



Way Ahead for Wendover Project Report 2

1. For completeness, this report should be read in conjunction with the action plan and other items in the project pack. In line with Wendover Parish Council's transparent approach to the project, all project papers are available from the clock tower and at <http://www.wendover-pc.gov.uk/>
2. **The project phase 2**
 - a. The second phase of the project involves the council's adoption of an action plan and urgent training for councillors and senior staff. Cllr Sue Toft-Hunt, Way Ahead Lead Champion, will promote and lead the project and its implementation. The third phase is the development of a communications plan, led by Communications Champion Cllr Alan Myers, who will consult with residents and other stakeholders.
 - b. Two days of intensive training has taken place and seven councillors attended a substantial part.
 - c. To inform the action plan and this report, I took on board comments and concerns of individual councillors and members of staff, as well as gaps in internal procedures that I directly identified in my exploration of internal processes. My remit did not include financial audit which is the role of the council's professional internal auditors, but I did address two specific financial issues which arose in discussions.
 - d. I have endeavoured to provide solutions rather than attribute blame.
3. **Summary of findings**
 - a. With many changes in personnel, the council and therefore the community has suffered from poor leadership. It is incumbent upon councillors to ensure that, in appointing chairmen, and, to some extent, in setting the committee structure, they exploit the strengths of serving councillors effectively and that these chairmen are seen to seek and champion the majority view. Councillors should not allow a minority faction to dictate the council's position. An early opportunity for the current council to choose freely from its full membership in electing a new chairman will ensure that this new team has a leader who can demonstrate the confidence of the majority of its members.
 - b. Poor teamwork also arises from the lack of understanding of the various roles, being: the council as a corporate body; committees; individual councillors; and the executive ie the clerk and other paid officers. Training should clarify roles and help councillors and staff to work more effectively as a team.
 - c. The lack of appropriate formal policies and procedures is a contributory factor. Effective procedures for dealing with complaints, grievance and disciplinary matters are essential. Networking and training in best practice will assist in developing policies and procedures, and encourage appropriate delegation for responsive decision making.
 - d. The role of the council as an employer has been a major challenge. It should consider buying in expert help in human resources as and when appropriate to ensure that the council exemplifies good employment practice. Amongst those missing procedures, is a means of measuring the clerk's performance. I hope that the action plan itself will provide the basis for ongoing performance measurement, with delivery being a rewarding challenge for the clerk. However, it is for the council to provide leadership and to have a system in place to monitor the plan's implementation.
 - e. The clerk, the council's Proper Officer, should be the conduit of advice to the council except in rare circumstances. Circumventing the clerk may result in undermining her position which could have serious consequences. The confusion caused by inconsistent advice from outside sources, coupled with a lack of clarity in the appropriate source and delivery point, have exacerbated the council's difficulties. I believe it is a wider issue for the sector as a whole to resolve, involving the County & National Associations of Local Councils, the Society of Local Council Clerks and Monitoring Officers of district councils. However, discussion between local representatives of these bodies would be useful in working up a local protocol in the absence of a national lead.
4. **Implementation**
 - a. This action plan may seem at first glance to be daunting. However, given public patience and effective leadership, it should be feasible for the council to implement the action plan by April 2010, ie a clear year before the next scheduled elections, providing the current level of distraction reduces substantially. The traffic light system for monitoring the action plan implementation is designed to aid in celebrating the council's success.
 - b. Finally, I would like to commend the courage and commitment of the council in this Way Ahead project. The council needs to have all councillors on board the project and the wider support of the community and partners. I wish it every success and many green lights!

Pat Edwards 18.08.08