

Parish Liaison Sub-Committee – 10 February 2004

Minutes of the meeting of the **Parish Liaison Sub-Committee** held on **10 February 2004** when there were present:-

Cllr T Livings (Chairman)

Cllr C J Lumley
Cllr C R Morgan

Cllr D G Stansby

SUBSTITUTES

Cllr A J Humphries

OFFICERS PRESENT

D Deeks	Head of Financial Services
M Martin	Committee Administrator

1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

Cllr T Livings was appointed Chairman of the Sub-Committee.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

All Councillors present declared a personal interest by virtue of being Members of Town/Parish Councils.

3 TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Sub-Committee noted its term of reference.

4 TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Head of Financial Services, which invited Members to consider the issues raised by the Town and Parish Councils and determine a work programme.

The Head of Service circulated a handout and the following key points were noted, together with comments that arose during its discussion.

- The District is fully parished with a total discretionary spend for 2004/05 of just under £800,000.
- Town/Parish Tax ranges from £17.25 to £46.85; this does not directly correlate with the size of the Council.
- Existing Town/Parish involvements included:-
 - Town Centre Developments

- Open spaces management and transfer; these arrangements needed to be the subject of further discussion
- Working together on Crime and disorder projects
- Consultation, which includes the planning process
- Community Strategy.
- Areas of potential future partnership might include, for example, public conveniences, other local assets and services, IT development, purchasing through the IDEA e-procurement system, and customer services where Town/Parish Councils would be natural front line partners.
- There could be benefits of partnership in terms of a Parish's ability to achieve bigger and more ambitious schemes.
- The District Council already demonstrates partnership through, for example, Comprehensive Performance Assessment, the Community Strategy and the Planning process.
- Resource issues around the Government's Quality Parish and Town Council Scheme.

Members noted that whilst detailed submissions had been received from some Town/Parish Councils around issues of particular concern, these were, nevertheless, representative of views held by many of the Town/Parish Councils.

The following points were noted in discussion around those submissions:-

- The suggestion of purchasing manpower/technical support from the District Council could prove difficult as work in certain specialist areas, for example, budget and woodlands, takes place at similar timings. Should this be possible in certain areas, cost implications would need to be considered.
- Whilst Parishes had wanted additional Police in their areas, there had been no support for the Police Community Support Officer scheme if it could not guarantee additional resources staying in the area.
- Parishes commented that they needed meaningful timescales when requested by the District to respond to consultation, however, it was noted that Districts are themselves frequently under pressure to respond within tight deadlines.
- There are particular problems relating to small parishes.
- The street lighting columns in respect of Stambbridge Parish Council have now been funded from the crime and disorder budget.
- Town/Parish Council would need to consider and define the perceived benefits of appointing a Parish Liaison Officer, prior to consideration of the funding issues for such a position.
- Summaries of the budget making papers had still not been received from some Councils when notifying the District of their precept.

It was noted that whilst Town/Parish Councils were often in a much better position to carry out some local functions, difficulties arose in relation to

their scale of operation and all their income is accrued from tax levied. However only the District Council is at risk of being 'capped'.

Any partnership arrangement between the District and Town/Parish Councils needed to identify funding arrangements at the outset. Smaller parishes were naturally handicapped by their low income and larger Town/Parish Councils already had large remits of their own.

Town/Parish Councils needed to take seriously what they agree to take on in terms of assets, otherwise there is a risk of being exposed financially given their smaller funding base. However, schemes operating within a large contract, for example, could bring benefits.

Members agreed with the suggestion of the Head of Service that he meet with Town/Parish Clerks to determine their views on the way forward and report back to a further meeting of the Sub-Committee.

Resolved

That the Head of Financial Services meet with the Clerks of the Town/Parish Councils to gain a consensus of views on how to improve clarity of service delivery.

The meeting commenced at 10 am and closed 11.25 am.

Chairman

Date