

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Community Governance Review Member Group

held on Thursday, 30th July, 2009 at East Committee Room - Municipal Buildings, Earle Steet, Crewe, CW1 2BJ

PRESENT

Councillors D Cannon, R Cartlidge, A Kolker, R Parker, A Ranfield and R West

IN ATTENDANCE

Councillors D Flude, B G Silvester and R Westwood

OFFICERS

Mr C Chapman	Borough Solicitor
Mr M Flynn	
Mr W Howie	Democratic Services Officer
Ms D Moulson	Democratic Services Officer
Mrs L Parton	Elections and Registration Team Manager
Mr J Rounce	Research and Intelligence Officer (Consultation)
Ms D Todd	Electoral Team Leader

1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED: That Councillor T Ranfield be appointed Chairman of the Group.

2 POINT OF ORDER

A Member raised a Point of Order prior to the start of the proceedings. seeking clarification on whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting. In response, the Borough Solicitor confirmed that the Access to Information Rules applied only in limited circumstances and would not, in this case, preclude the press and public from being in attendance. It was agreed that a briefing note would be circulated to members following the meeting detailing the position.

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received on this occasion.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Cannon, Cartlidge and Parker each declared a personal interest in the business of the meeting by virtue of their position as Crewe Charter Trustees.

5 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME

In accordance with Procedure Rules 11 and 35, a total of 10 Minutes was allocated for members of the public to address the Committee on any matter relevant to the work of the Committee.

As no members of the public were in attendance at the meeting, no questions were received.

6 BRIEFING PAPER

On 30 March 2009, a petition had been received by Cheshire East Council calling for a Community Governance Review; the petition identifying three recommendations arising from a Review; namely that -

- i) a new parish council be constituted under Section 87 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007;
- ii) a new parish should have a council to be known as Crewe Town Council; and
- iii) the area to which the review was to relate would be the whole of the Electoral Wards of Coppenhall, Delamere, Grosvenor, Maw Green, St. John's, Valley and Waldron; and those parts of the following Electoral Wards which did not already fall into an existing parish: Alexandra, Leighton, St. Barnabas and Wistaston Green.

From February 2008, the power to take such decision had been devolved from the Secretary of State and the Electoral Commission to principal Councils such as Cheshire East Borough Council. The Elections and Registration Manager spoke to the briefing paper attached to the agenda which outlined for the Group the issues which would need to be resolved to conduct the review. In addition, a copy of the government advice on undertaking a Governance Review was provided as background information for Members.

Paragraph three of the paper identified the phases which would need to be completed and on which the Group would be asked to comment. The draft timeline was, in part, being driven by the work of the Boundary Commission and would not allow much leeway for slippage if the Group wished to present its recommendations to Council in December and submit comments to the Boundary Committee before the deadline of February 2010.

In responding to questions from members, officers confirmed that the review had to be completed within twelve months of the petition being submitted i.e. March 2010. Whilst the Group understood of the need to 'fit in' with existing deadlines, such as committee/consultation dates, it was the view of Members that this should not be to the detriment of the process.

Following a short debate the Group concluded that all attempts should be made to adhere to the timeline proposed but that a contingency plan be drawn together should the process slip. It was also agreed that a letter be sent to the Boundary Committee to inform it of the Council's position.

7 BRIEFING PAPER - INITIAL OPTIONS EVALUATION

In accordance with the procedures set down in the guidance for conducting Governance Reviews, Cheshire East Council had to assess any proposal, including that set out in the petition, in terms of the criteria and key considerations. The paper submitted represented an initial valuation of the options which could be considered i.e.

- I. Area Committees
- II. Neighbourhood Management
- III. Tenant Management Organisations
- IV. Area/Community Forums
- V. Residents' and Tenants' Associations
- VI. Community Associations
- VII. Multiple Parish Councils

It was suggested to the Group that, of all the options proposed only (vii) above would fit the required criteria. Therefore the most viable options going forward would be for a single parish or multiple parish councils to represent the areas identified in the petition.

The rationale behind the conclusion was not disputed by the Group but, to ensure that the consultation process was not seen to be weighted in any way it was proposed that each of the options set out in the paper be included in the consultation leaflet, with a short explanation of the pros and cons associated with each.

8 COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW - PROJECT PLAN AND TIMELINE

Having discussed the procedure to be applied in some detail, the Group was invited to make a number of decisions to guide the way forward. For ease of reference, a list of required decisions was tabled at the meeting.

Part b of the recommendation sought agreement as to the form the consultation process would take. The Group reiterated its request that the explanatory leaflet, which would be sent to consultees, was short, to the point and clear about the response it wished to solicit; the same approach

to be applied to the questionnaire which would be sent to all electors. A proposal to hold a public meeting at the Municipal Buildings in Crewe was also supported, the Chairman of the Group offering to Chair the meeting.

Further to the above, it was suggested that information be provided as to the potential cost of each of the option. In confirming that the information could be included, the Borough Solicitor provided a caveat in that the data had to be reported in such a way as to inform and not influence.

It was reported to the Group that the Review must give consideration to the electoral arrangements that should apply in the event a parish council was to be established. The views of Members were sought as to whether this issue should be consulted on during stage one of the process or as part of stage two. As the format of questionnaire would need to contain a view on the warding arrangements for a single or multiple parish Council, the Group requested that this item be deferred, to allow time for further consideration.

To enable the timetable to be met, a method of delivery for the leaflets and questionnaires needed to be agreed. For expediency, it had been suggested that the Council employ its on electoral canvassers as a means of deliver, an approach which was supported by the Group.

RESOLVED: That

- a) the Community Governance Review Consultation process comprise:
 - i) an explanatory leaflet to all consultees, inviting a written response (to be agreed by the Borough Solicitor in consultation with the Chairman of the Group);
 - ii) a questionnaire to all electors;
 - iii) two public meetings, to be chaired by the Chairman of the Group Councillor T Ranfield and held in the daytime and evening on a date to be nominated in keeping with the timetable proposed;
- b) consideration of the format of the questionnaire [referred to in (aii) above] be deferred to a second meeting;
- c) public notifications be made in the Crewe Chronicle, on Cheshire East Council's website, on Council Notice Boards and libraries;
- d) the Government Guidance on Community Governance reviews be noted;
- e) the timeline for the conduct of the review (to be amended as necessary) be approved;

- f) the use of canvassers for the distribution of the questionnaire to all electors be approved; and
- g) a request be made for the provision of additional funding in the sum of £12,000 to cover all relevant expenditure.

9 LIST OF CONSULTEES

A proposed list of consultees has been tabled at the meeting for Members' consideration and views were sought as to whether any additions were required for completeness.

A number of nominations were made for inclusion in the list which included:

- Edward Timpson MP
- Cheshire Police Authority
- Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service
- Cheshire Interfaith Network
- Cheshire and Wirral Mental Health Trust
- Cheshire East Third Sector Congress
- Parish Councils adjoining the wards listed in the petition

To enable the list to be as comprehensive as possible, it was agreed that further nominations could, if required, be submitted to the Borough Solicitor.

It was noted that the Crewe Charter Trustees could have a view on the mayoralty arrangements which might apply in the future and it was suggested that the question be put to its next meeting in August.

RESOLVED: That the list of consultees (as amended) be approved.

10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED: That the next meeting be held on Wednesday 12th August 2009 commencing at 4.00 pm in the Municipal Buildings, Earle Street, Crewe.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 11.25 am

Signed: Councillor T Ranfield