

SCRUTINY COMMISSION FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES	Agenda Item No. 4
20 OCTOBER 2014	Public Report

Report of the Head of Community and Safety Services

Report Author – Cate Harding
Contact Details – 01733 317497

PARISH COUNCIL ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND SUSTAINABILITY

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide members of the Rural Scrutiny Commission with an overview of the roles and responsibilities of Parish Councils. The report also highlights the current opportunities open to Parish Councils that will support their viability and financial sustainability

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the commission note and support the range of current activities underway, as highlighted in the content of this report.
- 2.2 That the commission offer observations and further recommendations for how the Council and its partners can actively ensure all is done to ensure their long term viability and sustainability

3. LINKS TO THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

The Sustainable Community Strategy aims to deliver a bigger and better Peterborough through improving the quality of life for all. All policies, procedures and strategies that form part of the overall Community Strategy will be of relevance to the Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities.

4. BACKGROUND (Information in part extracted from promotional leaflet of Peakirk Parish Council)

- 4.1 Parish councils are the first tier of government. They operate within a legal framework that defines their powers and duties.
- 4.2 In Peterborough there are currently 27 Parish Councils and each will vary in the makeup of numbers of elected members though each will have, as formally required, a part or full time clerk.
- 4.3 A Parish Council has an overall responsibility for the well-being of their local neighbourhood. Their work falls into three main categories:

- representing your local community
- delivering services to meet local needs
- striving to improve quality of life in the parish.

A Parish Council may also provide, maintain or contribute to the following services:

- Allotments & leisure facilities
- bus shelters & litter bins

- car parks & local illuminations
- community centres, parks and open spaces.
- community safety schemes planning
- community transport schemes
- public lavatories
- crime reduction
- street cleaning measures
- cycle paths & street lighting
- festivals and celebrations
- tourism activities
- traffic calming measures.

Parish Councils may often work with the Council and its partners to ensure the effective delivery of services to the local community.

- 4.4 Each year a sum of money called a 'precept' is collected through council tax. This money is invested back into the local neighbourhood by the parish = council to improve facilities and services for local people. The Parish can also apply for grants and loans and, if they own property, can receive money from rents or leases.
- 4.5 Many of Peterborough's Parish Councils are affiliated to Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Association of Local Councils (CPALC) which is a membership organisation that works with and supports local councils

5. KEY ISSUES – CURRENT & FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

- 5.1 The community capacity team are currently working closely with CAPALC, with the support of representatives of existing Parish Councils in Peterborough, to promote the opportunity for additional local interest groups to explore the creation of new community or parish councils in their area. This programme of activity is being financially supported by DCLG to encourage un-parished areas to learn about the potential for greater local democracy and decision making by becoming a community or parish council.

Local groups in the following urban areas are interested in exploring this opportunity:

Paston
Walton
Stanground
West Town, Westwood & Ravensthorpe
Dogsthorpe
Fletton & Woodston

- 5.2 The above programme of activity promotes how parish or community councils can have a greater say over how their needs are met at a local level by becoming more involved in local decision making and having a greater control over how money raised locally is spent.
- 5.3 Of significance, the involvement and support of the existing, predominantly rural based parish councils, in the programme provides an additional opportunity to 're-market' amongst them, the current understanding of the roles of parish councils in the context of the Localism Act. This will also highlight the additional range of responsibilities now open to them via this legislation such as community asset transfer and/or community budgeting. Maximising these opportunities will ideally see the parishes becoming more enterprising and create interest from additional individuals in becoming involved in influencing local decisions in the area they live. Encouragement to have a more enterprising outlook would be a means to secure greater financial sustainability for the parish.
- 5.4 The community capacity team continue to work proactively with elected members and parish

councils to ensure that the community have a voice when investment opportunities arise in their area. A 'project bank' system has been put into place which records the needs of an area (e.g. physical improvements, new street furniture, play equipment or enhancements to existing facilities) identified following a community needs assessment or other form of local consultation. Additionally external funding can be proactively sought by Parish Councils to support the implementation of the feasible needs evidenced via their consultation process.

- 5.5 The council is committed to adopting CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) from April 2015. CIL is a new method of collecting funding from developers to fund infrastructure provision. When CIL is introduced and where development takes place in a Parish area, the local Council will automatically receive 15% of the agreed allocation. In areas where Parish Councils have developed a Neighbourhood Plan, this amount will be increased to 25%.

The above system (5.4) for recording the priorities and needs of the community will be a valuable and transparent tool for determining how to utilise the spending of these funds. Parish Councils will be required to publish an annual report to demonstrate the amount of CIL received and spent each year, together with a summary of how this was spent.

6. IMPLICATIONS

Not applicable

7. CONSULTATION

Not applicable

8. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- 8.1 That the commission accept the content of this report.

9. NEXT STEPS

- 9.1 That any comment or further recommendation of the commission is duly noted and recorded.

10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- 10.1 N/A

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 N/A

This page is intentionally left blank