
REPORT TO:	FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: 13
DATE OF MEETING:	17 JANUARY 2002	CATEGORY: RECOMMENDED
REPORT FROM:	DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	SALLY KNIGHT (EXT. 5728)	DOC:
SUBJECT:	'QUALITY TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS' - CONSULTATION PAPER	REF:
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL	TERMS OF REFERENCE:

1.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are recommended to consider the consultation paper from the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on 'Quality Town and Parish Councils' and make recommendations to Council at its meeting on 31 January 2002

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to seek the views of the Committee on a consultation paper from the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) on 'Quality Town and Parish Councils' prior to consideration by Council on 31 January 2002.

3.0 Detail

Introduction

- 3.6 The Council has been invited to comment on proposals by DEFRA on how a *QUALITY* Parish or Town Council might work. This follows a commitment made in the Rural White Paper, published in November 2000.
- 3.2 A copy of the consultation paper has been placed in the Members' Room. There is also a summary at Annexe A to this report.

Contents

- 3.3 In summary, the consultation paper sets out proposals for:
- a model charter covering relations between all parish and town councils and their principal authorities

- the additional benefits that a local council can expect from achieving *QUALITY* status (bigger role in service delivery, access and information points and integral part of consultation arrangements)
- guidance to principal authorities and local councils setting out how the *QUALITY* system will work, including the model charter and guidance to principal authorities on financial arrangement with local councils
- a series of tests that local councils will have to pass to achieve *QUALITY* status
- self assessment validated by the external auditor

3.4 Details of the proposed model charter can be found at Annexe B. It is envisaged that Part 1 would apply to all parish and town councils and Part 2 to those that had achieved the *QUALITY* standard.

3.5 Possible functions that might be considered for delegation to all parish and town councils include:

• markets	• recycling
• street cleaning	• street naming
• maintenance of highway verges, footways and footpaths	• noise and nuisance abatement
• litter collection and control	• tree preservation orders
• some aspects of Development Control	• some aspects of leisure and tourist provision
• public convenience	• allotments
• street lighting	• parking restrictions
• issue of bus and rail passes	• road safety measures
• some aspects of the management of museums and libraries	

3.6 Essentially, the Government wants a *QUALITY* local council to:

- be representative of, and actively engage, all parts of its community, providing vision, identity and a sense of belonging
- be effectively and properly managed
- articulate the wishes of its community
- work in partnership with principal authorities and other public sector agencies
- in proportion to size and skills, deliver local service on behalf of principal authorities when this represent the best deal for the local community
- in proportion to size and skills, undertake more service delivery and other responsibilities themselves
- work closely with voluntary sector groups in their communities
- give leadership to work by the community on town or village plans; and,
- act as an information point for local services

3.7 The consultation paper includes a series of questions on which DEFRA is seeking views. These are included with the summary at Annexe A.

3.8 Under the Council's new constitution, the issues raised by the consultation paper are matters that should dealt with by full Council. Consideration would normally take place at the next available meeting (i.e. on 31 January 2002).

Consultation with local Parish Councils and the County Council

- 3.9 According to the consultation paper, the Government's aim is to improve the contribution of local councils to local governance; to promote greater co-operation between the tiers of local government; and, to encourage principal authorities to work in partnership with local councils.
- 3.10 Given this agenda, the views of South Derbyshire Parish Councils and Meetings and the County Council have been sought and these will be reported to Council on 31 January.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 None arising directly from this report.

5.0 Conclusions

- 5.1 The consultation paper comments:

'Quality local councils will work closely with their principal authorities and others to give their communities a better deal on local services and a stronger voice in the decisions that affect peoples lives. Local Councils are the democratic bodies with the closest direct links to their communities. They can make a vital contribution to establishing the long-term vision and the priorities contained in the community strategies which principal local authorities are responsible for preparing. They can also help to implement community strategies although their individual capacity for doing so will vary...'

6.0 Background Papers

'Quality Town and Parish Councils' DEFRA Consultation Paper (November 2001)

