

NON CONFIDENTIAL Minutes of the **SPECIAL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING** held in the **OFFICES OF THE LANGLEY PARK TRANSPORT GROUP, LANGLEY PARK** on Monday 6th October 2003 commencing at 7.00pm

Present Councillors:- A. Mollon (Chairman), G. Coulson, F. Crow, A. Harling, K. Robson, S. Rothwell, M. Tyler and W. J. Tyrie

Apologies:- M. D. Cummings, J. Geany, H. S. Guildford, M. Sands and H. Tyler

Also in attendance:- M. G. Ackroyd (Clerk)

091/03 QUALITY PARISH COUNCILS

The Clerk had submitted a detailed report on the DEFRA initiative to enable Parish and Town Councils to seek accreditation for Quality status as from 1st July 2003. For the benefit of Councillors the Clerk advised that out of over 100 Parish Councils in the County around 35 Councils had shown an interest in pursuing Quality Status although currently only 2 Clerks had an AQA Certificate in Local Council Administration although one (working for a small Council with only 200 electors) had stated that she did wish to move to a Council seeking accreditation.

In other words even if a Council satisfied all the other criteria if it did not have a suitably qualified Clerk then it would not be able to pursue accreditation. The Clerk also stated that he had been advised that the estimate from starting to prepare the AQA Portfolio to actual accreditation was around 9 months.

The Clerk also stated that as the guidelines had not yet been printed for QPC's the Durham Association of Parish and Town Councils (DAPTC) had not arranged any training sessions although he understood that the guidelines should be issued shortly and that the County Secretary for the DAPTC was hoping to arrange a session before Christmas.

In addition to the papers circulated Councillors Rothwell and Tyrie reported on the Seminar arranged by the National Association of Councillors North of England Region on 20th September 2003. Councillor Rothwell said that the Council would have to satisfy the Accreditation Panel that it was of a sufficient standard to be accredited and if not, the improvements necessary to achieve accreditation and a date when the application will be reconsidered. Councils to re-apply every 4 years in order to retain Quality Status.

To proceed to possible accreditation an action plan should be prepared engaging and involving the local community in the process. Training and development for members and voluntary groups should be facilitated.

The Clerk stated that he had received advice from the County Secretary, that once a Clerk had achieved the necessary qualifications, and the Council accredited with Quality Status, the Status would remain for the 4 year period even if the Clerk left the Council and was replaced by a non qualified Clerk.

After considerable discussion it was the general feeling that the Council would benefit from possible Quality Status and should therefore pursue possible accreditation in 2004/05 subject to the then Clerk being suitably qualified through the appropriate channels.

Councillor Rothwell referred to the possible benefits of joining the National Association of Councillors. The current cost is £15 per annum per Councillor or £65 for the full Council.

The Clerk advised that the Council was already a member of the Durham Association of Parish and Town Councils which offered some similar benefits to those on offer by the NAC.

The Clerk to make further enquiries in this case with both the DAPTC and the Council's own Insurers.

119/03 CLERKS FUTURE ROLE

The Clerk advised the Council that he did not wish to pursue the AQA qualifications and that as the Council had now decided, in principle, to pursue accreditation as a Quality Parish Council he wished to step down as Clerk during 2004/05 and as outlined in more detail in the confidential report attached to the Agenda. The Clerk recommended that in these circumstances the Council should appoint a Clerk Designate, with effect from 1st April 2004, who should either be qualified to an AQA status, or be prepared to pursue the appropriate qualification procedures, including the option of completing and submitting a Portfolio in accordance with the National Training Strategy for Town and Parish Councils guidelines.

The Clerk also recommended that the Council should adopt the NALC/SLC pay scales for Authorities in excess of 5000 (the population for Esh Ward being 5023 as at the 2001 Census) with immediate effect and to increase the part time worker's pay to the minimum of £5.33 per hour in accordance with the National Agreement of Local Government pay Spinal Column Point 4 refers.

It was agreed that the Council should adopt the framework of Option A contained within the Clerk's report as set out in the Confidential Minutes of this Meeting subject to certain minor modifications re the initial probationary period of the incoming Clerk linked to a possible requirement to qualify under the AQA procedures.

Councillors Coulson and Tyler declared an interest in the following item although they did take part in the debate to clarify various points of interest.

120/03 INTERMEDIATE LABOUR PROJECT

The Clerk had circulated a report with the Agenda advising that the funding for this project ended on 17th October 2003 but it was anticipated that other funding would be identified to carry this project on from 1st April 2004.

It was agreed that the Council should fund the Project for the balance of 2003/04 subject to a satisfactory contract being agreed with the Project Worker, Mr D. Rider in accordance with the framework set out in the Confidential Minutes of this Meeting .

The Meeting closed at 8.40pm