



## **Report to Policy Review Scrutiny Committee**

**Subject: Parish Council Funding Scrutiny Report**

**Date: 25<sup>th</sup> November 2008**

**Author: Scrutiny Officer**

### **1. Purpose of the Report**

To update Members on the progress of the working group's review into Parish Council funding.

### **2. Background**

This review commenced in April 2008 and a final report was drafted in October 2008.

### **3. Proposal**

That Committee Members read the attached report and endorse the recommendations made by the Chair of the working group.

### **4. Recommendations**

That this report and its recommendations are passed onto Cabinet for consideration for implementation.



## **Report to Policy Review Scrutiny Committee**

**Subject: Parish Council Funding**

**Date: 25<sup>th</sup> November 2008**

**Author: The Working Group**

### **1.0 Purpose of the Report**

1.1 To update members on the progress of the scrutiny-working group's review into Parish Council funding.

### **2.0 Background**

2.1 This working group comprises of Councillors J. Collin (Chair), G. Withers, P. Feeney, G. Tunicliffe, P. Andrews, V. Bradley, C. Powell and Officers T. Lack (Scrutiny Officer), M. Kimberley (Head of Corporate Services), D. Parton (Head of Direct Services) and K. Tansley (Head of Leisure Services).

### **3.0 The Scope of the Review**

3.1 This working group was convened to explore the equity of Council provision between urban and rural areas and between the parishes themselves within the Gedling Borough area. In particular, the working group considered the facilities of Parks and Open Spaces, Village Halls and Community Centres (including Leisure Centres). The working group's scope is attached at Appendix 1.

### **4.0. Information Gathering**

4.1 The working group gathered various information in relation to of Parks and Open Spaces, Village Halls and Community Centres (including Leisure Centres). The working group also sought to canvass the views of the eleven Parish Councils within the Gedling Borough area. The

working group scrutinised:

- 4.2 Report to Cabinet: Review of Parish Aid 21<sup>st</sup> July 2004- Councillor R. Poynter
- 4.3 Report to Cabinet: Review of Parish Aid 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2004- Head of Finance
- 4.4 Parish Precept Payments Schedule 2008/09
- 4.5 Parish Revenue Grants Payments Schedule 2008/09
- 4.6 Letter to Parish Councils (Appendix 2)
- 4.7 Expenditure on Gedling Borough Council Community and Leisure Centres
- 4.8 Gedling Borough Council Playing Pitch Assessment Technical Report (Final Draft – April 2003)
- 4.9 Gedling Borough Council Recreational Open Space Assessment Report (February 2004)
- 4.10 Large scale maps x3 (depicting Gedling Borough Council leisure provision)
- 4.11 Smaller scale maps x11 (depicting Parks 1&2, Housing, Highways and Sundries) and related colour coded list
- 4.12 Asset management plans for the Gedling Borough Council Play Areas, Garden for the blind, Recreation Grounds, Open spaces and Country Park
- 4.13 Directory for venue hire of Halls and Community Centres in Gedling Borough
- 4.14 Gedling Borough Council Community Profile data (including Super Output Areas (SOA) and Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD))
- 4.15 Gedling Borough Council Ward Population statistics (Appendix 3)
- 4.16 Operational costs of running Gedling Borough Council Community Centres
- 4.17 Analysis of Parish Council Net Expenditure

- 4.18 Parks and Street Care Cleansing (PASC) works cost / price analysis (at 2009-09 figures)

## **5.0 Findings**

- 5.1 The working group are aware of a report written previously by Councillor R. Poynter which went to Cabinet on the 21<sup>st</sup> July 2004. This report had been initiated by a scrutiny review into Parish Aid which was undertaken by a subgroup of the former Resources and Management Scrutiny Committee (2003).
- 5.2 The working group acknowledge a related report that also went to Cabinet (Review of Parish Aid 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2004- Head of Finance). The working group are familiar with this report which summarises the work of the Resources and Management Scrutiny Committee and in particular Councillor R. Poynter. This latter report reflects the current situation in terms of the grant aid allocation given by Gedling Borough Council to the Parish Councils. The working group understand that in terms of revenue money 50% of the grant aid allocations are based on spend and 50% are based on per head of the population.
- The working group note that for 2008, £189,000 will go out to Parish Councils in terms of grant aid and that this figure increases with the Gedling Borough Council Revenue Support Grant.
- 5.3 The working group are familiar with the Parish Precept Payments Schedule 2008/09 and the Parish Revenue Grants Payments Schedule 2008/09 which details the particular amounts payable in terms of each of the eleven Parishes.
- 5.4 The working group acknowledge the replies from the Parish Councils in relation to the letter sent out (Appendix 2) to invite their comments in relation to the Parish Council Scrutiny review. The group are aware that five out of eleven Parish Councils responded to the letter; Calverton, Colwick, Lambley, Newstead and Ravenshead. The working group acknowledge that there were some negative comments made by the Parish Councils in relation to perceptions around resource allocation and urban bias.
- 5.5 The working group note the expenditure on Gedling Borough Council Community and Leisure Centres. The group have analysed the expenses for Calverton, Carlton Forum, Redhill, Arnold and Richard Herrod Leisure Centres and the community centres as a totality. These are categorised in terms of various expenses, services and charges and include revenue income.

The working group acknowledge that Gedling Borough Council does not have any information on village hall venues as these are operated in the main by Parish Councils. The group understand that any expenditure data or information relating to usage of village halls is only available from the Parish Councils themselves. The group note that not all Parish Councils may choose to provide this information and that in fact they are not obliged to. The working group recognise that the Parishes all operate differently i.e. some record 'net' expenditure whilst others record 'gross' expenditure. The group acknowledge that whilst there are published accounts available regarding Parish Council grant aid, Gedling Borough Council is not a governing body for Parish Councils. It is understood that Gedling Borough Council and Parish Councils are separate legal entities with separate auditing requirements. The group also aware that some Village Halls are in fact run by local churches and other bodies and not Parish Councils and as such this would make it difficult to make any credible comparisons and thereby draw conclusions.

- 5.6 The working group are aware that the Gedling Borough Council Playing Pitch Assessment Technical Report (Final Draft – April 2003) is a comprehensive document which also includes a (playing pitch) site-by-site assessment and analysis. This report also considers the current supply and demand issues for playing pitches and ancillary facilities within the Gedling Borough Council area.
- 5.7 The working group also acknowledge the Gedling Borough Council Recreational Open Space Assessment Report (February 2004) which details the current demand for and supply of children's play areas and other open spaces, including recreation areas, nature reserves, and common land within the Gedling Borough.
- 5.8 The working group have been able to view three large-scale maps which depict Gedling Borough Council leisure provision and eleven smaller scale maps which delineate the Gedling Borough parks, housing, highways and sundries.
- 5.9 The working group are aware of the Asset Management plans which outline Gedling Borough Council play areas, garden for the blind, recreation grounds, open spaces and a country park.
- 5.10 The working group understand that the directory for venue hire of halls and community Centres in Gedling Borough details the Council's own community centres and that of other providers i.e. churches, community groups/organisations. The group note that this is useful (yet not exhaustive) resource for members of the public wanting to hire facilities other than that provided by Gedling Borough Council.

- 5.11 The working group appreciate that the demographic information detailed within Gedling Borough Council Ward Population statistics (Appendix 3) is significant when considering equality/inequality and resource allocation. Similarly having reviewed the Gedling Borough Council Community Profile / Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) data the working group are aware that the most deprived parts of the borough are in the urban areas and that the more affluent parts of the borough tend to be in the rural areas. The working group acknowledge that Bonington, Killisick and Netherfield and Colwick are the three most deprived wards within the Gedling Borough Council area, whilst Ravenshead, Woodborough, Burton Joyce, Woodthorpe and Mapperley Plains rank as the most affluent wards.

The group recognise that the IMD data is crucial when scrutinising equality of spend i.e. allocation of resources. However, the working group acknowledge that the IMD data cannot reflect variations within wards i.e. Newstead Village within Newstead Ward. The group note that Gedling Borough Council's Annual Satisfaction Surveys have not indicated any major issues in terms of equality of services.

- 5.12 The working group are familiar with the various operational costs of running Gedling Borough Council Community Centres. The working group acknowledge how the Council tries to assist and enable user groups to run their own community facilities. This in turn encourages volunteering and community spirit through local management. The group noted that the council are currently working with the Brickyard and Burton Road Community Centres. The working group appreciate that each community centre is different depending on its particular usage.
- 5.13 The working group are conversant with the Parish Council Net Expenditure information. This is demarked in terms of budget expenditure for 'recreation facilities', 'community halls' and 'other' including 'burial grounds'. The working group are aware that the 'other' column can also include community centres or anything that the parishes are responsible for. It was noted that each parish Council Clerk records things differently in terms of the 'other' category and this too, reflects again the variability in how the Parish Councils organise their affairs.
- 5.14 The working group are familiar with the Parks and Street Care Cleansing (PASC) works cost / price analysis (2009-09 figures). The group acknowledge that this information is difficult to analyse by Parish as some of the work the Council undertakes will constitute a 'one-off' job and that the Council works in some parishes and not in others. Similarly, the working group are aware that parishes, such as

Colwick did not adopt their land and left the maintenance to the Borough Council. Because of these differences the group recognise that it is not easy to draw any tangible comparisons in terms of PASC services and Parishes. The group did also note that the Borough Council charges for grass cutting works to the parish councils were very similar to the charges the Council's housing department incurred for maintenance on housing land. It was also accepted by the group that the frequency and standard of grounds maintenance works was high.

- 5.15 The working group learned from discussion within the group meetings that the policy pursued by the Borough Council with regard to the facilities within the scope is that they are provided by Parish Councils (as autonomous Councils) where the Parish Council has chosen that course. Facilities provided this way may or may not be in accordance with any Borough Council policy if the Borough Council were the provider.
- 5.16 The working group also learned from discussion that there may be some mismatching of perceptions of the respective roles of the Borough and Parish Councils in the provision of services, not just the ones within the scope of this review.

## **6.0 Recommendations**

- 6.1 That the Parish Council Liaison Member is made aware of this review so that the relationship between the Borough and Parish Councils be developed to deliver a common view on the respective roles and responsibilities of these autonomous bodies.
- 6.2 That an opportunity be given for Parish Councils to examine, with the Borough, the services provided within the scope of the review to determine whether those services are provided by the "right" Council.
- 6.3 That consideration be given to amending Borough Council systems to allow financial data to be extracted by ward area.
- 6.4 That in future all requests for Parish Grant Aid must be submitted on a new standardised basis (the exact form to be devised by Gedling Borough Council's Finance Department) so that, as far as possible, like for like comparisons can be made.
- 6.5 That the Borough Council ensures, by means of its Equality Impact Assessment, that any disparity between parishes and non-parished areas is identified.

## **7.0 Acknowledgement**

- 7.1 The working group wishes to thank everyone who made themselves available to provide information and support this review.



## Scope

**Scrutiny committee: Policy Review**

**Working Group: Parish Council Funding**

**Chair of group: J. Collin**

**Working group members: G. Withers, P. Feeney, C. Powell,  
G. Tuncliffe, P. Andrews, V. Bradley,**

**Portfolio holder/s: Councillors R. Spencer and G. Clarke**

### **(1) Scope**

Why this review is being undertaken.....

(list the specific outcomes)

To explore the equity of Council provision between urban and rural areas and between the parishes themselves within the Gedling Borough area.

### **Aims**

The specific issues to consider/examine are...

Parks and Open Spaces

Village Halls and Community Centres (including Leisure Centres)

### **(2) Timetable**

The review will commence in: April 2008

Milestones: None

The review will report in: Autumn/October 2008

Committee dates: 20<sup>th</sup> May, 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 16<sup>th</sup> October, 25<sup>th</sup> November.

Frequency of meetings: every 3 – 4 weeks

### **(3) Information gathering and consultees**

The working group has requested the following information:

The expenditure on Parks and Open Spaces in Gedling Borough and Parish Council areas

The expenditure on Village Halls and Community Centres in Gedling Borough and Parish Council areas

Community Profile data - population by ward and deprivation levels

What are the main questions to be asked and of what parties?

What is the spend on Parks and Open Spaces?

What is the spend on Village Halls and Community Centres?

What is the provision and the quality/standard of Parks and Open Spaces?

What is the provision and the quality/standard of Village Halls and Community Centres?

The working group will be inviting the following persons/organisations to one or more meetings to help with the review:

Councillor W. Peet - Parish Council Liaison

### **Visits**

The working group might need to consider a visit to:

A particular site if deemed appropriate after information gathering.

### **(4) How the community will be consulted, informed and involved**

The working group wishes to consult through:

A Letter (including the scope) to the Parish Councils to inform them of the review and invite any comments they wish the working group to take into consideration.

### **(5) Resources**

The working group is supported by:

Tracy Lack- Scrutiny Officer (For Project Management)

Mark Kimberley- Head of Finance (For Technical Support)

Keith Tansley - Head of Leisure Services (For Technical Support)

David Parton – Head of Direct Services (For Technical Support)

**(6) How the effectiveness of the review will be measured**

After the initial review the working group will....

Draw a conclusion about the effectiveness of resource allocation between urban and rural areas within the borough.

Have the conclusions and recommendations addressed the outcomes of the scope?

***Democratic and Community Services***

Civic Centre, Arnot Hill Park  
Arnold, Nottingham NG5 6LU

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Email: [tracy.lack@gedling.gov.uk](mailto:tracy.lack@gedling.gov.uk)

Please ask for Mrs Lack

Our Ref: TL/PMC  
Your Ref:

Date: 9<sup>th</sup> June 2008

Dear Parish Council Clerk,

**Re Parish Council Funding Scrutiny Working Group**

I am writing out on behalf of Members on a working group which has recently been convened to look at Parish Councils, funding and the provision of Parks and Open Spaces, Village Halls and Community Centres. Please see the scope (terms of reference) attached to this letter which outline the working group's aims and objectives.

If you have any comments you would like the working group to take into account in terms of the scope i.e. the provision of Parks and Open Spaces, Village Halls and Community Centres within your parish could you please put these in writing and return these to the address above marked for the attention of Mrs T. Lack-Scrutiny Officer.

Should we not receive any comments back from yourselves by Wednesday 2nd July then we will assume that you have no particular comments to make in respect of this review. Thank-you.

Yours Sincerely

**T LACK**  
**SCRUTINY OFFICER on behalf of**  
**HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC AND COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**Ward Profile Information**

<u>Area</u>	<u>Population</u>
Gedling Borough (entire)	111,787
Bestwood Village Ward	1,655 (1 <sup>st</sup> least populated)
Bonington Ward	6,863 (7 <sup>th</sup> )
Burton Joyce and Stoke Bardolph Ward	3,555 (17 <sup>th</sup> )
Calverton Ward	6,903 (5 <sup>th</sup> )
Carlton Ward	6,999 (4 <sup>th</sup> )
Carlton Hill Ward	7,204 (22 <sup>nd</sup> most populated)
Daybrook Ward	4,997 (12 <sup>th</sup> )
Gedling Ward	6,758 (10 <sup>th</sup> )
Killisick Ward	2,709 (8 <sup>th</sup> )
Kingswell Ward	4,699 (14 <sup>th</sup> )
Lambley Ward	1,977 (20 <sup>th</sup> )
Mapperley Plain Ward	6,885 (6 <sup>th</sup> )
Netherfield and Colwick Ward	7,042 (2 <sup>nd</sup> )
Newstead Ward	2,103 (19 <sup>th</sup> )
Phoenix Ward	4,962 (13 <sup>th</sup> )
Porchester Ward	6,806 (18 <sup>th</sup> )
Ravenshead Ward	5,636 (11 <sup>th</sup> )
St James Ward	4,476 (15 <sup>th</sup> )
St Marys Ward	6,801 (9 <sup>th</sup> )
Valley Ward	4,001 (16 <sup>th</sup> )
Woodborough Ward	1,852 (21 <sup>st</sup> )
Woodthorpe Ward	6,992 (3 <sup>rd</sup> )