

Clustering

What is clustering?

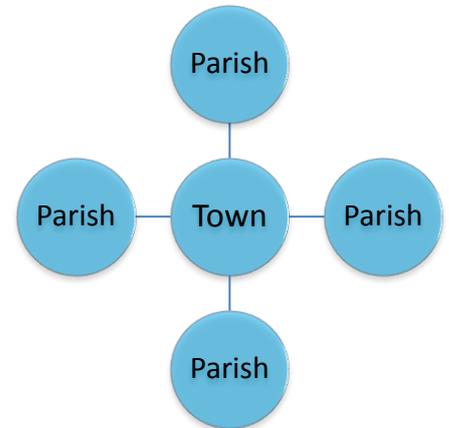
Clustering is a term widely used to describe the ways that parish and town councils can increase their effectiveness and meet their objectives through collaborative, joint working and partnership arrangements.

Why form a cluster?

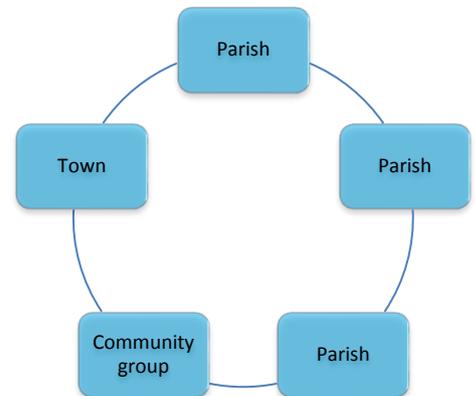
- Increases the groups capacity for undertaking projects
- Creates a network of shared knowledge and experience
- To engage with a larger section of the local community
- Cluster groups speak with a louder voice on common issues
- Smaller parishes and town councils can cluster to make the most of new abilities granted in Localism Act 2011 e.g. Community Rights
- Effectively addresses issues which are of a wider concern than an individual parish or town
- They provide better representation and influence with other tiers of government
- More likely to gain and be able to maintain service delegations
- Opens up new funding opportunities due to increased ability to undertake large projects

Who to cluster with?

The membership of a cluster group depends on the purpose. It could include parish and town councils as well as other groups in the community.



Hub and spoke model



Partnership working arrangement

What does a cluster look like?

- Common thread is they act as a voice for local communities
- Various models exist (two examples shown above)
- Common interests and/or geographical proximity
- Shared purpose e.g. service delivery
- Can be simple informal arrangements or formal structures

Setting up and managing a cluster – things to consider:

- Be clear, at the outset, about the reasons for clustering
- Clusters should provide added value to working individually
- Establish clear priorities for the cluster group
- Individual parish and town councils still continue to fulfil their individual existing statutory obligations
- Decide on the right model for the cluster group
- Membership of the group depends on the objectives and aspirations of the cluster
- Need to establish an appropriate leadership model for the cluster e.g. individual chair and secretary, or rotating chair
- Level of governance required depends on the model adopted - may require a formal constitution or a memorandum of understanding as well as codes of conduct or protocols
- Agreement of how the cluster will be financed e.g. funding grant or contributions by the group members
- Monitor and review regularly to assess progress against objectives

Examples of clustering:

- Tenbury Area Partnership
- Four Parish Heritage Group (Shropshire)

Useful links

<http://www.tenburytown.org.uk/cocommuni-plan.html>

www.nalc.gov.uk/Document/Download.aspx?uid=2ed1bf3d-e1d2-4df8-a35a-3baa099f9d8d

<http://www.discovershropshire.org.uk/html/search/verb/GetRecord/homepage:20060811143533>