

Community Governance Review Sub Committee
16th October 2013

Briefing Note

Options for the Next Stage of the Community Governance Review

1. Introduction

At the last meeting of the Sub Committee members considered feedback received from the first stage of consultation with the public and with stakeholders. It was noted that despite publicity and public meetings being held the response had been disappointing. 114 members of the public had attended the public meetings but some of these were multiple attendees. 90 responses to the consultation were received. The majority of those who responded felt that a parish/town council was the best option for Macclesfield – but only 56 people in total gave a view on this issue. The Sub Committee agreed that further publicity should be undertaken to engage the community, including young people and that the next stages of consultation should now focus upon the two options of:

- No change - with an enhanced Service Delivery Committee; and
- A Town Council for Macclesfield.

It is difficult to pursue further publicity until such time as the option of an enhanced Service Delivery Committee has been developed and can be articulated clearly to the public. It is suggested that this is placed as a high priority to seek political agreement for an operating model.

Two additional responses received since the last meeting of the Sub Committee (in response to the first stage of consultation) are attached as **Appendix A**.

2. Macclesfield Local Members Briefing

There was an extended discussion relating to Macclesfield Community Governance Review at Macclesfield Local Members Briefing held on 13th September and it was requested that the following key points be reported to the CGR Sub Committee:

1. Members generally acknowledged the poor response to the consultation, in terms of attendance at events and formal representations.
2. There was some debate as to whether there was any case to support a local referendum on the establishment of a Town Council.
3. An alternative to a Town Council was proposed by the Leader in the form of an 'enhanced Local Service Delivery Committee' to ensure a

localist approach, representation of existing Cheshire East Council elected Members, and engagement of other local key interests.

4. Members indicated that they wish to more fully understand what a 'enhanced LSDC' could take on and deliver, and how it would be structured and resourced.

5. That this information be reported to the next Community Governance Review Committee.

3. Options for the Next Stages of the Review

Having considered the limited level of public response and feedback from the Macclesfield Local Members Briefing, the Sub Committee may wish to consider whether or not they wish to proceed with a ballot of electors in Macclesfield. It is suggested that if a decision was made to proceed with a ballot, that this would need to take place in December 2013 to allow enough time for the review to be completed within the statutory period of 12 months. See suggested draft revised timetable attached as **Appendix B**.

In terms of potential outcomes for the review, the Council could decide to proceed with the "No change option with an enhanced service delivery committee" with immediate effect, without the need for a ballot of electors, as this outcome does not require a CGR decision to proceed. However, this would not be the case if the Council decided to create a town or parish Council - as there is a statutory requirement "to consult local government electors" before reaching this outcome. A ballot would generally be deemed the most appropriate method to achieve this (as has been undertaken by Cheshire East for all Community Governance Reviews conducted to date).

In terms of the cost of a ballot of electors it is estimated that this would be approximately £6,700 for the printing of the ballot packs, plus approximately £12,000 for the outgoing and return postage. Members may wish to consider whether they consider the benefits of conducting a ballot would merit this level of expenditure.

4. Further Publicity (in advance of any ballot)

At the last meeting of the Sub Committee Members requested that the Communications team prepare a plan on how to make better use of a wider range of media to support the next stage of the review and also requested that the consultation information be reformatted to include the two options of a Town Council for Macclesfield (with examples of services, functions and associated costs drawn from existing town councils) and no change with an enhanced service delivery committee.

Draft publicity material is attached as **Appendix C**. Wording on the emerging proposals for an enhanced service delivery committee would need to be added. Stakeholders could be reconsulted on the two options and the general public engaged via the website.

In terms of additional publicity the Communications Team have suggested the following approach:

- To arrange a Schools Voting day – one week prior to any ballot being undertaken and try encourage media interest.
- To engage young people via twitter.
- Identify campaigners for both options and use this to encourage press interest / promote press ownership.

Councillor Janet Jackson has helpfully suggested that we need to make as much use of local radio, press and social media as possible; need to tweet people in Macclesfield who have a lot of followers and wide networks; and that we could promote the review /ballot at the Macclesfield Town Football matches and any other events happening around the town. It has also been suggested that Cheshire East take over an empty shop in the Town to publicise the options for Governance and Cllr Jackson has asked for this suggestion to be included on this agenda for discussion.

If a decision is taken to proceed with a ballot, clarity is needed asap on the option of an enhanced service delivery committee so that this can be communicated to the public in advance.

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