

Beeches Local Area Forum

Title:	Voting Rights
Date:	18 November 2009
Author:	Stephen Young, Locality Services Area Coordinator
Contact officer:	Stephen Young, Locality Services Area Coordinator Tel: 01296 387543
Electoral divisions affected:	Burnham, Dorney, Farnham Royal, Stoke Poges, Taplow

The Beeches LAF need to determine voting arrangements where decisions need to be taken. The overriding principle is that wherever possible, decision-making at LAFs should be by consensus i.e. reaching an agreement without the need to vote. This will not require everyone to fully support everything within a motion/decision but that everyone does agree it can go forward in spite of reservations that some individuals may have.

In practice, the more established LAFs are rarely voting. When voting takes place, it's usually a sort of straw poll to test out opinion at a large meeting where not everyone can speak rather than being a formal vote.

If the LAF insists on formal voting, the following are options that are used in different LAFs across the County that Beeches LAF members can take into consideration when reaching a decision on its own arrangements.

OPTIONS

1. "Model" constitution

Vote for each formal member of the LAF i.e.:

- All County and District Councillors for the Local Community Area.
- One representative per parish. (Typically the parish rep will be a parish councillor but could be the parish clerk.)

Plus



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



- Anyone one else that the LAF chooses to invite into membership e.g. community or residents groups. Council policy (Full Council July 2008) is to encourage LAFs to engage as widely as possible although membership by any such groups is at the LAF's discretion.

In Beeches that would mean:

- 3 County Councillors
- 15 District Councillors (2 vote as County Cllrs) - unlikely all would attend, but possible.
- 1 vote per parish Council i.e. 5 votes

So if all attended from this list above, this would mean a maximum of 21 votes assuming not parish representative was a district councillor.

Additional organisations e.g. Police or NAGs could be invited as non voting participants or as voting members

No LAFs presently have voting members outside of County, District and Parish councils, although outside organisations are represented.

2. **Buckingham; Haddenham and Long Crendon; High Wycombe, Wendover and Winslow LAFs**

All work on the basis of one vote per parish or town council. This is also the approach that is being favoured at the Missendens LAF.

3. **“Electoral college” approach** - this is favoured by **Chesham Town Council** and was also proposed at the first meeting of the LAF on Sept 16th by Chris Howell (Chartridge PC). It acknowledges the population size of Chesham town whilst ensuring that the parishes cannot be overwhelmed at the LAF by the town presence.

- 5 votes to rural parishes (i.e. one vote each)
- 5 votes to be allocated to Chesham Town – to be distributed by the CTC e.g. shared with the ChAP
- 4 County Councillors
- 12 District Councils (but 2 vote as County Cllrs) – it is unlikely that all would attend but possible.

So if all attended from this list above, this would mean a maximum of 24 votes.

Plus

- Anyone one else that the LAF chooses to invite into membership e.g. community or residents groups. Council policy (Full Council July 2008) is to encourage LAFs to engage as widely as possible although membership by any such groups is at the LAF's discretion.

SW Chilterns, Princes Risborough, Chepping Wye, Greater Aylesbury and Gt Brickhill, Wing & Ivinghoe LAFs use versions of this approach – i.e. the number of votes per parish/town council determined by the relative population sizes of the parishes.

4. **Amersham**

One vote per organisation rather than one vote per County/District councillor.

- 1 vote per parish

- 1 vote for Town Council
- 1 vote for District Council
- 1 vote for BCC (not Chairman) plus chairman's casting vote in case of deadlock

Other comments

- With regard to County and District councillors, a twin or triple hatter only gets one vote; therefore a parish might choose to appoint someone other than a district/county councillor as their representative.
- Where a councillor is both a County and District councillor, they are expected to exercise the vote as a County Councillor. Likewise, a district councillor who is a district and parish councillor is expected to exercise the vote as a District Councillor.
- With respect to County Council decisions, the LAF decision is advisory with the final decision resting with the appropriate Head of Service. A Head of Service decision not to follow the LAF's advice would require a report back to the LAF/LCP.
- To avoid any confusion if a formal vote is ever be required, it will be important that each voting organisation nominates a named person(s) and substitute(s) who can cast their vote.