

# Joint Governance Committee

You are summonsed to attend a meeting of the Devizes Town Council Committee at the following, place and date.

Date: 1 December 2016

Time: 7.15PM

Venue: Council Chamber, Town Hall, St John's Street, Devizes

Enquiries: Town Hall - Tel: 01380 722160

## MEMBERS

Devizes Town Council:

Councillors: Hopkins  
East  
Nash  
Parker  
Wooldridge

Roundway Parish Council:

Councillors: Callow  
Geddes  
Parsons  
Von Berg  
Stevens

### 1. MINUTES

To approve as a correct record and authorise the Chairman to sign the minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on the 13 October 2016.

### 2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

### 3. DISCLOSURE(S) OF INTEREST

To receive any disclosures by a Councillor(s) and/or Officers in matters to be considered at this meeting in accordance with the provisions of Sections 94 or 117 of the Local Government Act 1972 or the National Code of Local Government Conduct.

#### **4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

At the Chairman's discretion, members of the public attending the meeting will be allowed to ask questions, make a statement or address the Council upon a matter of concern to that person which is relevant to the Council. A time limit of 5 minutes per person will be permitted, but this may be extended at the Chairman's discretion and a maximum period of 20 minutes has been allocated by the Council for this item of business.

#### **5. REPORT FOR INFORMATION – UPDATE ON DEVIZES & ROUNDWAY COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW**

The proposals agreed by Wiltshire Council in November 2015 as part of the Community Governance Review has implications both for the warding and for the number of councillors to represent the enlarged council. The Joint Governance Committee considered this matter at its meeting on 16 June 2016 and the recommendations have been agreed by both Devizes Town and Roundway Parish Councils.

The consequential changes as proposed by the two councils were included as recommendations to Wiltshire Council.

Accordingly, at its meeting on 18 October 2016, Wiltshire Council agreed the following consequential changes:

1. The area currently covered by Roundway Parish is to become a separate ward within the Town Council, to be known as Roundway Ward;
2. The total number of town councillors will be increased from 17 to 21, with the existing South, North and East Wards each having 5 members and the new Roundway Ward having 6 members;
3. All assets owned by Roundway Parish Council are to be transferred to Devizes Town Council.

The next stage is for the formal Order(s) to be finalised and it is anticipated that these will be sealed by the end of December.

The changes to the electoral registers and the Council Tax systems are being made.

Additionally, the Joint Governance Committee also made recommendations in respect of the interim governance period between the 1 April, when the Order comes into force and the 4<sup>th</sup> day after the elections in May 2017.

The arrangements recommended by the Joint Governance Committee, agreed by the two councils, is that all members of both Councils would form the democratic decision making body for the interim period.

The following report for decision makes further recommendations with regard to introducing these arrangements earlier than originally agreed and proposes some governance arrangements to ensure that both council's decisions are protected during this period.

## **6. REPORT FOR DECISION – EARLY ADOPTION OF INTERIM GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS**

### **Recommendation**

To agree to recommend to Devizes Town and Roundway Parish Councils, the interim governance arrangements prior to the elections in 2016.

### **Purpose of the Report**

To propose arrangements to both of the Councils with regard to how the two Councils will operate jointly leading up to the elections in 2016.

### **Background**

As already set out in the previous update report, the Community Governance Order will come into force on 1 April 2017 with interim arrangements being put in place until four days following the elections.

The two Councils have already agreed that from the 1 April 2017, the decision making body will be the membership of the two councils.

In order to ensure the smooth transition, officers are recommending that Devizes Town and Roundway Parish Councils consider entering into voluntary interim arrangements from an earlier date and agree the delegation of all decisions to, what would effectively be, a the Joint Governance Committee now comprising of all members.

Introducing these arrangements from 28 February, will give greater opportunity to deal with any complications or snagging issues prior to vesting day.

Additionally, in order to protect the interests of the individual councils in respect of matters which relate solely to one or other of the councils, it is proposed that a protocol is adopted. (Doc 6/1 refers).

There is the option of including a proviso that, where a matter on an agenda relating exclusively to either council or a matter on which either council has already made a previous decision or commitment, that the members of the council in question reserve the right to hold the matter to be considered by the members of that council alone.

### **Options Considered**

The Joint Governance Committee needs to decide if it agrees to recommend to the Councils of Devizes Town and Roundway Parish that:

- 1) Devizes Town Council and Roundway Parish Councils enter into a voluntary interim arrangement from 28 February 2017.

And, if so

- 2) That the protocol outlining specific governance arrangements for this period is agreed.

### **Implications & Risks**

#### **Financial and Resource Implications**

There are no significant financial implications although there are resource implications to coordinate the business of the two councils into a single agenda. However, this will be required anyway, so the resource is not wasted.

#### **Legal Implications and Legislative Powers**

There is no impediment to the Council's delegating responsibility to a joint body with the exception of setting a rate or taking out a loan.

#### **Environmental Implications**

Officers are not aware of any environmental implications associated with this decision.

#### **Risk Assessment**

A longer transitional period would mitigate the risk of issues being overlooked

#### **Crime and Disorder**

Officers are not aware of any issues the Council should consider under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder act 1998.

## **7. REPORT FOR DECISION – COMMUNICATION PROGRAMME**

### **Recommendation**

The committee agrees the content to be included in a letter to be distributed to Roundway residents prior to the new governance arrangements.

### **Purpose of the Report**

To agree the information that needs to be communicated in a letter to be distributed to residents of Roundway.

### **Background**

At its meeting on the 13 October the committee recognised the importance of proactive communication with the community to ensure that residents are informed about the changes in the local council governance arrangements for Devizes and Roundway.

### Progress since last meeting

- A website “One Council for Devizes” has been set up
- Information about some quick wins and a breakdown of next year’s budget have been uploaded to the site.
- The Mayor of Devizes and Chairman of Roundway have met with the press and local radio to explain the changes.
- An article about the changes was included within the Messenger
- Information about Town Council meetings is now placed on Roundway notice boards.

It has been agreed that a letter would be sent to all Roundway residents early in 2017 to ensure that they are aware of the proposals. This is a strategy welcomed by both Wiltshire Council and the unitary members for Devizes and Roundway.

It is officers’ intention to prepare this letter for distribution in week commencing 23 January and therefore would welcome the committee’s input into its content.

Currently officers plan to set out.

- Why a decision has been made to join the two authorities
- The benefits of one Council for the Town
- How the Council will work with residents.
- The financial implications

A copy of the draft letter, which is to be signed by the Town Mayor and Chairman of Roundway will be sent to all members prior to its distribution. It also needs to be agreed if the same letter is sent to local businesses or if this needs to carry slightly different content and what that content should be.

The final element of the strategy agreed on the 13 October is to strategically place banners around the town to reinforce the message to residents who do not read local papers or information put through their doors. These banners will probably go up in Mid-February for maximum impact.

### **Options Considered**

The Committee needs to decide what content should be included within the residents’ letter and if different letter needs to be sent to businesses.

## **Implications and Risks**

### **Financial and Resource Implications**

There will be a limited cost of printing and distribution.

### **Legal Implications and Legislative Powers**

The Town Council will be considering this matter under its General Power of Competence.

### **Environmental Implications**

Officers are unaware of any environmental implication for the Council associated with this decision.

### **Risk Assessment**

Failure to communicate properly could increase the risk of unhappy residents making complaints. This would cause additional workload and could frustrate a smooth transition to the new arrangements.

### **Crime and Disorder**

Officers are not aware of any issues the Council should consider under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder act 1998.

## **8. QUESTION TIME**

A short time is allowed at the discretion of the Town Mayor for councillors to ask questions on matters which are not on the current agenda but which are related to matters which have been previously discussed on an agenda relevant to the committee.

At least 24 hours' notice must be given to officers of the intended question. All other matters should be raised on an agenda and the request should be submitted through the Town Clerk

TOWN CLERK