

Review of the Chorley 3 Tier Liaison – Written responses received

The questions asked were:

1. How well has the pilot achieved its key functions?
 2. Would you like to see the pilot continue?
 3. How could the meeting be improved?
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Malcolm Allan: Heapey Parish Council

- 1 No problem
 - 2 Yes
 - 3 If there is an issue effecting more than 1 parish/town council the cabinet member from LCC should attend the meeting.
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Katrina Reed: Euxton Parish Council

Point 1 Very well indeed.

Point 2 Yes would like the pilot to continue.

Point 3 Whilst nothing is perfect, these meetings must score at least 9 out of 10.

Laura Lennox: Astley Village Parish Council

I have found the meetings useful but have been disappointed by the attendance of one or two County Councillors. Also it would have been useful to know which District Councillors represent each Neighbourhood Area.

John Pigott: Bretherton Parish Council

I think that the new format is working quite well and seems to be well supported.

It does provide a better open forum for sharing issues across the three levels and I thought that the last meeting was particularly good.

We have benefitted from the meeting by being able to raise and get a response to the availability of Planning documents on the Portal. Lots of other useful issues have also been discussed i.e. Chorley's Credit Union, a presentation on the new Meals on Wheels Service, LCC Highways priorities etc.

I think that it is important that the new PC continues to support the forum and to attend, ideally the current Chairman.

Terry Dickenson: Wheelton Parish Council

1. Wheelton PC believes that the pilot achieved what it set out to achieve i.e. engaging and listening to all stakeholders.
 2. We believe the pilot should continue, with a definitive timeline in to making it part of the standard meeting calendar i.e. no longer a pilot but an actual scheduled bona fide part of CBC/LCC/PC consultation and dialogue process.
 3. Clearly there have been issues re: length /time of meetings and agendas. However, that is a small price to pay for genuine consultation and dialogue. One possible solution is to have some form of electronic voting re agendas and making the meeting time limited (which should focus the mind!!!).
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Ian Horsfield: Anderton Parish Council

- Generally I think it has proved a useful forum for bringing together representatives from all three tiers of local government
 - I'm not sure it has succeeded particularly well in dealing with issues of 'strategic' importance. Quite naturally and perhaps inevitably it has tended to focus on issues that are of more concern at Borough/Parish level.
 - It has allowed engagement between parish, borough and county councillors and officers but I'm not convinced about how much influence this has had on any strategic decision making.
 - However it is early days for this format and after only three meetings I think it is probably too soon to judge the effectiveness. I suggest it should be allowed to continue for at least one more year and reviewed again.
 - The only improvement I might suggest is to consider if the meeting could be better segregated in terms of the agenda into County, Borough and Parish sections. I appreciate this may not all that easy but it may help clarify who is driving which priority and what inputs would be particularly beneficial or influential.
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Gordon France, Neighbourhood Area Meeting - Eastern Parishes (Chair)

I personally have found it very useful especially meeting Parish Councillors who I would not normally meet and hearing the views and problems. As a Rural Borough Councillor and also a Parish councillor it was useful to realise that what I thought where isolated problems in my Borough and Parish in a lot of cases where occurring across all rural regions. That is not to say in some cases town as well but these did vary more which was also useful to know. So all in all I would like to give a thumbs up to the pilot and hope it is allowed to continue.

Marel Urry, Hoghton Parish Council

I would like to pass on my thanks to Chorley Borough Council mainly – and to Lancashire County Council for the success of the project and for allowing me to take part in the pilot. As you are aware, many Parish Councils expressed concern at the LALC conferences at the demise of the Lancashire Locals and felt a vital point of contact between the three tiers of local government and the public on local issues had been lost. Concerns were also raised in 2012 with the Lancashire 3 Tier Forum as many at Parish Council level felt that only the County and Borough Councils had

equal representation on two of the Tiers, that Parish Councils did not have an equal representation as one of the Tiers – and the public, none. Dissemination of information from meetings – and outcomes also caused concerns as neither agenda or minutes were published or publically accessible.

For some years, I had been a participant in the Borough and Parish Councils Liaison, and took my role in reporting back to the Parish Council on the BPCL meeting very seriously.

I regretted the change initially from BPCL to pilot Chorley 3 Tier Liaison – until the first meeting. From the inaugural meeting, not only did it fill the gap left by the Lancashire Locals (which had become unwieldy) but Chorley was the only Borough to seriously take on board the concerns raised by many Parish Councillors across the County who felt the role of Parish Councillors in Local Government was of no significance to the County Council.

Welding the Borough and Parish Council Liaison model with County Council representation has made for a very successful Liaison Group. The Chorley pilot has been successful in all three of its proposed function areas. Local elected representatives at all levels (including town and parish councillors) have had a partial overview of Borough and County strategic priorities and to report back at Parish meetings to engage the public at local level and initiate dialogue with the local electorate. It also enabled some County Councillors to view at a local level some very real local concerns which they are usually removed from – or view from a statistical/theoretical distance rather than the very local grass roots reality. This is a step nearer to local democratic interaction.

Although the public can now go online to read about County and Borough policy and plans, so this part of local government is becoming more transparent. Many people locally still feel detached from the democratic process. The various council websites provide a great deal of information and the public now has greater access to this. However the sites do not yet allow this to be a reciprocal process whereby members of the public can engage in any form of debate or discussion.

Sadly, very few members of the public attend Parish Council meetings to discuss areas of micro-government unless they have a very specific personal and immediate local concerns which they wish the Parish Council to take up with the Borough or County Council on their behalf.

The Chorley pilot enabled all tiers of local government to meet and discuss Lancashire/Local issues ahead of some decisions being made: a great improvement in communication. Constraints of time and agenda restrict the amount of discussion, input and impact quarterly meetings in 12 calendar months can cover, so only broad topics could be covered in the 3x2 hourly meetings we have had. Feedback from the meetings, plus dissemination of visible responses and outcomes from the forums to the public still needs to be addressed.

However, this has been a pilot, a test study, so the key functions were initial steps to (hopefully) refining the formula and format for many local groups.

I feel the pilot has been an effective response to a local need in a time of democratic change and am looking forward to our final meeting on 15 April when we can review as a group the response from all participating members as to the success – and future needs of a liaison body.