

CABINET

DATE OF MEETING: 8 JANUARY 2009

TITLE OF REPORT: APPOINTING SHADOW COUNCILLORS TO THE NEW SHADOW PARISH COUNCILS

Report of: Chief Executive

Cabinet member: Councillor Ken Crookes - Leader of the Council

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To seek approval to the process for appointing the new Shadow Councillors for Church Crookham, Elvetham Heath and Fleet.

2 OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

2.1 That the approach set out in the report for appointing Members of the new Shadow Councils for Church Crookham, Elvetham Heath and Fleet be approved.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 The New Parish Councils Working Party has been considering a process for appointing Members to the new Shadow Parish Councils. This paper seeks approval to the details of that process.

3.2 The shadow parish councils will come into existence in April 2009, and will last until the full parish councils are elected in May 2010. For most of that time the shadow councils will not exist as formal legal entities and any "decisions" they take will need to be ratified by the district council. However, they have an important role to play in setting up the new parish councils, establishing budgets and council tax precepts, and making arrangements for the handover of services from the District Council to the parishes in due course.

3.3 With effect from 1 April 2010 the new parish councils will formally come into existence and between that date and the elections in May the shadow councillors will run the new parish councils. There is therefore a short period in which they will be taking decisions on behalf of the new parish councils with full legal powers.

3.4 The new Parish Councils Working Party have recommended that the shadow councils be established as follows:

Church Crookham – 3 shadow councillors, plus one district councillor
Elvetham Heath – 3 shadow councillors plus one district councillor
Fleet – 5 shadow councillors plus one district councillor

3.5 It now falls to the district council to appoint the shadow councillors to each of the three shadow councils. To do that a four stage process is proposed:

- a. Advertisement
- b. Application
- c. Selection
- d. Appointment

- 3.6 It is proposed to place an advertisement in the local press in the middle of January inviting applications from people interested in serving as Shadow Councillors on each of the three Shadow Councils. The advertisements will give brief details of the work involved in being a Shadow Councillor, and invite those interested to apply for further details. Those further details will consist of the Job Description and supporting information (attached as Appendix A to this report), together with notes explaining the background to the establishment of the new parishes.
- 3.7 Persons interested in making an application to become Members will be asked to submit an application form. This will ask them to set out their personal details, a description of the qualifications and other skills and abilities which they think they could bring to the Shadow Councils, and an indication of the extent of their existing involvement in local affairs.
- 3.8 When applications are received, there will need to be a selection process to determine which applicants, if any, should be appointed. For each of the Shadow Councils an Interviewing Panel will be set up, drawn from the New Parish Councils Working Group, and consisting of two Councillors (chosen on a politically proportional basis), a representative from the Hart District Association of Parish and Town Councils, plus officer support. The interview panels will consider the applications received, compare them with the Job Description, identify a short list of candidates for interview, and carry out the interview process.
- 3.9 Following the interview process, the Panels will make recommendations to the New Parish Councils Working Group on which applicants should be appointed. The appointment recommendations will be subject to ratification by the New Parish Councils Working Group and the Cabinet.
- 3.10 Based on these decisions, the successful applicants will be formally invited to join the Shadow Councils, which are likely to have their first meeting on or around 1 April 2009. The Shadow Councillors will hold office until the elections to the new Parishes take place in May 2010.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report, other than the incidental costs of appointing the shadow councillors. These costs will be met from existing budgets.

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JOB DESCRIPTION

A Parish Councillor:

- Effectively represents the interests of their ward or parish.
- Fulfils and enacts any statutory requirements of an elected member of the council.
- Actively and constructively contributes to good governance.
- Actively encourages community participation and citizen involvement in the work of the council.
- Encourages people to take up their roles of active and engaged citizenship.
- Knows and has contact with key local stakeholders.
- Represents the council to the community, and the community to the council, using all appropriate means.
- Is a channel of communication for the ward or parish and ensures constituents are informed of services available; decisions that affect them and the reasons for those decisions.
- Develops and maintains a working knowledge of organisations (including principal councils) operating within the area which have an impact on the wellbeing of both the community and the council as a whole.
- Deals with constituents' enquiries and representations fairly and without prejudice.
- Carries out case work for constituents and represents their interests, or enables the constituents to take action to deal with the matter themselves.
- Identifies and works with local 'hard to reach' and under-represented groups to ensure their views can be identified.
- Contributes to the formation of the council's policies and plans by active involvement in council meetings, committees and working parties.
- Undertakes appropriate training and development to help fulfil the requirements of the councillor role.
- Acts as the council's representative on outside bodies, and reports back on their activities.
- Champions the causes which relate to the interests and sustainability of the council's area and campaigns for improvement in the quality of life of those living in, working in, or visiting the area.
- Must satisfy the legal requirements for being a parish councillor.

The Skills Needed by a Parish Councillor:

- Making decisions.
- Exploring and expanding ideas.
- Interpreting information.
- Having ideas.
- Visualising what might happen.
- Using imagination.
- Understanding budgets and financial paperwork.
- Keeping going skills.
- Encouraging yourself and others.
- Listening.
- Questioning.
- Dealing with conflict.
- Evaluating.
- Reviewing.
- Drawing conclusions.
- Seeing the bigger picture.
- Assessing objectively.
- Measuring and comparing results.
- Public speaking.
- Persuading and motivating.
- Prioritising.
- Negotiating.
- IT skills.