

# SWT Community Governance Review Working Group

10.06.21

Attendees: Cllr H Prior-Sankey (Chair), Cllr L Lisgo (Vice-Chair), Cllrs N Cavill, R Lees, J Hunt, F Smith, L Whetlor.

Officers: A. Tregellas, M. Prouse

## 1. Apologies

No apologies were submitted.

## 2. Notes from the previous meeting

The notes of the meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2021 were approved as a true and accurate record.

## 3. CGR Terms of Reference

An iterative version of the Terms of Reference was included in the Agenda pack which was shared with Councillors.

During the debate the following comments and questions were raised:-

- Discussion took place on the first stage of the consultation and whether preferred options would be set out at this stage?
- It was considered there were only three viable options and these were a Town Council based on the Unparished Area, multiple parishes, or a Town Council area that was wider than the Unparished Area.
- Officers cautioned that the advice in the guidance on Charter Trustees areas was clear that these should not be divided.
- It was clear that if there would need to be a pre-emptive discussion with the Parish Councils bordering the Unparished Area, especially in the area of Killams which was a part of the Vivary Ward but was a part of Trull Parish.
- It would be unhelpful if this exercise made any Parish Councils feel under threat.
- All other wards in the Unparished Area were complete i.e. did not contain bits of Parishes in them.
- One Councillor expressed a strong view that the boundaries of any new Council should be based on the boundaries of the old town.
- It was considered clear that the Working Group could not however go out to consultation with a pre-formed view and must consider multiple options.
- It was confirmed that the consultation would be with residents of the Unparished Area only, and not surrounding residents of parishes.
- A suggestion was made to involve and invite a representative from Somerset Association of Local Councils to assist in discussions with the Parish Councils.
- As wider amendments to Parish Boundaries would involve work with the Boundary Commission, it was considered that the timescales involved would mean the focus should be on parishing the unparished area.

- Discussion took place on the Local Community Networks proposed under the Unitary plans for One Somerset.
- There was some discussion over whether the existing unparished area was a large enough tax base for a Town Council. Officers confirmed there would be no issues over viability on this matter and the main issues were in reflecting identity and being effective and convenient.
- The population of the Unparished Area was confirmed as being around 48,000 people.
- Swindon was a recent example of a place that had opted for multiple parishes rather than one larger town Council.

The Group approved the Terms of Reference document.

#### 4. Communications and Consultation Plan

The Communications and Consultation Plan had been circulated and was shared on the screen for the benefit of the Group to consider.

During the debate the following comments and questions were raised:-

- It was felt that the roadshows should be fronted by officers.
- Clarity was sought on whether the Members on the Group could actively campaign for a particular option without being seen to be in conflict.
- It was advised that the forthcoming report to Full Council would seek to approve a budget from reserves to fund the communications materials.
- It was suggested the government and the County Council were lobbied for help with funding, even though it was SWT's responsibility to undertake the review.
- It was considered that once the minister had made a decision regarding unitary, the conversations with SCC would be on a different basis.
- The timing of the first consultation over the summer holidays and the possible extension of restrictions was considered and it was felt the longer time period of 10 weeks was preferable.

#### 5. Risks and Issues Log

The Group were advised that this would be circulated to the Group after the meeting.

#### 6. Examples from other Councils

The Governance Specialist signposted Councillors to the various documents attached which had been provided by neighbouring Councils such as Dorset and Torbay. Officers had held meetings with relevant officers to understand and learn from past experience to inform our review.

#### 7. Any other Business

N/A

## 8. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was proposed to be 17<sup>th</sup> June 2021 at 12 midday, to allow for the Group to discuss the budget proposed for Consultation before the report was published for the Charter Trustees and Council, with a follow-up meeting after the Council meeting in July.

The meeting closed at 11:10am