



Getting Closer to Communities

Newsletter—July 2006



getting closer to communities

COUNTY COUNCIL MOVES FORWARD WITH GETTING CLOSER TO COMMUNITIES

The County Council agreed at its meeting on 25 May, to proceed with the implementation of the Getting Closer to Communities (GC2C) Strategy, and in particular the phased introduction of cluster working arrangements in other local community areas.

The first six-months of the pilot GC2C programme has been interesting. Progress in the pilots has been faster than anticipated and feedback, in most cases, has been positive. Whilst it may not be perfect, nevertheless the framework provides a firm basis on which to move forward.

As a result we are now taking stock to consider how best to proceed in the short, medium and long term. Over the next six months we will continue to gather feedback and information from members, partners and a wide range of other sources to develop the strategy and prepare a detailed plan of options and proposals for implementation in the 24 local community areas over the next five years. These 24 local community areas will help us to target services to meet needs and priorities of different communities and will be used as building blocks to:

- Carry out a needs analysis of each area;
- Help us to decide future provision of Children's Centres and Extended Services to Schools
- Develop local transport plans
- Consider delegating funds to Parish and Town Councils to carry out activities on our behalf
- Join up services that the County Council provides to communities by establishing local networks of staff
- Link with the Police, Health, Fire Services and District Councils on joining up others services locally.

Further information on Getting Closer to Communities will be posted at regular intervals via the website and newsletters. In the meantime if you have any questions please contact Steve Orchard or your Senior Area Co-ordinator.

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GC2C on the web

www.bucksc.gov.uk/community_leadership/gc2c.htm

FOCUS ON.... NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Understanding our customers' needs is important to Buckinghamshire County Council in planning and delivering its services. It is therefore developing a more systematic way to determine and address service needs in our local communities. The proposed methodology is very much a work in progress which will be consulted on both internally within Buckinghamshire CC and externally with partner organisations, to ensure that it dovetails and builds on existing work service areas and partner organisations may currently be doing to understand their customers.

Understanding customers is the first step of our pilot corporate needs assessment methodology. It will present a picture of our customers at County and District level and also for the original 5 local community pilot areas. The 'picture' is comprised of a variety of data from the census and other sources. It will incorporate customer survey and other relevant information such as parish appraisals so we can gain an understanding of the characteristics of the people who use our services and what they believe as the priority areas for our services. Once we have a picture of who our customers are we can also work out other important things such as those who don't use our services (and use this to find out why), indications of areas where there is likely to be high demand for different types of service so we can tailor the services to where they are most needed and think about new ways of delivering services.

The next and most complex step of our methodology is assessing the supply and capacity of services to see how this fits with the customer characteristics and future population growth. Clearly to assess supply and capacity for every single type of service available is an enormous task. Our pilot therefore aims, as a starting point, to focus only on those services where demand can be predicted by examining the types of people that use those services across the county. Assessing the need for services other than these will require a different approach(es).

You will hear more about needs assessments in the coming months and in the meantime if you require further information please contact Jane Bambridge in the County Council's research team. jbambridge@buckscc.gov.uk

CLUSTER WORKING

The development of cluster working is moving forward across County. At the request of the County members involved, officers are now making arrangements for a further 5 cluster groups, in addition to the 6 already in place. Cluster working arrangements are now in place in: Buckingham North and South, Haddenham, Winslow, Waddesdon, Wing, Great Brickhill, Wendover and Aston Clinton

Many of these clusters are working closely with their local Neighbourhood Action Group (NAG) set up by Thames Valley Police so that meetings and actions are co-ordinated. The Haddenham NAG recently voted to combine with the County's GC2C Cluster Group for future meetings in recognition of the fact that the two groups share much of the same agenda.

Two separate meetings have been arranged for the Chesham GC2C cluster to reflect the different agendas for the town and parish areas. Separate meetings will give more time to explore the different priorities as well as those that are shared across the whole area. Where possible and with the partners agreement, future meetings will be held on a joint basis.

At the present time the group for Burnham/ Dorney/ Taplow is acting as a virtual cluster group, since it includes County, District and Parish Councillors as well as representatives from Thames Valley Police. Meetings to bring together a larger number of representatives from Parishes and District Councils will be arranged in the future if they are requested..

Princes Risborough has held its first Cluster meeting and further clusters are being developed in Bourne End, (Thames Division), Marlow, Hughenden Division and High Wycombe West.

Agendas can cover a wide range of issues, including Transportation, Planning and Environment, Youth and Community, Volunteering, and Parish Planning.

Whilst introducing these groups in local community areas will be subject to our ability to provide the necessary officer support, County Council members are reminded to let their senior area co-ordinator know if they are interested in holding a cluster group in their area.

LOCAL NEWS

Chiltern & South Bucks

Work with Chiltern District Council, the local housing association and the residents' association to upgrade parking and drainage has now been completed in Leachcroft, Chalfont-St-Peter.

The first Neighbourhood Action Group (NAG) meeting has been held in Chalfont-St-Peter and was attended by around 180 people. Anti-social behaviour was the dominant issue. In early June a police operation led to the arrest of 9 key trouble makers in the village.

Burnham/Dorney/Taplow cluster identified anti-social behaviour and criminal damage as a high priority. In May the Senior Area Co-ordinator arranged for permission to be given for a mobile CCTV camera to be attached to a street lamp which should help contribute to combating anti-social behaviour in the High Street

Arrangements have now been made for South Bucks District Council to replace damaged street name plates as a result on an approach through the GC2C group.

Aylesbury Vale

The Thames Valley Probation Service approached Rights Of Way staff to see if they could use the local area of footpaths and bridleways as part of their programme for Community Service Order offenders to do something worthwhile. Local Parish Councils were contacted to gauge their feelings about these individuals carrying out work in their community. Not all were in favour of this scheme but the majority of the Parish Councils were, and a meeting to discuss this further has been arranged on the 13th July 2006 at 17.15 to 17.45 at the Winslow Centre (before the local committee meeting which starts at 18.00)

Delegation of services to Buckingham Town Council - work is still to be done but in principle we are aiming for Phase 1 of handover of some powers to be 1st October to coincide with our new Neighbourhood Technician launch. Works that would be delegated in this phase include removal of illegal signs, sign cleaning, vegetation maintenance, clearing of footways, cutting back of overgrowth. Phase 2 work would follow on from this but will depend upon the Town Council having accredited people in place. Work is therefore needed on the training side. Work is now ongoing on budgets and insurance liability and on the process side issues such as correct record keeping etc. A further meeting is planned in 4 weeks' time.

Wycombe

A High Wycombe West Community and Market Stall Event was held on Monday 19 June 2006 at The Avenue Methodist Church, Rutland Avenue, Castlefield.

Over a glass of Mocktail (non-alcoholic cocktail made from recipes from the Road Safety Team) visitors heard about Getting Closer to Communities (GC2C) and learnt about the shaping and prioritising of services in the area and that the GC2C initiative was aimed at making public services more visible, identifying local needs and tackling local priorities. Everyone was asked to put forward their views on the area based on the three priority issues of Anti-social Behaviour, Health and Parking.

The Chairman of the High Wycombe West Pilot meeting, County Councillor Zahir Mohammed, promised that everyone would receive feedback on the event and future get-togethers would be organised.