils and Parish Meetings
- ✓ Where possible the Hampshire Association of Local Councils is to co-ordinate consultation activity, particularly on strategic matters such as the Hampshire Local Area Agreement

4. Advice and support

Citizens and customers benefit from well trained and skilled local government members and officers. Building resilience and expertise in local councils will help to make the most of local ambitions. The Hampshire Association of Local Councils and the County Council can assist local councils through training, expertise and sharing good practice. Hampshire County Council can also assist by exploring opportunities for a direct link to existing specialist officers employed by the County Council for local councils to access the information and advice they need.

Role of Hampshire County Council

- ✓ Explore opportunities for a direct link between local councils and officers employed by the County Council

- ✓ Assist in providing knowledge and training, including access to Council training programmes
- ✓ Support the continuous improvement of professional development and local councils generally, an example of which is Quality Parish Status

Role of Hampshire local councils

- ✓ Promote Quality Status to peer councils
- ✓ Engage with training on the power of well-being
- ✓ Advise and support the County Council on effective engagement with their community's local views and to reflect their diversity

5. Service delivery

Citizens and customers benefit from the use of local knowledge. Local councils have a wealth of local knowledge and expertise which should be utilised to create and inform customer-centred services. Local councils should play an active role in the creation, shaping and delivery of local services within existing resources with the long-term aim of empowering local councils to deliver more services closer to the customer.

Role of Hampshire County Council

- ✓ Provide support for local councils in the exploration of mechanisms for purchasing equipment and joint contracting of services
- ✓ Design in local variation into key contracts where possible and within existing resources
- ✓ Co-partner with the parishes in the monitoring of service and contract delivery and quality
- ✓ Support Parish Councils to engage with their local communities
- ✓ County Councillors should attend meetings in their divisions where possible
- ✓ Connect existing Customer Access Points to parish facilities where appropriate

Role of Hampshire local councils

- ✓ Deliver their statutory duties; the County Council will help them to do this
- ✓ Gaining the views of representative samples of local communities and prioritising aspirations
- ✓ Development of local project delivery
- ✓ Co-partner with the County Council in the monitoring of service and contract delivery and quality
- ✓ Participate where appropriate in steering and project groups
- ✓ Inform and consult the County Council if the power of well-being is to be used to 'top-up' the County Council's basic level of service
- ✓ To liaise with their County Councillor on issues affecting their local council

6. Better value (Pooled and Shared Services)

For some services there may be benefits in delivery being as close to local communities as practically possible. For some services there may be efficiencies in looking to share services across clusters of local councils or share with the County Council. Some local councils also have different capacities and desires to take on more direct management of some services than others. Citizens and customers may benefit from local councils who can choose the level of service they offer in consultation with the local community. For

these reasons the County Council and the Hampshire Association of Local Councils aspire to support close, collaborative working between each other and between clusters of local councils.

Role of Hampshire County Council

- ✓ The County Council will consider requests for greater and transparent delegation of priority setting of some services or functions if local councils request it. If there are no legal, technical or value for money objections the County Council will then work with that local council to develop a reasoned and sustainable business case based on a thorough cost-benefit analysis and an assessment of local council willingness and capacity to deliver
- ✓ Develop a menu of options for services where criteria can be applied to any consideration of pooled or shared services
- ✓ Develop mechanisms to support local councils who want to explore joint working and sharing of functions/tasks across groups of local councils
- ✓ Through the procurement process offer framework contracts which local councils can take advantage of if they so wish
- ✓ Establish a fair and transparent grant funding agreement for the Hampshire Association of Local Councils, as budgets allow
- ✓ Review the role of local councils in examining and commenting on planning issues
- ✓ The County Council is generally supportive of the creation of new local councils if the majority of residents determine that it is desired; it is for residents to determine how they wish to be governed

Role of Hampshire local councils

- ✓ Effective engagement with local communities and stakeholders to identify the potential benefits of delegation of functions
- ✓ Hampshire Association of Local Councils will support ambitious local councils to work together in collaborative groupings where appropriate

Signed:

.....
Councillor K. Thornber

Leader
Hampshire County Council

.....
Councillor A. J. Korbey

Chairman
Hampshire Association of Local
Councils

Appendix 1 to the Hampshire Local Councils Partnership Framework

Partnership Framework Action Plan

Introduction

This action plan will be developed and revised regularly to illustrate areas where further work is planned or specific proposals developed which achieve the principles in the Partnership Framework. Actions will depend on organisational capacity and the available resources. Initial thinking is described below:

1. Trust and mutual respect

- Maintain a regular programme of meetings to address blockages or problems
- Continue to develop close working relationships with County Council Members and the Hampshire Association of Local Councils
- To develop a performance monitoring programme of agreed actions. Targets will include those agreed through the Hampshire Association of Local Councils Grant Agreement, Hampshire Association of Local Council's key performance indicators and measures of overall satisfaction, and will not be overly burdensome

2. Communication

- Develop a protocol for communication and engagement between the Hampshire Association of Local Councils and the County Council
- The County Council is to explore email and electronic reporting mechanisms which differentiate local councils from other community correspondence, including the use of .gov email addresses
- Conduct regular surveys of local councils to gauge progress

3. Consultation

- The Hampshire Association of Local Councils and the County Council will monitor consultation processes

4. Advice and support

- Explore the feasibility of joint training provision where available
- Explore joint procurement, with energy provision of community buildings being an example

5. Collaboration on service delivery and support

- The Hampshire Association of Local Councils is to provide advice and guidance to help support local councils in engaging with their local communities

6. Better value

- The County Council will work with local councils who want to explore joint working and the sharing of functions/tasks across groups of local councils
- Develop a menu of options for services where criteria can be applied to any new ways of delivering better value services, including value for money and strong community outcomes