

"Getting Closer to Communities"

A strategy for local area working in
Buckinghamshire

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Councils face a classic dilemma. On the one hand they are striving to improve the quality and efficiency of public services, cutting costs, targeting and prioritising delivery and looking for economies of scale. On the other they are looking to become more customer-focused, more responsive to the needs of local communities and to better tailor services to meet individual or local needs. Often these objectives can be conflicting. One requires the centralisation, simplification and streamlining of services delivery whilst the other requires individualisation, delegation of decision-making and 'localisation', to be effective 'on the ground'.
- 1.2 There apparent contradictions are reflected in Government guidance to local authorities that must demonstrate progress in both when they are subject to the various inspections that measure their performance as community leaders and as service providers.
- 1.3 The County Council is committed to achieving both. Over the next 4 years it will establish with its strategic partners a better understanding of the needs of residents and tailor services to meet their local needs whilst, at the same time, maintaining a strategic approach to the delivery of public services that maximises the value of provision countywide.
- 1.3 To achieve this customer and local focus, the County Council has as part of its change programme two key initiatives that:-
- Focus on the needs of its customers as individuals – this first programme is called "Customer First", and;
 - Promote local area planning and working in partnership with community groups, key stakeholders, and other public organisations – this second programme is called "Getting Closer to Communities", the subject of this strategy document.
- 1.4 Appendix 1 summarises these two initiatives. Whilst there are obvious synergies between them, they form two distinct strands of the Council's overall approach to continuously improving service delivery and accountability to the residents of Buckinghamshire.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council has been developing its approach to local working for several years now. The following briefly summarises progress to date.

Local Committees

- 2.2 The County Council established four Local Committees in May 2000 based on District Council boundaries. They comprise of representatives from County, District and Parish Councils from within each District, although other local community organisations are also invited to attend.

- 2.3 Although all the Local Committees meet 4 times a year and are administered by the County Council, detailed arrangements vary dependent on their size, composition and the will of the Committee itself. The Aylesbury Vale Committee in particular tends to vary in its approach due to the large number of parish councils eligible to attend. Voting structures also vary.
- 2.4 Recent consultation on possible changes indicated a high degree of satisfaction amongst the committees with their present arrangements, with a reluctance to move towards standardisation, or the creation of "executive committee" structures with more formalised voting powers. Although there are formal voting arrangements, votes are rare with most decisions being arrived at through consensus.
- 2.5 More recently the County Council and Aylesbury Vale District Council agreed to pilot Aylesbury Vale Local Committee as a joint committee for a trial period of a year. The potential of the joint committee to achieve genuine engagement and active involvement of (as opposed to just consultation with) local communities across a range of environment and community-based services is significant enhanced under this joint arrangement.
- 2.6 The Local Committees have until recently focussed on transportation issues, partly due to the origin of the committees being in the old local road safety panels and partly because of the overwhelming interest of the public in roads, pavements and transport, relative to other areas of council activity. This is consistent with historic MORI poll results, as well as the general volume of overall County Council customer contact and media enquiries.
- 2.7 More recently, however, Local Committees have started to discuss a much broader range of issues relevant to their local communities including, for example, waste collection and disposal, housing stock review, libraries review, police community support officers and sub-regional planning.
- 2.8 Local Committees also have their own spending power. Currently they each have a capital transportation budget of £125,000 per committee. Whilst constitutionally the budget is delegated to the Portfolio holder and Head of Transportation, it is agreed that Local Committee decisions direct the allocation to schemes. The Area Managers deal with the bidding and allocation process as part of the Local Committee programme. No other County Council services currently use the Local Committees to influence local funding in this way.
- 2.9 More recently, these projects have been attracting increasing levels of matched funding or joint investment, for example:
- Chiltern District Council have recently agreed to contribute £30,000 of matched funding to bring forward further projects proposed by Parish Councils in the Chiltern area which tie in to delivering their Local Strategic Partnership objectives;
 - Parish Councils in Aylesbury Vale have also financed or contributed to a number of additional projects known as "community funded schemes" over the last few years (over 50 such projects have now been progressed at a rate of 10-15 per year –

equivalent about £100,000 per annum of matched funding in addition to county council service provision).

- Wycombe District Council have also joint funded a number of larger initiatives including the Cressex Express bus and the TRANQUIL quiet lanes project in the Wycombe AONB area (these two projects together have brought in over £500,000 of additional funding towards shared county/district transport objectives).

2.10 The committees are therefore increasingly encouraging a joint approach to project development, funding and service delivery, but still with an emphasis on transportation issues.

2.11 Overall, the existing local committees are almost universally viewed as successful. There are however duplications at a number of levels with District Council arrangements (e.g. local forums and parish "cluster" working). The potential, therefore is to promote further joint working at a County, District and Parish Council level, to harness joint funding opportunities, eliminate duplication of effort and deliver efficiency savings that can be reinvested into front line service delivery.

Local Area Working Officer Support Structures

2.12 Officer support structures for local area working with the local committees are most fully developed within the Transportation Service. Over the last few years the Area Managers have lost their direct line management of service delivery. This has meant they can focus more on supporting the development of local area working with local committees, Parish Councils, Districts and other partnerships to strengthen cross service working and co-ordinate local delivery. The role now focuses on the *whole Transportation Service* within each respective area, rather than, as previously, just those aspects of the service physically delivered from area offices.

2.13 The creation of "Local Area Co-ordinator" roles supporting the Area Managers and operating at a more "coal face" level has also been used to strengthen local community links and effectively provide a personalised "one stop shop" customer service for Parish Councils, local members and other local organisations. Equally, it has enabled an improvement in the flow of information out of the transportation service to the public at large.

The Relationship of Local Committees to Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs)

2.14 At a countywide level the Bucks Strategic Partnership generally operates at a high level feeding directly into corporate policy making at a cabinet level (e.g. through PSA development etc). However, there is much common ground between the work to develop District LSPs and Local Committee working. Both are trying to improve local engagement with local communities in developing solutions to local issues (for example, in the case of LSPs, through village appraisals and community audits and with local committees through the delegated budget programmes). Perhaps not surprisingly therefore, both are identifying similar issues as matters of local priority, with transport and environmental issues predominating in terms of those areas of emerging LSP priority that relate to County Council delivered services.

- 2.15 Local Committees would be the natural operational link for the County Council into District LSPs as shown in the diagram in Appendix 2. The extent to which the Committees may choose to prioritise projects coming out of the LSP process against those emerging from other sources would be a matter for them to decide. However, given the similar representation and similar nature of the priorities emerging, the degree of coalescence should be significant.

Quality Parish Development

- 2.16 In addition to developing its local committee work, the Council has also been encouraging Town and Parish Councils to consider joint working, or even service devolvement at an even lower level, principally through the development of "Quality Parishes", a result of a concept from the Rural White Paper.

- 2.17 Through demonstrating that Parish Councils meet certain minimum standards, Quality Parish status will enable them to take on a stronger role in their local communities. It is a voluntary scheme open to all Parish and Town Councils in England. Under it, with the agreement of their County or District Councils, Parishes may take on the delivery of some local services on their behalf, where this would give the local community the best deal. Examples of services that could possibly be considered for devolvement include:

- Local bus shelter maintenance
- Enhanced verge/grass cutting
- Enhanced environmental maintenance
- Community transport projects
- Litter picking
- Street lighting
- Speed Indicator Device (SIDs) operation
- Local signs maintenance
- Other local services?

- 2.18 Discussions are now well advanced with Buckingham Town and Chesham Town, who are both Quality Parishes. The Quality Parish using their own staff resource will deliver agreed services; the County Council will contribute an agreed amount to resource delivery. Some Parishes of course, already carry some of these activities out across the County.

- 2.19 The demand for Quality Parish status and the devolvement of further services may be expected to increase as Parish Clerks and staff progressively get trained up and able to take on formal quality parish responsibilities, and as LSP related "community appraisals and village audits" develop bringing with them an increased element of "self help" solution to local issues.

Local Communities

- 2.20 The Council has recently researched the concept of 'local community' areas across the county at a sub-district level that could be used as building blocks to plan and deliver services that are more relevant to the needs of local communities. The intention is that such a geographically

defined set of local community areas could be used by services across the Council both at a strategic and operational level for the development, prioritisation and delivery of services.

- 2.21 Through geographic mapping of locally delivered services, 24 proposed 'local community areas' have been identified countywide. Through consultation with county councillors and strategic partners (including district councils, the police, the health authority and parish and town councils), these have been refined and modified to potentially serve service delivery and community needs across as wide a range of locally delivered public services as possible. The current draft 'local community areas' are shown in Appendix 3.
- 2.22 In parallel, work has been on going to pilot a more joined up approach to both member and officer working. In Aylesbury Vale the County Council and District Council have been piloting joint "local cluster" working of Council, District and Parish Councillors in specific County Council divisions. Officers have also been experimenting 'speed dating' events have been held in three of the proposed local community areas (Buckingham, Chesham and Burnham), bringing together local front line service delivery staff from across the full range of services provided by the Council, to better understand each other's priorities and needs and start to develop a network of contacts. Both experiences have been positive.

3.0 THE VISION

- 3.1 The County Council's vision is one of strong strategic leadership for the county balanced with responsiveness to the needs of local communities. Communities will have genuine influence over the services delivered in their area within the context of a strategic framework set by the County Council, working in partnership with public, private and voluntary sector agencies. The needs and interests of their area will be represented in strategic, countywide decision-making.
- 3.2 Local Members will be recognised as community leaders, and they will be supported in their role of representing the County Council position to the local community, and the community needs to the County Council. Communities will be engaged in identifying the priorities for their area and developing solutions.
- 3.3 The locality focus will be at the heart of the County Council's policy and service objectives. Each community will have access to a core set of services, delivered within the local community area. Beyond that core, the community will have the opportunity to access additional or enhanced services according to their particular priorities and needs. Patterns of service delivery and access arrangements will be tailored to the needs of the community. Services will be delivered in an integrated way to ensure that they are working in a shared direction and have maximum impact.

4.0 THE STRATEGY

Aims

- 4.1 Building on its experiences so far the County Council has developed a medium term framework to guide its local area working and to get closer to its community. Within the context of the overall vision above, the strategy has 5 key aims as follows:

Aim 1 - To enhance the community leadership role of local members

Aim 2 - To improve community engagement

Aim 3 - To plan services to meet the needs of local communities

Aim 4 - To improve customer access to public services

Aim 5 - To join up public services locally

Objectives

- 4.2 To achieve these aims the County Council will deliver the following key objectives between now and 2008/09. By then we will have:

- 1 Developed a Local Forum of elected Members from County, District and Parish Councils with agreed decision making powers in each local community area
- 2 Piloted devolved decision making in a number of local community areas, and identified successful models to roll out to all areas
- 3 Provided a programme of learning and development opportunities to support Members in their community leadership role
- 4 Assigned a Local Head of Service to each local community area
- 5 Developed a Partnership Strategy to provide the framework and capacity to manage the County Council's participation in partnerships
- 6 Supported all Local Forums to develop a range of different ways to involve local people and to seek their views
- 7 Developed a community engagement plan to identify how we will help develop, coordinate and sustain local engagement in decision-making.
- 8 Defined a baseline of service provision for each of the local community areas, adjusted to reflect the needs of each individual community.
- 9 Developed and published a needs assessment for each of the local community areas
- 10 Undertaken an initial assessment of those budgets which are currently distributed on a geographical basis and analysed them against the local needs assessments
- 11 Developed a community service hub in each of the local community areas
- 12 Provided at least one extended school in each local community area
- 13 Developed networks of front line professionals in each of the community areas
- 14 Sought opportunities to co-locate staff and built multi-agency teams where possible

Supporting Principles

- 4.3 No 'one size fits all' approach. Buckinghamshire is made of diverse communities, from large urban communities to closely knit rural communities and villages, each with their own identities and aspirations.
- 4.4 Universal services will be accessible in every community; targeted services will be provided according to the needs of the particular community.
- 4.5 We will introduce new models in a way that they will be sustainable in the future.

Community Definitions

- 4.6 In order to develop local area working, we have considered carefully what is meant by community and concluded that local community areas need to be identified at a sub-District level. The aim has been to identify areas that are of a sufficient geographic size to allow effective service delivery and which will facilitate joined up services with key partners. 24 communities have therefore been identified through a combination of:
- Quantitative research – analysing population concentrations (broken down into groups of high and low mobility), existing access to services (libraries, schools, GP surgeries, police stations, transport links), and patterns of demand for services (library data); and
 - Qualitative research to incorporate a 'sense of place'
 - Adjustments to fit with District and Parish boundaries, and Thames Valley neighbourhood policing proposals.
- 4.7 The local community areas are all very different to each other – for example in terms of the size and characteristics of the population, the local geography etc – and there is no 'one size fits all' solution to local service delivery. Equally, there is diversity within each community area in terms of needs, characteristics and identity and community and 'sense of place' can be different in different contexts. This will affect the level of service provided and the pattern of delivery for each area. These communities form the building blocks for the strategy. The County Council will be asked to adopt the proposed boundaries as the community building blocks for this strategy

AIM 1 - TO ENHANCE THE COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP ROLE OF LOCAL MEMBERS

Effective Community Leadership helps to enhance the quality of life of individuals and communities, boosts the local economy, improves the environment and contributes to the wider regional and national goals. Sound governance, effective partnerships, community engagement and the ability and willingness to respond to local priorities are the components that enable councils to be successful community leaders.

As a community leader, the County Council will listen to and involve communities in its work, building vision and direction for the area, working effectively in partnership for the good of the community and will represent Buckinghamshire locally, regionally and nationally. The Community Leadership Strategy

sets out how the County Council will achieve its community leadership role through the deployment of its many and varied resources focused on eight key outcomes:

- County Council members, reflecting public priorities and public opinion, shape the policies of the County Council and influence the views of others, on major issues facing the County.
- County Council members reflect the public view on the nature and quality of public services by holding other public service providers to account.
- The interests of Buckinghamshire residents are promoted and defended at a European, regional and national level by the County Council acting with others to add value.
- The County Council being represented on a range of outside bodies assists decision-making. Members and officers can influence the policies and priorities of other bodies and can also explain County Council policies affecting local areas.
- Services to the public are improved by the County Council working in partnership with other bodies to provide joined up planning and service delivery.
- Decision-making is made more responsive to local needs through delegated decision-making that better reflects local community priorities.
- Members acting as champions of their local communities and local communities are better informed of the role and contribution of the County Council by Members acting as champions of the County Council within their local communities.
- All forms of media are used to promote the County's Community Leadership role and opportunities for feedback and comments from the public will be provided

Local Governance

Elected members are leaders for their communities. They know and understand the dynamics of their area and they are actively engaged with their local communities in a variety of formal and informal ways. This strategy seeks to develop structures at the community level that will strengthen the ability of local Members to influence service delivery in their area to respond to local needs, and also support them in raising local issues at the district and county levels.

Local Committees at district level already provide a successful forum for elected Members at County, District and Parish level to work together on a number of local service issues, primarily around transportation. The County Council has a Cabinet Member linked to each District – they are the Member representative for the District LSP and are able to contribute District issues to Cabinet decision-making. Below district level, “local cluster” working between County, District and Parish Councils is being piloted in Aylesbury Vale; these arrangements offer significant potential to enhance the community leadership role of elected Members. They also provide opportunities for Parish and Town Councils to play a stronger role where they wish to do so.

For each of the local communities, we propose to develop a Local Cluster or Forum which will bring together local elected Members in order to provide clearer local focus and direction for the delivery of public services in that area. The County Council would wish to involve elected Members from both District and Parish Councils in the development of the Local Forum. The participation of District and Parish Council Members will of course be a matter for them to decide, but the Forum would be weaker without their involvement.

The Local Forum will provide a vehicle for working together to set priorities, challenge the performance of service providers, solve local problems and take decisions where appropriate. The Local Forum may also wish to involve other members of the community in its meetings – for example voluntary, business, community groups etc – who can contribute different shades of local opinions and views. Elected Members may wish to consider pooling their respective community leadership or ward funds to address specific local issues as determined by the Forum.

The Local Forum will play an important role in representing the position of the local authorities to the locality. Equally, it will act as a sounding board for the Partner agencies in understanding local views. It will be able to raise issues upwards to Overview and Scrutiny Committees for review and investigation.

Each County Council Cabinet Member with a District responsibility will continue to provide a channel of communication between the Local Forum and Cabinet decision-making. [More radical options for the longer term could entail the delegation of executive decision-making to local committees or local cabinets?]

In a number of communities, we propose to pilot devolved decision-making. The service activities to be devolved will be agreed on an area-by-area basis, depending on the local issues and circumstances and the involvement of partner authorities. These are likely to include activities that have the most direct impact on the quality of life – such as community safety and transportation. Priority will be given to those areas with a Quality Parish or Town Council. [Is this a must – there are parishes well equipped to carry out developed services who are not quality parishes?] We will evaluate the pilots with a view to identifying successful models that can be extended to all local community areas across the county.

Objective 1 - We will develop a Local Cluster or Forum in each local community area which will bring together elected Members from County, District and Parish Councils with agreed decision making powers in order to provide clearer local focus and direction for the delivery of public services in that area.

Objective 2 - In a number of communities, we will pilot devolved decision-making and identify successful models to roll out to all areas. Priority for pilots will be given to those areas with a Quality Parish or Town Council.

Member Development

This strategy highlights the need to equip members with the skills and knowledge they need to be effective community leaders in a rapidly changing environment.

The County Council has established a Member Development Framework (January 2005). The aim of this framework is to provide a structure for development that will support members to grow and develop as more effective ambassadors and community leaders. The framework sets out the Council's commitment to learning and development and the member commitment to achieving top performance. It outlines the type of development that is envisaged and what other support mechanisms are available. It makes clear the expectations that members can have of the Council and the Council of its members.

A range of political skills for effective Councillors is identified in the framework. These skills include:

- Community leadership
- Regulating and monitoring
- Scrutiny and challenge
- Communication skills
- Working in partnership
- Political understanding

All members will be invited to explore their particular needs and the outcome will be used as a basis for the development of a relevant learning and development programme for members through the life of the next Council. The programme needs to reflect this strategy, and the role is sets out for local members.

We would wish to explore opportunities for joint Member training and development with District and Parish Councils.

Objective 3 - We will provide a programme of learning and development opportunities to support Members in their community leadership role.

Supporting Officer Structures

The County Council already has a Strategic Director for each district who plays a key role in ensuring that partners have a route into the Council and building a better mutual understanding and more effective relationships. The Strategic Director works as part of the "local leadership team" with the Cabinet Member, Local Committee Chairman and Area Manager. With the Cabinet Member the Strategic Director represents the County Council at the District LSP.

In developing local area working, we intend to extend this model to develop senior officer structures for each of the 24 local communities. A local 'Head of Service' will be assigned to each local community area, with responsibility for the coordination and integration of all County Council services in that area and for providing support to the Local Forum. Their role will be to ensure that local services deliver both the County Council's strategic objectives and the local priorities as determined by the Local Forum. Local area coordinators and service representatives will support the local Head of Service. The District Council Officers could also play an important role in working with the Local Forum and we would wish to explore that further.

The Strategic Director will coordinate feedback from the Local Head of Service in his/her District area and ensure that issues of strategic significance are raised with the Council's senior management team.

Objective 4 - A Local Head of Service will be assigned to each local community area, with responsibility for the coordination and integration of all County Council services in that area and for providing support to the Local Forum

Partnership Working

Partnership working is a key feature of the change agenda in the public sector. It has the potential to improve service quality and outcomes for local residents. It can also help to ensure best use of scarce resources. However, effective partnership working can be difficult. Organisational, cultural and political barriers need to be overcome and partnerships need to demonstrate that their achievements outweigh the costs of setting them up.

In response to both national and local drivers, the number of local partnerships is increasing at community, service and strategic levels and partnership working is having a growing influence on the County Council's service delivery. Effective partnership working will be critical to achieving some of the potential benefits of this strategy. We need to ensure that the County Council's participation in partnerships is an efficient and effective way of delivering the Council's priorities, and that the relationship with our own decision making arrangements is clarified.

Objective 5 - A Partnership strategy will be developed in order to ensure that the County Council has an appropriate corporate framework and capacity in place for effectively managing its participation in partnerships

AIM 2 - TO IMPROVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Greater participation by people in decisions that affect them locally, leads to services which better match the needs and preferences of communities. Beyond the formal governance structures, we want to encourage local people to participate in decision making and make a positive difference in their communities.

A range of County and District Council services, partner agencies and the voluntary and community sector are directly involved in community development activity which seeks to develop community networks, increase participation and enable local people to tackle local issues. Local community planning – such as grass roots activity in urban areas, parish appraisals etc – plays a key role in bringing together local people to identify their priorities and develop their own solutions.

Local Forums will need to link in to this community development and planning activity and use this resource in order to engage different parts of the community, including hard to reach groups. We would wish to explore with partners how we can work together to achieve this and develop a common understanding of issues, building on existing arrangements where possible.

Objective 6 – *We will encourage and support all Local Forums to develop a range of different ways to involve local people and to seek their views, drawing on the support of community development teams and the voluntary and community sector.*

Objective 7 - *The County Council will develop a community engagement plan to identify how we will help build, coordinate and sustain local engagement in decision-making.*

AIM 3 – TO PLAN SERVICES TO MEET THE NEEDS OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES

This strategy seeks to introduce a new local approach to service delivery across the full range of County Council services and those of key partners. The aim is to deliver a core set of services in each local community area, adjusted to reflect the particular needs of each area. This will include both universal and targeted services.

Local Services

A number of services are currently looking at how they can deliver a countywide service in a way that reflects the needs of different communities. The development of the local transport plan is currently being developed around a number of overarching countywide thematic strategies, delivered through a number of community based action plans. This will result in an approach which is tailored to community needs. The neighbourhood policing strategy being developed by Thames Valley Police is similarly seeking to put in place service delivery tailored to the needs of individual communities, within the Bucks Basic Command Unit structure.

This strategy will provide a structure to achieve that in a consistent way across the County Council and its partners. [Needs developing to reflect the full range of services and how they would be involved]

Objective 8 - *We will define a baseline of service provision for each of the local community areas, adjusted to reflect the needs of each individual community.*

Local Needs Assessment

The County Council and its partners hold a wide range of information and intelligence about local community areas, the characteristics of their populations, and the performance of services. This information will be brought together to support Local Forums and service providers in assessing the needs of the locality and shaping local services. The Information Management Strategy will provide the framework for this work by defining and agreeing information standards and promoting an information sharing culture.

Local area profiles are being developed for each of the local community areas to provide an assessment of the quality of life in the area, including information about the local population and the performance of services. Profiles of services users are also being developed. The County Council would wish to work with partners to extend the range of information available to inform these profiles and to use them to develop a shared view of local needs and priorities.

If Members and officers are to be able to represent the County Council in Local Forums and District LSPs, they need to be well informed about County Council priorities. Information needs to be easily accessible and fit for purpose. We will review with Members the arrangements for briefing them on County Council priorities and issues.

Objective 9 - *Local Area Profiles will be developed to provide a needs assessment for each of the local community areas for use by the Local Forum and service providers.*

Resources

In developing proposals for devolved decision making and options for local service delivery, there will be a need to develop a greater understanding of the way in which the County Council's resources are distributed geographically and the extent to which this distribution reflects the needs of the different communities. This analysis could become a key driver in planning and accounting for expenditure in the longer term. The geographical distribution of expenditure could potentially be explored with partners too, both in terms of pooled budgets and the mainstream budgets.

[Ought we to develop over the longer term our performance management systems on a local community basis?]

Objective 10 – We will undertake an initial assessment of those budgets which are currently distributed on a geographical basis across the County Council and analyse the distribution in the context of the local community needs' assessments

AIM 4 – TO IMPROVE CUSTOMER ACCESS TO PUBLIC SERVICES

The communities identified each includes a market town or another suggested focus for service delivery. The County Council and its partners already have an extensive range of service access points across the county - including Schools, libraries, adult learning centres, mobile service units etc – which provide the basic infrastructure to develop a new local approach to joined up service delivery. In addition, there are a wide range of community and private sector facilities – such as rural post offices, pubs etc - which play a role in delivering community based services

Schools have a long tradition of working in partnership to provide services beyond the normal school day to meet the needs of pupils, families and the wider community – for example pre-school groups, holiday programmes, ICT facilities, sports programmes adult learning etc. Currently thirteen schools in Buckinghamshire are main bases for Adult Learning Centres. Around fifty schools accommodate adult education classes at various times and sixteen schools accommodate school-based youth projects. Over sixty schools are providing child-care in various forms.

The national 'Extended School' programme provides an opportunity to develop this model in Buckinghamshire, building on the existing levels of activity. A full service 'extended school' provides a core set of services and activities to help meet the needs of its pupils, their families and the wider community - including: child-care, some health and social care services, lifelong learning, family learning, parenting support, study support, sports and arts, and access to ICT.

The Children's Centre programme offers a further opportunity. A Children's Centre provides integrated child and family support services for children from birth to 5. Services may or may not be delivered on a school site. Buckinghamshire is required to establish 25 Children's Centres across the county by 2008.

The network of library and adult education centres across the county increasingly provides a focus for joining up public service activity at a local community level. The development of the new Learning and Culture Service will maximise opportunities to deliver community and family learning services into the heart of communities through these centres and the service will have a key role to play in the delivery of this strategy.

It is proposed that a community service hub be developed in each of the local community areas, providing access to the full range of County Council activities, either through direct provision on site or through IT links to the contact centre. Each community should also have at least one extended school and a Children's Centre, either at the centre of the community hub or linked to it. It is recognised that a school might not always be the ideal location to deliver the full range of services and activities in each local community area but it would be a core component of a service hub. In addition to the County Council services, the Community hub should provide access to a wide range of partner services, including fire and rescue, neighbourhood policing teams, health promotion activities and voluntary and community sector activities.

Community hubs will be supported by a network of community access points, which will signpost local people to services. The development of local community access points through the Customer First Programme will seek to enable local residents to understand the services that are available and can access them.

This model will have even greater potential if partner services are involved and we would wish to explore with partners how we can work together to develop the most appropriate model for each community area.

Objective 11 - *We propose to develop a community service hub in each of the local community areas, providing access to the full range of County Council activities, either through direct provision on site or through IT links to the contact centre.*

Objective 12 - *Each local community should also have at least one extended school, either at the centre of the community hub or linked to it.*

AIM 5 – TO JOIN UP PUBLIC SERVICES LOCALLY

To achieve the greatest impact in local communities, it is vital that front line staff from the full range of public sector agencies have a coordinated approach to identifying priority groups and to targeting their activity.

To bring about coordination at a local level, we have successfully piloted a number of cross service workshops designed to build networks of front line staff in specific local communities and to encourage joined up working. These networks will ensure that front line professionals know each other, that they are aware of the expertise and skills available to support them and that they can access a coordinated response to issues as they arise. These will be extended to all local communities, and also to partners and elected Members. They will provide elected Members with a network through which the Local Forum can influence local service delivery. We will also develop ways of linking these networks into existing service-based forums – including school liaison groups for example - and supporting their further development.

We also intend to look for opportunities to co-locate staff with our partners within communities and to build multi-agency teams with the aim of promoting closer working relations and achieving a holistic approach, particularly in anticipating and responding to the needs of the most vulnerable. *The development of Neighbourhood Policing Teams* will provide a significant opportunity to develop joined up service delivery in response to community priorities. We will also promote tools to encourage partnership working such as use of a single assessment form.

Objective 13 - *We intend to develop networks of front line professionals in each of the local community areas.*

Objective 14 – *We will take opportunities to co-locate staff and build multi-agency teams where desirable and practical.*

5.0 ACTION PLAN

5.1 The strategy's action plan has yet to be finalised. It is proposed that the implementation of the strategy be phased reflecting the capacity of the Council and its partners to deliver, and the need to trial new approaches before fully committing to their roll out. It is suggested that the following be prioritised for 2005/06: -

- Adopt local communities initially as a framework to shape our service thinking in transportation (via LTP2), the provision of children's centres, the creation of further extended schools and school cluster working, and the development of the new Learning and Culture service. .
- Encourage the police and health care to use the local communities building blocks for their planning of community policing and local health care facilities/services.
- Match Heads of Service to each Local Community and ask them to conduct a walkabout with the relevant County Members and Parish Councils with a follow up session. Participation of District members/officers will be sought but is optional.
- To roll out the full strategy in one Local Community area within each district and for the Council's Policy Support Team to monitor closely the impact before further roll out to other Local Communities in subsequent years. It is proposed that Chesham, Buckingham, Burnham and Princess Risborough Local Community areas be invited in the first instance. This trial to include:-
 1. The devolvement to a parish council in each area of agreed services within an agreed financial and contractual framework that meets the DEFRA quality parish agreement – this to be a three way agreement with delegated District Council services where this is desirable.
 2. The establishment of a Local Forum and cluster working by the local Head of Service and Area Manager
 3. Fully developed local profiles – model framework attached for information
 4. A local working training programme established for County members
 5. Progress being made to implement key Customer First local delivery points in these areas
 6. The development of public service hubs around integrated County Council education, children and library services
- Improved co-ordination of the "local leadership teams" at district level with the aim of improving the general inter-relationship between the district LSPs, the County Council and its Local Committees.

**CUSTOMER FIRST AND GETTING CLOSER TO COMMUNITIES
SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES**

SHARED OUTCOMES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services are designed to meet the needs of customers • Services are provided in locations across the County • Services are integrated and organised to meet the needs of customers • Employees put the customer at the centre of service delivery • BCC is seen as less remote from local people • Customer satisfaction increases 	
CUSTOMER FIRST PROGRAMME OUTCOMES	GETTING CLOSER TO COMMUNITIES PROGRAMME OUTCOMES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We know what services customers want • We know how and when customers want to access services • There is a choice of access channels (face to face, telephone, electronic) • There is a network of local access points (not just BCC premises) across the County providing services across all channels • We have re-engineered services around customer need; to provide greater resolution of more services at the first point of contact and provide the back office changes and efficiencies to support this • We have integrated customer contact across services and across agencies • There are generic customer services advisers to deal with a wide range of queries across all channels • Employees are equipped for flexible (including mobile) working 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local committees are strengthened, a wider range of services and better engagement • Natural communities for service delivery are defined • BCC employees working in each community are networked and link and communicate together • Multi-disciplinary Teams are integrated to deliver services to the community • There is co-location with other partners where this will improve service delivery • A base line of service delivery in each area across the County is agreed • The service base line is adjusted to meet the specific needs of each community • Budgets are pooled to meet base or enhanced community needs • Selected services are delegated to Parish and Town Councils • Members; community representation role is enhanced and support is increased • An extended school is established in each natural community
LINKED PROJECTS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Strategy • Extended Schools • Community Cohesion • Community Strategy 	

Appendix 2: A Framework for Local Area working in Buckinghamshire

