

**North East Derbyshire District Council**

**Cabinet**

**9 March 2016**

**Review of District and Parish Liaison Group**

**Report No. GBXR/23/15-16/MK of Councillor G Baxter MBE, Leader of the Council**

This report is public

**Purpose of the Report**

- To present for Cabinet's approval new arrangements for the District and Parish Liaison Group.

**1 Report Details**

1.1 In July 2015, Cabinet considered a report of a scrutiny review undertaken by the Economic Regeneration, Skills and Environment (ERSE) Scrutiny Committee on the Council's working relationship with Town and Parish Councils. The review made the following recommendations which were all approved by Cabinet:

- (1) That consideration be given when providing training as to:
  - whether any District Council Events could be opened up to Parish/Town Councils.
  - Whether more training could be provided in partnership with the Derbyshire Association of Local Councils.
- (2) That a contact list of the services available to Parish/Town Councils at the District Council be circulated to all Parish Clerks within North East Derbyshire and this list should also be provided to the contact centre and be available on the Councils intranet/internet for use by all Council officers and elected members
- (3) That a calendar of meetings for the District Council be circulated to all Parish Councils for information
- (4) That any consultations involving Parish Councils be undertaken in a timely manner to help Parish Councils schedule in the item at Parish Council meetings.
- (5) That consideration is given to how Parish Councils can best be involved in any consultation on how Section 106 monies were to be allocated in their Parish.

- (6) That a review of the District/Parish Liaison Group be undertaken to identify ways in which its agenda could be more equally balanced between the District and Parishes and be reformatted to encourage attendance by Parish/Town Councils
- (7) That the Council welcomes any support the Derbyshire Association of Local Councils could provide to encourage and assist Parish/Town Councils in building their capacity through mechanisms such as the Local Award Scheme and the Certificate in Local Council Administration
- 1.2 The Governance Manager was designated the lead officer for the review. A report to ERSE's successor committee, the Growth Scrutiny Committee, was considered in August 2015 and showed that most of the recommendations either had been, or were in the process of being, actioned.
- 1.3 The key outstanding recommendation related to the District/Parish Liaison Group (recommendation 6) which scrutiny felt needed to be reviewed. In discussing the work of the Liaison Group with parishes, scrutiny highlighted several key concerns with the Group's current format (Wednesday evening meetings on a quarterly basis):
- Over-reliance on "chalk and talk" and PowerPoint methods.
  - Lack of response and 'ownership' from parishes resulting in low attendance;
  - Generally 'District led' in its approach;
  - Need for greater focus on training.
- 1.4 The District and Parish Liaison Group was informed of the outcomes of the review at their meeting in July 2015 where an alternative format was presented for discussion. This was based on:
- A reduction in the number of meetings from four to two, acknowledging that parishes have a number of demands on their time and a number of sources of information from which to access information (e.g. District Council, National and Local Association of Local Councils, Society of Local Council Clerks). Reducing the number of events also allows the District Council to focus resources into two well planned events per year;
  - The first session (in June, after the annual meetings) based around a conference theme on a Friday day-time with a further 'business' style meeting on the usual Wednesday night (in November/December).
  - Each parish being invited to nominate a member representative (and substitute) to attend the meetings along with the clerk although this would not debar other members from attending.
  - Future meetings being based on the principles of participation and involvement rather than presentations.

- Closer working between the District Council and Derbyshire Association of Local Councils but also with other partners.

1.5 Following consultation with the parish and town councils, a further presentation was made to the District and Parish Liaison Group in January 2016 firming up the proposals.

1.6 Subject to Cabinet approval, the new arrangements will begin in 2016/17. Parish and town councils will be written to requesting contact details for their nomination and substitute. Proposed dates for the conference and business meeting are 1 July and 30 November 2016 respectively, subject to final approval by Cabinet of the 2016/17 calendar of meetings (see separate report). Additional meetings can be set up where there is a need.

## **2 Conclusions and Reasons for Recommendation**

2.1 To increase the District Council's level and quality of involvement with parish and town councils and encourage a more collaborative approach to training and information exchange.

## **3 Consultation and Equality Impact**

3.1 The new proposal was consulted on with parish and town councils between September 2015 and January 2016 and, although there were limited responses, the new concept was broadly supported.

3.2 A copy of this report will be sent to the Derbyshire Association of Local Councils and to all parish and town councils in the District. It will also form an appendix to a report to the Growth Scrutiny Committee on 8 March 2016.

## **4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection**

4.1 To keep things as they are. However, this is not recommended as the current District and Parish Liaison Group is not as effective as it could be. Its approach is too presentational and too District Council led. As a result it generally yields a low turnout with many parishes choosing not to get involved and own it, as "their" meeting.

## **5 Implications**

### **5.1 Finance and Risk Implications**

5.1.1 None.

### **5.2 Legal Implications including Data Protection**

5.2.1 None.

### **5.3 Human Resources Implications**

5.3.1 None, other than staff time.

## 6 Recommendations

- 6.1 That the new arrangements in respect of District and Parish Liaison events be approved in line with the proposal given in paragraph 1.4 above.

## 7 Decision Information

<b>Is the decision a Key Decision?</b> (A Key Decision is one which results in income or expenditure to the Council of £50,000 or more or which has a significant impact on two or more District wards)	No
<b>District Wards Affected</b>	All
<b>Links to Corporate Plan priorities or Policy Framework</b>	N/A

## 8 Document Information

<b>Appendix No</b>	<b>Title</b>
None	
<b>Background Papers</b> (These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Cabinet (NEDDC) or Executive (BDC) you must provide copies of the background papers)	
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