

Executive – 30 November 2016

Present: Councillor Williams (Chairman)
Councillors Beale, Berry, Edwards, Habgood and Mrs Herbert

Officers: Shirlene Adam (Director – Operations), Alastair Higton (Executive Assistant, Policy and Research, Somerset County Council), Chris Hall (Assistant Director – Operational Delivery), Steve Read (Somerset Waste Partnership), Dave Mansell (Somerset Waste Partnership) and Richard Bryant (Democratic Services Manager)

Also present: Councillors Coles, Ms Lisgo, Prior-Sankey and Wren

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm.)

62. Apologies

Councillors Parrish and Mrs Warmington.

63. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 9 November 2016, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and were signed.

64. Parishing the Unparished Area of Taunton Task and Finish Group

Considered report previously circulated, relating to the findings of the Unparished Area of Taunton Task and Finish Group.

The Group had been established by the Committee in July 2014 to investigate creating new Parish Council(s) to cover the Unparished Area of Taunton.

To address dissatisfaction with the revenue currently available to the Unparished Area versus the potential for precepting to provide additional services in Taunton, the Group had considered six possible options:-

- Do nothing;
- The formation of a single Town Council for Taunton;
- The establishment of several Parish Councils to cover the Unparished Area;
- To consider alternatives to Parish Councils;
- The production of a 'hybrid' solution; and
- Look ahead to what could happen alongside any future Local Government reorganisation.

The Group had met three times and explored:-

- What, if any, changes should be made to current arrangements;
- How new Parish Councils Would be set up;

- What powers they could exercise;
- What costs might be associated with setting up and running them; and
- What alternatives to new Parish Councils might offer.

The Group had agreed that the four challenges facing the Unparished Area in terms of governance were:-

- (1) Dissatisfaction with the revenue currently available to the Taunton Unparished Area;
- (2) The perceived lack of revenue for central Taunton, opportunities for cascading of services to Parish Councils and the potential for Parish Precepts to be capped in the future.
- (3) Concern that a democratic deficit might exist; and
- (4) That a parished Taunton might benefit more from the double/triple devolution that a Heart of the South West devolution deal could offer.

Parish Council powers were generally the same as those of District Councils. However in reality their lack of resources meant they limited themselves to local environmental, community and amenity issues.

Reported that new Parish Councils could only be created after a formal Community Governance Review had been carried out by Taunton Deane Borough Council and its recommendations adopted by the Council. Noted that such a Review could be triggered by an appropriate petition or by the Council deciding to carry one out.

The cost of setting up a Parish Council depended on the ambition for the Council and the activities it would take on. Staffing levels and cost of premises could be lower if these costs were shared with other organisations, such as a District Council.

Examples of setting-up costs and subsequent running costs were submitted for information.

The Group had felt that the costs associated with setting up one or more new Parish Councils for Taunton would:-

- ❖ Be costly in terms of a Community Governance Review, set-up and running costs; and
- ❖ Not necessarily be supported by the people of Taunton who would likely have to pay a higher precept than currently if the new Council(s) were to have any significant additional impact on Taunton.

At the time of writing the Group's report, the ongoing consideration of merging Taunton Deane and West Somerset Councils; the potential for Local Government reorganisation should the Government wish it; and continuing public sector austerity, suggested that a "wait and see" attitude should be taken.

The Group had therefore agreed that an incremental approach was advisable. If there was a public desire to parish Taunton (which did not currently appear to be the case), the petitioning mechanism remained open. Furthermore, the recommended new Committee would be able to revisit the issue in the future.

Further reported that when conducting a Community Governance Review, alternatives and intermediate stages to a Parish Council had to be considered. These included:-

- Area committees;
- Neighbourhood management arrangements;
- Tenant management organisations;
- Area/community forums; and
- Residents, tenants or community associations.

Each of the options were considered and most appeared to require a level of public participation that was not guaranteed, and potentially required significant resources to set up and run.

The Group had therefore suggested that an initial way forward could be to call half-yearly meetings of the Councillors representing Wards in the Unparished Area. This new Committee would allow issues affecting this area of Taunton to be discussed.

It was suggested that this Committee could:-

- Take responsibility for the Unparished Area Fund, appropriately ring-fenced so it could be used to support services to a limited degree in the Unparished Area; and
- Replace the Taunton Unparished Area Advisory Panel.

Members were cautioned that if an Unparished Area Committee was formalised than an adequate level of officer support would be essential.

The Community Scrutiny Committee had considered the Task and Finish Group's report at its meeting on 1 November 2016 and had recommended the deletion of Recommendations 2.1 and 2.4 for the reasons provided. Changes to the wording of some of the other recommendations had also been proposed.

In addition to the above, the Community Scrutiny Committee had also recommended the Executive to agree that, with the likelihood of a new District Council being formed with West Somerset Council, a Community Governance Review should be commenced at the earliest opportunity to consider the establishment of a Town Council for Taunton, with a further view to achieving Borough Status for the town to provide a democratic and civic focus.

Having considered Scrutiny's comments, the Executive decided not to accept its recommendations other than to enable the proposed new Area Committee to also consider using the available funding derived from the Community Infrastructure Levy. The Executive also agreed that the Area Committee should meet no more than four times per year.

Resolved that the following recommendations of the Task and Finish Group (as amended by the words shown in italics) be approved:-

- (a) Currently, the creation of a Town Council or several new Parish Councils for the Unparished Area of Taunton be not supported;
- (b) A new Committee be established comprising all Borough Councillors in the Taunton Unparished Area to:-
 - Replace the Taunton Unparished Area Advisory Panel;
 - Discuss and advise Taunton Deane Borough Council on issues in the Taunton Unparished Area;
 - Consider using the available funding derived from the Unparished Area Special Expenses Precept *and from the Community Infrastructure Levy* to partly support the existing grant scheme and to support more strategic schemes or existing services in the Unparished Area of Taunton; and
 - Determine its other Terms of Reference;
- (c) Taunton Deane Borough Council be requested to provide officer support for the new Committee at the lowest possible cost to be funded from the Unparished Area Precept Fund; and
- (d) The new Committee meets *no more than four times per year* in the first instance.

65. **Executive Forward Plan**

Submitted for information the Forward Plan of the Executive over the next few months.

Resolved that the Forward Plan be noted.

66. **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

Resolved that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item because of the likelihood that exempt information would otherwise be disclosed relating to Clause 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972 and the public interest in withholding the information outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information to the public.

67. **Recycle More, Domestic Waste Collection Services**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the environmental and financial benefits of the Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP) moving to the new 'Recycle More' collection services.

The collection of domestic waste was a responsibility of the district councils, with the final disposal costs being the responsibility of the County Council.

Taunton Deane, like all districts in Somerset, met its statutory requirements through the SWP who managed the domestic collection and disposal on the Council's behalf.

The rising costs of waste collection and disposal had been a matter of concern for the partner Councils for some time and SWP were asked to look for alternative models that would limit exposure to cost increases as the number of properties and the cost of the Landfill Tax continued to rise.

The Business Case prepared by SWP, which accompanied the report, looked at the kerbside collection elements of the domestic waste chain and the opportunity to divert waste to recycling, together with other projects which were underway with a view to agreeing final waste disposal options.

Taunton Deane had never set a target for savings as the complexity of the contracts made it difficult to establish a realistic reduction. Work that had been undertaken had evidenced that the adoption of Recycle More would deliver the greatest saving whilst retaining the principles of "Sort It Plus". There were other collection models that would be cheaper, but the value of the materials collected would reduce, impacting on the overall package of costs and therefore not deliver the level of savings that were on offer.

The Council currently had a number of homes still on weekly collections. Part of the saving to Taunton Deane was on the basis that these properties were also moved to the same collection schedule as the rest of the County if the new service model was approved.

A consideration for Members was to fund the retention of these weekly collections for the benefit of approximately 200 properties in Taunton Town Centre and approximately 100 in Wellington Town Centre.

Further reported that moving to the proposed model of collections and with the assumptions made on waste diversion from landfill to recycling, these presented an opportunity for savings. The savings identified by SWP for Taunton Deane Borough Council were set out in the report. This was in a full year after all upfront costs for implementation had been met.

The matter had been considered by the Community Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 28 November 2016 where the Recycle More proposals were generally supported. The main comments made by Members were submitted for the information of the Executive including a recommendation that the weekly collections to certain properties in the central areas of both Taunton and Wellington should not be retained.

Resolved that:-

- (1) The Somerset Waste Board be notified of the Executive's support for the

Recycle More proposals prior to the Board taking its final decision on the matter on 16 December 2016; and

- (2) A proposal not to retain the weekly collections in place for a number of defined properties, identified within the report, be also supported.

(The meeting ended at 7.54 p.m.)