

Committee: Full Council

Date: 21 March 2023

Title: Future of Local Government in Somerset

Purpose of Report

For members to receive updates and consider how they see Ilminster post-unification of the District Councils and Somerset County Council.

Recommendation:

Members **Resolve** to appoint the Mayor, and in their absence the Deputy Mayor to represent Ilminster Town Council at any Local Community Network meetings that take place. They may request that an officer accompany them if one is available.

Report:

1. South Somerset District Council will cease to be an authority after Vesting day on the 1 April 2023 when Somerset County will come into being.
2. It is looking like the new Local Community Networks will start to have meetings in June or July. As reported to members we are endeavouring to get a head start on this, with the three larger town's clerks meeting to see how we can best help to ensure that the various Parishes feel engaged and involved in the group. As well as to see what commonalities can be advanced to help progress the startup of the LCN.
3. At present I am not aware of the location of the meeting as there are limited places that meetings with 60 plus people can be held in. Venues that have the ability to record and even transmit the meetings are being considered as a preferred location but this narrows down the choices considerably.
4. Members still need to decide who they wish to represent them at the first of the LCN meetings. The logical choice would be for the Mayor and if they are not available then the Deputy Mayor would automatically step in. However this should be an agreed decision for members to take that is then reflected in the minutes.
5. It should be noted that matters that require a vote of the representative may need to be referred back to the Town Council, this is also true for all the other parishes and Town Council representatives since they are all governed by the

same legislation contained in the 1972 Local Government Act that states that no one councillor has any more authority than another and that no delegated powers may be given to an individual councillor in respect of decision making.

6. We have also been made aware in the past few days of the following changes that will be taking place with regards planning.

Town Councils will continue to be consulted on planning applications as they are currently, and they will be asked to respond as they currently do, within the existing District areas. For some this is via the website or online platforms, and for others this is via a form that is emailed in. This will remain, as existing.

One change we will notice will be the webpages. These will be rebranded to reflect the new authority and we will be directed to the relevant area of the website to view applications and comment (if we are commenting online).

In effect, the changes set out that if as a Town Council (or the Ward Member) we raise a comment contrary to the officer's recommendation – for example, support looking to refuse or object, when they are looking to grant - then the scheme of delegation takes effect.

If it is a major application, then the application will automatically be sent to the relevant area committee for determination.

If it is not a major application, then the application is deferred to the Chair and Vice Chair of the relevant area committees with a copy of the officer's report (which will set out the contrary comment in full, and confirm how this was considered and/or mitigated resulting in the recommended decision). The Chair and Vice Chair will then review the comments on the application, alongside the report, and confirm if they wish the application be determined by committee or if the application can be determined under delegated authority by officers.

If the application is referred to committee, we will be notified of the time/date/venue and given the opportunity to register to attend or speak at the meeting. These are continuing to be run in areas that reflect the current district authorities but will run as Somerset Area Committees (North, East, South and West).

If the application is to be dealt with under delegated powers, we will be notified with a confirmation as to why this decision was made. They will cover this, and the structure of the new authority, in more detail in the upcoming training session for officers.

7. Members may wish to resolve to appoint the Mayor, and in their absence the Deputy Mayor to represent Ilminster Town Council at any Local Community

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Network meetings that take place. They may request that an officer accompany them if one is available.

Mark Tredwin
Town clerk
March 2023