

Wilmslow Community Governance Review Public Meeting held at the Handforth Youth and Community Centre at 7.00pm on Wednesday, 28 April 2010

PRESENT:

Councillor J Crockatt (in the Chair).
Councillors G Barton, D Stockton and P Whiteley.

OFFICERS:

Mike Flynn (Review Team Officer)
Brian Reed (Democratic Services Manager)
Cherry Foreman (Democratic Services Officer)

PRESENT:

Sarah Flannery (Independent Candidate, Tatton).
Councillor Frank Keegan (also of Alderley Edge Parish Council)
Councillor Howard Murray (also of Poynton Town Council)

Public/Residents:

Adrian Bradley, Malcolm Calvert, Rebecca Calvert, Bob Keen, Nick King, Rosemary King, Peter Mainwaring, Rod Menlove, Joanne Minnes, Christine Mitchell, John Mitchell, Robert Moore, David Pincombe, Anna Triantis, Anne Walsh, Elizabeth White and W White.

Questions and Responses

- Q1 If a Town Council goes ahead how many Councillors will there be for Handforth, Wilmslow and Styal?
Ans *Brian Reed and Mike Flynn*: the number cannot be predicted at this stage but will come out of the process; it will be a minimum of 5 and the maximum is not set but generally is no more than 25.
- Q2 What will the precept for Handforth be?
Ans *Brian Reed*: the precept will be dependent on the services carried out by the town or parish council.
- Q3 PCSO's (Police Community Support Officers) have been appointed by Poynton Town Council, how and why?
Ans *Cllr Murray*: the PCSO's have been an excellent addition to the service: he explained the different categories of PCSO, the duties they can perform, and the cost to the Town Council.
- Q4 Is the cost of town/parish councillors entirely funded by the precept?
Ans *Brian Reed*: they are funded by the precept initially unless other arrangements are made such as future grant monies.
Cllr Keegan: the wish is that eventually the whole of Cheshire East will be parished and that, with the award of the necessary finance, they would then take over the responsibility for certain functions and duties. At present Cheshire East Council provides a number of discretionary services and there would be discussions with the councils as to whether they wished to take them on.

- Q5 Are parish councillors remunerated? What resident's opinions were researched when including Finney Green in the Handforth proposal?
- Ans *Mike Flynn*: CHALC (Cheshire Association of Local Authorities) has a generic remuneration scheme which PC's can adopt, although none have. Travel and subsistence can be claimed but no allowances.
Cllr Whiteley: Finney Green has been included in the Handforth petition, although this is puzzling as the proposal describes the boundary quite accurately using the River Dean. He did not believe the Finney Green residents supported it, it was based on a Boundary Commission change in 2007 which was designed to retain 3 councillors in the ward but which as a result distorted the traditional boundaries,
Cllr Barton: the Handforth petition referred to the boundary of the old borough ward, but the ballot would enable this to be agreed, the petition boundaries were indicative not final.
- Q6 If the decision made by Council is different to the petition, it would be undemocratic.
- Ans *Brian Reed*: the Council has to conduct the consultation exercise to ascertain the views of the public and that could throw up something different to what was envisaged.
Cllr Barton: it is fully democratic, hence the ballot. The final option will be in line with the most popular opinions and, ultimately, the ballot response may be no.
- Q7 What questions will be on the ballot paper, and what happens next?
- Q8 Regarding counting and interpretation of the vote, are all the responses put together or is there separate counting for Handforth and Wilmslow i.e. will the Wilmslow vote affect the Handforth vote?
- Ans *Mike Flynn*: responded that the format of the ballot paper was to be discussed at a meeting later that evening. He explained the options for the 3 different areas, which would be separately identifiable, in order to separate out each area from the whole area of 'greater Wilmslow'. The ballot paper would ask whether or not a parish council was wanted and then, if yes, whether for the whole area or for a single area (relating to the area in which the respondent resided).
- Q9 The natural boundary is the River Dean, and until that is resolved how can those in the grey area make a decision?
- Ans *Cllr Crockatt*: the boundary will be decided before the ballot paper is sent out.
Cllr Stockton: there may not be a boundary to decide if a single entity is determined.
- Q9 Is there a capping mechanism for the precept?
- Ans *Cllr Whitely*: the precept is what is asked for by the parish council and Cheshire East Council only approves it.
Cllr Keegan: referred to the precept to be levied by Alderley Edge Parish Council which reflected the need to cover the costs of building a medical centre on to the front of the Festival Hall. The higher amount

was for one year only. The parish council had the power to raise money in this way, as did Poynton Town Council in order to cover the cost of its PCSO's.

Cllr Murray: stated that Poynton Town Council had not raised its precept for three years running. Accountability meant that if people did not like what was happening then you did not get re elected. The public could attend all the council meetings and ask questions, and also go to the Parish Assembly and raise questions – there was a whole raft of accountability. He referred to the current complications of double taxation on some of the services provided/carried out by parish and town councils but that this would not continue in the future as the parish council would have control of the costs and the services provided.

Q11 With reference to the services which Cheshire East Council wants to offload, do we know what they are?

Ans *Cllr Murray:* there is a difference between 'transfer' and 'devolve' e.g. Cheshire East Council has responsibility for litter but would like to devolve it to a local council or to a cluster of local councils, the finance for that primary function would follow it.

Q12 How will people not present at (this) meeting be able to understand, from the leaflet, the issues around double taxation etc.

Ans *Brian Reed:* the process identifies that there will be some benefits but there is a limit to the amount of information that can be included in the leaflet; its aim is to get people attention, there are other ways they can find out more.

Cllr Murray: it is a weak document and it does not do justice to the benefits. How do you put out the benefits of big v small groupings?

Cllr Crockatt: the parish councils would start in a small way and they would decide what services they would provide, gradually building in experience.

Cllr Keegan: a presentation was given recently in Middlewich, which set out the duties and responsibilities of town and parish councils; it would be useful to distil that information down for circulation with the leaflet.

Brian Reed: explained that the timescales for printing, meetings etc were extremely tight but that Cllr Keegan's suggestion (above) would be looked into and, if possible, it would be put on the website.

Cllr Barton: confirmed that this would be discussed at the Sub Committee meeting to be held at the close of the public meeting.

Brian Reed summarised what would happen next and urged all those present to participate in the consultation exercise, in addition to having attended the meeting. He confirmed that the consultation exercise would end on 4 June, and that the results were due to be considered at a meeting of the Council on 22 July 2010.

Thanks were extended to the Councillors Keegan and Murray, from Alderley Edge Parish Council and Poynton Town Council respectively, for attending and assisting in answering questions.

The public meeting commenced at 7.00 pm and ended at 8.20 pm