

ARRANGEMENTS FOR JOINT WORKING AND COLLABORATION BETWEEN 3 TIERS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN CARLISLE DISTRICT

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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to set out some principles for refreshing joint working arrangements between the 3 tiers of local government in Carlisle, namely: Cumbria County Council, Carlisle City Council and the 34 Parish Councils including Carlisle Association of Parish Councils.

During a meeting in 2017 all parties were in agreement that the current methods were limited in their effectiveness and did not provide for a timely response to a number of issues being picked up at very local level. It was further accepted that large meetings whilst useful for some purposes, were not providing the best opportunities for maximum inclusion.

Background

Meetings to date have typically taken place twice per year and this has led to some issues being held back until such a meeting has been held. In order to examine any future approach, the key reasons for dialogue between the three tiers were examined and described in the following terms:

- Day to response to issues picked up in parishes e.g. highways, lighting, footpaths, general repairs and issues
- Problem solving, e.g. a more pressing/unpredicted issue that is unable to be resolved as a day to day response but may require the convening of key partners
- Policy issues and legislative changes affecting any or all of the three constituent parties, less frequent but an important area nonetheless.
- Statutory consultation which may or may not be linked to legislative changes referred to above

What has been working well?

- Dialogue takes place between the 3 layers of local government regardless of formal tripartite meetings, councillors are well linked in to their respective parish councils and are able to take issues back into the County or City

Council as appropriate. This is very responsive and often recorded through the parish council minutes and therefore gives a robust audit trail of any issue.

- There are good channels of communication between officers of Cumbria County Council, Carlisle City Council and the Carlisle Parish Councils Association and to an extent, individual parish councils.
- There has been significant development in online help for issues such as highway/footway repairs, street lighting and other issues.

What hasn't been working so well?

- There has been a tendency to rely on or wait for tripartite meeting dates to report issues, leading to holding back of some matters which could otherwise have been dealt with sooner.
- The format of formal tripartite meetings does not always lend itself to resolving a live issue in a timely way.
- Due to pressures within all councils and reduced resources, it is more challenging to secure effective attendance and to administer formal meetings when there may be more effective and efficient mechanisms.

What steps could we take to improve?

There are a number of recent technological improvements such as the Highways Information Management System (HIMS) and other online reporting tools which, if better coordinated and communicated, could provide a better alternative to some of the issues which come up in Parish Council settings. Training for Parish Clerks and other key community members may be required.

As partners we all need to provide and receive clarity on what is expected of each organisation and how responses will be received and processed to provide the best service to the community.

The suggested arrangements for joint working and collaboration should be considered by stakeholders from Cumbria County Council, Carlisle City Council, Carlisle Parish Councils Association and other stakeholders as appropriate.

Suggested future arrangements

As described earlier, the principal areas of dialogue are:

1. Day to response to issues picked up in parishes e.g. highways, lighting, footpaths, general repairs and issues
2. Problem solving, around a particular issue which requires the input of key partners
3. Policy issues and legislative changes affecting any or all of the three constituent parties
4. Statutory consultation which may or may not be linked to legislative changes referred to above

In respect of item 1, it is felt that the following actions could provide an appropriate response:

Sharing contact details

Training on HIMS

Understanding of which officers look after which patches

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