

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Community Governance Review Member Group

held on Wednesday, 12th August, 2009 in the East Committee Room -
Municipal Buildings, Earle Steet, Crewe, CW1 2BJ

PRESENT

Councillor A Ranfield, Chairman
Councillors D Cannon, R Cartlidge and R Parker

APOLOGIES

Councillors A Kolker and R West

COUNCILLORS IN ATTENDANCE

Councillors A Moran, B G Silvester and R Westwood

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr C Chapman	Borough Solicitor
Mr M Flynn	
Mr M Garrity	ICT – Cheshire Shared Services
Mr W Howie	Democratic Services
Mrs C M Jones	Democratic Services
Mrs L Parton	Elections and Registration Team Manager
Mr B Reed	Democratic Services Manager
Mr J Rounce	Research and Intelligence Officer (Consultation)

11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors D J Cannon, R Cartlidge and R W Parker each declared a personal interest in the proceedings on the basis that they were Crewe Charter Trustees.

12 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 30th July 2009 be approved as a correct record.

13 PUBLIC SPEAKING

In accordance with Procedure Rules Nos. 11 and 35, a total period of 10 minutes was allocated for members of the public to address the Member Group on any matter relevant to its work.

Members of the public present did not raise any questions and the Member Group proceeded to its next business.

14 CREWE COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW PROJECT PLAN AND TIMELINE

Based on discussions at the previous meeting, a revised project plan and timeline was submitted for consideration.

The Elections and Registration Team Manager spoke to the document and highlighted the revised timescale. It was noted that there had been some slippage in the timeline and it was no longer possible to adhere to the original deadline of submitting draft recommendations to the Governance and Constitution Committee at its meeting scheduled for 28th September. A special meeting of that Committee would, therefore, be held on 15th October (the day of Full Council) at 11.00 am. The Governance and Constitution Committee would be asked to make recommendations to Full Council, later that day, for the purposes of consultation.

RESOLVED:

That the revised Project Plan and Timeline be approved.

15 CREWE COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW – FIRST STAGE CONSULTATION

The Member Group considered arrangements for the First Stage Consultation. The following documents were submitted and discussed –

(a) Task Timeline

The task timeline proposed a public consultation on the options, between 1st and 30th September during which time, electoral canvassers would deliver the questionnaires; one to each Local Government elector in the area of review.

Reference was made to a “feedback form” to be included on the website; this would be an open forum for members of the public to make comments.

(b) Updated List of Consultees

At the previous meeting a list of consultees had been submitted. Members had made suggestions for additions to the list, and subsequent to the meeting, further additions had been requested. An updated list was now submitted. The list would be regarded as “open” and could be added to as and when required.

(c) Press Release and Public Notice

A revised Press Release and Public Notice was tabled at the meeting and approved for issue.

(d) Date and Time of Public Meetings

Public meetings would be held on Tuesday, 1st September at 2.30 pm and 7.00 pm respectively in the Council Chamber, Municipal Buildings, Crewe. These would be an opportunity to inform members of the public about the proposals and interested parties would be able to express their views in a public forum.

The Cheshire Association of Local Councils would be informed of the date of the proposed meetings, to enable it to notify its member parish councils at the earliest opportunity.

(e) Draft Leaflet to Consultees

A copy of the proposed explanatory leaflet was tabled. At the previous meeting, the Member Group had considered a briefing paper which presented an initial evaluation of the options to be considered. In accordance with guidance in respect of reviews, community governance within the area under review should be reflective of the identities and interests of the community in that area. No decision had been made in respect of the number of parish councils to be proposed. Notwithstanding this, a map for inclusion in the leaflet was tabled, showing four proposed parished areas which represented the current wards of Crewe North, Crewe South, Crewe East and Crewe West.

It was AGREED that a red line be used to show the extent of the boundary of the unparished areas of Crewe and a blue line used for the delineation of the four proposed parished areas.

- Under the heading “How are these things paid for?” was a list of various Town Councils, their population and their precepts. The list included Town Councils in Cheshire, but also Town Councils from further afield. A Member commented that the inclusion of Town Councils in other counties was misleading, and could create a perception that the establishment of a Town Council in Crewe could be prohibitively costly.

In response, the Member Group was informed that information had been gathered for illustrative purposes only. Application of statistical formulae produced no correlation between the population number and the level of precept. There was a tendency for smaller parish councils to request larger precepts but this view had no statistical validity.

- Why have a Town Council?

The guidance had indicated that as part of the review, other viable options should be considered to determine if they represented a better option in terms of addressing the criteria. It was AGREED that the paragraph on the inside cover of the leaflet be expanded to include an

explanation of the role of the Crewe Charter Trustees and what would happen in the event of a Town or Parish Council(s) being created.

(f) Questionnaire to Electors

Members were invited to consider if the questionnaire/voting paper should be subject to measures to prevent fraudulent copying. Options included a print security mark on the voting paper, requirement for elector to sign the paper, pre-paid envelope to be issued with each questionnaire/voting paper. The greater the security measures, the more costly and time-consuming the process would be; the timeline could slip further.

The Member Group also discussed evaluation of the outcome. On balance, it was agreed that the results be evaluated in a similar manner to traditional consultation exercises. It was AGREED that a pre-paid envelope be issued with each questionnaire/voting paper to minimise the risk of fraud and introduce some degree of certainty.

A copy of a proposed ballot paper was tabled on which three questions were posed, namely –

1	I want no change (no Parish Council)
2	I want a single Town Council for the whole of the unparished area of Crewe
3	I want four Parish Councils for the unparished area of Crewe

A comment was made that there could be some residents who may not want any change, but, notwithstanding this, if a decision was made to create one or more parish councils, they may wish to express a preference in respect of the number of parish councils to be established. In these circumstances, there should be an opportunity for such views to be taken into account. A revision to the voting paper was suggested so that two separate questions were posed; the first to indicate whether electors do or do not want a parish council; the second question to express a preference for either a single Town Council or 4 parish councils.

RESOLVED: That

- (a) The voting paper be revised as outlined in (f) above;
- (b) The explanatory leaflet be expanded to include the role of the Crewe Charter Trustees;
- (c) The map as tabled, be approved for inclusion in the leaflet, showing the proposed four parished areas of Crewe North, Crewe South, Crewe East and Crewe West;

(d) The extent of the boundary of the unparished areas of Crewe be marked on the map in red and a blue line be used for the delineation of the four proposed parished areas;

(e) A pre-paid reply envelope be issued with each questionnaire/voting paper; and

(f) The questionnaire responses be evaluated as survey results.

16 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

5th October 2009 – 2.00 pm

East Committee Room, Municipal Buildings, Earle Street, Crewe

The meeting commenced at 4.00 pm and concluded at 5.25 pm

Councillor A Ranfield (Chairman)