



Delegation to Town and Parish Councils

Dear Clerk,

I have been appointed as the manager of the Delegation to Town and Parish Councils project – part of the Towards One Council implementation programme. I thought it would be useful to introduce myself, to outline the project and to seek your ideas and aspirations for the delivery of services.

Part of the unitary council plan is the development of Community Boards (CB) in which town and parish councils will play a crucial part. In addition, however, we want to strengthen our direct relationship with each council, building on initiatives such as the Parish Steward scheme.

We will be offering councils the opportunity to work with us in providing local services, through delegation of responsibility and funding. A draft schedule of appropriate services has been drawn up based on the 1996 Wiltshire Charter for Local Councils and the 2003 guidelines for Quality Councils. The schedule is given below. It is in no way prescriptive or exhaustive – many opportunities will come to light as the implementation programme develops.

The overall objective of the project is to encourage the delegation of key local services to town and parish councils according to local needs. I would emphasise that there is no question of forcing councils to take on services against their will.

I see the project having the following main components:

Phase 1 (to end of 2008)

- Initial consultation with town and parish councils about aspirations – this has already started with individual discussions and Meet & Greet sessions throughout the county. Also, several future dates have been scheduled and I would hope to get around to speak with as many councils as possible in the coming months.
- Refining the menu of appropriate services – this is being done in conjunction with town and parish councils and service departments in the existing County and District Councils – and ascertaining factors relating to services and their delivery, not least cost.
- Developing criteria based on: meeting needs, value for money (balancing against economies of scale), equity, capacity, capability, attitude to liability and sustainability (see below)
- Developing mechanisms for their delivery – these are complex issues that will be established on a case-by-case basis (see below).

Phase 2 (from 2009)

- Implementing delegations during the first years of Wiltshire Council

I do not underestimate the great opportunities that exist for really effective local development and delivery of services and I very much look forward to working with you.

Draft schedule

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

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

Criteria

Some suggested criteria are given below. Again, this list is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive and will need to be developed as the schemes progress. These are not necessarily pass/fail criteria, and they do not apply only to the 'receiving' council, but they are aspects that need to be reflected as delegations are negotiated. Also, a great deal of financial and contractual detail will need to be worked up.

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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 | For example, 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 an 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 |
| • Sustainability | Can the council give assurances that the services will be sustained to the same degree as Wiltshire Council would wish |

There may well be other issues that support the case for delegation, for example:

- 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

Methodologies

Some example methodologies are shown below. Again, this list is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive. It will be important to investigate several schemes of delegation:

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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 | Wiltshire Council retains freehold but transfers management of whole or part |
| • Transfer service/asset to third party | e.g. to a Development Trust |
| • Transfer operational direction of service | Wiltshire Council 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 current service; at marginal cost; using current labour and equipment; to receiving council's specification |
| • Delegate to Community Board or cluster of parishes | Community Board or a cluster takes on service as above; liability to sit with Community Board /cluster |

Next Steps

If you would like to consider taking on some services in the future I would very much like to hear from you. It would be helpful if you could reply to me showing, **in note form only**:

- a. **those services that your council would definitely like to take on**
- b. **those that you are not sure about**
- c. **those that you definitely do not want to take on**

I fully recognise that many factors relating to services and their delivery need to be understood before decisions can be made, not least the current cost. However, these will take time to ascertain and all I need at this stage is an indication.

I should emphasise that your replies will not be binding on either party but they will be very useful indicators. We will then analyse the lists and get back to you to discuss a way forward on a case-by-case basis – having ascertained costs, etc. I should emphasise, of course, that subsequent negotiations could take quite a time.

Whereas there is no strict deadline and this is certainly not the only window of opportunity that you will have, I would be grateful if you could let me have your **replies by 1 July** (or earlier if possible) in the first instance to allow us to assess the scope of the project as a whole. After that I would see it as ongoing business as circumstances dictate.

In the meantime, please do call me if you would like to discuss the project in general or specific services in particular. And Wiltshire County Council's [website](#) has up-to-date One Council news.

Richard Munro

Project Manager
Delegation to Town and Parish Councils
Towards One Council
County Hall
Trowbridge
BA14 8JN

RichardMunro@wiltshire.gov.uk
Mobile: 07824 599665