



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

E249

Rural Area Working Party 27 January 2014

Attached are the unconfirmed action notes (including Terms of Reference) of the first meeting of the Informal Parish and Town Council Liaison Group.

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D r a f t

Informal Town and Parish Liaison Group

Action notes from the meeting on 29 November 2013 at 4pm in West Suffolk House

Present:

Philip Reeve	Great Barton Parish Council
Eddie Gibson	Great Barton Parish Council
Ian Steel	Rushbrooke with Rougham Parish Council
Jane Brookman	Brockley Parish Council
Margaret Godwin	Clare Town Council
I C Brookman	Pakenham Parish Council
Dave Ray	St Edmundsbury (SEBC)
Jim Thorndyke	St Edmundsbury
Peter Stevens	St Edmundsbury
Rachael Mann	West Suffolk
Ziaul Quader	West Suffolk
Cathy Manning	West Suffolk

Actions are noted in bold

- 1 Eddie Gibson agreed to take the Chair for this meeting.
- 2 The draft terms of reference were discussed (attached). It was accepted that they were relevant to this initial grouping but the following amendments made:
 - a. **Within SEBC the outcomes of the meeting would be reported to the Rural Area Working Party and such other committees or working parties as appropriate so that issues raised by the group could be considered by SEBC through the decision making process. (CM to amend)**
 - b. **The group could also play a role in agenda planning for future Parish Conferences.**
 - c. If the role of the group developed into something more than informal liaison it would be necessary to look at the membership and how it is selected.
 - d. The group noted that it can revisit the terms of reference at any point if the role develops so limited its amendments to the first two issues above.
 - e. **The action notes from the meeting should be circulated to all Clerks to share with all Parish and Town Councils within the SEBC area. (CM)**

- 3 Opportunities to participate in collaborative/joint procurement and purchases.

It was noted that the motivation for coming together to discuss this was to share best practice amongst parishes and towns and open up opportunities for parishes and towns to benefit from economies of scale by collaborative procurement or from accessing wider frameworks.

- a. **SEBC to share the details of the framework contracts it is part of/aware of so that parish and town councils have the option of joining any relevant frameworks. (ZQ)**
- b. Depending on the individual contracts there will be constraints on Parishes and towns buying into existing SEBC contracts as they were not procured with the option of extending them to parishes and town. However work could be done to build that option in in future.
- c. **SEBC to share with parishes its list showing when current contracts are up for renewal to provide parishes and towns with the opportunity to indicate an interest to join. (ZQ)**
- d. Discussions also identified the following list of potential SEBC/West Suffolk services which parishes and towns might want to buy-in:
 - Grounds maintenance
 - Audit
 - Legal services
 - Procurement
 - Banking services
 - Minor works

SEBC Joint Leadership Team to discuss the opportunity to open up these services. (RM and CM)

- e. **SEBC agreed to ask all parishes to identify their top spend and to capture this so that parishes could identify if there were opportunities to cluster and procure with neighbouring parishes and towns.**
- f. In addition it was identified that parishes and towns would welcome being circulated with relevant briefing notes, for example on changes resulting from legislation, which are being produced by SEBC/West Suffolk officers. **SEBC to establish a simple internal mechanism to achieve this. (RM and CM)**

- g. The meeting identified that a template to request quotations would be really helpful to parishes. SEBC have a template that would need amending to be appropriate for town and parish use. **Agreed that at the next meeting the group would review the SEBC template and jointly design one which would be available if parishes and towns wished to us it.**
- 4 Rural Initiatives Grant Scheme
- a. The group identified that a reminder was needed that this funding was available. **SEBC to send a reminder about the availability of this funding and to encourage SEBC rural ward councillors to promote its availability to the parishes and town ins their area. (CM)**
- 5 Communications
- a. The group had already identified the information to go to all Clerks.
- 6 Any other business
- a. **SEBC to renew the previous practice of opening up SEBC training events to parishes where the topic was appropriate. (CM to action with Juliet Fulford)**
- b. Dave Ray reported that although the minister for Communities and Local Government had indicated that the provisions for referendums on "excessive" increases in precepts would be extended to parish and town councils there would be a de minimis level taking account of the monetary as well as percentage increase.
- c. Dave Ray mentioned Community Infrastructure Level (CIL) and the changes in Section 106 monies which, from 1 April 2014, would only be available for facilities on-site. Off-side facilities would be funded through CIL when adopted with 15% of the funding linked to growth being passported to parishes/towns (25% where there is an approved Neighbourhood Plan).
- 7 Date of Next Meeting
- a. **Next meeting to be in early February,** when the work on pulling together the top areas of spend has been completed, and when more information should be known about CIL.
(CM)

Draft Terms of Reference

- Name:** Town & Parish Council Liaison Group
- Status of Group:** Informal working group (on a trial basis)
- Membership:** 5 representatives of town and parish councils in St Edmundsbury.
Up to 4 St Edmundsbury Borough councillors.
- Purpose:** Initially to explore the feasibility of suggestions made at the 22 October Parish Conference in relation to ways of managing the reductions in grant funding to Town and Parish Councils.
Option to continue and look at issues of mutual interest if this was felt appropriate and a productive way to work.
- Duration:** Initial trial meeting to establish if this is a productive way to work and to progress issues usefully.
If it is considered worthwhile to continue, normally one meeting between each Parish Conference (two per year on the current frequency). Further meetings could be programmed if business dictates.
- Meeting format:** Participative workshop style with all participants seeking to find practical solutions to the issues under discussion.
- Reports to:** The next Parish Conference