Appendix 1 - Final report, including recommendations of Panel

Report of: Townships Review Members Panel

Date: 30th May 2018

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1.   Executive Summary

Aims & Objectives

In January 2018, Township Chairs and a cross-party group of Elected Members formed a working group to look at the structures and workings of the Townships. Members of the Townships Review Steering Group were appointed by Group Leaders.

The group was facilitated by Sir Steve Houghton, Leader of Barnsley Council, and officers from the Local Government Association.

The purpose of the group was to consider the following in the context of cooperative values (Self-help, Self-responsibility, Democracy, Equality, Equity and Solidarity) and behaviours playing a key part in the future role of the townships:

Do we need to improve engagement with our communities?

Do Members and Townships need to link into the public service reform and Cooperative Council agendas?

Do we need to work better with partners and our communities at a neighbourhood level?

Are we aiming to 'tidy up' existing Township structures/processes, or should we aim for more radical change?

2. Overview from the sessions

It was recognised that members already provide strong leadership in their communities. It was also acknowledged that Members have an important role to play as Leaders of Place, alongside their communities, partners and officers. There is now an opportunity for Members to further develop their roles within place.

Over five sessions, concluding on the 30th May, the group identified their priorities for future working and how members see their roles in the future. It was recognised that there needs to be a culture change among services, staff and residents to encourage self-responsibility and resilience within our communities.

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3. Township Structures

An element of the review looked at current Township structures. It was seen that the current geographical make-up of the Townships delivers inconsistency in terms of population, number of wards and number of Elected Members. In order to address this, members of the group felt that this review was an opportunity to consider splitting the Rochdale Township into two separate Townships.

4. Recommendations

The recommendations from the Members Panel were as follows -

1. **Members should have a broader role in having oversight of issues such as Health & Social Care and other issues at a township level, and should play a stronger role in developing more resilient communities.**
   a. Encouraging self-reliance in the community
   b. Encouraging more engagement
   c. Working alongside communities

2. **There should be a continued recognition of different needs and priorities throughout the Borough, across townships and at a neighbourhood level.**
   a. There should be a core offer of services throughout the Borough, whilst ensuring that there remains scope to be flexible with delivery of services at a township level.
   b. Members and services need to recognise the diversity of communities at a neighbourhood level

3. **Members should have a role in encouraging co-creation within communities**
   a. Members have an important role in delivering community capacity and as an outcome support an increase in the number of volunteers
   b. This could result support an increase in the number of volunteering hours

4. **A re-structure of the Rochdale Township**

   4.1 The group considered the Rochdale Township, which is made up of nine wards . They considered how effective a committee of 27 members was, and whether there was an option to reduce the township to a more manageable level. A number of models were discussed. Members finally agreed that the creation of an additional township within Rochdale was the preferred option. The make-up of the proposed new township areas are shown below:

Rochdale 'A'	Rochdale 'B'
Balderstone & Kirkholt	Bamford
Castleton	Healey
Central Rochdale	Norden
Kingsway	Spotland & Falinge
Milkstone & Deeplish	

Recommendation:

I.   Rochdale Township be split as shown above.
II. A name for each of these township areas be agreed.

5. Consideration should be given to developing greater core capacity of Township staffing levels

Reason for Recommendations

As a Co-operative Council, there is a commitment to moving towards being a Co-operative Borough. The recommendations in this report will assist members in working with our communities, encouraging and building resilience. Members will continue to have a front facing leadership role in delivering against the Council priorities for the Borough. At the moment, there are 5 Township Officers and a Township and Communities Manager. The review has highlighted a capacity issue in terms of core staffing to enable greater levels of community engagement and support township delivery.

6. Creation of ward alliances

Recommendation: The creation of Ward Alliances in all wards across the borough

Members are asked to consider that each ward could develop a 'Ward Alliance'. The alliances would facilitate discussion around issues of concern at a very local level, and could influence decision making around allocation of Township funds at a neighbourhood level. An example of how this could work is as follows:

- 3 x Ward Members
- 6 x Members of the public (as a minimum)
    - Members agreed by application process
- Meetings bi-monthly – serviced by a Community Development Worker**
- Dispute Resolutions Procedure introduced
- Minutes of meetings go to Township Committees

**Would need to be recruited in addition to current staff.

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Alternatives Considered

I.   Members could choose to go with all or part of this proposal, e.g. it may be that the new ways of working are favoured, but that the geographical changes to the Rochdale Township is not. Conversely it may be that the geographical changes are accepted, but that Members would prefer to work as they currently do with area forums and thematic partnerships.

II.   Members could reject the proposal if they feel that their Townships are already effective in working co-creatively with their communities.

Other Implications for consideration

The creation of an additional Township would increase the number of committees and sub-committees to five, increasing the resources required to facilitate these meetings.

The creation of an additional Township would lead to a re-alignment of the Township Capital & Revenue budgets, in line with changes in population in each Township.

Consultation

Informal Cabinet, Township Committees: Heywood 8th October 2018, Rochdale 10th October 2018, Middleton 11th October 2018, Pennines 16th October 2018, Informal Cabinet, Council.