

**RYE TOWN COUNCIL****DEVOLVED SERVICES WORKING GROUP****Notes of Meeting Held on 29 October 2007**

*Present* Cllrs Brian Elliott (BE), Sonia Holmes (SH),  
Paul Osborne (PO), Sam Souster (SH), David Wright (DW)  
Richard Farhall (RF)

**1 Apologies**

Cllr Bernardine Fiddimore (BF).

**2 Rye-Rother Liaison meeting (18 October)**

It was reported that in relation to the devolvement of services, the Rother officers present – particularly the Head of Amenities – had been notably positive.

RTC asked whether RDC would continue to insist on the production of a Local Action Plan as part of the procedure for devolving services. The impression was given that this was negotiable. RTC suggested that it could instead provide RDC with evidence that it had consulted with, and had the support of, the community.

The Head of Amenities had suggested that there was no reason why RTC could not take on services such as Rye Sports Centre/Swimming Pool, ancient monuments, refuse collection and street cleansing. The Clerk advised her that local councils did not have the power currently to take on refuse collection but there was a possibility Quality Councils could be empowered to take on such functions by the end of the year.

RDC had tabled 'Criteria when considering devolution of a service delivery' (*attached*). This was considered by the Working Group. Criterion 1 was interpreted as meaning that an increase in Council tax for Rye taxpayers only (in return for more local control/improved services etc) might be acceptable to RDC. Otherwise, the criteria were considered to be largely acceptable (assuming that it was most unlikely RDC would voluntarily relinquish any freeholds).

In relation to 10, RDC had explained that the main obstacle to progressing negotiating a package of devolved services was that it did not apportion costs/overheads by parish – ie costs – and income - were spread over the whole district.

Members of the Working Group agreed generally that further progress was impossible if the respective parties did not have reliable core financial/management accounting information for Rye only. The Clerk advised that he had received an email from RDC's Head of Finance estimating the cost of the proposed consultancy work – ie identifying the cost/income associated with RDC services delivered in Rye – at £4,400 – or £2,200 per partner. He had suggested that a recently-retired RDC accountant could be engaged to undertake this work – the advantage being that the individual concerned is familiar with Rother's accounting systems.

**RECOMMENDATION That the Council budgets up to £2,250 as its contribution towards the consultancy work proposed, subject to RTC agreeing the Brief.**

It was agreed that the consultant's priority should be to identify the costs/income associated with those RDC services which RTC currently has the power to take on. However, basic data in respect of other services could well prove useful in respect of future dealings with RDC.

It was noted that taking over responsibility/maintenance of Rye Cemetery could be problematic because most of its lies outside of the parish [however, it is permission for a parish – as a burial authority - to provide a cemetery outside of its area].

It was suggested that RDC could consider passing a proportion of its tourism budget to RTC.

Criteria when considering  
devolution of service delivery

1. Should be at no increase in costs/council tax to Rother residents generally.
2. Any proposal should demonstrate value for money, either by way of reduced overall costs or by way of enhanced quality of service delivery at the same cost (this could embrace increased "customer satisfaction")
3. Should not be to the detriment of other service users/recipients
4. The potential for "double taxation" must be considered in all cases.
5. Will be unlikely to result in any transfer of RDC staff, unless real value for money can be demonstrated
6. Consideration will be given to a package of devolution to embrace more than just one service area
7. Agency agreements will be considered e.g. a Town/Parish Council could act as our agents for service management within an overall RDC contract
8. Parish/Town councils will be free to fund enhancements to our specified contracts, e.g. if they want more grass cuts, they can pay for it themselves
9. Consideration should be given to inclusion of ESCC delivered services.
10. The driver for devolution must come from the Town/Parish Council. As we do not have resources to lead on these considerations, we will be prepared to joint fund any suitable consultancy work with the Town/Parish Council (to come from within the Executive Priority Projects earmarked reserves).

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