

An inclusive approach to towns and parishes

Peter Lacey, County Secretary, Somerset Association of Local Councils

Vivienne Pay, Monitoring Officer, Mendip District Council

Chair: Alex Kroon, Policy Adviser,
The Standards Board for England

Why town and parish councils are important:

- Part of the local government family
- Electorate
- Budget
- Council tax charge
- Neighbourhood governance

Town and parish model

- Provides election regime
- Provides financial regime
- Provides method of direct elector consultation (parish or town meeting)
- Provides ethical regime

Working with the first tier – challenges

- Communication
- Misunderstanding of roles
- Lack of recognition of problems
- Overload at town/parish level
- Much depends on clerk
- Resources

Working with principal authorities

- Not a partnership of equals
- Reluctance
- Little party discipline
- Distinguish between authority and members
- Resources

County association strategies

- Highly variable in terms of quality and quantity
- Essential and specialist
- All made presentations on the Code – alone and jointly
- Continuing relationship
- What of the ‘difficult to reach’?

Mendip – engaging with parishes

- Standards in context
- Ways to engage
- Personnel
- Communications
- Training and events
- Cooperative approaches
- Accessibility

Lessons from experience

- Identify the need
- What is the incentive?
- Use existing resources
- Frequently asked questions
- Accessibility and attitude

Benefits of better engagement

- Better understanding
- Levels of awareness raised
- Problems identified earlier
- Proactive approach can avoid complaints
- Fewer investigations

And finally...

- What will you take back to the office for **action** to improve the working relationship between the tiers?

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