promising beginnings

a compendium of initiatives
to improve joint working
in local government
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Promising beginnings

A compendium of initiatives to improve joint working in local government

In its first year in office the Government has created an impetus for change in local government.

- the 'best value' regime is intended to stimulate 'continuous improvement' in service delivery
- local democracy is to be enhanced
- councils are to have a duty to promote the well-being of their communities
- 'action zones' for services such as housing and education are being established
- new financial arrangements (council tax, business rates, capital accounting), designed to improve financial accountability, are to be put in place
- recent Green and White Papers have signalled new legislation for police, social services and health provision

Local government service provision is increasingly moving beyond traditional service areas and service providers...

- the concerns of citizens and service users, rather than those of the providers, are becoming the focus
- there is a recognition that different council departments and different authorities must work closely together – for example, housing and social services are both responsible for delivering care in the community
- different public sector agencies must work in partnership – for example, the youth justice system involves social services, police, probation service, and magistrates' courts
- complex cross-cutting issues, such as community safety and anti-poverty strategies, are heading the policy agenda

...but the way forward is not easy.

- there is confusion about 'who does what'
- dealing with separate agencies for different elements of the service can be frustrating for the public
- unclear lines of accountability can create gaps in service provision

At the same time, local government is dealing with the implications of adapting to life after local government reorganisation...

- new unitaries need to form new working relationships
- continuity of services must be maintained within constrained resources

...and there is already emerging evidence that parts of local government are active in embracing this agenda of change.

- better information on services is reaching the public
- frameworks for successful joint working are being established
- co-ordination between different authorities and agencies is improving and innovative best value proposals are emerging in these areas

These councils are to be commended and many have an established record of developing effective joint working arrangements. But many other authorities have not examined these opportunities.

This compendium provides an extensive range of initiatives already underway and aims to encourage debate in what is a dynamic and evolving area. It is not intended to be comprehensive or prescriptive: local circumstances must influence the way in which different authorities and agencies work together. But all of local government can learn from these initiatives. Local government now needs to build on these promising beginnings.
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Introduction

Why improving inter-tier and inter-agency working is important

1. Current proposals for modernising local government are wide-ranging. There are major initiatives covering best value, democratic renewal and community leadership, and Green/White Papers on social services, police and the health service. They all emphasise the need for councils to work more closely with the communities that they serve. Councils need to be the driving force in ensuring that all public service providers work effectively together, and the democratic legitimacy of local government gives councils that opportunity. Making the achievement of best value a duty to the public, and one with a rigorous evaluation process, increases the focus on improving the quality of service delivery at a local level. Better working between the different tiers of local government and with other external agencies is fundamental to the success of these initiatives.

2. This is not a new concept. In some areas effective, well-established joint working arrangements for the delivery of certain services have been in place for many years between different local authorities, often under the auspices of joint boards or committees. Working with other external agencies, such as health authorities and voluntary sector bodies, has also been an intrinsic part of delivering initiatives such as care in the community.

3. The recent local government structural review in England and Wales has also required new joint working arrangements between many of the reorganising councils – both for statutory service arrangements such as probation, magistrates’ courts committees and rent officer services, and for an extensive range of voluntary arrangements for the delivery of discrete or specialist services, particularly in education and social services. But these requirements are not unique to the structure of local government in the aftermath of the review. They are also central to the achievement of best value. A number of proposals put forward to pilot best value in both England and Wales have been designed specifically to develop inter-authority and inter-agency working.

4. The impetus needs to be maintained and participation needs to broaden. Local government service provision is increasingly moving beyond traditional service areas and providers. Many authorities are continuing to review actively the opportunities to develop and improve working with other local authorities and external agencies. These are promising beginnings. Such partnerships are increasingly taking a variety of forms and cover joint working between departments in a council, between different local authorities (at whatever tier), with local health authorities, police authorities, other public service providers, voluntary organisations and the private sector.

5. But the picture is patchy. Many other authorities have not examined such opportunities, despite promises made during the structural review. Current government proposals for modernising local government should create a fresh impetus to such developments, and existing initiatives across England and Wales provide a valuable learning experience.

6. These wide-ranging proposals for change provide an opportunity to reform local authority legislation. The Government’s intention to provide councils with discretionary powers to engage in partnership arrangements with other bodies, and to clarify the uncertainty surrounding councils’ powers to establish and participate in companies, will be an important stimulus. The legal framework within which local authorities operate is often cited as a barrier to local authorities’ development of innovative ways of working, or acting in partnership with other local agencies. Councils must always ensure that they function within the powers conferred upon them, but the need to obtain detailed legal advice in order to thread a route through the complex web of local authorities’ statutory functions can often cause delay and additional cost. A significant element of that cost and delay can be attributed to the fact that the legal framework dates from an era when authorities were primarily expected to be the direct providers of services, and is now out of date. It is ill-suited to a world in which local authorities are likely to be joining together with other bodies for the provision of co-ordinated...
services, or commissioning a service from the private sector, delivered to a broad and general specification.

**The purpose of this compendium**

7. This compendium highlights an extensive range of council initiatives to develop working relationships with others. It is not intended to be comprehensive and cannot be prescriptive. Every local authority is developing its own approach to the planning and delivery of services. Local circumstance must influence the way in which different authorities and agencies decide to work together. In a dynamic area, there may be many interesting initiatives across the local government spectrum that are not identified in this compendium. The compendium is intended primarily to spread ideas and raise local awareness of these initiatives, to challenge all authorities to review their circumstances, and to address this agenda where they believe that local opportunities exist.

8. The intended audience for this compendium is local authority members, chief executives and senior officers. It will also be of interest to health authorities, voluntary organisations and the numerous other external organisations that now contribute to the delivery of local government services.

9. The Audit Commission will shortly be publishing a management paper on partnership working across local government and the health service, which will examine the characteristics of a good partnership, the factors that help partnerships to work effectively and efficiently, and measures for reviewing progress and success (Ref. 1). Promising Beginnings complements this forthcoming paper as it demonstrates how such concepts are being put into practice locally.

**The research base**

10. Over the past two years, auditors have been reviewing councils’ progress in implementing local initiatives to improve inter-tier and inter-agency working. This work was based on Audit Commission guidance (Ref. 2). To supplement this guidance, the Audit Commission also distributed a short briefing note to all principal local authorities and all town, parish and community councils in England and Wales, outlining the importance of such initiatives and the work that auditors would be undertaking (Ref. 3). These audits have expected councils to demonstrate that they have considered local opportunities and have enabled an extensive database of national initiatives across a wide-range of services and themes to be compiled. This compendium distils the initiatives identified from this audit work. Although it is not possible to validate every aspect of joint working illustrated in this compendium, in terms of service outcomes, audit work at a local level has generally commended the initiatives as evidence of developing good practice.

11. A number of other strands of research have also contributed to this compendium:

- Audit Commission case study visits to a range of councils in England and Wales, to follow up auditors’ work in more detail;
- research undertaken by the Local Government Management Board (LGMB) (Ref. 4);
- a survey of local authority initiatives undertaken by the Local Government Association (LGA);
- a survey of all 22 Welsh unitary councils undertaken by the Welsh Office in 1997; and
- analysis of the best value proposals in England and Wales.

12. As with all similar work undertaken by the Audit Commission, the research has benefited from the experience of an advisory group of chief executives from a number of authorities (Appendix 1). The Commission would like to thank this group and all the authorities that have helped with its fieldwork and given permission to use case study material and other references. If further information is required on any of the case studies and other references in this compendium, the

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1 Appendix 3 of this compendium gives a brief description of recent Audit Commission publications that relate to opportunities to improve joint working.
councils featured have consented to be contacted directly, and a council-by-council index of initiatives has been included (Appendix 2).

The structure of the compendium

13. Chapter 1 examines some of the main factors which provide the impetus for change in local government, particularly the need to improve working relationships.

14. Chapters 2 to 4 describe a range of national initiatives already in place, or being developed in England and Wales, and include a number of case studies that highlight existing practice. For the purposes of providing a structure to the material presented in this compendium, these initiatives have been divided into three inter-related categories [EXHIBIT 1]. Given their extensive and varied nature, many initiatives do not fall neatly into a single category, and so these headings should not be regarded as definitive. In any case, an emphasis on service delivery that focuses on community needs means that integration is often the dominate feature.

15. The final chapter considers a way forward and highlights some of the common themes emerging from the examples of joint working that have contributed to the success (or not) of the initiatives described. The compendium concludes with a checklist for action by members and officers, to prompt corporate review.
The impetus for change

There has never been a greater impetus for councils to improve working arrangements with other local government tiers, and with different external organisations. An integrated approach to delivering cross-cutting services such as community care is essential, and the Government’s policies for modernising local government all emphasise the need for councils to work more closely with the communities that they serve. Better joint working is fundamental to the success of these policies.

Local government reorganisation has also prompted councils to identify ways to improve joint working. The commitments made by councils as part of the structural review process now need to be delivered.
16. Three main catalysts, with a national and local focus, have created a need for better working between the different local government tiers and with different agencies [EXHIBIT 2]:

- the need for an integrated approach to service delivery;
- government policy; and
- commitments made during the local government review.

The need for an integrated approach to service delivery

17. The range of issues that require authorities and organisations to work together to meet the community’s needs has encouraged greater cooperation between councils and external agencies. The need for effective joint working has been highlighted in a number of specific Audit Commission reports in recent years (Refs. 5-12). For example, effective community care necessitates joint working by housing and social services staff (often in different local government tiers), the health authorities, and the support of local people and voluntary organisations. Planning, leisure, highways, crime prevention, environmental protection, and youth and children’s services are further examples of issues that cut across all three tiers of local government and across external organisations. Many local authorities aspire to be leaders and co-ordinators of their community, but their credibility in respect of this role can be undermined if they are themselves fragmented in their dealings with other agencies.

EXHIBIT 2
The impetus to improve joint working
Three main catalysts will lead to improved joint working and better services.

Source: Audit Commission
18. In addition, a number of services are provided concurrently by different levels of local government – that is, both county and district councils have powers to provide the same services. Examples include economic development, tourism, museums, leisure facilities, footpaths, grants to voluntary organisations and community-based services for elderly people. Some of these services are also provided concurrently between districts and parishes/community councils. For some other services, county and district councils have duties that are complementary and which need to be exercised in relation to each other. For example, county councils have responsibility for structure plans, trading standards and on-street parking, which need to be co-ordinated with district councils’ respective responsibilities for local plans and development control, environmental health and off-street parking. These concurrent and complementary functions all necessitate close joint working and liaison between the councils involved.

Government policy

19. After a year in office the Government has created an impetus for change in local government. The best value framework has been designed not just as a replacement for compulsory competitive tendering (CCT), but also to stimulate ‘continuous improvement’ in service delivery. The expectation raised in both the consultative papers on best value from the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) and Welsh Office (Refs. 13 and 14), and as part of the subsequent White Papers on modernising local government (Refs. 15 and 16) is that, as part of fundamental service reviews, councils will challenge why the particular service is needed at all, and even if it is, why it needs to be provided in any particular form. Assessing opportunities for improved working arrangements with other councils and other agencies must be an important part of that review process.

20. However, involving local communities in service planning and decision-making extends wider than the best value agenda. It is also explicit in the Government’s White Paper aspirations to reinvigorate local democracy and strengthen the role of councils as community leaders (Refs. 15 and 16). Councils’ duty to promote the ‘economic, social and environmental well-being of an area’ will necessitate close working relationships between councils and other agencies, as will the creation of ‘action zones’ for services such as housing and education. Encouragingly, many of the case studies and other initiatives in this compendium demonstrate wide-ranging community involvement in service planning.

21. Community focus and the need for close co-operation and consultation between councils, police authorities and community groups is also at the heart of the planned reforms under the Crime and Disorder Bill. The Government sees a role for more formal private sector involvement in aspects of community planning and consultation, and the involvement of the business sector is an important part of the planned reforms of business rates.
The framework of government policies to stimulate improved working arrangements and greater community involvement is already taking shape. The Local Government and Rating Act 1997 increased the powers available to town and parish councils – for example, in areas of community safety and transport – and placed a requirement on principal authorities to consult with town and parish councils as part of their service planning. In Wales, Section 14 of the Local Government (Wales) Act 1994 gave the new unitary councils a duty to consult with community councils.

Commitments made during the local government review (LGR)

Even after the formal review by the Local Government Commission (LGC), and subsequent government action on its recommendations, the majority of district councils and county councils in England still operate within a two-tier local government structure (or a three-tier structure where parish and town councils exist). But unchanged boundaries and functions do not mean maintaining the status quo. In submissions to the LGC, many county and district councils admitted that the two-tier system could be improved. Many made explicit commitments about improved co-operation and – where appropriate – delegation of functions.

These commitments now need to be delivered. Corporate commitment within an authority to these initiatives and increasing trust between all the authorities involved are important prerequisites to improved working arrangements. In some areas, the adversarial nature of the LGR process has undoubtedly had an effect on relationships in the short term and hampered progress. But local government structures are largely irrelevant to citizens. Councils must put LGR behind them if they are to respond to the changing local government agenda.

Improving working between the tiers is also an issue for unitary councils. Unitary councils in England and Wales have to develop new relationships with parish, town or community councils in their area. They will also need to establish relationships with the other unitaries, district and county councils surrounding them, not least because complex issues have a habit of not respecting local authority boundaries.

But delivering on commitments is not the only issue linked to LGR. Confusion among the public was one of the underlying problems that gave rise to the review. A survey undertaken as part of the LGC’s review process showed that:

- of those interviewed, just under two-thirds of local people in the shire areas said that they either did not know very much, or knew nothing at all, about councils in their area and the services that they provide.
• only around one half correctly identified the councils responsible for services in their area [EXHIBIT 3]. For example, one-third of those surveyed thought that district councils provide libraries and one-fifth thought that they run schools. Around one in five believed that the county council is responsible for council housing and administers benefits; and

• there is an appetite for more information and involvement in the affairs of local authorities. The survey suggested that over three-quarters of the public either like to know what their council is doing, or would like more say in what their council does and the services that it provides.

EXHIBIT 3
Public knowledge about local government
Of those interviewed, only around one half correctly identified the councils responsible for services in their area.

27. The message is clear: better services to the public must be underpinned by improved information. Councils must embrace the practicalities of making more information available to the community about themselves and the services that they operate.

Local government’s response...

28. If councils are to implement these proposals successfully, an ethos of letting out better information about services, their availability and performance, letting in the community to influence the council’s decisions on service priorities and standards, and eventually letting go and allowing other organisations to play a part in delivering local services, must be embraced.

29. Councils are responding to these changes. Initiatives to improve the accessibility of services and information to the community, to establish a framework for successful joint working and to develop co-ordination between different authorities and agencies are increasing. Chapters 2 to 4 highlight some of the initiatives already in place.
'Letting out' – increasing accessibility

Improving the accessibility of council information and services is a vital first step in developing the relationship between councils and their communities, and to encourage greater community participation in council business and activities. Initiatives to improve both information and access to services are becoming increasingly common, and often involve joint working between councils and other agencies.
30. County, district, town and parish and community councils have traditionally run many of their services independently of each other. Services, both within councils and across councils are often delivered from separate locations. Geography and travel are often factors that increase the difficulty of access, particularly in rural areas. Many in the community are unaware of which tier provides which service, and often that a service can be provided at all. This confusion has long been recognised as a problem. Resolving this problem was a key motive behind the structural review of local government. Confusion is increased where services cross traditional departmental boundaries, or where similar work is done by different tiers of local government – for example, trading standards, environmental health, parks and recreation, refuse collection and disposal.

31. Better information and the provision of facilities that assist the community in obtaining services are often the key to increasing accessibility and reducing confusion. Where councils are letting out clear and valued information, they assist the public in navigating around the complex organisational boundaries of the public sector. This chapter highlights a number of initiatives designed to improve the situation.

### Information about council services

32. Making information available about the services provided by all of the councils in an area – for example, by publishing a joint A-Z booklet of services – is well established. For example, East Devon District Council, Devon County Council and Devon and Cornwall Police Authority have, for example, jointly produced a booklet which replaces the three separate information leaflets that had been sent out with the annual council tax and business rate demands. This assists in reducing public confusion, and generally costs the authorities less in publication costs. Simple steps such as these can be cost-effective, and target information more concisely to the public. Posters and leaflets which provide simple information about which authority provides which service also are becoming increasingly popular. However, not all of these are as user-friendly as others – it is easy for such publications to be simply a list of the services provided by the county council and a list of those provided by the district council. The better examples are organised around the service required by the user with the required contacts for that service at both county and district councils.

33. Some authorities have taken the concept further, by using the internet. Somerset County Council shares an A-Z with districts, and parishes, on its website. It is a comprehensive document of services provided by all tiers of local government, and is accessed by the service requirement of the user rather than from a county or district council perspective. The website is well used, with over 300,000 pages accessed last year.

34. In some areas, joint welcome packs for new residents have been introduced. For example, Oadby and Wigston Borough Council has designed a welcome pack that includes a copy of its Visions and Values statement, details the complaints procedures, the A-Z of the services, leaflets on various facilities, a list of members, the council meetings timetable and a list of clubs and societies.

35. Joint county and district council advertisements in the telephone directory is an increasing practice, as is joint articles in the local press and council newsletters. These 'easy win' areas demonstrate that a little work can create very effective results.

### Community offices and facilities

36. The development of community offices or 'one-stop' (or 'first-stop') shops has been one of the most common and useful developments to increase accessibility to the public and to reduce confusion.

37. Concise, helpful guidance to the public, regardless of the authority where they have chosen to start their enquiry, is vital in providing a seamless service. Staff at the first point of contact, who are trained to understand the services provided by all the
tiers in the county, are better able to explain to the public how to take an enquiry further.

38. Examples are numerous. Nottinghamshire County Council has set up a Contact Information Service in partnership with district councils, the local health authority, voluntary groups and others to provide computerised touch-screen kiosks with information on services, events, health awareness and job vacancies. Knowsley Borough Council has set up a number of 'one-stop' shops as part of its integrated Customer Contact plan. The shops are located in main shopping areas across the borough and offer a wide range of council services alongside other services provided by the Council's partners in the private, community and voluntary sectors. The shops provide the main point of 'face-to-face' contact with customers. The Council is also currently developing a multi-service call centre to maximise the extent and quality of the service that it provides by telephone. Another aspect of the Customer Contact plan is the Community Information Programme, run in partnership with Liverpool University. The concept is to provide the community of Knowsley with up-to-date communications technology, so that local people can have 'on-line' access to council services and be trained in the use of this technology. These projects are complemented by a wide range of readily available printed council information, including detailed Who's Who booklets, A-Z guides to services and a publication each year which includes the council's performance indicators information. The London Borough of Brent has eight one-stop shops and a telephone call centre to provide access to council services and public service information, links with the voluntary sector and DSS benefit information. Another example is at North Devon District Council's offices in Barnstaple [CASE STUDY 1].

CASE STUDY 1 • North Devon District Council and Devon County Council – shared reception area

**Background**

The reception area at North Devon District Council's offices in Barnstaple previously had two reception desks: one for the county council and one for the district council. Each had staff with different uniforms, and the areas had different entrance titles and telephone numbers. Departments also maintained their own reception areas.

**Action**

The two entrances and reception areas were confusing to the public. This was overcome by replacing the existing arrangement with a one-point reception desk. This included improving the council's entrance facilities to comply with regulations particularly regarding disabled facilities. The project was jointly funded by both councils. Staff now have a common uniform, and have been jointly trained to answer both district and county council queries.

**Results**

The changes have achieved a much less confusing beginning to the public's contact with the district and county councils. The reception service is more efficient, with a single desk able to take queries for both authorities. It has reduced confusion at the first point of contact for both councils, and increased public accessibility to the services of both tiers of local government.

**Good practice points**

- successfully reduced confusion by removing the split between the two tiers at the first point of contact for the public; and
- used the opportunity of an existing need to upgrade a facility, to enhance joint working.
39. An unusual example of the development of a shared community office can be seen in Somerset. [CASE STUDY 2]

CASE STUDY 2 • Somerset – shared community office

Background
The police station of Dulverton was used as a base for community policing, but was not open during the day. Negotiations involving Somerset County Council, West Somerset District Council, Dulverton Town Council, the police authority and Exmoor National Park Authority have allowed the station to reopen during the day. It now acts as a police and community information office providing services and information on behalf of all authorities.

Action
The station now provides not only police services to the community but also a general council information service, administers car parking fines and undertakes other administrative tasks. The office is open Monday to Saturday each week from 9am to 1pm. The police authority owns and runs the building, and employs all the staff. This involved the transfer of some county council staff to the police authority. All are trained to deal with county and district council information, and funding is given by both councils.

Results
The shared community office has provided an important community focus for the town. The service has grown, and now includes the booking of community education courses, and MP and town council surgeries.

Good practice points
• good cross-agency working;
• makes use of the facilities already available in the community; and
• provides better access to the services that the community needs.
One example in Hampshire has demonstrated that the driving force behind a community office does not need to be the district or the county council, but can be the parish council [CASE STUDY 3].

CASE STUDY 3 • Bramshott and Liphook Parish Council – local community office

Background
The parish council of Bramshott and Liphook, with a population of 7,500 people, lies within East Hampshire on the borders of 3 districts and counties. It is 8 miles from the district council offices, with county 'local' offices between 8 and 30 miles away.

Action
The parish council has established a new office which provides a one-stop information point for all tiers of local government. The building is located in a prominent place beside Liphook's main car park, and both the county council and the district council gave grants to offset part of the development costs. The district council contributes towards the cost of providing this service, and both the county and district councils help with the freephone links from the office to their buildings. The district council provided some of the land for this project, and helped to fund new public toilets in the new building.

The office is open for public queries five hours every weekday. Callers get information by leaflet and from parish council staff, who help the public to identify the right contact point in the other councils, where appropriate. The facilities and information include:

- schedules for street cleansing, refuse collection and grass cutting;
- council tax scheme and rebates, and housing benefits;
- recycling facilities;
- dog by-laws and warden scheme;

- Health for All information;
- reporting sewerage problems;
- taxis/private hire cars; and
- small business information service.

There is also a surgery with a reception area, which is used by the Citizens Advice Bureau three mornings per week. District council planners and Housing Association officers hold weekly surgeries. The Job Centre is also considering using the office.

Results
The office provides a well-used and easily accessible entry to local government services. The most common queries include housing, highways, planning, public transport, reporting litter and lighting faults and local tourist information. The Citizens Advice Bureau has also more than doubled its previous caseload since it has been based in the new office.

A comprehensive one-stop facility is now being provided and managed by the parish council with technical and some financial help and training from the county and district councils.

Good practice points
- co-operation between all three tiers of local government; and
- the office provides other services needed in the community beyond those provided by local government.
41. In Purbeck, a similar arrangement for a one-stop shop has been established at the offices of Lychett Minster and Upton Town Council. The staff answer queries on behalf of the district and the county councils, and administer a cash office to collect council tax and other payments on behalf of the district council. This service is particularly important in increasing accessibility as the town is a considerable distance from the district council offices.

42. There does not necessarily need to be a separate office for this sort of facility. At Epsom and Ewell Borough Council, space has been made available in a town centre site for key public organisations to provide information. These include the Community Health Council, the Surrey Business Enterprise Agency, the Chamber of Commerce, the Benefits Agency and parts of the local NHS trust.

43. Increasing accessibility can also be achieved by developing the facilities that already exist. Many county councils provide a mobile library service in their rural areas. Purbeck District Council has agreed with the county council to have an input into the design of new mobile library vehicles, to include the display of district council information, and the team can include a member of the district council staff from time to time. The facilities will be labelled as Purbeck Local Government Services rather than perpetuating a county/district split.

44. Creating local panels, community forums or task groups is another common way of actively increasing the accessibility of local government to the community. These can take various forms. For example, Somerset County Council has set up community panels as a means of encouraging community involvement in local issues, and getting feedback on council services. The panels include representatives from the county council, the town council, the police authority, West Somerset District Council and the health provider, along with interested businesses and community groups. The panel meets every two to three months and tackles local issues such as local bus services, traffic-calming measures, and mobile library routes, and gives input to local projects such as the Rural Youth Challenge Project.

45. In Neath Port Talbot, the Neath Town Centre Forum has been established to provide an opportunity for consultation as part of planning a Neath town centre development strategy. Representatives from a wide range of organisations including community groups, the police authority, local businesses, council officers and members are involved.
46. Kettering Borough Council has established a community forum to draft and consult upon a community development plan for the borough. The forum is supported by three area forums. Issues that the forum will cover have been categorised into community issues rather than by service: quality of life, health and well-being, life-long learning, economy and environment. The council has also been involved in creating a ‘student council’, made up of elected representatives from the secondary schools in the borough, which it consults on issues affecting young people in the community. The council provides an annual grant to support the group.

47. Other councils have also set up forums for improved working. For example, East Cambridgeshire District Council carried out a survey of its parish councils in 1996. The survey was compiled by the district council in association with Cambridgeshire County Council, the Cambridgeshire Association of Local Councils and the parish councils. The survey covered the parish councils’ views on the district and county councils’ services, the quality of consultation, contacts and information, and the priorities for community governance. As a result of the survey, a parish forum was established, giving all the councils a chance to meet, share information and ideas as part of service planning. The forum also provides a platform for other agencies, such as the Police Authority, to meet the councils.

48. Following completion of its first service delivery plan, Flintshire County Council considered ways of translating commitments in the plan into specific policy development along with its commitment to working in partnership with as many facets of its communities as possible. The council has now created a number of joint member/officer task groups to pursue policy development around anti-poverty, environment and regeneration in community development, and children and young people.

49. Equal opportunities has subsequently been added and the task groups are now working in partnership with representatives of the council’s workforce, voluntary organisations, town and community councils and other appropriate agencies. The work of all the task groups is overseen by the policy committee of the council.

50. A good example of local forums being established, with a specific area focus, can be seen at Nottinghamshire County Council [CASE STUDY 4, overleaf].
CASE STUDY 4 • Nottinghamshire County Council – local area forums

Background
Nottinghamshire County Council started the County of the Future programme in 1995. This initiated three main streams of activity - to improve working relationships between the county's three tiers of local government, to build effective partnerships with other agencies, and to engage with local communities.

Action
Key to the impact of this programme has been the creation of a network of local area forums across Nottinghamshire. These are:

• based on natural communities ranging in population between 10,000 and 40,000; and

• multi-agency and multi-sector partnerships bringing together members and officers from all local government tiers in an area, schools, colleges, the voluntary sector, TECs, health purchasers and providers, the police authority, local churches, local businesses and local community organisations - the mix and range of participants is determined by local stakeholders.

The forums have been created to:

• work closely with the local community to establish a clear agenda of local needs and priorities;

• use a wide range of techniques to consult, inform, encourage participation and build local community capacity - techniques include conferences, focus groups, questionnaires, surveys and community-based work groups;

• respond to local priorities by tackling locally those issues which cannot readily be addressed by individual agencies (such as regeneration, crime and community safety, social exclusion, youth disaffection) or by influencing individual agencies' approach to local services; and

• improve targeting of locally deployed resources which are usually both scarce and fragmented.

Results
At a strategic level, the forums have been successful in:

• winning European Social Fund support worth £200,000 to work with community organisations to support local delivery of training and employment opportunities;

• winning inclusion as a pilot project in the Government's Welfare to Work and New Deal policies.

At a more local level, the forums have been instrumental in establishing:

• local projects ranging from community safety schemes, initiatives focused on work with older people and lottery bids.

• influence over local service provision with examples including changed policing patterns, the introduction of a health worker and advice sessions for young people, and the provision of new leisure facilities.

Good practice points
• the programme brings together opportunities for collaborative working, community consultation and collective community leadership in one process and tests these ideas in a range of different communities; and

• in most cases the programme has been developed jointly between the county council and district councils and, as a result, has made an effective contribution to developing relationships following LGR.
51. Leadership at elected member level is required if such initiatives are to be most productive. For example, the Leader of Flintshire County Council has highlighted the importance of developing an ethos of joint working at the earliest opportunity.

'From the very start of Flintshire, we have been fully committed to involving our communities in open, transparent and, above all, meaningful partnerships. We have developed the initiatives heralded in our first Service Delivery Plan by implementing a Task Group approach, involving community representatives, to core, corporate issues. "Planning for Real" exercises in localities have demonstrated the value of involving local communities in identifying their needs and the means by which they can best be met.

Corporate commitment is essential, and none of this could have been achieved without the commitment of members who seized the opportunities offered by these initiatives and responded enthusiastically to the challenges they presented to the more traditional role of members and to the changing relationship with their communities, and in particular community councils. We now look forward to building upon our initial success by further developing our approach to inclusivity and genuine partnerships in our community planning processes.'
Area committees

52. Some authorities are devolving services to area committees as a means of bringing services closer to the community, making them more accessible, and increasing accountability. Cumbria County Council has six area committees based on the same boundaries as the district councils. Joint Policy Advisory Committees (JPACs) comprising county, district and parish council members support the area committees. The terms of reference of the JPACs include the development of a common policy agenda for the area. Another example is at South Somerset District Council [CASE STUDY 5].

CASE STUDY 5 • South Somerset District Council – area committees

Background

South Somerset District Council has one-third of the county’s population within its boundary. It covers 370 square miles and contains 121 parishes. It has established four generic area committees, which are supported and serviced by four area offices, to provide services directly to the public.

A MORI survey of South Somerset residents revealed that three-quarters of respondents wanted more council services available in their locality rather than from the main council offices in Yeovil. In response to this view, the first area office opened in 1995, at Wincanton.

Action

The area committees are responsible for a broad range of council services such as housing, environmental health, leisure and planning. Meetings are held in local venues and attract general public attendance. They also enable better involvement by the parish and town councils. Delegation has meant that area planning managers can now agree planning matters with the parish and town councils. If they cannot reach agreement, problems are referred to the area committee.

The area committees also work with the county council and parish and town councils. This is carried on at the area office level as well. For example, the area office at

Wincanton houses the community office which is jointly funded with Somerset County Council and Wincanton Town Council. The social services team dealing with services for the elderly is based there, along with the registrar of births and deaths and the town clerk.

Results

The creation of area committees has promoted more community involvement in local government, and facilitated closer working with the parish councils. They have made the provision of services more accessible to the community and encouraged more public involvement in decision-making.

The location of the area offices and the sites for the committee meetings have provided easy accessibility and ensured good community attendance at meetings.

Good practice points

- encourages community involvement in committee meetings, and helps to develop the concept of direct consultation;
- improves cross-tier working with the county and parish councils; and
- enables better access for the community.
Joint surveys

53. Joint surveys of users of council services are becoming increasingly common as a means of allowing greater community access into decision-making processes of councils, and improving performance management and accountability to the community. For example, Breckland and Great Yarmouth councils are jointly undertaking surveys, supplemented by focus panels, as part of their ongoing service improvement initiatives [CASE STUDY 6].

CASE STUDY 6 • Breckland District Council and Great Yarmouth Borough Council – joint council surveys

Background
The two authorities are undertaking joint working to develop their benefits services. This is helped by joint customer surveys. The authorities see this initiative as a ‘three-way partnership’ between the two councils and their customers.

Action
The authorities jointly produced a series of questionnaires with common aims and questions. These surveys included invitations to join user panels, as a means of focusing in on individual issues. Each authority has learnt from the other’s experiences and from the knowledge gained from the surveys to develop their own benefits service.

‘Quality groups’ have been set up in each authority to develop and introduce initiatives. These groups consist of representatives from a wide cross-section of staff.

Results
The surveys have given the councils a database of current public opinion and it has also allowed customers to achieve a better understanding of the issues involved.

Overall, the joint approach has allowed the two authorities to be more targeted in the analysis of the survey results. The user forums allow deeper review and discussion on particular issues. Survey feedback has prompted the councils to look at a number of areas including:

- payments procedures;
- braille leaflets;
- advice leaflets; and
- reception facilities.

Good practice points
- joint customer survey;
- shared information and joint learning; and
- encouraged customer involvement and understanding.
Increasing democratic accountability

54. A growing number of local authorities see accountability as consisting of more than voters periodically electing councillors. Representative democracy is strengthened when it is supported by participative democracy, through informing, consulting and involving local people and communities.

55. The White Papers on modernising local government in England and Wales (Refs. 15 and 16) clearly state an intention to improve local accountability and encourage participative democracy.

56. A significant number of councils are working on methods to encourage people to vote. However, working together to increase electoral registration appears to be an area of relatively limited progress. There are some examples of where this has been developed, especially to encourage young people to vote. In Derbyshire, the county council and Amber Valley Borough Council have worked together to promote joint schemes to increase registration, particularly among the younger population.

Further measures, such as making polling stations more accessible and the use of electronic facilities are being considered to encourage a wider voting pattern. In Leicestershire, Blaby District Council annually co-ordinates joint advertising on behalf of other councils in Leicestershire to promote electoral registration. The council is also doing research to establish why voting turnout is low.

Using information technology

57. The use of IT, the internet and video-conferencing is increasing the possibilities for joint working and accessibility to the public. Joint IT information network points provide valuable access for citizens to local government information, as well as other general local information.

58. In Cambridgeshire, the county council and Cambridge City Council have established an IT project which involves a wide range of public sector, voluntary and private partners [CASE STUDY 10, p31]. This project uses 17 electronic access points – most assisted – in libraries and voluntary sector premises, with the aim of developing IT skills and providing information through free internet access.

Opportunity Links, a partnership between councils and local businesses in Cambridgeshire, provides information about childcare, training benefits and jobs across the county. Somerset County Council hosts a website used by the district and parish councils to disseminate information on services, facilities and local attractions.
59. Devon County Council has developed and maintains a large database of information: *Facts and Figures*, which includes information from a wide range of sources, including the health authority, all the district councils, South West Water, the Environment Agency, and the Employment Services. The database is accessible through the council’s internet 'home pages' and contains nearly 70,000 pages of information. This is now being developed further with the *Intercom Project* (that is, *Interconnecting Communities*). The project is based around research conducted by the county council into the information needs of people living and working in rural West Devon. It will encourage and support communities in developing their own home pages with local relevant information. It will include access to information from all the partners involved in the project.

60. The use of video-conferencing technology has proved to be more difficult than the general acceptance of the internet. Attempts have been made by some authorities to use video conferencing as a means of bringing service users into contact with service providers where they are more remote and do not have easy access to face-to-face contact. For example, the London Borough of Lewisham is providing *Telly Talk* shops, a European Union funded project, located at a number of sites (including shopping centres) and provides a video conferencing service for enquiries regarding public services. In Cumbria, the county council has developed its *Genesis* project to aid communications across what is the most sparsely populated county in England. The project has provided 20 public access sites spread across all six district councils in the county. Each site provides video conferencing facilities, information, and services. The public can use the sites to e-mail comments or queries to the council. The project is being developed further to include internet e-mail addresses for all officers and members which can be accessed by the public via *Genesis*, and a 'virtual public gallery scheme' – where members of the public can 'attend' council meetings from remote sites.

### Next steps...

61. Initiatives such as the establishment of community offices, better use of IT and improvements in the quality of information about council services are important initial steps in improving the accessibility of those services to the community. The community and other agencies now need to be encouraged to play a more involved and active role in influencing councils' decision making processes, within an accepted framework. Examples of developing initiatives in this area are described in the next chapter.
'Letting in' – establishing the framework

If joint working arrangements are to be successful, they need to be supported by an agreement or understanding about the respective roles and responsibilities of the councils and external agencies involved. Establishing that framework is an important part of developing effective inter-tier or inter-agency working.
Opportunities to improve multi-agency working are significant. These opportunities will only be realised if councils encourage letting in the community and other agencies to be part of the policymaking process and put in place a framework to ensure that the process functions effectively. The lessons from LGR showed that co-operative working is dependent upon initial willingness to participate and a clear understanding between the parties of their respective roles and responsibilities. Some of the joint working arrangements born of the LGR process were not supported and regulated by formal written agreements or protocols, nor were they understood by members or officers, and as a result have subsequently withered. This chapter provides examples of framework agreements under three headings:

- principles and protocols;
- joint working groups; and
- consortium arrangements.

**Principles and protocols**

The exact nature of any written agreement or protocol between the authorities and agencies involved should reflect the detail and format of individual joint arrangements, but most should include a number of essential elements [EXHIBIT 4, overleaf].

The requirement of best value may, however, require a further sort of protocol, in certain instances, from the joint service delivery model illustrated - for example, joint sharing of public consultation programmes as part of preparing best value local performance plans.

The Local Government Association (LGA) and the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) have recognised the importance of providing a framework for joint working between principal and local councils, and have recently published a joint statement on the principles that they believe characterise effective working relationships (Ref. 17).
EXHIBIT 4

Written agreement or protocol for joint arrangements

A number of essential elements should be included.

Source: Audit Commission
Several councils have adopted such protocols at the local level. Leicestershire County Council, in conjunction with district councils in the county, has developed a comprehensive joint protocol for regulating joint working and facilitating better consultation between the councils [CASE STUDY 7].

### CASE STUDY 7 • Leicestershire County Council and the Leicestershire district councils – joint working protocols

**Background**

In Leicestershire, the county and district councils worked together to produce a Memorandum of Understanding and Principles of Consultation, which set out protocols for greater co-operation, joint projects, avoidance of duplication and better use of buildings. The Memorandum provides the basis for improving partnership working. The Principles sets out the ground rules for staff to follow in their day-to-day work.

**Action**

**Memorandum of Understanding**

This document was based on discussions between the county council and district councils, recognising that, while they were going to remain in a two-tier system following LGR, they could make ‘worthwhile improvements for the benefit of all Leicestershire people...within the existing system’. It establishes agreed principles that will govern working relationships between the county and the district councils. The agreed commitments cover:

- workable agreements;
- local decision-making;
- removing duplication; and
- a consensual approach.

It was also agreed that the main improvements in working relationships must include a commitment to:

- greater co-operation at a strategic level;
- avoidance of duplication;
- better use of buildings, including co-location of staff; and
- joint help points.

**Principles of Consultation**

The principles set out guidance that staff should follow in their day-to-day work to ensure the achievement of the Memorandum of Understanding. These principles include:

- consulting over proposals likely to have a significant impact upon local communities;
- ensuring that consultation takes place at the earliest possible stage;
- allowing adequate time for responses;
- reporting clearly and impartially the consultation responses received from other councils;
- ensuring that all committee reports on issues likely to have a significant impact on local communities include details of what inter-council consultations have taken place and, if none, why not; and
- ensuring that each council appoints a lead officer to act as the first point of contact in situations where any difficulties or uncertainties arise with consultations.

**Results**

Joint working arrangements have been codified in protocols agreed by all participants, which constitute an improved framework for joint working.

**Good practice points**

- clear principles for joint working and consultation were established and agreed at the outset; and
- all parties are working to the same commitments.
Joint working protocols of this nature need not be restricted to principal authorities. Following the Local Government and Rating Act 1997 requirement for principal authorities to consult with town and parish councils, a growing number of councils have introduced protocols/agreements for this consultative process. In Wiltshire, a charter has already been developed to promote consultation and the active involvement of all tiers of local government, especially on planning decisions [CASE STUDY 8].

CASE STUDY 8 • Wiltshire – a charter for joint working

Background
The *Wiltshire Charter for Local Councils* was launched in 1996, and 'represents the general consensus on the way in which principal councils (that is, the county and district councils) should work with local councils (that is, town and parish councils) for the benefit of the people of Wiltshire'. It was published as a joint policy statement by the county council, the district councils and the Wiltshire Association of Local Councils.

Action
The aim of the charter is to provide the basis for effective consultation between the principal councils and the parish and town councils, to consider the potential for greater involvement by the parishes in the provision of services, and where possible to develop partnership working. The charter defines which matters will be the subject of consultation, and places a duty on the parish councils to provide an assessment of the needs and wishes of individual communities. The charter also includes an intention that 'elections to local and principal councils should be held at the same time in order to stimulate increased electoral activity and minimise costs to local councils'.

A code of conduct has been established for consultation. The duties of all parties are clearly set out.

Principal councils will:
- provide all relevant information on which the local council is asked to provide a view;
- provide a realistic consultation period in which to respond;
- ensure that the views of local councils are reported and taken into account; and
- provide an explanation if the decision does not accord with local views.

Local councils will:
- provide a practical and realistic response to the matter under consideration; and
- respond within the specified consultation period.

Results
The charter has successfully codified the roles and responsibilities of all the councils in Wiltshire, facilitated a better understanding of their respective priorities, and improved joint working arrangements.

Good practice points
- clear and concise duties and commitments embodied in a charter that has been agreed by all parties.
68. Another good example of a protocol designed to co-ordinate the activities of a range of external agencies and organisations is the Stafford Governance Partnership [CASE STUDY 9].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CASE STUDY 9 • Stafford – a governance partnership</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Background</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The Stafford Governance Partnership was established to bring together the key local organisations that are responsible for personal welfare, health, education, safety and security. All have signed a Governance Charter, which is a commitment to consult, co-operate, and listen to each other, to report actions taken, and work together on specific actions for the benefit of the whole area. Member organisations include Stafford Borough Council, Staffordshire County Council, police and health authorities, health trusts, the probation service, the university and college, the TEC and the fire service, the university and college, the TEC and the fire.</td>
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<td><strong>Action</strong></td>
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<td>The charter represents the commitment of all the member organisations to:</td>
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<td>• consult, co-operate, listen and explain themselves in relationships with each other;</td>
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<td>• consult, listen, explain and report actions taken with regard to the community; and</td>
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<tr>
<td>• work together when pursuing specific actions for the benefit of the area.</td>
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<td><strong>Results</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The first joint project involved tackling social issues on a local housing estate, and focused on unemployment, single parents and educational achievement. The aim is to focus attention on the key decision-making organisations in the area, trying to draw them together into a partnership.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Good practice points</strong></td>
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<td>• the charter provides the framework for multi-agency commitment to working together; and</td>
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<tr>
<td>• the councils and agencies involved have looked beyond their own needs and requirements to consider the future provision of local government services in tandem with other public sector providers.</td>
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Wales

69. In Wales, LGR was more comprehensive and consequently is more advanced than in parts of England. The stimulus for creating protocols or agreements for joint working is embodied in a general statutory requirement under the Local Government (Wales) Act 1994. This requires new unitary councils to consult with community councils. This statutory requirement, and the accompanying Welsh Office guidelines [BOX A], provide authorities in Wales with a useful initial framework for forming relationships with community councils and for developing consultative techniques, which will be vital in terms of meeting the impending best value requirement.

70. As a follow-up to these guidelines, the Welsh Office conducted a survey of unitary councils in the summer of 1997 to establish what agreements to consult with the community councils had been put in place. Responses indicated that all were undertaking the requirements to some degree.

BOX A

Welsh Office guidance on consultation with community councils

'The new principal councils should normally seek to consult community councils in their area on the following subjects:

1. local planning matters (including applications for listed building consent, establishment of conservation areas, tree preservation orders);
2. local recreation or other facilities;
3. local education matters, such as proposals for the opening or closure of schools or other education facilities;
4. litter control zones;
5. establishment of noise abatement zones, applications for prior approval of construction works and public entertainment licences;
6. local highways issues such as proposals for carrying out highways works, parking restrictions and road safety;
7. street naming within the community; and
8. local authority supported bus services and local authority provided bus shelters.'

Source: Welsh Office

71. Most councils, including Wrexham, Torfaen, Conwy and Denbighshire, have developed codes of practice or charters for consultation with community councils. Others, including Caerphilly, Swansea, Newport and Powys, have appointed community council liaison officers or allocated responsibility to specific service departments for consultation and liaison with community councils on the issues specified in the Welsh Office guidance, and on how it may be developed further. Some councils, such as the Vale of Glamorgan and Swansea, have established a joint liaison committee to develop relationships and working practices with the community councils.
Joint working groups

72. Joint officer/member working groups can often provide the stimulus and rigour to ensure that mechanisms and protocols for joint working are developed and maintained. The Further Improving the Three Tiers (FITT) group, established in Cambridgeshire, is one example [CASE STUDY 10].
73. Similarly, at Neath Port Talbot, a tripartite working group involving officers and members from the council, the Welsh Development Agency and West Wales TEC has been established to co-ordinate strategic economic development planning and investment in the area.

CASE STUDY 10 • Cambridgeshire – the Further Improving the Three Tiers (FITT) Group

Background
The chief executives of the councils in Cambridgeshire established a joint working group, called FITT, to plan and co-ordinate improvements to the two- and three-tier system. Improvements were focused on enhancing services to citizens, improving information and access, and sharing officers’ skills and resources.

Action
The FITT group established a detailed work programme, with target dates, and identified lead officers, using short-term and medium-term priorities. The FITT group has initiated a number of ideas, including:

- developing an information database, which is available at access points across the county. Ownership rests with the county council, with each district council having a nominated person for updating details, which is done regularly. This database includes information on other organisations, and is added to, at the request of the public, if omissions are identified;
- using the internet to bring local MPs, local authorities and the voluntary sector together. An internet provider has supplied equipment and links to 17 pilot sites, and the city council and county council provide the technical support. It gives all citizens free access to the internet. The information is badged under Cambridge on-line City. A £140,000 grant from the Lottery Charities Board is supporting further expansion of the project over the next three years; and
- linking the telephone systems of the authorities for Huntingdon, Cambridge City, the county council and East Cambridgeshire, with the potential to add remaining districts in the near future. Calls are charged at the local call rate, which in itself is expected to generate savings in the cost of inter-authority telephone calls.

The group’s work has also covered longer-term projects which involve improved working with the parishes, secondments between the authorities, the potential for one-stop shops and closer links with housing and social services.

Results
The FITT working group established clear targets with set timescales. This focused its work and ensured that the potential for action was actually achieved and not just discussed. The life of the group was finite, and once the main goals were achieved, the group disbanded. Chief executives retain an overview, but smaller local groups are continuing to work on specific projects.

Good practice points
- clearly defined and measurable targets set for the joint working group to achieve;
- the group provided the forum to ensure that projects were controlled and monitored; and
- set achievable objectives which had practical benefits for users and participating agencies.
Consortium arrangements

74. A number of councils in England and Wales submitted best value pilot proposals that emphasised the importance of good inter-tier and inter-agency working as a key feature of demonstrating best value. Two of these proposals in England were selected to be formal pilot sites. Consortium arrangements have been put in place that require co-ordination between several authorities, some not even within the same county boundary [CASE STUDY 11].

CASE STUDY 11 • CWOIL group of local authorities - a joint best value proposal
(Cambridge City Council, Welwyn Hatfield District Council, Oxford City Council, Ipswich Borough Council and Lincoln City Council)

Background
The CWOIL group of local authorities was established in August 1992 to share experience and ideas, initially in the field of housing management.

The group has established close co-operation and liaison, including the development of specifications and quality evaluation techniques, mock tendering exercises, benchmarking, and the development of key performance indicators. More recently, the group jointly commissioned research by external consultants into each authority’s performance in the management of empty property, with a view to establishing best practice and comparable performance and cost indicators.

The joint application for best value pilot status represented the continuation of the work already started. Ipswich Borough Council is also a best value pilot in its own right, reviewing all services, and is using the CWOIL benchmarking processes for housing and revenue services.

Action
The best value pilot covers the housing services and revenue services provided by each of the local authorities and includes some services not currently defined for CCT purposes, together with associated support services. The two other members of the group will continue to support the three lead authorities in providing an open exchange of information on costs, service standards and performance in relation to service delivery, and will participate in specific comparison exercises.

This pilot project will offer the opportunity for customers and stakeholders to have access to detailed information on the performance, cost and quality of services, but also to make informed comparisons with other providers, and to seek explanations for differences.

The project is intended to stimulate joint working between the group of authorities by developing joint training initiatives, the sharing of skills, knowledge and experience, and the joint commissioning of research and consultancy work. The opportunities to build on existing partnership working between the authorities will be explored at member, officer and customer/stakeholder level.

Good practice points
• sharing of skills, training, research and consultancy work; and
• increasing accessibility of information on council services to the community and other stakeholders.
The other best value pilot in England which incorporates joint working as its main feature, is that of Tandridge District Council, Brighton and Hove Council, and Wealden District Council [CASE STUDY 12].

Best value is in its early stages of development. Many other authorities are also developing joint working mechanisms as a means of improving their co-ordination of services even though, as yet, they are not formal pilot sites.

Completing the picture...

Clearly, setting up frameworks for co-operative working, joint working groups and consortium arrangements is a starting point. The case studies show that some councils have already progressed beyond the initial setting up of these frameworks. Councils are also discovering that letting in influence from the public and other bodies adds to their authority, rather than diminishes it. However, establishing the right framework is not sufficient in itself to guarantee change. What is needed next in all authorities is detailed interaction with other councils and agencies to improve co-ordination in service delivery mechanisms. Examples of developing initiatives in this area are described in the next chapter.

CASE STUDY 12 • Tandridge, Brighton and Hove and Wealden – joint working within best value

Background
The best value pilot is a joint proposal from the authorities of differing sizes, and backgrounds. It aims to develop joint working arrangements in revenues and benefits focused on customer needs, leading to better administration of local taxes, revenue collection and benefits in an integrated organisation. The partnership is aided by the geographical proximity of the three authorities.

Action
The first stage of the project will review the different working methods of the three authorities, with the objective of identifying areas for combined working or combined service delivery. This will involve the extension of existing IT systems at one authority to all three, and new IT procurement will be undertaken jointly.

New services, such as out-of-hours enquiries or phone services might also be included in the project. The emphasis is on ‘providing a quality service combined with economies of scale, standard documents for the three authorities using plain English, and service delivery reflecting appropriate customer care levels.’ Lewes District Council is also joining the project.

Good practice points
• joint working between unitary and district councils, not formally linked by historical boundaries; and
• the project is aimed not only at reducing costs, but also at improving services and involving the public more in terms of influencing and accessing information.
'Letting go' – developing co-ordination

Interaction between councils and a range of other different public and private sector agencies to develop and improve co-ordination in service delivery is increasing. These joint working arrangements can be seen not only in the traditional service areas, but also across the multi-dimensional 'wicked issues' such as community safety and regeneration.
78. The role of local government in co-ordinating the activities of public, private and voluntary sector agencies has grown very significantly in the last few years. The strategic role of elected members, the move towards authorities as commissioners and enablers as much as direct providers of services, and the advent of Challenge funding have all contributed to this development. So has the multi-dimensional character of local problems and 'wicked issues' like urban regeneration, crime prevention, drug abuse and environmental sustainability, and the fragmentation of accountability for local services.

79. Authorities are increasingly accepting that it is a contradiction in terms to aspire to the co-ordination of these functions in isolation from other authorities and agencies in their area. Some councils appear to have been particularly active and innovative in letting in influence from other agencies.

80. LGR presented similar challenges to the newly created and 'continuing' unitary councils in Wales and England, not least to develop, plan and implement their own approaches to service delivery for a much-expanded range of services. LGR has therefore necessitated the forging of new working relationships with other organisations and bodies involved in the delivery of local government services and provided an ideal opportunity to make a fresh start in improving inter-tier and inter-agency working.

81. Equally, those county councils that have relinquished parts of their area to new unitary councils will have needed to redefine service delivery to see themselves as new entities rather than as merely downsized authorities.

82. There is a growing number of examples of working across the tiers, and with the police, health authorities, local businesses, TECs, voluntary organisations, probation services and other external agencies. They cover both traditional service areas and those that cut across traditional approaches and address wicked issues. This chapter gives a flavour of some of these initiatives. A number of these initiatives demonstrate that, at some councils, the reluctance to letting go of the direct delivery of services has been diminished, and other agencies are being asked to take a more prominent role. There are encouraging signs that local government is grasping the wider agenda of best value and looking outside/beyond its own boundaries. Increasing co-ordination across boundaries must be an essential component of 'better value' for service consumers and the public.

83. Good examples of co-ordination are to be seen in the areas of:

- economic development and regeneration;
- community safety;
- education and young people;
- highways;

- leisure services;
- social services; and
- waste management.

Economic development and regeneration

84. A co-ordinated approach is increasingly seen as essential to economic development and regeneration, in an area where some councils are committing significant resources. The Government has recently agreed support initiatives in this area, as part of the Local Government Association's 'New Commitment for Regeneration' proposals. The scheme requires local authorities to co-ordinate the preparation of comprehensive regeneration strategies designed to address issues of unemployment, social exclusion, poor health and inadequate facilities. These 'pathfinder' schemes will require local authorities, the private and voluntary and community sectors to work together and in partnership with the Government to improve the social and economic environment within the area covered by the strategy.
85. Maximising the benefit of limited financial resources is a key catalyst in the development of joint initiatives, and shared resourcing is increasingly becoming an area for councils to explore, particularly for urban regeneration schemes. One such major joint project has been set up by Newport County Borough Council [CASE STUDY 13].

86. Other examples include Flintshire, where the county council has instigated a ‘match funding’ scheme, whereby revenue and capital financial commitments from the community councils and voluntary sector in the area are matched by the county council. The project is ongoing and has, to date, contributed to the maintenance and development of playschemes and the introduction of a range of traffic-calming measures as part of a programme of community and urban development.

CASE STUDY 13 • Newport Development Board - a joint approach to regeneration

Background
Newport County Borough Council had identified the need to develop the river area in Newport, to promote external investment and support the Council’s strategies for economic regeneration.

Action
The council set up the Newport Development Board - a joint board comprising members of the council, representatives from the Welsh Development Agency and the private sector, with business executives from major companies such as British Steel and Midland Bank, and with the support of the Welsh Office, as observers. Responsibility for decisions on opportunities and initiatives to develop the Newport area has been delegated to the board, although financial responsibility remains with the council.

The board is supported by a number of project working groups.

Results
The schemes under the management of the Board have attracted major capital investment from the private sector and development grant aid from both the Welsh Office and the Welsh Development Agency. Capital commitments from the council itself bring investment in the redevelopment of the area to a total of £80 million. Schemes cover the river banks, the town centre and other urban areas and include new housing, retail developments, offices, car parking and a theatre.

Good practice points
• joint board with a mix of public and private sector representatives encourages a co-ordinated multi-agency approach; and
• major capital investment, not available from the council alone, has been encouraged from the private sector and other funding agencies.
In England, Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) bids can often provide an ideal background for promoting joint working. A good example of co-ordination of SRB projects between councils and other agencies can be seen at Hertfordshire County Council [CASE STUDY 14].

**CASE STUDY 14 • Hertfordshire County Council – co-ordinating SRB projects**

**Background**
In Hertfordshire, a six-year programme for SRB has been set up, with seven separate projects involved across the county. The strategic objectives of the programme are to:
- improve education and training for young people;
- help new businesses by providing practical support;
- help those leaving education and training to gain entry to the workforce; and
- develop the personal and social skills of young people and promote community action against crime.

**Action**
The SRB programmes are managed locally by area partnership groups, involving the county council, the relevant district councils and other stakeholders. These groups advise all the key partners, including community representatives and local businesses, and work to shape the programmes to reflect local needs and priorities.

In addition to the main groups, there is also a network of local working groups set up to monitor progress and keep in touch with local views on the programme. This helps to keep the partnership groups accountable.

**Results**
The area partnership groups and community representatives have been working to co-ordinate a range of projects including:
- in Borehamwood, the *First Schools Compact* is a project to improve the performance of children with special education needs;
- in St Albans, franchise workshops have been set up to provide independent advice on franchising as a route into business. A number of high street banks, together with the British Franchise Association have supported the workshops;
- in Welwyn Hatfield, there are two complementary projects to provide computer training for small businesses, and an *IT Centre Project*, which promotes IT awareness for small businesses;
- in St Albans, the *Employment Direct* project has established an employers’ forum to develop a supported employment service for people with mental health challenges which offers one-to-one support and training to assist individuals into paid employment; and
- the *Welwyn Hatfield Community Safety* initiative has been set up to create a community safety strategy, to develop annual action plans for multi-agency working and to initiate, monitor and promote local crime prevention projects involving all partners. So far this project has provided a number of new jobs, and provided various crime prevention and community initiatives.

**Good practice points**
- tackles community issues, such as community safety, with multi-agency joint working and consultation;
- encourages wide community involvement in progressing local issues and priorities; and
- develops interest and involvement from local businesses.
Other examples of co-ordinated SRB bids include Amber Valley Borough Council in Derbyshire, which established the *Amber Valley Partnership* four years ago, with the objective of regenerating the local economy through co-ordinated SRB bidding, taking into account environmental issues as well. The Partnership functions through a joint board which includes representatives from the borough and county councils (officers and members), the health authority, voluntary organisations, and private businesses. The board meets every two months, with Amber Valley Borough Council providing support services and taking a co-ordinating role. This is an important networking forum, and has been instrumental in co-ordinating the SRB bids, and obtaining funding for CCTV projects. From this partnership, various subgroups have been established to tackle specific areas of need. These include a range of voluntary organisations. One, the *Erewash Valley Initiative* involves four district councils and crosses the Derbyshire/Nottinghamshire boundaries, to discuss economic developments, recycling, open cast mining and general joint working.

Co-operation on the marketing of land, land exchanges and land assembly projects has also proved to be a significant help to the economic regeneration of an area, such as in County Durham. [CASE STUDY 15].

**CASE STUDY 15**

**Sedgefield Borough Council and Durham County Council – joint marketing**

**Background**

Sedgefield Borough Council and Durham County Council have a long-established culture of joint working. Despite the turbulence caused by the LGR process, the two councils continued with projects on joint marketing and development of land to encourage business investment in the area.

**Action**

The two councils included land assembly projects as part of their Inward Investment Strategy initiative. The project involved the authorities jointly purchasing pieces of land which were then marketed as a factory site. It was sold to Fujitsu, creating several hundred new jobs in the area.

**Results**

The two councils have worked together on projects that have promoted business investment in the area, and created new jobs.

**Good practice points**

- joint project for marketing and development of land; and
- LGR was not allowed to be a reason for the projects to be discontinued.
90. Councils are becoming increasingly involved in companies that have been set up to oversee city redevelopment and to encourage investment as part of urban regeneration strategies. For example, Cardiff County Council established a consultative group when developing its City Centre Strategy which included the chairs of the main council committees, other public sector organisations and, through the local Chamber of Commerce, the business community.

91. In parallel with this process, the council and the Chamber of Commerce set up a partnership company, Cardiff Initiative Limited. The council is represented on the board of the company and provides revenue support. The company exists to support the implementation of the City Centre Strategy and to involve the private sector in shaping development. The company has been successful in securing investment for commercial development within the city, as part of a major regeneration programme.

Community safety

92. The Crime and Disorder Bill focuses on co-operative working between councils, police authorities and community groups as part of the development of community safety strategies. It will also necessitate participants 'pooling' budgets as well as human resources. Some joint-work initiatives are already in place. Most metropolitan councils, London borough councils and some unitary councils have introduced 'safer cities' initiatives that involve joint working with police authorities and other agencies. Other councils are also developing community safety initiatives.

93. In Gedling, the borough council works with the county council, the parishes, residents' groups and the police in a Crime Reduction Forum that is aimed at preventing local crime. The council also published a joint Crime and Safety plan with the county council and the police authority in 1997. The authorities jointly commissioned research into crime in Gedling using the voluntary organisation, Crime Concern. As a result of the feedback on the Crime and Safety plan (which went to all households) and the research, a joint Crime Reduction/Community Safety plan has been published. The plan has a number of locally agreed strategic aims and a wide variety of tasks shared between the partners. In North West Leicestershire, the district council has joined with the police and local agencies to promote crime prevention through their Partnership in Safer Communities project.

94. In 1997, Breckland Council was short-listed for the 'Community Initiative of the Year' award by the Local Government Chronicle for its work in partnership with different agencies and authorities to tackle crime, improve employment and generally enhance the quality of life in Thetford. Following public consultation, this partnership has developed a range of programmes and initiatives to improve the health and skills of the local community.

95. Best value has also provided an opportunity for some councils to develop community safety initiatives with an emphasis on joint working. Bradford's pilot proposal focuses particularly on co-ordinating the contributions of the different directorates of the council (housing, social services, education and community and environmental services) towards improving community safety.

96. A forthcoming Audit Commission report, planned for late 1998, will highlight the progress made by councils in implementing community safety initiatives.
Education and young people

97. A number of partnership initiatives provide educational opportunities as well as tackling wider social issues. The City and County of Swansea has recently introduced a multi-agency project called City and County of Learning. The initiative aims to co-ordinate priority education themes including learning opportunities for the pre-school and 14 to 19 age groups, together with adult education. It involves a range of other local organisations including voluntary and community groups, schools and colleges, the careers service, employment and training organisations, the local health and police authorities and local businesses. For example, a variety of projects are being put in place to promote learning for the pre-school age groups, including training and advice to parents and adults involved in pre-school provision. Opportunities to develop the links between education and employers are also being examined, as are ways to improve key skills and work-related activities of the 14 to 19 year olds. The concept of the project ‘has at its heart the principle of achieving excellence through partnership: partnership that is now developing into a very powerful mechanism for change, with the long-term aim of enabling everyone to access appropriate and quality learning opportunities’.

98. Surrey County Council has a Youth Link project that targets young people who have been identified as difficult, disruptive or disaffected within a school environment. The project aims to retain young people within full-time education by enabling them to build personal and social skills and to build their self-confidence and self-esteem. It was established with central government funding, and is a multi-agency scheme which involves educational psychologists, teachers, welfare officers, youth workers, police and health authorities working together as a team within schools. At Leicestershire County Council, an attendance scheme joint initiative between the LEA and Leicester City Football Club has been established to reward good attendance in schools. Participants are rewarded with certificates and prizes presented at the football club. Sunderland City Council’s best value pilot examines innovative ways of working with young people and using partnerships to move 16 to 18 year olds from social exclusion into work. It focuses on developing best value performance measurement systems in services where few indicators currently exist.
Highways

99. Highway partnerships, where agency arrangements have been established for sometime, offer valuable opportunities for joint working at both member and officer level. A number of innovative highways partnerships and agency arrangements are now being developed, in which county councils are devolving responsibility for some aspects of the service.

100. Some are being piloted between two tiers in part of a county before going county-wide. One example is in Leicestershire, where there is now a pilot arrangement between the county council and Harborough District Council [CASE STUDY 16].

CASE STUDY 16 • Leicestershire County Council and Harborough District Council – a pilot highways partnership

Background
A pilot highways partnership project was established in 1997 between Leicestershire County Council and Harborough District Council. The pilot is to run for two years, with an annual review, and is subject to six months notice for termination by either side. The partnership is monitored by a joint member group consisting of an equal number of county and district members. The group does not have an executive function, but works on the basis of consensus to produce recommendations to the appropriate committees of the county and district councils.

Action
For the duration of the pilot project, the delegation of highways functions to the district council covers the whole district, and includes decision-making on non-strategic highway matters relating to traffic management, traffic calming, minor improvement schemes and their related Traffic Regulation Orders. It is subject to the county council being able to 'call-in' for review and resolution of any matter of concern. Strategic matters continue to be dealt with by the county council, but with the benefit of the views of the joint member group. Insurance arrangements continue as under the previous agency arrangement, with the county council responsible for maintaining third-party insurance cover in the name of the district council. Differences in the conditions of employment between county council and district council staff are also being examined during the project.

Results
The county and district councils have used the opportunity to form a new highways partnership arrangement. They have recognised that some differences exist, such as culture and job conditions. These are not considered to be insurmountable problems and are being examined during the pilot period.

The joint arrangement has also allowed both authorities to release capital by rationalising resources into one building.

Good Practice points
• develops a co-ordinated and integrated approach to delivering highway related services in Harborough;
• makes better use of existing buildings owned by the two authorities;
• brings the highways services closer to the community and enables both a strategic and local view to be established; and
• encourages a better understanding between the officers and members of the two councils.
101. Other approaches to developing highway arrangements are also emerging. In Hertfordshire, different models of highways partnership arrangements have evolved between the county council and each of the districts, with each arrangement adapted to suit the culture and needs of each area. The county council undertook a trial partnership with Hertsmere Borough Council in 1995/96, and from that experience began negotiations for other partnerships. The county council concluded that 'working together in highways partnerships is the way it would like to deliver the highway authorities' obligations of the future'. The advantages were summarised as 'the benefits of a big organisation – buying power, economies of scale, strategic overview – together with those of the small – locally focused, fast, flexible and less bureaucratic'.

102. IT will play a key part in the development of these highways partnerships in Hertfordshire to support and improve operations and communications. The intention is to have a website that links all partnership units and county/district headquarters. This should allow quicker access to consistent and up-to-date information, and provide data and voice communications. A start was made by installing e-mail facilities, with the longer-term plan of developing an integrated highway management information system for use by the county council, district councils and other agencies, such as local bus operators.

Leisure services

103. A number of multi-agency arrangements are developing in the sports and recreation area. For example, Dover District Council’s White Cliffs Countryside Project was established to conserve wildlife and provide marked footpaths and better countryside information. It involves a range of other organisations such as the county council, English Heritage, the National Trust, and the Countryside Commission. The special needs of young people with disabilities are being addressed by the London Borough of Croydon’s Sports Partnership between the council, local businesses and charitable trusts and sporting organisations. Nestlé is the main sponsor. It is funded through a combination of grants from the council, donations and sponsorship from the private sector, and grants from government and other agencies.
Some councils are using sport and recreation as the catalyst for joint work aimed at promoting development of the area. One example is the construction of a new ‘Millennium Stadium’ in Cardiff. [CASE STUDY 17].

**CASE STUDY 17 • Cardiff County Council and the Welsh Rugby Union (WRU) – the Millennium Stadium**

**Background**

The WRU and the council recognised that Cardiff Arms Park, the only stadium in Wales with a capacity of more than 12,000 seats, provided a venue for events other than rugby. Major sports, cultural, music and community events have taken place in recent years at the site. The WRU also recognised that the stadium was out-of-date and needed replacing with a venue that would be part of the major redevelopment of Cardiff, and could also raise funds to help finance rugby at club level.

Cardiff County Council recognised that regeneration of the city and job creation could, in part, be helped by using sport and leisure as the catalyst. The opportunity to work in partnership came initially with the WRU’s successful bid to host the Rugby World Cup in 1999. The council assisted the bid by providing staff to prepare the presentation documents.

**Action**

The WRU and the council set up a company with directors from both organisations. Responsibility for funding the new Millennium Stadium lay with the WRU, so it has the majority shareholding. The council has responsibility for ensuring that the stadium is operated as a multi-event and community facility. It provided planning, marketing and estate management expertise to bring together bids for the design and construction of the new stadium, and to provide a business plan for a bid for funding from the Millennium Commission. As part of the process, council staff have been seconded to the company.

The council is also providing funding to support the development of public amenities and other facilities (such as the City Centre Square) around the new stadium. The council and the WRU are working closely with the Government, and a range of other interested public/voluntary organisations and the private sector in this development.

**Results**

The project has been successful in attracting funding and future commitments from the Millennium Commission, the Government and the private sector to support not only the development of the stadium itself, but the development of the city including hotels, city centre shopping, the railway station and multi-plex cinemas. In total, investment of over £200 million is associated with this joint project, together with the creation of a significant number of job opportunities.

The development of the stadium has also necessitated the integration of other public transport strategies, park-and-ride schemes and pedestrianisation projects.

**Good practice points**

- innovative joint approach to city centre development, using sport and leisure facilities as the catalyst;
- relevant skills and expertise within the council have been used to support funding bids; and
- the partnership has secured major capital investment from the Millennium Commission, government and the private sector, to support the development at the stadium and in the city.
Social services

105. National initiatives such as community care require the co-ordination of the services provided by social services with housing departments, the voluntary sector and health authorities. A number of Audit Commission reports have highlighted the need for effective multi-agency working in these areas, and the opportunities that exist (Refs. 7, 8, 18 and 19).

106. The recent Audit Commission report Home Alone: The Role of Housing in Community Care highlighted the need for closer working relationships between council housing and social services departments (Ref. 7). The need for close working arrangements between the NHS and councils was also highlighted in the recent Audit Commission report The Coming of Age: Improving Care Services for Older People (Ref. 8). Councils are now increasingly preparing, consulting on and publishing joint social care plans and children’s services plans with the relevant health authorities.

107. Initiatives linking social services and the agencies that support them with a particular client/community group focus are an increasing feature. For example, the London Borough of Newham, in partnership with the health authority, the Community Health Trust and the voluntary sector, is providing a community-based service to enable people with learning difficulties to become more involved in community activities.

108. Bridgend’s best value proposal continues this trend. The pilot study is based around a co-ordinated approach to the delivery of all services to people with visual impairment. This will cover not only those services provided as a direct result of their disability – care services or special education services – but also accessibility to all other council services. Multi-agency involvement will be a crucial part of the development of this proposal. At North Tyneside, a joint initiative between the council and the local health care trust is providing multi-disciplinary services to clients, including occupational therapy, with links to private companies and voluntary organisations.

109. In Southampton, the new unitary authority has developed working relationships with the health care purchasers and providers in the city, and has set up a consultative committee as a means of planning and co-ordinating social services and health related issues. This has provided the catalyst for the council’s best value pilot proposal A Better Life For Older People which aims to develop housing and community care services for the elderly.

Waste management

110. Waste management is providing opportunities to develop and improve inter-tier working. The DETR has recently issued a consultation paper that advocates joint working arrangements at both officer and member level to develop joint municipal waste management strategies covering a whole county area (Ref. 20). Councils in a number of areas have now prepared joint strategies. One example is in Hampshire [CASE STUDY 18].

CASE STUDY 18 • Hampshire – a joint waste management strategy

Background
At the end of the 1980s, Hampshire County Council realised it was facing a waste disposal crisis as landfill space was rapidly filling up, incinerators built in the 1970s were not going to meet new EU emission regulations and waste levels were continuing to increase.

Action
In 1993, the county council and the district councils in Hampshire undertook a county-wide public consultation process to establish the views of the residents of Hampshire on how to deal with the waste problem. The consultation exercise helped towards the introduction of an integrated waste management strategy, known as Project Integra, adopted by the 11 district councils of Hampshire, Portsmouth and Southampton unitary authorities, Hampshire County Council and the
private waste contractor, Hampshire Waste Services. Links were established within a wider network including parish and town councils and community groups. These links are still being developed.

Project Integra has been developed on the basis of an action plan that included:
- waste minimisation;
- composing;
- recycling;
- support for anaerobic digestion;
- use of recovery technologies, including incineration; and
- residual waste to landfill.

Results
To date, developments have been made in terms of:
- material recovery facilities;
- centralised composting facilities;
- a network of transfer stations; and
- the introduction of energy recovery incinerators within the next few years.

There is also a countrywide promotional campaign known as War on Waste aimed at raising awareness about waste minimisation and recycling issues.

Good practice points
- a joint memorandum of understanding setting out the respective responsibilities and obligations of all the partners involved in the project;
- a tripartite management agreement between Hampshire County Council and the two unitary authorities of Portsmouth and Southampton;
- a formal meeting structure to include representation by all Project Integra partners at officer and elected member level;
- a proposal for a formal agreement to share income and risks from the sale of recyclable material;
- a joint waste volume planning process establishing service needs; and
- a joint promotional campaign focusing on waste minimisation and recycling.
‘Putting it all together’

III. This chapter has highlighted a range of initiatives at several councils for developing service co-ordination. A number of local authorities have been particularly enthusiastic in putting corporate-wide initiatives in place to develop co-ordination with other tiers of local government and with other agencies. They have established processes and practices to develop service delivery across a range of functions. Examples that illustrate the extent and diversity of action at some councils are those in Devon, Somerset, Hertfordshire and Bridgend [CASE STUDIES 19 to 23].

CASE STUDY 19
Devon County Council and North Devon District Council

Background
Following LGR, the existing two-tier structure remained, except for the creation of two new unitary authorities, Torbay and Plymouth. Building on these changes, and a challenging agenda faced by the councils, improvements have been put in place around the commitments made during the review process. This has been particularly in evidence in the joint initiatives between the county council and the district councils in the county to create partnership committees. One of these partnership committees involves the county council and North Devon District Council and this partnership has formed the basis of a pilot for taking forward practices throughout the county.

Action
Devon County Council and North Devon District Council have developed a partnership which has generated a number of joint working projects. Examples include:

- co-ordinated joint funding bids – for example, ten organisations have been signatories to an SRB bid resulting in £500,000 over the next three years;
CASE STUDY 19 (cont.) - Devon County Council and North Devon District Council

- improved targeting of needs and enhanced inter-service co-operation for community regeneration, involving the health authority as part of a 'North Devon Partnership'. For example, funding for a community worker post has been provided by a combination of agencies, none of which could have funded the post individually;
- new joint ways of approaching environmental projects such as Agenda 21, traffic and parking plans and waste management;
- shared information – resulting in community profiling to identify need, and resource allocation as part of local strategic planning;
- co-operation and secondments between trading standards and environmental health departments;
- a joint approach to community governance pilots through the establishment of four area committees;
- a commitment to review the provision of joint support services - for example, payroll. This has also resulted in introducing joint e-mail connections;
- agreement to help develop and support the role of members in order to facilitate community leadership;
- as part of co-operation on the Capital Challenge bid for Barnstaple, a new school has been designed and will be built for community use;
- establishment of the North Devon Regulatory Forum, which includes the county council, the district council, the North Devon Chamber of Commerce, North Devon Marketing Bureau, and Devon Fire and Rescue Service; and
- establishment of a joint management assessment centre. Together, county and district council business managers have attended the specially designed assessment centre. It is seen as the cornerstone of the organisational development of both councils, and is used to identify areas for corporate and the collaborative development of both.

Results
An extensive range of joint working and jointly funded projects has been established to facilitate improved service delivery both within and outside local government.

Good practice points
- improvements around commitments made during the LGR process are being put in place; and
- pilot working across a range of areas is being used as a basis for more extensive county-wide initiatives.
A corporate approach to inter-tier and inter-agency working can also been seen in Somerset [CASE STUDY 20].

**CASE STUDY 20 • Somerset County Council**

**Background**

The county council has been working with the district councils and other agencies since before LGR. The council is keen to see joint working progress, to reflect the differing needs of areas within Somerset.

**Action**

*Joint working with other agencies/councils*

Partnerships between the county council's social services department and local health agencies, and between social services and district council housing departments, are particularly well established. Initiatives include:

- development of a joint strategy for special needs housing and 'pooling' of funding by the county council, the five district councils and the health authority which has led to new housing for people with mental health problems, for people with physical disabilities and young single people;
- implementation of integrated community care initiatives aimed at providing 'seamless' services for the people of the county, and plans for a joint health and social care provider organisation;
- jointly funded projects with the health authority - for example, a *Health and Community Care Freephone Information Service* has been working for some years and plans are being developed for a joint health and social care internet service with public access, and for implementation of e-mail facilities between social services and health agencies including all GP practices;
- various joint publications with the health authority - for example, continuing healthcare, and information on residential care homes listing the services available from the two providers; and
- working with disabled groups has resulted in a jointly produced access document signed up to by all the Somerset district as well as the county council. A guide to disabled facilities has also been produced.

The council has also been actively developing joint working in other areas. Initiatives include:

- financial support for setting up and running of 18 local offices, in conjunction with district and town councils, which provide information and services for all the tiers involved;
- 'town studies' in Somerset steered by groups comprising officers and members from the county council, district councils and town councils, the police, the Chamber of Commerce, local bus operators and other local agencies; and
- preparation of the highways Transport Policy Plan (TPP) submission and the highways maintenance policy plan is undertaken jointly with the district councils.

**Local area panels/task forces**

Initiatives include:

- the use of area panels to oversee local issues and encourage multi-agency working, including interest groups and businesses. The Dulverton Panel meets every two to three months and tackles local issues such as the provision of a bus service, traffic calming measures, mobile library routes, highways and grounds maintenance issues; and
- agreements with a number of town councils for some minor highway tasks to be carried out, with devolved funding from the county council.
Joint working on IT
Initiatives include:

- e-mail links with a number of the district councils in the county;
- the county website also hosts parish information. The only cost to the parishes is the preparation of the information that they wish to include;
- the county council's IT manager is sharing his expertise with Mendip District Council, as its IT client manager. This includes involvement in the budget process and management team meetings; and
- a shared library of community information between the county council and three of the unitary authorities created from Avon (Bath and North East Somerset, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset).

Results
Joint working with other councils within the county, and with other agencies has facilitated service improvements, particularly regarding the quality and extent of the information available on council services. The creation of multi-agency local area panels has also developed community participation.

Good practice points
- there has been close liaison and joint initiatives developed with the health authorities;
- active use of IT facilities has stimulated community interest and enhanced the availability of information; and
- the establishment of local community-based forums has promoted consultation on service delivery planning.
113. Some authorities are planning service provision around community or locality needs, involving integration with other agencies involved. One example is at Hertfordshire County Council, which is developing 'locality planning' as a framework for further service delivery planning [CASE STUDY 21].

114. The commitment of members, to exploring joint working and to community consultation, is essential to the success of the initiatives highlighted in this and many of the other case studies in this compendium. This was emphasised by the Leader of Hertfordshire County Council:

'[The council]... strives to find better ways to bring a community focus to the delivery of services. The views of the people who we work for are vital to us. We continue to develop ways of achieving this, as can be seen from the case studies in this report, and we are proud of these initiatives.'

CASE STUDY 21
Hertfordshire County Council

Background
In 1996, the council produced its Framework for Locality Planning in Hertfordshire. This document was based on a county-wide consultation process, and fed into the district council, health authority and county council budget discussions and county-wide planning. The framework identifies processes at locality and county level designed to improve the effectiveness of planning across the county. The conclusions were agreed by all the statutory agencies involved and cover:

- the framework of meetings in each district;
- production of county-wide strategies;
- annual proposals; and
- ‘making it work’ – the commitment to a number of steps to ensure that locality planning outputs are useful and used.

Action
The county council sees the development of locality planning as an essential process for the future:

'The development of locality planning is necessarily an evolutionary process. The proposals are intended to take it forward a significant number of steps. There is huge potential for more effective integration and collaboration in the planning and delivery of
CASE STUDY 21 (cont.) • Hertfordshire County Council

local government and health services. This is wider
than planning for community care, important
though that is. The evolutionary model proposed
here for locality planning should be a key building
block for broader collaborative work.’

The aims that will guide this partnership working are to:
• move towards integrated and collaborative planning
of local government and health services;
• involve and empower users of services and their
carers in provision, planning and development of
services;
• understand and prioritise the total service needs of
communities;
• forge links, however informal, between the
different authorities’ resource planning and financial
allocation processes; and
• provide integrated and high quality local service
delivery.

In addition, the council has established five community
commissions to cover ‘wicked’ issues such as community
development and safety, young people, economic
development and sustainability. The commissions
promote joint working and the forums for discussing
the potential for devolution and partnership working.
One key project is looking at whole settlement
strategies, with a view to establishing a methodology
for reviewing a settlement area, and encouraging the
empowerment of local communities. This vision of
community focus is exemplified in the council's planned
Gateway strategy. This would be the ‘first stop’ for the
people of Hertfordshire to receive up to 90 per cent of
their services (regardless of the traditional provider), and
to allow unanswered queries to be passed to the correct
department. This mission statement would include not
only the three tiers of local government, but also the
other public service providers such as the health service.

Results

The council has established a rationale for the direction
in which it is aiming to co-ordinate the provision of
services in Hertfordshire. The result of a more
co-ordinated approach should enable decisions to be
taken more quickly and as closely as possible to the
communities they affect, by involving all the agencies
working in the area or by a better understanding of
local circumstances on the part of the decision-making
organisations.

Good practice points
• corporate-wide planning processes are being
focused around community based needs and
information;
• multi-agency involvement in the council's planning
processes from the outset; and
• development of community-based forums to review
cross-cutting issues.
Initiatives at Bridgend County Borough Council provide a good example of developing co-ordination of service delivery by better joint working as part of a corporate commitment to improving inter-tier working in Wales [CASE STUDY 22].

**Background**

The new unitary council was created in 1996, taking over responsibilities from the abolished Mid-Glamorgan County Council and Ogwr Borough Council. Within its boundaries, the council has 3 town councils and 16 community councils. Progress is being made to involve the community councils in Bridgend’s strategic initiatives. As time progresses, the development of the community councils’ ability to provide more locally focused involvement is becoming increasingly important.

**Action**

The chief executive of the new unitary council visited each of the community and town councils to establish the possibilities for working in partnership. The aim was to encourage joint working to reduce duplication, ensure that community councils were involved in the strategic development of the area, and improve the democratic process.

Bridgend and all the town and community councils have developed a Charter, which details each council’s roles and commitments. It covers:

- exchange of information;
CASE STUDY 22 (cont.) • Bridgend County Borough Council

- liaison between Bridgend and the community councils; and
- consultation on specific subjects.

A subcommittee of Bridgend Council has been created, chaired by the Leader, which meets approximately every two months. The meeting is focused on issues raised by the community councils. Issues are limited to strategic ones affecting the majority of those involved, with more specific local issues addressed in other meetings, or by the calling of an exceptional meeting of the subcommittee.

After one year, the Charter was re-examined to establish the success of the practical working arrangements.

Projects resulting from joint working
- planning applications – community councils are consulted on all planning applications and involved in any public meetings called to discuss major planning applications. Community councils also attend the site meetings when applications are being considered;
- development strategies – the community councils have been kept informed and consulted on the Unitary Development Plan and the countryside strategy;
- ‘summer holiday’ play schemes - community councils provided 50 per cent of the funding for these schemes;
- community and sports centres – a number of community councils are involved in the joint management committees of community centres and also some arts and sports centres;
- ‘rights of ways’ – parts of some rights of ways are being maintained by community councils under agency agreements with funding provided by Bridgend;
- markets – the markets are jointly managed by community councils;
- bus shelters and street benches – the community councils provide, and in some cases maintain, some of the bus shelters and street benches in the area; and
- general consultation – community councils are invited to all exhibitions and public meetings. Consultation documents are sent to them as a matter of course.

The future
The councils are clear that some form of decentralisation will be needed to meet the government’s requirements on being closer to the community. Improving community involvement requires more meaningful liaison outside the County Hall. The initial concept is to use the library network to disseminate the council’s services and information directly into communities. This form of community liaison can be extended by using technology to offer face-to-face contact with council officers through a screen in a private environment. There will also be IT-based information points, and the library staff will also be trained to disseminate council information.

Results
Bridgend has embraced the potential created by the statutory requirement to consult with community councils. This has resulted in a range of ongoing projects.

Good practice points
- the principal authority has welcomed the new requirement to consult with the community and town councils as an opportunity to promote the benefits of joint working; and
- new consultation and joint working arrangements are being developed gradually at a pace that is suitable for all involved.
The unitary councils in Wales are not alone in promoting and encouraging this process. The town council in Bridgend is actively developing its own relationships, and joint working arrangements with other community councils and other agencies [CASE STUDY 23].

**CASE STUDY 23 • Bridgend Town Council**

**Background**

Bridgend Town Council is one of three town councils within the Bridgend area. It covers a population of around 11,000, and includes a busy town centre. It is positive about the changes related to its relationship with the unitary council, and welcomes opportunities to work in partnership with others.

**Action**

Various partnership opportunities have been developed and some are being proposed for the future. Examples include:

- the town council is working with the Probation Service to use community service initiatives on a number of local schemes; for example on a bulb planting programme;
- a tripartite agreement between the town council, Brackla Community Council and the unitary council has been set up to purchase a piece of derelict land, to regenerate and preserve it as a green belt area;
- a partnership with the unitary council is renovating a listed building in the town, which the town council did not want to see converted into living accommodation. Instead, a facility for all residents and visitors is proposed, such as a museum, which would have to be self-financing. The partnership is in its early stages, and the unitary council has agreed to support the town council with funding for a feasibility study and legal support;
- a partnership with the unitary council to provide jointly funded new play areas for children;
- a proposed regeneration scheme for the town, which was first established by the town council and involved a tree-planning scheme, has now been taken over by the unitary council. The partnership agreement will mean that the trees will be provided by the town council, but will be maintained by the unitary council; and
- the unitary council has devolved some powers to the town council regarding the running of the Newbridge Fields Park. The town council is responsible for the lettings and takes the income on the cricket, rugby and football pitches. The responsibility for maintenance remains with the unitary council, and the town council monitors the standards of the facilities.

**Results**

The creation of a number of partnership agreements has provided the framework for improved working relationships and communication between the town council and other community councils and agencies. However, there is also a recognition that this is only the beginning, and that there is room for improvement in some areas, and potential for developing further partnerships and for devolving more power to those town and community councils who want it.

**Good practice points**

- the town council is actively seeking a more active role in local government; and
- the town council and the unitary and community councils have established successful partnerships to achieve projects which could not be financed by one council individually.
117. Community councils differ enormously in their size, the roles that they perform, and their management and resource basis. Some community councils operate entirely on a voluntary basis, while others have relatively large budgets with paid staff. As stated in the Welsh office guidance [BOX A], 'it might not be possible for some of the smaller councils to take on the role of consultee for a wide range of matters, but this decision should, in the first instance, be for the community councils themselves'. Responsibility must also rest with the community councils throughout Wales to stimulate and develop their relationships and involvement still further.

Maintaining the momentum...

118. This chapter has highlighted an extensive range of initiatives to develop co-ordination across a wide range of traditional services and cross-cutting areas. Some have focused on community issues, but with the emphasis particularly on letting out information and increasing the accessibility of services to those communities; some are letting in influence over their service planning; some are letting go of control in order to allow more local management of services; and all have gained greater influence over the strategies and decisions of other key local players. The community focus on service planning is evident in much that has been described. This momentum must be maintained. The next chapter considers how this can be encouraged and brings together some of the common themes for success emerging from the examples given.
The way forward

There is no single model for joint working arrangements, or for multi-agency approaches to delivering any particular service or cross-cutting issue. There are, nevertheless, a number of common themes for success emerging from joint initiatives being put in place. Councils must review their own circumstances and strive to achieve improvement. A ‘checklist for action’ is included in this chapter to help officers and members to focus on these key issues.
119. Local government is under constant stimulus to change and improve. The Government has given clear indications that it expects improvements to continue, as it looks to local government to regenerate local democracy and move closer to the communities that they serve. The local government White Papers of 1998 ([Refs. 15 and 16]) establish clear principles of consultation and joint working across all public sector agencies. They embody much of what was outlined in the earlier promises of improvements already made by many councils during the local government reorganisation process. With the financial constraints within which councils operate, it makes good economic sense for councils to explore opportunities for improved working, and for any duplication in the provision of local services to be minimised.

120. The expected requirement on councils to undertake a rolling programme of fundamental performance reviews as part of the best value framework, emphasises the need for an objective assessment of alternative service delivery options and providers. Those who have actively reviewed their circumstances and developed networking arrangements and partnerships are well placed to face these new challenges. Others are still finding their feet, and will need to reconsider their traditional approaches if they are to bring about positive improvements.

121. There are promising beginnings. This compendium highlights an extensive range of initiatives put in place across all tiers of local government, and with many external agencies, demonstrating that many councils see community leadership at the heart of their role. Many of the initiatives identified here reinforce and develop that role and are driven by the needs of the community.

122. This community focus, supported by consultation, may require a significant change in culture at some councils, and the breaking down of historical barriers that have been created by years of working independently. There are many other service providers in the community. The concept of these bodies working together is still a new and evolving process in many areas. The ethos of letting out, letting in and letting go will need to be embraced, but some considerable successes are already apparent. The Government’s proposals for modernising local government give clear indications that joint working across the public sector will be the way forward.

123. But there is no single model of joint working arrangement, or one appropriate multi-agency approach to delivering any particular service or cross-cutting issue. Local circumstances, different cultures and local needs all prevent that and must ultimately guide what joint working arrangements are put in place. The variety of initiatives in this compendium are clear evidence of that.
124. Examination of these diverse initiatives, nevertheless, highlights a number of common themes that have contributed to their success, notably:

- a corporate willingness to re-examine existing service delivery and consider opportunities to involve other councils and agencies;
- a corporate commitment, particularly amongst elected members, to develop joint working arrangements;
- a flexible arrangement, but one that is regulated by some form of agreement with all parties aware of their roles and responsibilities;
- developing trust and respect among the parties;
- extensive dialogue and consultation with users, the community and the other agencies as an integral part of establishing joint working;
- training and support for the staff involved with a new joint working environment; and
- a regular and thorough appraisal of the successes and failures of the partnership.

125. Local circumstance and culture may make the attainment of these themes appear difficult to some councils, but such barriers must not be allowed to prevent councils from striving to achieve them. It is no coincidence that where local auditors indicated that councils have not been active in considering opportunities to develop joint working, or that initiatives put in place have not worked to the satisfaction of the participants, some or all of the common themes noted above were not in place. The best value pilot process should also lead to an examination of the existing legal framework and highlight areas where existing powers and duties create barriers to innovative joint or multi-agency working, rather than encourage it.

126. This compendium has highlighted the promising beginnings made in developing multi-agency working arrangements in a dynamic and constantly evolving environment. But there remains great potential within local government to forge better relationships, both internally and externally. Best value and the other government initiatives will focus attention on the planning and delivering of services with a community focus. The disciplines required under best value for service review and community consultation will be considerable. All councils, not just those piloting best value initiatives, should now examine their own local circumstances and the opportunities for improved working.

A checklist for action

127. This brief checklist is designed to help members and officers to focus on the issues raised in this compendium. The checklist can help councils to assess local progress and to identify priorities and review arrangements against some of the common good practice themes outlined in this compendium. There can be no model approach, however, as the initiatives identified in the case studies and other references in this paper need to be adapted to meet local circumstances and needs, available resources and capacity for further innovation.
# A checklist for action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>EVIDENCE</th>
<th>ACTION NEEDED?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Has the council a corporate-wide process in place to review existing</td>
<td>• Corporate strategy papers/minutes?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>service delivery methods that is citizen/user-focused?</td>
<td>• Service objectives?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lead officer/review team?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>If so, has a review identified opportunities for examining new or</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>improved joint working?</td>
<td>• Service objectives?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was a commitment made during the local government review to examine this</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>topic?</td>
<td>• Submission to LGC?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are members fully involved?</td>
<td>• Minutes?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Working Groups?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Is the authority consulting with all interested/relevant parties, as</td>
<td>• Meetings?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>appropriate? For example:</td>
<td>• Panels/forums?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• other principal councils?</td>
<td>• Newsletters?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• parish/community councils?</td>
<td>• Surveys?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• other local organisations and agencies?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• the local community/users?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• the private sector?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>If a joint arrangement is being put in place, are roles and</td>
<td>• Formal written agreement?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>responsibilities defined in a written agreement or protocol?</td>
<td>• Minutes?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lead officer?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the council set up and agreed measurable objectives for its joint</td>
<td>• Agreement?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>working arrangements?</td>
<td>• Service strategy papers/minutes?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the council set up procedures for monitoring and reviewing the</td>
<td>• Agreement?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>achievement of those objectives?</td>
<td>• Members/officers responsible?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the council set a timetable for implementing the joint working</td>
<td>• Timetable?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arrangements?</td>
<td>• Action plan?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the council evaluated the financial and legal implications of the</td>
<td>• Budget?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>proposals?</td>
<td>• Legal advice?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the council put in place support and training arrangements for staff</td>
<td>• Training programmes?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and members involved in working as part of the joint arrangement?</td>
<td>• Newsletters?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 1

The study advisory group of chief executives

Bill Ogley       Hertfordshire County Council
Peter Housden    Nottinghamshire County Council
Paul Walker      Kettering Borough Council
Paul Croft       Purbeck District Council
Keri Lewis       Bridgend County Borough Council
Robin Wendt/     National Association of Local Councils
Bob Scruton
## Appendix 2

### Summary of initiatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REFERENCE</th>
<th>AUTHORITY NAME(S)/AREA</th>
<th>INITIATIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER 2 ‘LETTING OUT’ – INCREASING ACCESSIBILITY</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INFORMATION ABOUT COUNCIL SERVICES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARAGRAPHS 32</td>
<td>Devon County Council and East Devon District Council</td>
<td>The councils have produced an A-Z of services in conjunction with Devon and Cornwall Police Authority.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARAGRAPHS 33</td>
<td>Somerset County Council</td>
<td>The council's joint A-Z of council services, including district council and parish council information, is available on its website.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARAGRAPHS 34</td>
<td>Oadby and Wigston Borough Council</td>
<td>The council has produced a 'new resident' pack containing information on council services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COMMUNITY OFFICES AND FACILITIES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARAGRAPHS 38</td>
<td>Nottinghamshire County Council</td>
<td>The council's Contact Information Service, established in partnership with various local agencies, is an example of a 'one-stop shop' where residents can access information on the council's services, health services and voluntary groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARAGRAPHS 38</td>
<td>Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council</td>
<td>As part of improving contact with customers and users, the council is developing a Community Information Programme, which is designed to be accessible from a variety of locations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARAGRAPHS 38</td>
<td>Brent London Borough Council</td>
<td>The council has eight one-stop shops providing links to council, voluntary sector and DSS benefit information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CASE STUDY 1</strong></td>
<td>North Devon District Council and Devon County Council</td>
<td>The councils have combined separate reception areas into a single reception point. Staff have a common uniform and have been trained jointly to answer district and county council queries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CASE STUDY 2</strong></td>
<td>Councils and other agencies in Somerset</td>
<td>A police station has been set up as a community office, where the public can access council services and information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CASE STUDY 3</strong></td>
<td>Bramshott and Liphook Parish Council</td>
<td>The council has established a community office providing residents with a single information point for all tiers of local government in the area. The Citizens Advice Bureau and the local housing association also hold 'surgeries' here.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### PANELS, FORUMS AND TASK GROUPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paragraph</th>
<th>Authority Name(s)</th>
<th>Initiative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Somerset County Council</td>
<td>The council has set up community panels to encourage community participation in local issues, involving a range of public and private sector groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council</td>
<td>The council has established the Neath Town Centre Forum in order to involve community partners in the preparation of a town centre development strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Kettering Borough Council</td>
<td>The council has set up a Community Forum to facilitate local input into a community development plan, and funds a Student Council involving secondary school pupil representatives who are consulted on issues affecting young people in the area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>East Cambridgeshire District Council</td>
<td>The council has established a Parish Forum to enable the views of parish councils to feed into service planning processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48, 49 &amp; 51</td>
<td>Flintshire County Borough Council</td>
<td>The council has created service delivery task groups that work in partnership with a variety of agencies, including voluntary organisations and town and community councils.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Nottinghamshire County Council</td>
<td>The County of the Future programme established cross-county local area forums that centre on natural communities and involve a range of public and private sector partners. These forums have supported community consultation and a co-ordinated response to local priorities, as well as successfully securing external funding.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## AREA COMMITTEES

### PARAGRAPH 52
- **Cumbria County Council**
  - The council has established six area committees that are co-terminous with district council boundaries. The committees help the development of a common policy agenda for each area.

### CASE STUDY 5
- **South Somerset District Council**
  - The council has set up four area committees, which are supported by four area offices. The committees cover the full range of council services and have encouraged greater public participation in decision-making and more effective working with parish councils.

## JOINT SURVEYS

### CASE STUDY 6
- **Breckland District Council and Great Yarmouth Borough Council**
  - The authorities are using joint customer surveys to support and inform decisions on improvements to their benefits services.

## INCREASING DEMOCRATIC ACCOUNTABILITY

### PARAGRAPH 56
- **Derbyshire County Council and Amber Valley Borough Council**
  - The councils are co-ordinating their efforts to encourage higher electoral registration among young people.

### PARAGRAPH 56
- **Blaby District Council**
  - The council annually co-ordinates joint advertising to increase electoral registration across all councils in Leicestershire.

## USING INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

### PARAGRAPH 58
- **Cambridgeshire County Council and Cambridge City Council**
  - The *Online City Project* involves a range of public, private, and voluntary sector partners. It promotes the development of IT skills in the community, and provides free internet access and a cross-county information service.

### PARAGRAPH 58
- **Somerset County Council**
  - The council hosts a website for district and parish councils in the county to disseminate local information.
### CHAPTER 2 ‘LETTING OUT’ – INCREASING ACCESSIBILITY (cont.)

#### USING INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paragraph</th>
<th>Authority Name(s)/Area</th>
<th>Initiative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>Devon County Council</td>
<td>The council has assembled a large database of community information, <em>Facts and Figures</em>, compiled from a wide range of local public sector partners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>Lewisham London Borough Council</td>
<td>The council is experimenting with video conferencing as a channel for community enquiries about local services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>Cumbria County Council</td>
<td>The council provides a county-wide information service, <em>Genesis</em>, which covers five of its six district council areas. It is also piloting video conferencing as a means of allowing the community to apply for free school meals and clothing grants.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### CHAPTER 3 ‘LETTING IN’ – ESTABLISHING THE FRAMEWORK

#### PRINCIPLES AND PROTOCOLS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study</th>
<th>Authority Name(s)/Area</th>
<th>Initiative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Leicestershire County Council and the Leicestershire district councils</td>
<td>The councils produced a protocol and associated principles, <em>Memorandum of Understanding/Principles of Consultation</em>, as a framework for improving joint working.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Joint working in Wiltshire</td>
<td>A joint policy statement, <em>Wiltshire Charter for Local Councils</em>, outlines a code of consultation between the county, district and parish/town councils.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Councils and other organisations in Stafford</td>
<td>A joint policy statement, <em>Stafford Governance Partnership</em>, has been prepared that outlines arrangements for consultation and joint working between councils and other organisations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wrexham, Torfaen, Conwy and Denbighshire councils</td>
<td>These councils have established charters to engage in consultation with community councils.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caerphilly, Swansea, Newport, and Powys councils</td>
<td>These councils employ liaison officers to improve consultation with their community councils.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vale of Glamorgan and Swansea councils</td>
<td>These councils have established joint liaison committees as a means of communicating with their community councils.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Join Working Groups

**CASE STUDY 10**  
**Cambridgeshire councils**  
The *FITT Group* (involving the county council and district councils) established a number of projects — especially in the IT area — to improve inter-tier working. Examples include the development of an information database and use of the internet.

**PARAGRAPH 73**  
**Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council**  
The council has established a tripartite working group to co-ordinate economic development planning between the council, the local TEC and the Welsh Development Agency.

### Consortium Arrangements

**CASE STUDY 11**  
**CWOIL Group of local authorities**  
(Cambridge City Council, Welwyn Hatfield District Council, Oxford City Council, Ipswich Borough Council and Lincoln City Council)  
The participants are developing co-operation and liaison across a number of areas of housing management, formalised through a joint best value pilot proposal.

**CASE STUDY 12**  
**Tandridge District Council, Brighton and Hove Council and Wealden District Council**  
The participants submitted a joint best value proposal aimed at developing joint working in revenues and benefits services.

### Chapter 4 ‘Letting Go’ – Developing Co-Ordination

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION**

**CASE STUDY 13**  
**Newport Development Board**  
(Newport County Borough Council, the Welsh Development Agency and the private sector)  
This is a joint board focused on economic development and urban regeneration and involves both public and private sector representation. It has developed a number of projects leading to substantial capital investment in the area.
### Economic Development and Urban Regeneration (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paragraph</th>
<th>Authority Name(s)/Area</th>
<th>Initiative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>86</td>
<td>Flintshire County Borough Council</td>
<td>The council has developed a ‘match funding’ scheme with community councils and the voluntary sector in the area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
<td>Hertfordshire County Council</td>
<td>The council has set up <em>Area Partnership Groups</em> to manage local SRB programmes that are focused on a range of strategic priorities such as community safety, and involve a variety of public and private sector partners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
<td>Amber Valley Borough Council</td>
<td>The council has established the <em>Amber Valley Partnership</em> to co-ordinate SRB bids, involving a variety of public and private sector representatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
<td>Sedgefield Borough Council and Durham County Council</td>
<td>The councils jointly purchased land and marketed it as a factory site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-91</td>
<td>Cardiff County Borough Council and the Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>A partnership company, <em>Cardiff Initiative Ltd</em>, has been set up to co-ordinate economic development initiatives in the city.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Community Safety

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paragraph</th>
<th>Authority Name(s)/Area</th>
<th>Initiative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>93</td>
<td>Gedling Borough Council</td>
<td>The council has set up a <em>Crime Reduction Forum</em> involving the council, residents’ groups and police in local crime prevention initiatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93</td>
<td>North West Leicestershire District Council</td>
<td>The council has established a <em>Partnership in Safer Communities</em> initiative with the police and other local groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94</td>
<td>Breckland District Council</td>
<td>The council has set up a partnership involving 11 different agencies in tackling crime and unemployment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95</td>
<td>Bradford Metropolitan Borough Council</td>
<td>The council's best value pilot proposal focuses on co-ordinating the activities of its directorates around the issue of community safety.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCE</td>
<td>AUTHORITY NAME(S)/AREA</td>
<td>INITIATIVE</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARAGRAPH 97</td>
<td>Swansea County Borough Council</td>
<td>The council's City and County of Learning initiative involves co-ordinating a range of public/private/voluntary sector groups in priority education areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARAGRAPH 98</td>
<td>Surrey County Council</td>
<td>The council has started a Youth Link scheme to help disruptive pupils, which involves a number of public sector agencies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARAGRAPH 98</td>
<td>Leicestershire County Council</td>
<td>The council has developed a scheme to reward school attendance, in partnership with Leicester City Football Club.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARAGRAPH 98</td>
<td>Sunderland Metropolitan Borough Council</td>
<td>The council's best value pilot is focusing on cross-sectoral/agency working on educational development for 16 to 19 year olds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASE STUDY 16</td>
<td>Leicestershire County Council and Harborough District Council</td>
<td>The two councils have entered into a pilot highways partnership project. Highways-related functions have been delegated to the district council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARAGRAPH 101-102</td>
<td>Hertfordshire County Council</td>
<td>The council has developed separate arrangements with each of the district councils in the county to develop highways partnerships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARAGRAPH 103</td>
<td>Dover District Council</td>
<td>The council’s White Cliffs Countryside Project involves links with English Heritage, the National Trust, and the Countryside Commission.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARAGRAPH 103</td>
<td>Croydon London Borough Council</td>
<td>The council’s Sports Partnership for disabled young people involves the voluntary sector and local businesses, and has secured sponsorship and donations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### LEISURE SERVICES (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study 17</th>
<th>Cardiff County Council and the Welsh Rugby Union</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The Millennium Stadium</strong> development, to replace Cardiff Arms Park, has involved a partnership between the council and the Welsh Rugby Union in a successful bid to host the 1999 Rugby World Cup. They have also set up a joint company to manage the subsequent development of the new stadium and city centre.</td>
<td></td>
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### SOCIAL SERVICES

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<tr>
<th>Paragraph 107</th>
<th>Newham London Borough Council</th>
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<tr>
<td>The council has created a partnership with health and voluntary groups to improve access to community activities for people with learning difficulties.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Paragraph 108</th>
<th>Bridgend County Borough Council</th>
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<tr>
<td>A major component of the council's best value proposal to improve services for those with a visual impairment involves multi-agency participation in service provision.</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Paragraph 108</th>
<th>North Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council</th>
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<tr>
<td>The council is providing multi disciplinary services to clients, in partnership with the health trust and private and voluntary sectors.</td>
<td></td>
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<th>Paragraph 109</th>
<th>Southampton City Council</th>
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<tr>
<td>The council's best value bid, <em>A Better Life for Older People</em>, involves a multi-agency approach to the development of housing and community care services.</td>
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### WASTE MANAGEMENT

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<td>Collectively, the councils have established <em>Project Integra</em>. This involves a joint waste management strategy with a private sector waste contractor - Hampshire Waste Services.</td>
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### PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

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<th>INITIATIVE</th>
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<td><strong>CASE STUDY 19</strong></td>
<td>Devon County Council and North Devon District Council</td>
<td>The two authorities have developed a partnership encompassing a variety of joint working initiatives with other public and private sector partners. The focus is on corporate policy priorities such as environmental problems, community governance and regulation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CASE STUDY 20</strong></td>
<td>Somerset County Council</td>
<td>The authority is engaged in the development of inter-agency and inter-tier working, including jointly funded projects with the health authority, and local area panels to oversee local policy issues and to encourage community participation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CASE STUDY 21</strong></td>
<td>Hertfordshire County Council</td>
<td>The Framework for Locality Planning in Hertfordshire has identified a set of processes at locality and county level to ensure that consideration of local concerns can be fed into the county-wide planning process. At inter-agency level, there is a particular focus on co-ordination between local government and health services. Community commissions will examine cross-cutting issues such as economic regeneration and community safety. Gateway has been established as a 'one-stop shop' for the community to receive multi-agency services and information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CASE STUDY 22</strong></td>
<td>Bridgend County Borough Council and the town and community councils</td>
<td>The authorities have developed a charter establishing the role of all the councils in consultation and liaison. A range of multi-agency initiatives are being put in place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CASE STUDY 23</strong></td>
<td>Bridgend Town Council</td>
<td>The council has developed partnerships with other town councils, the unitary authority, and others such as the Probation Service on a variety of projects, creating a framework for improved joint working between councils and agencies in the area.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
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Annotated bibliography

(Ref. 1)

STEPPING OUT TOGETHER: WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

(To be published later in 1998)

This paper examines partnership working across local government and the health service and focuses on the characteristics of a good partnership, the factors that help partnerships to work effectively and measures for reviewing progress and success. Promising Beginnings complements this paper as it demonstrates how such concepts are being put into place locally.

(Ref. 2)

IMPROVING WORKING BETWEEN THE TIERS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Technical Release 14/96, 1996

This Technical Release provided guidance to auditors on reviewing local authority progress in improving inter-tier working and included good practice checklists.

(Ref. 3)


This short briefing note was sent to all principal local authorities, town, parish and community councils in England and Wales. It outlined the importance of initiatives to improve inter-tier working in local government and the work that local auditors would be undertaking.

(Ref. 5)

MISSPENT YOUTH: YOUNG PEOPLE AND CRIME


With two out of every five offenders in 1994 being under the age of 21, the subject of this study is, quite understandably, high on the public agenda. Misspent Youth explores the way in which £1 billion per year is distributed between the police, youth justice services, probation, legal aid, the Crown Prosecution Service, youth court, crown court and the prison service, and considers how resources might be better used to reduce offending.

(Ref. 6)

MISSPENT YOUTH '98: THE CHALLENGE FOR YOUTH JUSTICE


Providing an accessible insight into the future of youth justice administration, this update follows on from the Commission's first report, Misspent Youth, which investigated youth crime. Based on our 1997 audits of local criminal justice services, Misssent Youth '98 examines the Government's plans for a new framework and outlines the action needed by the various criminal justice agencies for the new arrangements to be put in place. It includes statistical data and good practice examples.

(Ref. 7)

HOME ALONE: THE ROLE OF HOUSING IN COMMUNITY CARE


Housing is a vital source of support for vulnerable people living in the community. But fiscal, social and legal changes pose key challenges that need to be addressed if the present system is to meet future demands. Focusing on the national as well as the local issues involved in housing vulnerable people, this topical report looks at the role of housing in relation to community care and examines factors such as planning, delivery and monitoring services. It includes good practice case studies and makes recommendations for all those involved.

(Ref. 8)

THE COMING OF AGE: IMPROVING CARE SERVICES FOR OLDER PEOPLE


An ageing population is placing increasing demands on health and social services to organise effective long-term care. Older people and their carers often experience poorly co-ordinated care services. The Audit Commission's report reviews care services for older people, focusing on the roles of the different agencies involved including social services, the NHS and independent care providers. Drawing on case studies, the report makes detailed recommendations to those involved in delivering these services and those responsible for policy.

1 The references before each entry relate to the publication's number in the References section.
(Ref. 9)

**FRAUD AND LODGING: TACKLING FRAUD AND ERROR IN HOUSING BENEFIT**


In 1996/97, local authorities in England and Wales spent £11.1 billion on housing benefit. The Commission's report, which investigates the extent of housing benefit fraud, estimates that £905 million may be lost each year. Including case studies, it presents key findings and recommendations to help detect and prevent fraud.

(Ref. 10)

**IT'S A SMALL WORLD: LOCAL GOVERNMENT'S ROLE AS A STEWARD OF THE ENVIRONMENT**


Around the world, there is growing concern for the environment. Local Agenda 21s set out a framework for local authorities to implement environmentally friendly policies and practice. Many councils have positively responded to the challenge, but others can do more to achieve results. This report highlights good practice and looks at how councils can successfully co-ordinate the financial and environmental aspects of their work, and implement environmental initiatives at little or no extra cost.

(Ref. 11)

**CAPITAL GAINS: IMPROVING THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT CAPITAL EXPENDITURE SYSTEM**


English and Welsh authorities own assets worth over £120 billion and spend above £7 billion annually on acquiring new assets and maintaining existing ones. Within a framework of tight central government regulations, this report examines the problems for local authorities and new initiatives including Challenge Funding, the National Lottery and the Private Finance Initiative. It calls for authorities to take tough measures, shedding unproductive and unwanted assets to generate resources for higher priority areas.

(Ref. 12)

**IMPROVING VALUE FOR MONEY IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT: A COMPENDIUM OF GOOD PRACTICE FROM AUDIT COMMISSION REPORTS, 1995**

*Compendium, 1995, ISBN 0118864114, £8*

This publication contains at-a-glance summaries that look again at the key issues and messages that have emerged from the Audit Commission's studies of local authority services over the last ten years. Each summary is intended as an aide mémoire for members, chief executives and senior officers who are charged with determining service strategies and achieving optimum service standards.

(Ref. 18)

**UNITED THEY STAND: CO-ORDINATING CARE FOR ELDERLY PATIENTS WITH HIP FRACTURE**

*National Report, 1995, ISBN 0118864343, £10*

£250 million worth of hospital care is spent on hip fractures each year. This report examines the care received by elderly people who have suffered such an injury.

(Ref. 19)

**ALANCING THE CARE EQUATION: PROGRESS WITH COMMUNITY CARE**

*Bulletin, 1996, ISBN 0118864319, £8*

This update charts the progress of the implementation of community care arrangements. It examines the complex financial equations that authorities are faced with to ensure that financial commitments do not exceed the funds available.

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Current proposals for modernising local government are wide-ranging, including major initiatives that cover best value, democratic renewal and community leadership. All of them emphasise the need for councils to work more closely with the communities that they serve and for better working between the different tiers of local government and with other external agencies. If these initiatives are to succeed, councils must embrace an ethos of letting out better information about services, their availability and performance; letting in the community to influence their decisions on service priorities and standards; and eventually letting go to allow other organisations to play a part in delivering local services.

There is already evidence that parts of local government are actively embracing this agenda and have a long pioneering record of developing joint working. But many other authorities have not yet examined opportunities for joint working, despite promises made during the local government structural review. The new moves to modernise local government should create a fresh impetus to this development, and initiatives across England and Wales provide a valuable learning experience.

*Promising Beginnings* is an extensive compendium of council initiatives to develop working relationships with others. It is essential reading for local authority members, chief executives and senior officers and is intended primarily to spread ideas and raise local awareness of these initiatives. These examples are not intended to be prescriptive, but to challenge authorities to review their own unique circumstances when assessing opportunities for action in their areas.