

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL
26TH FEBRUARY 2014

FUTURE GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS FOR KIDDERMINSTER – UPDATE REPORT

1. This report provides Council with an update from the working group established by the Council resolution in July 2013 and proposed next steps.

Background

2. A Community Governance Review of Kidderminster was conducted in 2013 following receipt of a petition organised by the Charter Trustees and signed by over 5,000 electors in the town. The purpose of the petition was to call for the creation of a town council for Kidderminster. Following consultation, the results were reported to Council on 24th July 2013 and showed that, out of over 1,500 responses, 53% were against the proposal to create a town council. Council resolved as follows:

- “1. The second stage of consultation with the proposal to create the parish of Kidderminster (and for the parish to be called Kidderminster) should not be undertaken.
2. Delegated authority be granted to the [Solicitor to the Council] for the drafting and publishing of the results of the consultation review in accordance with The Local Government and Public Involvement Health Act 2007.
3. The Chief Executive be authorised to convene a working group of Members to consider future options.”

Update

3. A cross-party working group of 10 members from Kidderminster was convened accordingly and has met on 14th November 2013 and 31st January 2014. The working group is chaired by Councillor Graham Ballinger. Thus far, it has considered a wide range of options in respect of the future governance of Kidderminster, including:
 - Making no change to the current position i.e. retention of the Charter Trustees;
 - The Council making use of its powers to incur expenditure in section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972;
 - Changing the Council’s policy and introducing “special items” under sections 34 and 35 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, so that the Council’s expenditure in Kidderminster on matters which are paid for elsewhere by parish councils would be charged solely on council tax payers in Kidderminster;
 - Creating a development trust for Kidderminster;
 - Creating an area planning committee for Kidderminster;
 - Initiating a community governance review in order to parish Kidderminster but without creating a town council. This is not legally possible as legislation requires the creation of a parish or town council where the parish has more than 1000 electors;

- Initiating a community governance review in order to create a town council for Kidderminster.
- 4. The working group is minded to recommend that the Council should commence a further community governance review to seek public endorsement for the creation of a town council for Kidderminster. Before finalising its recommendation to Council, further work needs to be done on the rationale for taking this step, the business case for change compared to the other options, and the one off costs that would arise in respect of consultation with electors. This work could not be satisfactorily completed before today's meeting of Council. The working group will therefore be meeting again on 13th March in order to finalise its advice to Council.

Proposed next steps and recommendation

- 5. This update report does not seek any decision from Council on the future governance arrangements for Kidderminster. However in order to ensure that momentum is not lost, an additional meeting of full Council would be required in order to consider the working group's recommendations. It is proposed that the meeting would be held on Wednesday 26th March 2014 and that this topic would be the sole item on the agenda.
- 6. **The Council is recommended to note the update in this report and to consider the proposal to hold an additional special meeting of Council on Wednesday 26th March 2014, when the working group's recommendations would be submitted.**

Chairman of the Working Group: Councillor Graham Ballinger
Lead officer: Ian Miller, Chief Executive