

PARISH COUNCIL LIAISON	AGENDA ITEM No. 4.
1 DECEMBER 2021	PUBLIC REPORT

Report of:	Adrian Chapman – Service Director, Communities and Partnerships	
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Councillor Steve Allen – Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing, Culture and Communities	
Contact Officer(s):	Elaine Matthews – Think Communities Manager	01733 384628
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FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS FOR PARISH COUNCIL LIAISON

RECOMMENDATIONS	
FROM: Adrian Chapman – Service Director, Communities and Partnerships	Deadline date: N/A
<p>It is recommended that the Parish Council Liaison Meeting either:</p> <p>1. <i>Agrees to the Good Neighbours – Rural Peterborough Scheme taking over responsibility for the running of Parish Council Liaison (PCL) meetings from Peterborough City Council</i> OR</p> <p>2. <i>Agrees to continue the present arrangements with Parish Council Liaison being supported by the Think Communities and Democratic Services teams of Peterborough City Council.</i></p>	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report is presented following a proposal raised by Parish Councillor Neil Boyce at the Parish Council Liaison meeting on 15 September 2021.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to set out the two options to the Parish Council Liaison meeting, so that each Parish Council representative can make an informed decision on the future running of the Parish Council Liaison group.

3. TIMESCALES

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	No	If yes, date for Cabinet meeting	N/A
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4. BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 The Parish Council Liaison meeting has been organised by Peterborough City Council for a number of years as a means for Parish Councils to be kept informed about City Council policies and programmes relevant to rural and urban parished areas of the City and to provide feedback on these policies from a parish perspective.

Under Peterborough City Council's Constitution, the meeting also has responsibility for nominating the non-voting parish councillor co-opted members on the Council's Scrutiny Committees although in recent years this has been done via the Chair of the meeting, with administrative support provided by the Think Communities service area. The meeting has also received reports from these Co-opted Members on Scrutiny Committee proceedings for discussion by parish councillors and clerks.

Following changes to staffing and concerns raised about the lack of parish influence over agenda setting, it was felt appropriate to consult Peterborough's parishes on how they wished these meetings to be organised in the future. This was made possible following receipt of an offer from the Good Neighbours – Rural Peterborough organisation to take over the running of Parish Council Liaison Meetings. This offer was discussed informally at the Liaison meeting on 15 September 2021 and it was subsequently agreed by the Chair, officers, and the Cabinet Member for Housing, Culture and Communities that any new model needed the consent of parishes to take forward.

Parish Representatives are therefore invited to consider the two options set out below:

Option 1:

The offer from Good Neighbours – Rural Peterborough:

“Initially we are offering to independently host and coordinate the Parish Council Liaison meetings with the primary aim of retaining a focus on the issues directly affecting the Peterborough Parish Councils.

Our objectives would be to:

1. Collectively review the Parish Charter and Rural Vision and ensure these are up to date (and reflect any changes to roles and expectations as a consequence of these proposals).
2. Have an understanding of the priority needs of Parish Councils and maintain a working action plan to reflect and address these.
3. Be a key point of contact for the Clerks on advice / support and signposting.
4. Support the development and delivery of localised projects and initiatives that enhance the health and wellbeing of parish residents.
5. Have a membership model that ensures the Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) can be financially self-sufficient and non-grant dependent.
6. Operate with a Board of Trustees made up of members from the Parish Councils
7. Collectively have a shared box of skills and experiences that can be mutually beneficial for all.
8. Work closely with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Association of Local Councils (CAPALC) and PCC on all mutual matters of interest.

To note: this offer is not conditional on Parish Councils becoming members of the GNRP Charity.”

Option 2:

- Continue as now with meeting administration and officer support being provided by Peterborough City Council's Democratic Services and Think Communities Service areas.
- The Chair of the Parish Council Liaison meeting continuing to direct and agree agenda setting (based on feedback from the PCL members).
- Democratic Services officer input to supporting with meeting administration (arranging meeting dates, circulating agenda in advance, taking meeting notes and sharing with Group members).
- Think Communities and appropriate service lead officers attending PLG to share updates and gather input to key topics such as Covid response and vaccine take-up, business planning, community led good practice, identified key concerns from Parish Councils.
- Think Communities to be the point of contact for Clerks and Chairs via parishcouncil@peterborough.gov.uk

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The Parish Council Liaison meeting is informal and has no Terms of Reference. The only reference to the meeting in Peterborough City Council's Constitution is with regard to its responsibility for nominating non-voting co-opted parish councillor members of the City Council's Scrutiny Committees. There are therefore no formal governance requirements for changing how the meeting is organised. However, it is the view of the City Council that changes to the running and administration of the Parish Liaison Group should be decided by the Chair and Members of the Group.

This paper and the agenda item on 1st December 2021 is therefore to provide that opportunity for each Parish Council representative to vote on the way this Group is managed in the future.

Voting will take place only at the meeting on 1st December, one vote per Parish Council. Individual Parish Councils will therefore need to agree their collective position prior to this meeting.

6. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT

- 6.1 If the decision is made for Good Neighbours Rural Peterborough to host and coordinate quarterly meetings, it is done so on the understanding that:

- This is not a PCC-funded role or function
- All meeting hosting, coordination and administration support and associated costs are provided by GNRP.
- GNRP need to keep Council Think Communities officers informed of the aims, actions and priorities of the Liaison Group.
- Relevant PCC Service leads are invited to attend future Quarterly meetings to appropriately represent a service or council function with advance notice of the request to do so.

A GNRP-hosted approach will ensure a stronger focus on the issues directly affecting parish councils, with agendas being set more collaboratively by the parish community themselves. This will help enhance accountability of council services to the Parish Council community, and strengthen further the voice of parish councils when the council is deciding key policy changes or service designs.

7. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 To ensure the future direction of Parish Council Liaison meetings is decided in a democratic manner by the Parish Councils themselves.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 8.1 Two contrasting options are presented by officers for consideration by Parish Councillors at the meeting: to hand over the running of PCL to the Good Neighbours Rural Peterborough Organisation, or to maintain the status quo. No other proposals have been put forward.

9. IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 9.1 There would be a slight financial benefit to the Council from adopting the proposals of the Good Neighbours Rural Peterborough organisation as PCC officers would no longer administer these meetings. Officers from specific service areas would attend on an ad hoc basis when required.

Legal Implications

- 9.2 Parish Council Liaison is not a formal Committee of Council and there are therefore no legal implications arising from making changes to its governance arrangements.

10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

10.1 Peterborough City Council's Constitution

11. APPENDICES

11.1 None.