GETTING CLOSER TO COMMUNITIES AND CONSULTATION ON THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCALITY STRATEGY

COUNCIL 10 JULY 2008

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* Available on request from Jackie Louch, GC2C Office, (01296 383839)

PART I – INTRODUCTION

1 OVERVIEW: WHAT THIS REPORT COVERS

1.1 This report provides the detailed information to support the recommendations to the Council on the future direction of the Getting Closer to Communities Strategy in the light of:

- A comprehensive review of the Strategy, including the views of all Members of the Council
- An assessment of the organisational requirements for delivery
- The framework for Local Area Forums as a replacement for Local Committees
- The Consultation with partners on the development of a "Buckinghamshire Locality Strategy" (which would, in effect, replace GC2C – a different title may be agreed)

1.2 **Part II** of the report summarises what GC2C, as our Locality Strategy, is intended to deliver from the perspective of residents, local Members and partners. It also illustrates some of our achievements to date and the ambitions for the future across all Service Areas.

1.3 **Part III** of the report sets out the findings from a major review of the Strategy (including the 57 Conversations with all Members of the Council) and deals with the organisational requirements that need to be in place to deliver our Aims. Finally, this section covers the proposals for Local Area Forums.

1.4 **Part IV** of the report deals with the consultation on the Buckinghamshire Locality Strategy. It explains the reasons for the consultation, the approach we adopted and the responses we have received. The section ends with an analysis of the key issues from consultees and a response to these.

1.5 **Part V** of the report summarises what has gone before and makes recommendations to the Council on the internal changes we need to continue to make and the next steps in developing a partnership approach to locality working. Recommendations on the constitution for Local Area Forums are also included.

1.6 A number of **Appendices** are attached to the report to provide further background and detail for Members. These include a Glossary of terms and abbreviations. In addition, **Background Papers** are listed which are available on request.

PART II – DELIVERING BETTER OUTCOMES FOR RESIDENTS

2 WHAT A LOCALITY STRATEGY WILL DELIVER

2.1 The first Council Plan of this Administration set out two key aims:

- How to make Council services better meet the needs of individual residents (as customers/clients); and
- How to meet the needs and priorities of different communities

The first of these aims led to the development of the Customer First Programme and the second led to Getting Closer to Communities (GC2C).

2.2 The GC2C Vision is:

> *To enable Councils in Buckinghamshire, working in partnership, to achieve:*
>
> - *Services tailored to the priorities of 19 local areas*
> - *Genuine and increased influence by residents over local decisions and budgets*
> - *More accessible and integrated local services*
> - *Strengthened local leadership across the three tiers of local government*

2.3 Our residents will have

- Greater and genuine influence over service delivery
- More local involvement in decisions about local issues
- Services that better meet the needs of their area
- Better access to local services
- Action on the ground from all partners that will make a difference to their community

3 ACHIEVEMENTS SO FAR

3.1 Our work already across Services, across the 19 local community areas and with partners has demonstrated the benefits and the potential of working together at a more local level.

Service Improvements Through Locality Working

3.2 The range of service improvements that have already been made is impressive. Service, corporate and partnership examples of current locality working include:

- Local councils can now request to take on a range of services on behalf of the County Council which means that they have greater flexibility and potential to respond more quickly to some matters that are important locally. We have developed criteria which will enable more parishes to take on services in future years
- Funding has been obtained through the South East Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (SEIEP) to improve care for older people through building community capacity; this will be piloted in two local community areas
- A Parish loan scheme has been introduced to help reduce carbon emissions through improved energy efficiency within the local community
- Local Access pilots are being established in each of the 19 areas, including in all libraries – larger libraries will have a partner presence
- Adult Social Care drop in surgeries are being held in each local area to help Buckinghamshire residents find out more about the services available to vulnerable adults
- Each Children and Young Peoples Area (CYPLDA) will have a multi-agency local delivery team covering a range of services for vulnerable children and establishing where appropriate pooled budgets
- Youth Cafés, in community areas, are being set up in partnership with district, town and parish councils and Youth for Christ. This is supported by funding from the Youth Opportunities Fund which comes via the County Council and is allocated by panels of young people. The cafés offer support and development opportunities and run out of school activities
- The 19 areas have been used to help to determine the location of children's centres and extended services for schools
- Area Highways Technicians are assigned to each of the 19 areas
- Highways maintenance "gangs" are working in each of the 19 areas to priorities set by local Members and parish councils. A community "clean up" project is being developed to extend the range of services and agencies involved in these events, to be piloted in the Wycombe area
- Local Transport strategies/partnerships are being developed for each local community area
- An Adult Social Care Co-ordinator has been identified for each area
- The 57 Conversations and the 19 Discussions have engaged all Members of the Council in defining the outcomes of GC2C and what success on the ground would look like
- Profiles have been developed for the 19 areas setting out the take up of key services
- Local cluster meetings have been operating in 14 out of the 19 areas and are now developing into Local Area Forums
- The "speed dating" initiative has built communication networks between county council employees working in each locality; these have developed into the Service Excellence events, which include partners. Informal meetings of frontline employees are being piloted in 2 local areas.
- Additional Area Co-ordinators have been appointed to work with local Members, Services and local stakeholders to address the needs of each area

Examples continued overleaf…..

- A lead Area Officer has been appointed for each area to provide senior management support
- Environmental enhancement in Denham Green
- Courts Carnival held in (Southcourt and Walton Court)
- Work with parishes and Housing Associations to improve parking arrangements in Chiltern area
- Partnership training for Police Community Support Officers on local authority services and shared premises eg: Farnham library
- In Aylesbury Vale, Police Community Service Officers will also be attending the Adult Social Care Surgeries.
- A wide range of children and young people services are working closely with heath services on local delivery - "the team around the child"

3.3 Further engagement is planned with Services to embed Getting Closer to Communities principles into Service and Business Plans and to provide tailored support from the GC2C Team.

Delivering in the 19 Areas

3.4 Action Plans for the 19 local community areas enable us to focus on the needs of each area and achievements at a local level. Highlights for each area are shown in **Appendix A**. Particular priorities for the current year will be reflected in the team's business plan.

3.5 Area Co-ordinators are responsible for the performance monitoring of the 19 area plans, keeping in close communication with local Members.

Progress Overall

3.6 A high level summary of the latest position on the GC2C Programme is set out in the table in **Appendix B**

3.7 To deliver on this, it is vital that **all Services** set out their current and planned contribution to the 5 Aims of GC2C so that we can demonstrate how services for local communities will change in different areas as a result.

4 OUR AMBITION FOR THE FUTURE

4.1 We need to build on the success so far and grasp the potential of GC2C for the benefits of residents, Members, partners and to meet the future agenda for public services.

Meeting the Needs of Residents

4.2 For the first time, the 2007 Residents' survey provided a representative sample for each of the 19 areas. The analysis of the different views held by residents across the county has reinforced the need for a locality approach. For example, there were wide variations in satisfaction for each of the 19 local areas, ranging from 88% satisfaction in Winslow to 58% in The Beeches.

Further analysis of these results is required, but initial research shows that clean streets feeling safe and low levels of crime were important to the majority of areas whereas condition of roads was felt to be the most in need of improvement. Focus Groups have taken place to follow up key topics of concern.

4.3   This information is being used in Service Excellence Events and will be presented to each Local Area Forum. Where possible, specific measures will be developed for each of the 19 areas, based upon the Residents' Survey, linked to the new Local Area Agreement and built into the proposed local community plans. This means that we will be better placed to deliver services that meet the particular needs of different localities.

Meeting the Needs of Members

4.4   Following the 57 conversations that took place with Members between August and December 2007, a package of support has been agreed and circulated to all Members (**Appendix C**). This will help all Members in their prime role of supporting local residents. Members will have better information about their local areas and more support from Officers across all Services to respond to needs.

4.5   The Area Co-ordinator is the first point of contact for local Members in their community leadership role, to provide knowledge of the area and regular updates of developments and issues in the area

4.6   A Member induction and development programme is being developed for 2008/09 and beyond, which will focus on the importance of the local Member role and the development of key skills where required.

Meeting the Needs of Partners

4.7   We recognise that not all community needs can be met by just the County Council; many issues require the co-operation of a number of different organisations across various sectors. As such, all partners need to work together to meet the increasing expectations and the complex needs of local residents. The vision is that we will have multi agency working to support local delivery and realise efficiencies. There are already a number of good examples of joint working across the County, which are noted in paragraph 3.3 above.

4.8   We will need to undertake further work with partners on the opportunities for multi-agency teams/co-location, including:

- Sharing information
- Sharing processes/systems
- Co-location
- Joint project teams
- Joint management

Meeting the Future Agenda

4.9   The extent of locality working, community empowerment and influence on service planning and delivery is becoming increasingly important as part of the Comprehensive Area Assessment which will commence in April 2009. The County Council was praised for its vision with regard to its GC2C programme at the last Corporate Performance Assessment inspection and it will be of greater importance for the future.

4.10   The need to understand and measure outcomes for local communities is also an important aspect of the new Local Area Agreement framework. Our understanding of local community needs will be the starting point for the LAA, service planning, budgetary processes and central to our performance management. In addition, all authorities will have a new "duty to involve" from April 2009. Ways that authorities will be expected to deliver this is likely to form a key focus in the forthcoming Community Empowerment White Paper expected during the Summer.

4.10   Finally, there is a lively national debate about localism and the need for greater devolution between the various tiers of government. The Local Government Association, in particular, is promoting the importance of this approach to delivering better outcomes for people and places.

4.11   So, whilst GC2C has been designed to meet the needs of Bucks and our residents, having an effective locality strategy in place also puts us ahead of the game in responding to new national developments.

PART III – REVIEW OF THE STRATEGY

5   REVIEW OF THE GC2C STRATEGY

The Getting Closer to Communities Strategy

5.1   The County Council approved the GC2C Strategy in July 2005. The Strategy includes five key Aims for improving the delivery of services to different communities in Buckinghamshire (see further below). This was initially based upon 24 local community areas. The Council agreed to introduce 5 pilot areas to test the approach across the Aims. Following a review by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the Environment and a further report to the Council in 25 May 2006, it was agreed to extend this to all local community areas.

5.2   The Community areas were further refined in late 2006 and boundaries were modified to take in feedback we received. The number of community areas was reduced to 19.

5.3   The principle of using the 19 local forums as the basis of community engagement was included in the Pathfinder Agreement signed by the Leaders of the County and District Councils in February 2007.

The Review Process

5.4   The Review of the GC2C Strategy took place between June and December 2007 in the light of recent national and local developments including the Buckinghamshire Pathfinder Programme and the comments from the "57 Conversations" with Members. By and large the Aims are unchanged although they have been re-ordered. The Objectives have been revised to reflect a sharper focus on how it will impact on local communities, things that are already in place and new developments. High level Outcomes have also been built into each Aim to signal the importance of making a difference to the residents and communities of Buckinghamshire. We have also included a vision that encapsulates what we want to achieve through the Strategy. The GC2C Board has overseen this work. In addition, from a Member perspective, the Review has been overseen by the Deputy Leader with advice from the Community Leadership Policy Advisory Group.

Key Messages from the 57 Conversations

5.5   Between August and December 2007 we undertook individual conversations with all Members of the Council to seek views on progress on the GC2C programme and aspirations for its future. The key messages that resulted from these conversations are outlined below:

- The Vision and Aims of GC2C had been well communicated but Members wanted more evidence of how delivery on the ground had actually been enhanced and improved and, therefore, had achieved the desired outcomes for local communities

- Members appreciated how GC2C can and will support their community leadership roles and there was significant enthusiasm to make it work, despite some tensions around boundaries of specific local community areas
- A strategy for Locality Working was seen as the way forward but Members would like to see more joined up working both from within the Council and with partners to enhance the quality and quantity of delivery in local areas.

5.6 This engagement with Members and the views expressed have been crucial in the revision of the Strategy and the development of the package of support outlined above.

Key Findings from the Strategy Review

5.7 The review concluded that, GC2C is a wide-ranging, forward thinking strategy that has the potential to put Bucks and Members from all councils centre stage in terms of leading national developments on locality working. It is also broadly accepted as the way forward, albeit more evidence of delivery is needed. The Aims can also meet the future agenda for the County Council and our partners, including:

- Comprehensive Area Assessment: focusing on the distinctive needs of different places and communities
- Local Area Agreement: localised targets
- Community empowerment: duty to involve
- Place shaping: creating safer and stronger communities
- Role of Members as community leaders
- Achieving Outstanding Performance: strong communities, customers first

5.8 More importantly, it provides a real opportunity for partners, working together, to deliver service improvements to the residents of Buckinghamshire which reflect the distinctive needs of different communities.

Revised Strategy and Objectives

5.9 The revised Getting Closer to Communities Strategy, which reflects the findings of the review, is attached as **Appendix D.**

Key Communication Messages

5.10 To support the change process required for GC2C, tailored key messages (**Table 1**) have been produced for residents, Members, employees and partners, to be delivered through the new Communications Plan:

TABLE 1: GC2C KEY COMMUNICATION MESSAGES
Residents • Making a difference to you and your community • Giving you genuine influence over service delivery • More local involvement in local issues • Services that better meet the needs of your area • Better access to local services
Members • Helping you to support local residents • More support to you as a frontline Member • A local partnership forum to plan for the needs of your area • Redirecting resources to meet greater needs • More delegated resources for local areas
Employees • A new way of working, for all of us • A change of culture – "think local, act local" • Time to deliver improvements on the ground • Empowering frontline employees
Partners • Working together to improve localities through better services • Achieving efficiencies by working together • Local delivery of the Local Area Agreement • Meeting the requirements of the Comprehensive Area Assessment

6 ORGANISATIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR DELIVERY

6.1 The Council has already shown clear leadership and foresight in approving the GC2C Strategy, agreeing high level sponsorship by the Deputy Leader of the Council and providing additional resources to achieve the Aims. We are now at a crucial point with the GC2C programme, a number of things are in place, awareness has been raised and we have a clear direction in the revised Strategy to deliver the next phase.

6.2 However, there are significant leadership and cultural challenges to address if we are to deliver across the full range of the GC2C Objectives. Work has taken place on the "organisational requirements" to deliver GC2C. The key areas where we need to take action are as follows:

- **Leadership**… the leadership and commitment required to communicate the vision and create the conditions for success
- **Cultural Change**… how the organisation will need to change to deliver a different way of working, based upon increased community empowerment, a local partnership approach to service delivery and enhanced community leadership.
- **Locality Management**… the skills, knowledge and capacity dedicated to implementing the strategy and locality working; and the new structure that will be put in place

- **Service Area Management**… how services are organised, co-ordinated and delivered through some form of local management structure and how this relates to the 19 areas
- **Multi-Agency Service Delivery**… how service delivery is joined up locally across agency boundaries.

6.3 These issues have been considered in detail by Members and officers in recent months. In addition, the Council retained SOLACE Enterprises to undertake a short 'health check' of the GC2C Strategy and to give us a view about the robustness of our approach, the organisational requirements and risks to delivery. The review confirmed that the Strategy was the right way forward and provided some very helpful pointers, which we are building into our way forward.

Culture Change and Leadership

6.4 Clearly the breadth and depth of change required by GC2C, requires significant leadership from both Members and Officers.

6.5 A key theme is the central role of **Members** in helping to make GC2C work. Subject to the decisions taken by the County Council, the expectation is that that Members will:

- Promote GC2C positively within the Council and with residents, district and local councils and other partners
- Lead and promote Local Area Forums
- Participate in (where possible, multi-agency) ward walks
- Meet regularly with Area Co-ordinators and liaise with Lead Area Officers
- Consider the reallocation of resources between the 19 areas to meet differing needs (based on the Needs Analysis)
- Promote community empowerment of local residents as complementary to traditional engagement with local councils and other local groups

6.6 In parallel, we will implement the package of actions to support Members in their local role as set out above. We will also consider an area based approach to developing Members' community leadership role, meetings skills and community engagement as part of the new induction and development programme.

6.7 We will expect to see **Managers** across the Council:

- Giving frontline employees more freedom to respond to differing local needs
- Mainstreaming, and providing training in, community development and community engagement
- Agreeing locality based targets as part of performance appraisal
- Using need analysis and resident survey data to shape services differently in the 19 areas

- Identifying functions and budgets that can be devolved to the 19 Local Area Forums
- Introducing processes to ensure the provision of timely local information and to respond to the needs of local Members
- Prioritising requests for local information and participating in local management teams
- Raising awareness and promoting the role and contribution of other services and agencies in the context of the needs of the local areas

Performance Management

6.8 We need to embed the GC2C philosophy into performance management. This will involve recognition and reward based upon a locality focus and, ensuring a "golden thread" from the day-to-day work of individual employees through to the five Aims of GC2C and a clear focus on outcomes. We will also need to consider changes to job descriptions, person specifications and the recruitment process. Training and development in locality working and new skills will be required.

6.9 The principles of GC2C are embedded in the Corporate Plan and locality working is reflected in a number of the Council's Corporate Plan targets (agreed by Council on 21 February 2008). However, we also need to agree performance measures that will demonstrate the success or otherwise of the programme, linked to each Aim. The initial focal point will be towards process and outputs, which will clearly demonstrate the difference GC2C is having on the ground. However we will need to develop more outcome focused measures as the changes are embedded. Suggested performance indicators are in **Table 2** below:

TABLE 2 – GC2C PERFORMANCE MEASURES

AIM	MEASURE
Services That Meet Local Needs	% of Residents satisfied in the 19 areas % of actions in the 19 Local Action Plans that are delivered - Number of Adult Social Care surgeries held in each of the 19 areas - Number of local road maintenance and environmental improvements in each of the 19 local areas - Number of parish and town councils taking on a package of services
Joined Up Local Public Services	- Number of actions delivered from Service Excellence Events - Parish partnerships working on behalf of each other - Number of (virtual) area teams established
Improved Local Access to Public	- Community Access Point in each of the 19 areas - Children's Centres in each of the 19 areas

Services	• Greater use of web services
Enhanced Community Leadership	• Local Area Forum established in each of the 19 areas • Attendance at each of the Forums • Satisfaction with Forums
Community Empowerment	• NI 4: % of people who feel they can influence decisions affecting them • Participatory budgeting pilots in four areas • Number of Local Community Plans in place • Increase in engagement locally eg: turnout at local elections

Structures for Locality Working

6.10   In order for Locality working to be effective, we need to focus on five aspects:

- Establishing the right organisational **structures**, both locally (where they can be quite informal) and centrally (where more formality is required)
- Ensuring that the different **people** involved own the issues and are supported to work together
- Having the right **processes** in place to make local decisions
- Embedding a **culture** of locality working
- Effective **communications** between the locality and the centre.
- Extensive **community development** work to get people involved and to sustain this.

6.11   A revised GC2C Team organisation has been put in place as a central part of this. The number of Area Co-ordinators will increase from September 2008 and over time as the focus shifts to direct local delivery. However, whilst the Area Co-ordinators are at the hub of the local area team, it is essential that local Members, Lead Area Officers and relevant Service Managers are also fully involved.

6.12   All Services need to think through how they change and resource to meet the GC2C requirements such as:

- Identify and communicate the key Service contacts for the 19 areas eg: Highways Technicians, Older People's Services Co-ordinators
- The management networks for each of the 19 areas
- Devolution of functions and budgets for local decision making
- Devolution of functions and budgets for delivery by local councils
- Managing cross service and multi agency teams
- Process to support local Members
- Local information needs

6.13   It is essential that, as LAFs are introduced and public awareness of GC2C increases, Members and Officers manage expectations for local service improvements - we will never have the resources to meet all requests.

6.14   In addition, we need to consider the following:

- Persuading partners to invest in locality working eg: making a contribution to the devolved budgets for the Local Area Forums
- Joint funding of Officers with partners eg: community development workers
- Redirecting existing Service locality employees to support the work
- Funding the VCS to do some of the work eg: community development
- Capacity building bids eg: against the MKOB Improvement Project

Financial Implications: Budgets

6.15   Additional resources have been agreed through the Budgets for 2007/08 and 2008/09 for the GC2C Team and to support delivery on the ground. The current budget is £913,000.

6.16   However, the real difference to local service delivery and quality of life in the 19 areas through GC2C will be through the **reshaping of existing Service budgets not simply increasing resources**. Some work has taken place to identify the Service budgets that can be devolved to the 19 local areas for local decision or consultation on local priorities and further work will be undertaken in this service planning year. The main budgets identified so far by Services are as follows:

- **£500k Transportation Capital devolved to Local Area Forums**: the sum currently allocated to Local Committees, will, subject to the Council's decisions, be allocated to the 19 Local Area Forums. Over the years some Parishes Councils have added value by allocating additional funds from their own precepts where schemes are approved in their parish
- **Additional Highways Maintenance Funding:** the Council agreed an additional £3.25m for highways maintenance to meet priorities within the 19 local community areas. This will also be allocated locally through the LAFs in 2009/10.
- **Other budgets**: there have been various commitments to invest in the 19 local community areas e.g. Adult Social Care have designated 19 employees with locality roles; Transportation have appointed Local Area Technicians with vans. This process must continue as LAFs begin to operate into 2009.

Changes to Financial Systems

6.17   Work has started to investigate the feasibility of using SAP to provide an analysis of expenditure by the defined 19 (GC2C) geographical areas.

6.18   The approach being considered aims to minimise any changes to the main SAP system and use an additional feature within the system that is currently not used to allow us to set up 19 'business areas' that will relate to each of the specific GC2C areas. All expenditure would then need to be allocated to one of these 19 areas that would allow reports to be produced to show an analysis of spend by geographical area.

6.19   To achieve this, a business area code relating to one of the 19 GC2C areas would need to be entered when a transaction is carried out. For instance an invoice for the purchase of street signs could then be assigned to a specific business area and be reported:

- at cost centre level, ie total cost of street signs, and/or
- at street signs in the Wendover GC2C area.

6.20   To ensure that the reports are comprehensive and meaningful there would also be a need to collect data from other systems that have links into SAP. Depending on the data content within each individual system this could either be an actual business area code or for example, in the case of SWIFT could be a client's postcode. In all cases interface programs would need to be amended to incorporate and/or interpret this additional field to match with the GC2C area.

6.21   The aim would be to give Members more local financial information which (together with the other data on needs, Residents' satisfaction etc) can raise questions about the relative spend in each of the 19 areas and value for money.

7   LOCAL AREA FORUMS (LAFs)

The Benefits of LAFs

7.1   A key feature of the locality strategy is the development of LAFs. The LAFs will build on our history of local decision making and the long tradition of "cluster" meetings held by Members in different parts of the County at a community area level. The current local engagement mechanism of Local Committees based on District boundaries has been in existence since 2000 and has evolved over time. However, their size and structure inhibits true localism and the even more local decision making envisaged by GC2C. Additionally, Local Strategic Partnerships exist and cover the same geographic areas and there is clearly potential to streamline processes, reduce the number of meetings at this level and avoid duplication. A diagram showing the evolution of decision making in Buckinghamshire is attached at **Appendix E.**

7.2   Building on the success of the Local Committees, there are a number of benefits to Members and local communities in changing to LAFs. The County Council is using the 19 local areas as building blocks to plan and deliver services, it is, therefore, sensible to base local decision making around the same areas. The LAFs will:

- Provide a targeted local focus for discussion, more responsive to local needs
- De-centralise decision making based on the 19 areas
- Enhance the local Member role as the leader in the local community
- Develop priorities for the local community
- Co-ordinate policy and service delivery between local partners

Examples from Other Counties

7.3   The majority of County Councils have developed or are developing some form of Local or Area Forum as part of their locality working strategy. Whilst some of these are district based (e.g. Lancashire and North Yorkshire) an increasing number are modelling their local area forums on a sub district basis to achieve a more locally based focus to the groups and the discussions (eg: Leicestershire, Cornwall, Cumbria).

7.4   Although parish and town councils can be members of area forums/committees, current legislation precludes them from voting on decisions that have financial implications. In most counties, lengths are taken to ensure that parishes feel fully involved with the forums e.g. by custom and practice the appropriate parishes attend the meeting and have rights to speak on issues relating to their local area etc.

7.5   Whether area forums are developed at district or sub-district level, county councils are considering the need to make 'membership' numbers manageable. Options here include having parish representatives on area forums rather than all local parishes etc. We are in discussion with BALC to look at ways this might happen in Buckinghamshire.

Outcomes from the 19 Discussions

7.6   Between January and March 2008, discussions were held with County Council members in each of the 19 local community areas about the evolution of LAFs. The main points arising from these are summarised below:

- Locality working, with focus on local outcomes, was confirmed as the appropriate direction of travel
- The existing four Area Committees should be replaced by a LAF in each of the 19 areas
- The remit of LAFs should be broadened, away from the current focus on Buckinghamshire County Council services and particularly transportation issues
- We would need to work closely with partner agencies i.e District ,Town and Parish Councils ,Thames Valley Police, Health , the voluntary sector including faith groups/churches and other local organisations
- There was support for enhanced public engagement through attendance at and structured opportunities to speak at LAFs
- We need to confirm the LAF role in influencing service delivery priorities and current budgets and outline links to community planning processes.
- Clarity was requested on the role of LAFs in influencing strategy and policy issues both locally and countywide
- We need for a timetable for internal negotiation with services on area based budgeting and decision making.

The Development of LAFs

7.7 Proposed terms of reference, constitution and working arrangements for Local Area Forums is attached as **Appendix F**. The views from the 19 discussions have been built into this paper. It will be essential to maintain a dialogue about the development of LAFs. There is no blueprint for LAFs and it is only by working locally that the right approach for the locality will be found over time.

7.8 A key aim is that, wherever possible within the necessary countywide framework, LAFs should have the freedom to develop according to local needs and circumstances. This will include:

- Choosing a name for the local community area
- Deciding who to invite to meetings
- Deciding when and where to meet
- Agreeing which of the various roles and local issues to give time to
- Allocating devolved budgets according to local priorities

PART IV – CONSULTATION ON THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCALITY STRATEGY

8   BACKGROUND TO THE CONSULTATION

Why We Consulted

8.1   The review of the GC2C Strategy concluded that:

- Delivery of the five Aims requires full partnership engagement
- Many partners did not appreciate the breadth of the strategy
- GC2C, as a County Council initiative and brand, was not owned by partners
- The national changes facing all public services in Bucks (principally the Comprehensive Area Assessment) require a locality strategy approach

8.2   Consequently, it was agreed that a full consultation should be undertaken with the widest range of partners prior to a report to Council on the revised Strategy.

Our Approach to Consultation

8.3   The approach adopted for the consultation was as follows:

- Consultation was through the Bucks Strategic Partnership membership (this includes district councils, fire and rescue, health, police, voluntary and community sector etc – full list available on request), plus all local councils
- The consultation was framed on the fundamental premise that better outcomes for residents envisaged by locality working can only be achieved through a comprehensive and partnership approach at all levels
- The consultation also acknowledged that the County Council's approach so far to locality working had not always been seen as one of genuine partnership; and this is something that we wished to change through the consultation
- A key recognition of this is the need to agree a new partnership brand for locality working, with "GC2C" remaining only as a change management brand for the County Council
- To illustrate how each Aim might be delivered in partnership, the consultation paper set out a number of possible partnership actions (recognising that we were not starting from a blank sheet of paper). These were, however, meant to facilitate thinking and were neither prescriptive nor exhaustive

The Consultation

8.4   On 27 February 2008, the County Council began a consultation exercise on the "Buckinghamshire Locality Strategy" (ie: how the aims and objectives of GC2C might be delivered in partnership) through a letter from the Deputy Leader of the Council. The initial deadline of 7 April was extended to the 30

May 2008 following representations to provide a longer period for consideration of the issues involved.

8.5   In addition to the consultation letter and papers Officers have attended a range of local and partners meetings and have spoken to individuals, to explain the consultation and answer questions (see below).   Where appropriate, Officers have followed up comments to clarify points.

9   RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION

Responses Received

9.1   In total, 71 responses were received to the Consultation. A full list of the responses is set out in the schedule at **Appendix G.**   The schedule summarises the key issues raised by each consultee. (*Copies of the full responses are available in the GC2C Office and will be available at the Council meeting*).

9.2   In addition to the formal responses from consultees, the views expressed at various partnership meetings (including the four Local Committees) have been summarised – see **Appendix H**

9.3   A reply will be sent to all consultees detailing the outcomes of the consultation and what decisions were made by the Council in the light of the consultation process.

Summary of Key Issues

9.4   The key points from the consultation process together with a brief response are summarised in **Table 3** below:

TABLE 3: BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCALITY STRATEGY CONSULTATION SUMMARY OF COMMENTS RECEIVED

CONSULTEE	RESPONSE
District Council Leaders: objected strongly to the consultation having taken place; their view is that the Pathfinder Agreement covers the whole of GC2C; that we cannot consult separately; and that there should have been prior consultation on the contents of the consultation paper	• The Leader wrote to the District Leaders in response to this • The Locality Strategy is much wider than the Pathfinder Agreement and requires actions from all stakeholders in Bucks not just the County and District Councils covered by the Pathfinder Agreement • The GC2C Strategy has been public since 2005 so the contents are well known • The whole point of the consultation is to seek views

District Council Leaders: comments were subsequently received seeking further discussion on whether a LAF was required for all 19 areas, seeking a tailored solution for each district area, building on the Level 1 and Level 2 concept of the Pathfinder community engagement pilots and the development of LAFs as multi-agency arrangements	• The intention is to work within each district area on the application of all aspects of the locality strategy, including the arrangements for LAFs; this will include how LAFs complement the existing more local arrangements, that also need to be multi-agency • The intention is that LAFs will be multi-agency bodies; the County Council has arrangements in place to support the LAFs (as District Councils do with the LSPs) but they will operate as multi agency bodies
Aylesbury Vale District Council: no formal response received; but has accepted the end of Local Committee	• Work has started with AVDC on the piloting of LAFs in two areas
Chiltern District Council: wish to retain the Local Committee and do not recognise the local community areas or see a role for LAFs, other than at the district level (ie: the Chiltern Community Partnership); existing community engagement and local community planning arrangements work well	• Further discussions will take place in Chiltern (initial meeting already taken place)
South Bucks DC: want to keep the Local Committee as a forum for the 3 tiers to meet together for cross district discussions and to develop a local solution	• There is a real opportunity to strengthen the role of the Local Strategic Partnership. • Ad hoc meetings are of course possible, where required • Further discussions will take place in South Bucks
Wycombe District Council: no formal response received; but has accepted the end of Local Committee as part of the Pathfinder pilot	• Work has been underway for many months with WDC and other partners on the community engagement pilot, formally launched on 21 April 2008
Chiltern Community Partnership: support for the overall Aims, but the 19 local areas are not relevant for all services delivered by partners; that LAFs do not reflect natural communities; the value of four local community plans is unclear (given existing	• We have reassured the LSP that LAFs will be implemented sensitively to meet local needs and to complement existing community planning arrangements • Further discussions will take place locally about the links between LAFs and the Chiltern Revitalisation Groups

arrangements). Further discussions required to clarify what get discussed at different level	(which do not cover the whole of the district)
Local Councils: several parish councils have raised strong concerns about LAFs, the principal issues are listed below:	• Issues have been followed up local councils were possible • We are also working with BALC to try to try to improve our communication of the potential benefits to local councils
• Some local councils do not support the groupings of parishes and/or electoral division and ward boundaries for the 19 areas	• The Deputy Leader has said there will be no changes to the 19 areas (but there is flexibility about which LAF parishes attend)
• Some feel the LAFs will undermine the role of parishes	• We need to explain more clearly how LAFs will support and complement their more local role and extend their influence over local issues • We also need to stress that parish and town councils will be full members of the LAFs, but unable to vote on items of expenditure because of current legislation (although their views will be fully take into account)
• There are various questions about the constitutional basis of LAFs	• These were dealt with directly with the parishes concerned
• Some local councils see LAFs as just another layer of bureaucracy	• Again, we need to sell the benefits of LAFs and are working with BALC on this
• They do not like the fact that local councils cannot vote at LAFs on devolved budgets	• This is a legal barrier not of our making; we have asked DCLG to change the legislation
• Some local councils do not support wider membership of the LAF by groups who are not elected or representative	• This is a fundamental point of principle, a broader range of partners needs to be engaged to deal with local concerns; it is also not the case that parish councils are in all cases fully representative of their communities
• There is a view that the County Council only wants to work with Quality Parishes	• This is incorrect, we have already agreed (but not yet launched) a local Bucks accredited parish scheme with BALC
• There is confusion about how the LAFs fit with NAGs	• We are working with TVP to try to bring together all the community engagement groups, around a common neighbourhood management agenda, but there is no prospect of NAGs not continuing in some form

Encompass (VCS): support for the Aims and for the thrust of local working in partnership; the locality strategy must be owned by all partners; key role for the VCS and local councils in the 19 local community plans	• Discussions have already taken place with the Voluntary and Community Sector about their support for delivering the Aims, in particular: community empowerment and community plans
Oxon and Bucks Mental Heath Trust: support for the Aims, but needs top level commitment to deliver; more discussion required about the impact for different services, communication is key to this	• Local health providers have a key role to play in local community planning
Thames Valley Police: support the overall aims, but all partners need to sign up to deliver this; need to work at a neighbourhood level for some issues and establish links with NAGs; need to identify success factors for the 19 areas	• Agreement has already been reached with TVP about the need to eliminate boundary conflicts between the 19 area and NAGs • Work is also underway on a shared approach to "neighbourhood management"
Bucks Primary Care Trust: agrees with the aims of the strategy, but believe that the detail of how this is achieved requires further discussion and refinement with partners. Happy to input into the 19 areas but would not re-organise provider services around the 19 areas as these are not our "natural working boundaries"	• The response raises a number of valid points about delivery; further discussion will take place with the PCT and GPs about the application of the strategy to meet shared aims • PCT staff have been engaged in service excellence and in LAFs for health related issues
Bucks and Milton Keynes Fire Authority: agree with the aims of the strategy and will support it. They believe The initiative will rationalise and improve efficiency of community engagement. Communication and engagement strategies will need to reach as broad a spectrum as possible. LAFs should be flexible so that representation is appropriate	• The response raises a number of key points about the need to ensure the engagement of the broader spectrum of stakeholders and we will have further discussions with FRS about this. FRS staff have been engaged in service excellence and will be engaged in LAFs for relevant issues.

10   ANALYSIS OF THE KEY ISSUES

10.1   As stated above, it is important that specific issues are followed up with consultees where possible (a feature of the consultation process has been to

do this as we have gone along). Without diminishing the importance of any individual views received, **Table 4** provides an analysis of the key issues that it is judged that the County Council needs to take into account in reaching a decision:

TABLE 4: BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCALITY STRATEGY CONSULTATION ANALYSIS OF THE KEY ISSUES

KEY ISSUE	ANALYSIS
The Locality Vision	• Most respondents have welcomed and supported the overall vision of the Locality Strategy and the need for this approach • Understandably, some comments have been qualified with questions about how it might or should work etc; this will be an essential next stage of development • No suggestions have been received to change the name of GC2C
Aims and Objectives	• Few specific comments have been made • However, the responses (particularly from local councils) have shown a good deal of uncertainty about the detail, about the need for local tailoring of the overall aims and the time that this will take to deliver • Some consultees questioned whether this was a genuine consultation, again local discussion about delivery will be the key to this
Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA)	• Linked to the BSP point, it is becoming increasingly clear that some form of locality strategy will be an essential foundation of the local public service response to the CAA and in order to meet the increasing demands and complex needs of our residents. If the current proposals are not the right ones, then we will need positive proposals from partners about what is required; to continue as we are is simply not an option
Local Committees	• A key question for the Council from the consultation response is whether to agree that the Local Committees in Chiltern and/or South Bucks should continue, either for a longer period, or in a reduced form • If this approach were to be adopted we would need to think through how this would impact on the roll out of LAFs in these districts (eg: partial roll out of LAFs for those areas that were keen to go ahead, with devolved budgets and more powers, with retained budgets for the Local Committee for the other areas?) • A recommendation on the way forward is set out

	below
Roll Out of Local Area Forums	• Many comments received comments related to the roll out of LAFs with extended powers and the replacement of the four Local Committees. • This is disappointing, as one of the aims of the Consultation was to explain the comprehensive nature of GC2C • However, the LAF paper has been updated to reflect comments, which have mostly been about the need for a tailored local approach. Although the intention has always been that the 19 LAFs will roll out across the county (many are already operating in some form), **how they roll out will be for local discussion and agreement** • In particular, LAFs need to mould to the existing contours of local community engagement and planning, which varies between and within districts • Work will take place with each District Council and local parish and town councils on this (the position in Wycombe is already covered by the Pathfinder pilot).
Local Community Plans	• Mixed views were received about the benefits of 19 local community plans, particularly about how they will relate to existing more local community plans • A key point here is that the intention is to use the 19 local community plans as a formal countywide partnership framework within which local needs can be agreed and will get delivered; this will mean greater support for parish plans, market town appraisals etc – many of which, arguably, are not owned by the agencies that need to address the actions within them • Of equal importance is the aim of setting, where we can, local targets linked to the Local Area Agreement Indicators that reflect the different needs of the 19 local areas • Careful debate will be required at a local level about how the local community plans can add value to existing landscape
Community Engagement	• Comments were received about the need for community engagement to take place at a level below the LAFs. Additionally, there was a view that the County Council should leave community engagement to councils which are closer to the people, or to engage on its services only • On the first point, it is not the intention that the LAFs will be the focal point for all community engagement in the area; rather that the community engagement that has taken place in the area (at various levels, formal and informal) will feed into the work of the LAF

	(local decision making, addressing the key issues for the area and the local community planning process)
	• On the second point, a clear aim of the Locality Strategy is to bring together the three tiers of local government (and relevant partners) to engage with and to empower local people across the wide range of linked issues that concern them. It is not a job for one or other council, it is a requirement upon us all
Pathfinder Agreement	• A number of comments have queried how the Locality Strategy fits with the Pathfinder Agreement • The Locality Strategy requires action from the public, voluntary and community and business sectors in the County through the Bucks Strategic Partnership (BSP), it is not limited to the Pathfinder Agreement

10.2   This analysis is taken forward into the recommendations in Part V of the report.

PART V – RECOMMENDATIONS

11   **SUMMARY**

11.1   Clearly the purpose of the consultation exercise has been to obtain views and the County Council will need to decide, in the light of the response:

- What changes to make to the actions that are underway to implement GC2C
- How we take forward the aspiration of a partnership approach across Bucks to Locality Working

Conclusions: GC2C

11.2   The review of the Strategy and the 57 Conversations have confirmed that a locality strategy is the right approach and has the potential for the Council, working in partnership, to deliver service improvements to the people of Buckinghamshire at a local level. The evidence of service improvement so far shows the worth of a locality approach and the potential for our residents of going further is clear.

11.3   We are at a tipping point with the GC2C programme, the foundations and a number of key building blocks are now in place, awareness has been raised, the culture within the Council is beginning to change and we have a clear set of actions in the revised Strategy to move to the next stage of delivering better outcomes for local residents. As the report makes clear, we will need resilience, focus and belief to achieve this. Delivering GC2C will take several years and will require patience, risk taking and an acceptance that mistakes are part of the learning process.

11.4   The organisational requirements set out in the report can be summarised as:

- *Leadership at Member and Officer level, throughout the Council*
- *Cultural change to "think local and act local" and empower frontline employees*
- *A sharp focus on outcomes across the 19 local areas*
- *Performance management at all levels*
- *Changes to corporate service and financial planning and to systems and processes to support locality working*
- *A partnership approach to community engagement and empowerment, community planning and local service delivery*
- *Sufficient capacity and the right skills and knowledge to implement the changes and to embed and sustain these throughout the organisation*
- *A step change in communications about local issues*

11.5   If we are successful, over the next 12 months we would expect to see:

- *Local Area Forums rolled out across all 19 local community areas*

- *Issues and decisions directly affecting the local community considered in the 19 areas by key local representatives*
- *Better engagement with local communities and increased resident empowerment*
- *Members with the support they need to carry out their local community leadership role*
- *Visible and stronger local leadership from local elected Members across the three tiers*
- *Services that are planned and delivered by considering the opinions of residents and stakeholders in each local community area through local community planning*
- *Four local community areas having benefited from our participatory budget pilot*
- *More parish and town councils taking on a package of services on behalf of the County Council*
- *Internal changes to service and financial planning processes to support locality working*
- *Visible reporting of performance for each of the 19 local areas so we can see relative needs and views.*

11.6 The recommendation to the Council is to approve the revised Strategy and the organisational requirements so that we can seize the opportunities that are now presented by GC2C.

Conclusions: Buckinghamshire Locality Strategy

11.7 There has been a good response the consultation on the Buckinghamshire Locality Strategy. The consultation has produced a high level of support for the fundamental aims and objectives of the Strategy and an appetite for further discussions about how it would work. Additionally, it is clear that a strategic local public service response is required in order to meet the changing needs of our residents and the expectations on all local partners to work together to assess and meet the needs of different communities through both the LAA and CAA.

11.8 Significant concerns have, however, been raised by district and local councils in Chiltern and South Bucks about the evolution of local decision making from the Local Committee to LAFs.

11.9 A further issue to address is the concern that many local councils, who responded, appear to have about their relationship with the County and a strong view that we do not recognise or value the important role that local councils have. Despite the "New Deal" initiative, further work is clearly needed to improve understanding and our working relationship.

11.10 Based on the comments received and the analysis set out above the recommendation to Council is:

- To continue discussions with all partners about the development of the Buckinghamshire Locality Strategy as the Local Strategic Partnership approach to CAA etc
- To undertake further work with local councils to develop a better understanding of the relationship with the County Council and how we can support their fundamental role as the most local tier of community representatives
- To replace Local Committees with Local Area Forums, but to defer full implementation in Chiltern and South Bucks to allow time for further discussions within those areas on a local solution

Consideration by the Cabinet

11.11 The Cabinet considered this report at its meeting on 23 June 2008. The key points made at the meeting were as follows:

- A key aim of the strategy is to devolve decision making, influence and service delivery to the most appropriate level. Local people will have more choice about local services in their local communities.
- The arrangements proposed will provide more say for local councils not less.
- It is important that the County Council builds on the foundations for locality working that are already in place. The reaction of some district areas to this is disappointing. A way forward in some areas might be via District Wide Symposiums.
- Inclusion of appropriate wider groups as members of Forums will need to be the subject of local determination. This is entirely consistent with the principles of GC2C about flexibility to meet local needs.
- It is important that clear links are made between the GC2C programme and other local delivery plans e.g. for children's services.
- Some suggestions had been made for possible changes to the name of the programme but there was no consensus and, therefore, no change should be made for the time being

11.12 The Cabinet's recommendations are set out in Section 12 below.

12 RECOMMENDATIONS

That the County Council RESOLVES:

1. **To approve the revised GC2C Strategy and the Organisational Requirements for delivery**

2. **To continue discussions with all partners about the development of the Buckinghamshire Locality Strategy as the Local Strategic Partnership approach to:**
   - **Empowering communities**
   - **Delivering better outcomes for residents**
   - **Preparing for the Comprehensive Area Assessment**
   - **Localised delivery of the Local Area Agreement**

3. To undertake further work with local councils to develop a better understanding of the relationship with the County Council and how we can support their fundamental role as the most local tier of community representatives.

4. To replace Local Committees with Local Area Forums on a phased basis and to amend the Constitution accordingly.

5. To approve the Terms of Reference, Constitution and Working Arrangements for Local Area Forums.

6. To replace the Local Committees with Local Area Forums in Aylesbury Vale and Local Community Partnerships in Wycombe from 1 September 2008.

7. To defer the replacement of the Local Committees in Chiltern and South Bucks to allow further discussions to take place to try to identify an agreed way forward, but to permit the establishment of one or more LAFs in those Districts where there is support for this.

8. To authorise the Leader and Deputy Leader to make changes to the arrangements for Local Area Forums in Chiltern and South Bucks on the basis of further discussions within those areas.

9. To authorise the Deputy Leader to make minor changes to the terms of reference of Local Area Forums in the light of the operation of the Forums.

10. To request the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to bring forward recommendations for any minor amendments to the Constitution resulting from these decisions, which will then come to full County Council for discussion and approval.

11. To undertake a review of the operation of Local Area Forums and report to the Council on progress in 12 months time, taking into account the results of the Pathfinder Pilots in Wycombe and Aylesbury Vale.

GETTING CLOSER TO COMMUNITIES AND CONSULTATION ON THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCALITY STRATEGY

REPORT TO COUNCIL 10 JULY 2008

LIST OF APPENDICES AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

APPENDICES

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Appendix B   Update on GC2C Programme
Appendix C   Package of Support for Members
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- Responses Received to the Consultation
- Previous Council Reports on GC2C