

LOCALITY WORKING LOCAL JOINT COMMITTEES

Portfolio Holder Cllr Gwilym Butler
Responsible Officer Samantha Hine
e-mail: Sam.hine@shropshire.gov.uk

Tel: 01743
252591

Fax:

Summary

Council agreed at its meeting in July to defer any decisions relating to changes in geographies of the LJCs, pending further discussion with local members¹.

Discussions amongst Members during the summer concluded that rather than reducing the number of Local Joint Committees, which are believed to be working well, alternative ways of reducing costs, such as holding fewer LJC public meetings per year, should be considered. This also reflects the budget pressures the Council now faces, and the reduction in the number and capacity of senior officers.

Recommendations

Council agree that with effect from 1st April 2011

- A. All LJCs reduce the number of programmed, officer supported meetings per year, to between 2 and 3.
- B. All LJCs combine the function of pre-agenda and de-brief meetings, thereby reducing the number of additional meetings of the committee supported by officers.
- C. Much Wenlock and Broseley divisions work together to create a new LJC, with two zones, each zone meeting twice per year, serviced by the same officer support team (see paragraph 9).
- D. Brown Clee and Highley divisions work together to create a new LJC, with two zones, each zone meeting twice per year, serviced by the same officer support team (see paragraph 10).
- E. The six Shrewsbury LJCs remain, but meet only twice per year individually and twice per year as a collective, and that each Shrewsbury LJC budget be topsliced by 30% for Shrewsbury wide determination.

¹ The exception to this was Moreton Say and Adderley parishes which have moved to Market Drayton with immediate effect.

- F. Shifnal & Sheriffhales and Albrighton LJs are retained as separate LJs, meeting twice each per year, serviced by the same officer support team, and encouraged to join together for additional meetings and shared agendas as appropriate.
- G. Bayston Hill LJC is retained, meeting twice per year and encouraged to join together with neighbouring LJs for additional meetings and shared agendas as appropriate.
- H. The Oswestry and surrounding area LJs remain as current but cluster for additional meetings, shared agendas and strategic area issues as appropriate.
- I. The parishes of All Stretton, Smethcott and Woolstaston; Cardington; and Leebotwood & Longnor join StrettonDale LJC, for a trial period of 6 months/two meetings (this change to be implemented with immediate effect).
- J. Where more frequent or localised community engagement is needed, local members are supported to host informal neighbourhood or community forums within their divisions.

REPORT

1. The Local Joint Committees have now been meeting across the whole of Shropshire for twelve months. Most have proved successful with increasing public attendance and a variety of local issues discussed and resolved. The delegated budgets are supporting a wide range of community activity and all Shropshire Councillors are playing an active role in their LJs.
2. Whilst some progress has been made during the first twelve months, the full potential of the LJs to shape and influence Council policy and local delivery of key services has yet to be realised. Council agreed a number of recommendations at its meeting in July to seek to increase the role and responsibilities of local members through the LJs.

However, Council agreed at its meeting in July to defer any decisions relating to changes in geographies of the LJs, pending further discussion with local members. There was considerable opposition from all political groups to significant changes in the number and geographies of the current LJs.

3. The Portfolio Holder for Community Working was tasked with finding a solution to this in the light of reduced capacity and Council resources. The recommendations in this report reflect the outcome of detailed discussions with many members of Council that have taken place over the summer months.
4. It is clear the majority of members are committed to the LJs as a key means of how the Council engages with its partners and local people in their communities across Shropshire. Whilst the limitations of the LJs are acknowledged they are still considered an important element of our locality working.
5. It is important that the role, influence and decision making of the LJs is further enhanced in the future, enabling Councillors to demonstrate more clearly their community leadership responsibilities.

6. Discussions throughout the summer show there is little appetite for wholesale change or for generally increasing the size of existing LJC geographies. A general preference for fewer meetings as an alternative to fewer committees has been expressed.
7. The recommendations in this report provide some compromise between the financial pressures the Council faces and enabling us to address some of the areas of difficulty identified through the LJC evaluation. As a result there will still be twenty eight LJCs going forward.
8. The Much Wenlock, Broseley, Brown Clee, Highley area of the county has proved particularly difficult to get right in terms of the geographies covered by the LJCs. Electoral boundaries here have added to the complications of finding a solution that ensures more than one Shropshire Councillor is represented on each LJC.

Recommendations C and D are a best compromise. Detailed discussions have taken place with the four impacted local members and there is general consensus that this is the best option available.

9. Whilst Much Wenlock and Broseley divisions will join together to create a new LJC they will operate a two zone principle; one for Much Wenlock with surrounding parishes and one for Broseley and Barrow. They will be supported by the same officer team.

Both local members will each have a voting place at each zoned meeting, but the parish representatives will only have a vote within their own zone. Broseley will meet twice a year chaired by the Broseley member with a ringfenced budget, and Much Wenlock will meet twice per year chaired by the Much Wenlock member with a ringfenced budget.

10. This arrangement will also be implemented for Highley and Brown Clee. Highley and Brown Clee divisions will join together to create a new LJC and they will operate a two zone principle, with each zone meeting twice per year.

Both local members will each have a voting place at each zoned meeting, but the parish representatives will only have a vote within their own zone. Brown Clee will meet twice a year chaired by the Brown Clee member with a ringfenced budget, and Highley will meet twice per year chaired by the Highley member with a ringfenced budget.

11. As with all LJCs, the zones will be encouraged to cluster together for additional meetings and shared agendas as appropriate.

12. The only other significant change is in respect to Shrewsbury. There are currently six LJCs covering the county town and whilst these have worked well locally, the evaluation identified a significant weakness in terms of addressing cross Shrewsbury issues, sharing budgets to meet shared priorities, joint working to resolve shared problems or identifying town wide solutions.

Discussions have taken place with a number of Shrewsbury members. There is general consensus that the current six LJCs should be retained but that greater collaboration and cross Shrewsbury working should take place.

13. It is proposed that the current six LJs continue to meet based on existing geographies twice per year, and that all six come together as a Shrewsbury wide LJC twice per year to address whole town issues. This will provide Shrewsbury residents with a very good opportunity to see Shropshire Council and Shrewsbury Town Council working well together for the benefit of the town.

A senior officer will be identified to support elected Members at the collective Shrewsbury LJC meetings, given its role as the county town. Each Shrewsbury LJC will retain a portion of its budget at the local level and a portion will be top sliced for town wide consideration at the collective meetings. Details of how the Shrewsbury wide LJC will operate will be determined in consultation with Shrewsbury Members over the next two months.

14. A further report on how the LJs will support the authority's new Target Operating Model plus progress against the recommendations endorsed by Council in July, will be made to Council in the Spring 2011. This will include greater clarity on the community involvement and engagement potential of the LJs, the role of the Council and the LJs in helping to deliver the Big Society in Shropshire, the LJC Communications Strategy, the role of the Area Directors with the LJs, and potential opportunities for greater delegation and influence by local councillors on service delivery and localised budgets.

<p>List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information) Council Report July 22nd 2010</p>
<p>Human Rights Act Appraisal Recommendations are compatible with the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998</p>
<p>Environmental Appraisal There are no environmental implications arising from the recommendations.</p>
<p>Risk Management Appraisal There are no identified risks.</p>
<p>Community / Consultations Appraisal Consultation has been undertaken by the Portfolio Holder with local members and impacted parish councils.</p>
<p>Cabinet Member Councillor Gwilym Butler</p>
<p>Local Member All</p>
<p>Appendices None</p>