

Summary of Feedback from Interviews and written comments

- Piloting the Local Committees in their current form had been helpful in facilitating a smooth transition to the modernised Council and much has been learned from the experience.
- The Local Committees had started out quite well and were improving. They should continue to improve as the groups build their working relationships.
- The Local Committees were good but needed to be developed further in order to keep participants on board and interested.
- The Local Committees helped to improve communications between the various tiers. Despite this there was a continuing “us and them” culture.
- Perceptions of how Local Committees were working varied across the County.
- The lack of Parish Council participation in Aylesbury Vale (particularly amongst the smaller parishes) was a cause for concern.
- Lack of District Council participation in some areas was disappointing, but some district councils actively supported the concept and felt that the experience over the past year had been favourable. They would welcome further consultation/discussion on issues such as widening the remit, change to geographical boundaries and membership.
- The Agendas and meetings for the Local Committees were too long, predictable and frequently uninteresting. Agenda and supporting papers should be circulated well in advance to avoid papers being distributed at meetings.
- Meetings should be shorter and time-limited.
- Chairmen of Local Committees should be more closely involved with the agenda setting; District and Parish colleagues should be invited to submit items for the agenda.
- Venues should be checked for suitability/layout/availability of equipment etc
- Highway issues fully occupied local committees. The limited amount of time available would prevent other issues being discussed without additional meetings being held.
- Increasing the number of meetings held each year would have resource implications for the County Council and might not be popular with members who were already required to attend a large number of meetings.
- Local Committees currently played an important role in delivering the structural maintenance programme. They provided the only opportunity for sharing essential information with stakeholders and were a helpful tool to the Cabinet Member.
- The £100K delegated budget was too small to allow the Local Committees to have a significant influence over local spending. Increasing the amounts allocated to each local committee might increase participation and interest.
- Consideration could be given to re-introducing the system of divisional representatives for highway matters. Divisional representatives could be the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Local Committees
- Membership of the Local Committees reflects their environmental focus and might need to be revised in the light of any changes to the Committees remit.
- The system of voting in local committees causes confusion in some areas. Voting, when required, could be restricted to County Council members, who were the directly elected representatives. Alternatively indicative voting for advisory/consultative purposes could be used.
- The remit of local committees could be widened to discuss other than environmental issues. This might improve attendance and increase interest. However, it was important to resolve any existing problems first.

- Items should only be included on local committee agendas if there were general issues that could be applied across the area as a whole. Items relating to only one area did not work well.
- Local Committees could be an important tool in consulting and disseminating information to local communities on a wide range of issues including cross cutting issues such as community safety.
- Local Area Co-ordinators could make a difference in developing the local committees and keeping parishes and local members informed.
- Caution was required in widening the committee's remit or delegating any further funds. Widening their remit might not increase participation and interest.
- Public participation in meetings e.g. 'question time' should be encouraged and could open each meeting (advance notification of questions could be required to ensure that the right staff were available if necessary). Increased publicity, particularly in the local area, would help to encourage public participation.
- The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of each local committee could be elected by that committee rather than appointed by the Council.
- Each local committee was developing differently and reflected the differences between the areas. Any reorganisation should take this into account.
- The County Council should take into account the way in which District Councils were developing their modernised structures – further consideration should be given to working closely with the Districts to develop local forums, which could be used by all tiers of local government and other partners.
- Consideration could be given to providing budgets to the local committees (or local committee members) for (local) community type projects.
- The current configuration of local committees, based on district council boundaries may not be the most appropriate for Buckinghamshire and should be reviewed. The Aylesbury Local Committee, for example, was too large and should be divided. Wycombe Local Committee might also benefit from being subdivided into two covering urban and rural areas respectively. A further Local Committee based on the Chiltern AONB area might also be appropriate.
- Any significant changes to remit, structure etc should be made on an incremental basis and be the subject of further consultation with parishes, district councils and other partners.
- Consideration should be given to potential conflict/duplication with other already established fora if the remit of the committees was widened to include other service areas.
- The existence of the South Bucks Forum had helped the South Bucks Local Committee operate effectively over the last year.