

Extracts from the Constitution Working Group meetings in relation to Community Governance Reviews for the Crook and Durham City

Tuesday 12 July 2011

Present - Councillor Henig (Chairman) and Councillors J Armstrong, A Hopgood, P Jopling, D Marshall, N Martin A Napier, B Stephens, and M Williams.

The Group considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services that set out the background to undertaking a community governance review, summarised the guidance from the Secretary of State, proposed that the remit of the Group be extended to cover Community Governance Reviews and identified various issues for the Group to consider.

Members discussed at length the timing of community governance reviews bearing in mind, the requirement to complete it within twelve months, and in the case of Durham a review could be commenced but not completed until a review of the electoral arrangements is complete. Originally the Boundary Commission had advised to avoid starting a community governance review if a review of the electoral arrangements was being or is about to be undertaken.

The Working Group noted that some reviews had been received for some time and they wished that these be complete prior to the elections in May 2013. Taking that into account the electoral register would need to be in place by December 2012. This meant that the scope for undertaking the reviews was tight as they were hoping that the boundary review would be complete before they sought submissions on the community governance reviews as this was likely to have a bearing on the submissions that may be made.

The Working Group determined that they would need to be very clear on the information they sought when they asked for submissions. They would discuss this at a future meeting, and would plan to meet early September.

Resolved:

1. That the Council delegate to the Constitution Working Group the task of proposing terms of reference for Council approval, overseeing the review process and the production of recommendations for Councils consideration.
2. That Community Governance Reviews be commenced no later than 1st November 2011, commencing with reviews for the Durham City and Crook areas.
3. The Constitution Working Group be required to consider and propose to Council Terms of Reference for each review and the

initial options for consideration, including the option identified in any valid petition and the proposed timetable for each review.

4. The Working Group also consider their preferred option for undertaking reviews (whole of the County or a schedule for undertaking views initially to cover unparished areas of the County).

Thursday 8 September 2011

Present: Councillor S Henig (Chairman) and Councillors A Hopgood, P Jopling, D Marshall, N Martin A Napier, J Shuttleworth, W Stelling B Stephens, and M Williams.

The Group considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services on the progress made by the Officer Working Group on preparing the community governance reviews, and which presented proposed consultation documents.

The document considered was that which was initially prepared for Durham City, however the documents for Crook should be available shortly.

Members discussed at length the consultation document in terms of its content, range of options, and examples provided on the precept. The Group accepted that the document should be open and transparent, and differing views were expressed on the amount of information provided about a precept and the costs involved/ examples provided.

It was suggested that the document could be more user friendly, and could provide additional space in the comments box.

Officers were asked to re-work the document bearing in mind the comments made to hopefully seek a consensus for consideration at the next meeting.

In terms of the Community Governance Review for Crook, the Group agreed that the consultation should include the whole of the area.

Resolved:

2. That officers make amendments to consultation document as suggested.
3. That the first stage of each review involves the process as set out in paragraph 11 of the report.
4. That the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to finalise a consultation strategy for both reviews, arrange for both the strategy and the documents to be the subject of an

Equality Impact Assessment and bring those documents together with draft terms of reference to the next Constitution Working Group for further consideration by the Members.

Tuesday 11 October 2011

Present: Councillor S Henig (Chairman) and Councillors J Armstrong, R Bell, G Holland (substitute for Councillor Martin), A Hopgood, L Hovvels (substitute for Councillor Napier), D Marshall, W Stelling, B Stephens and M Williams.

The Group considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services on the progress made by the officer working group since the last meeting. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services informed the group that further work had been undertaken in relation to the consultation document which was attached as an Appendix to the report. Also attached were the terms of reference for each review which would need to be agreed by full council at its meeting on 26 October 2011. The approval of the terms of reference by full Council would signal the formal commencement of the review on 1 November 2011.

The group discussed at length the issues around the precept examples detailed within the consultation document and a number of different viewpoints were expressed in relation to comparable alternatives.

It was agreed that Bishop Auckland would be a better example to include within the final consultation document for Durham City. The group also agreed that the map on page 40 of the report be the version that appeared in the final consultation document.

Resolved:

That the consultation documents be amended to reflect the changes agreed by the working group and that the terms of reference be submitted to full Council for approval.