

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Community Governance Review Sub-Committee** held on Wednesday, 16th October, 2013 at Macclesfield Leisure Centre Meeting Room, Priory Lane, Macclesfield SK10 4AF

PRESENT

Councillor D Marren (Chairman)

Councillors G Baxendale, B Murphy, P Whiteley and K Edwards.

Councillors in attendance:

Councillors C Andrew, L Jeuda and B Livesley.

Officers in attendance

Lindsey Parton – Registration and Business Manager

Rose Hignett – Senior Electoral Services Officer

Cherry Foreman – Democratic Services Officer

19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Jackson and P. Groves.

20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

21 ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

The Chairman announced that he wished to allay any concerns that the option of creating a Parish/Town Council would no longer be pursued. Requests had been made, however, for more detailed information on the other options available prior to deciding upon how best to proceed.

22 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

Keith Smith, Chairman of Macclesfield Civic Society, spoke in support of the establishment of a Town Council for Macclesfield; he considered it to be the only democratic option open to residents for the delivery of their services and he considered it to be the best of the options available.

Richard Watson thanked the Chairman for the clarification given in his announcement at the beginning of the meeting. He stated that he would have like more information regarding the earlier consultation process and an assessment of why it had not been as successful as had been hoped. He expressed concern that the information on the Councils website was not easily accessible; that details on the size of existing Parish/Town Councils already in existence in Cheshire East implied that Macclesfield was too large an area and this was not the case by comparison with Lemington Spa and Weston Super Mere for example; that no clear definition existed of what could be done by a

Local Service Delivery Committee, and that the lack of progress was worrying in view of the total period of 12 months in which this work needed to be completed

David Whalley made three key observations. Whilst he sympathised with the position of Members and Officers he did not consider that the July consultation had been carried out well as the methods of publicity used had not reached those for whom it was intended; this needed to be remedied for future stages. The advantages of having a democratically accountable local/town based body would be found to be a huge benefit in the support of local cultural initiatives, and his own experiences in setting up a number of cultural and community projects showed that the role of the internet and social media was critical for the next stages of the process, especially in engaging the under 30's.

Liz Braithwaite stated that the purpose of any consultation was to engage positively with the people at whom it was aimed. She did not feel, however, that this had been the case in this process and that instead it had been left to the electorate to find out for themselves. She wanted the relevant information to be made clearly available in order to make an informed decision.

In response to the points raised with regard to advertising and making information available a resume was given of all that had been done to get the information into the public arena for which a number of different methods of communication had been used.

23 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED

That the minutes be approved as a correct record subject to the wording of recommendation 1 of minute 15 being amended to read 'Parishing for Macclesfield' instead of 'Town Council for Macclesfield'.

24 OPTIONS FOR THE NEXT STAGE OF THE REVIEW

At the suggestion of the Chairman the meeting moved into a work shop session, in which both the public and visiting Councillors were invited to participate, in order to better explore the meaning of an Enhanced Local Service Delivery Committee (ELSDC) and exactly what it could or could not do.

It was stated that the creation of an ELSDC did not exclude moving to a Town/Parish Council in the future. This view was not, however, agreed with by all as it was considered that the opportunity to create a Town/Parish should be grasped and that the time of the General and Local Elections in 2015 would be an ideal as it would be a time of political interest and activity.

It was noted that the existing Charter Trustees in Macclesfield involved the same 12 Councillors as would be involved in a LSDC i.e. they represented the unparished areas of the town.

The main powers of a LSDC were listed as being:

1. Monitoring Services.
2. To provide advice and recommendations to Cabinet on the issues and needs of Macclesfield.

3. To be the Cheshire East's principal consultee for matters and decisions relating to the Parish of Macclesfield.
4. To liaise and co operate with local organisations to pursue the wellbeing of the unparished area.
5. To nominate representatives from its membership to serve on local bodies.
6. To advise and liaise with Cheshire East Council on preparatory measures for the devolution and transfer of assets.
7. To consider the cost implications of the development and transfer of services to the unparished area.
8. To make recommendations to Cabinet on the level of service provision.
9. To consider and recommend to Cabinet the amount of any special expenses levy to be raised from residents in the unparished area.

It was pointed out that the main weakness of the above list was point no. 3 as in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 any self selecting group could set themselves up as a 'local economic forum' which then meant that the planning authority had to give special consideration to any views it expressed, as had been the case with the Macclesfield Town Centre Redevelopment proposals and the 'Make it Macclesfield' group; only a democratically elected body could override such a group and therefore the core of the debate should centre on whether or not Macclesfield wanted to have a self elected or a democratically elected body.

It was stated that a LSDC could only act as a consultative or advisory body whereas a Town/Parish Council could decide upon the level of services it wished to provide. The example of Congleton Town Council, formed in 1982, was given as a good example of how a Town Council had grown and gone from strength to strength and with the greater powers now available it was employing staff to carry out a greater range of duties the aim of which was to provide a service of a higher standard than that which could be provided by Cheshire East Council.

In considering the range of assets that could be taken on by a LSDC it was noted that car parking revenue could not be included as a LSDC was not a separate entity whereas a Parish/Town Council was; legal advice and also some political will would be needed to finalise a list including whether the direct management of services would be possible (which implied that staff would be available to do so).

In discussing what might become the responsibility of a LSDC reference was made to what could be learnt from areas that had already gone through this process. It was reported that unfortunately there was no direct comparison to be made as elsewhere the option of a LSDC had been dismissed.

The main difference between areas that had already gone through this process was in the level of public support; there was little evidence of support in Macclesfield for the creation of a new and additional tier of local government although this view was not agreed with by all those present who felt that lack of interest was a result of inadequate publicity and the consultation being held across the summer holiday period.

As Councillor Murphy had previously produced a paper which had been considered by the Constitution Committee, on the possible role of an Enhanced Local Service Delivery Committee, it was agreed that he and the Registration and Business Manager should discuss the matter to produce a form of wording for this option. In addition consideration needed to be given to the format and

question(s) for the ballot paper(s). Cllr Murphy had long held the view that the area of Tytherington would be better dealt with separately to the remainder of Macclesfield as it was a clearly identifiable area which had grown considerably in recent times.

In the light of the discussion, and the comments expressed by Councillors and the public the Chairman recommended that a paper be produced for the next meeting giving a comparison of the powers available to an Enhanced LSDC, and to a Town/Parish Council, and the advantages and disadvantages of each. In addition he was keen that the members of the public who had taken part in the session should be able to contribute further to what might be added to the responsibilities of an Enhanced LSDC, and to the questions to be posed on a ballot paper, and requested that they forward any such comments to the Registration and Business Manager.

It was suggested that a face book page be set up to facilitate comments being made; that clear maps be provided of the areas involved; and that a doormat leaflet be provided to support the stage 2 consultation.

It had been suggested that an empty shop unit in Macclesfield Town Centre be utilised to assist in publicity; whilst there was no objection to this in principal it was reported that it was not yet the time for this.

RESOLVED

1. That the comments and views expressed at this meeting be taken on board in formulating the responsibilities of an Enhanced Local Service Delivery Committee.
2. That Cllr B Murphy and the Registration Service and Business Manager liaise regarding the suggested wording for the meaning of an Enhanced Local Service Delivery Committee.
3. That all those present contact the Registration Service and Business Manager direct with any further suggestions for either the duties and responsibilities of an Enhanced Local Service Delivery Committee, or the format/wording of the ballot paper.

25 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

That arrangements be made for the next meeting when appropriate.

The meeting commenced at 10.30 am and concluded at 12.35 pm

Councillor D Marren (Chairman)