

Record of Decision taken by Executive Councillor

Decision title: Governance arrangements for the Special Expenses Precept raised on the Unparished Area of Taunton (UPA)

Executive Councillor making the decision: Cllr Ross Henley

Author Contact Details: Marcus Prouse
m.prouse@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

Date of Decision: 04/09/2020

Details of decision:

For 2019/20 the Charter Trustees for Taunton had been transferred the balance of unallocated legacy funds from previous years' TDBC Unparished Area Special Expenses Precept, to administer a Small Grants Scheme for grant funding towards projects or schemes which will be of benefit to residents of the Unparished Area of Taunton. ([Decision Full Council – 16th July 2019](#))

It is recommended that for this financial year;

- a) The Charter Trustees for Taunton are invited as the representatives of the Unparished Area to continue to make recommendations under their Grants Scheme if so wished against the Special Expenses Precept Budget of £29,240.00 levied on the ratepayers in the Unparished Area for 2020/21 ([this amount was set in the Budget – Decision of Full Council – 19th Feb 2020](#)).
- b) Final sign-off of any recommended spend is granted by the District Council via an Executive Portfolio Holder who is not a Charter Trustee (it is proposed to be Cllr Ross Henley), meaning also that decisions can be 'called-in' if valid reasons are provided. This is a change from 2019/20, where decisions were signed off by the Mayor of Taunton following recommendation by the Standing Committee.
- c) These funds will not be formally transferred as in the previous year but be retained in the District Council accounts.
- d) The Grants Scheme must ensure that the types of grants being administered fit the criteria of projects that a Town and Parish Council would typically support (see Appendix A). The funding may also be used to enhance local services and other local priorities.

This returns arrangements to a similar governance arrangement previously run under the auspices of the former Taunton Deane Borough Council, with all decisions from the Unparished Area Advisory Committee having had sign-off from the Portfolio Holder for Community at that time. It also ensures that the Charter Trustees for Taunton (now that they have undertaken their first precept for 2020/21) only have direct control over the funds they need to manage their own responsibilities.

Reasons for proposed decision:

In 2019/20 the District Council was required by law to set a budget for the Charter Trustees for Taunton, as they could not raise a precept to cover their costs in their first

year of establishment. SWT at its Full Council meeting on 16th July 2019 recommended that the Charter Trustees should receive the 2019/20 Unparished Area budget of £46,399, to be allocated in line with the approved scope and governance of the Charter Trustees including the cost of the mayoralty, support costs and local grants scheme and to transfer the balance of unallocated legacy funds from previous years' TDBC Unparished Area Special Expenses Precept, to be administered by the Charter Trustees of the Town of Taunton. The Council also noted that in future years, the Charter Trustees will be in a position to raise its own precept to fund its responsibilities.

In the Budget Report in February 2020 the Executive expressed its wish to maintain an element of special expenses for the unparished area related to local service costs that a town/parish might provide if in existence but is beyond the scope of the Charter Trustees. The Executive is charged under the Constitution with determining grant allocation priorities for external organisations.

The reason to continue to allow for Charter Trustee input into the spend of the Special Expenses Precept is to allow for the democratic input of the elected representatives of the Unparished Area (The Charter for Trustees for Taunton), whilst ensuring the accountability and final sign-off of any funding for any approved projects is retained by the precepting authority Somerset West and Taunton Council. The Charter Trustees for Taunton have no ability to precept for anything other than directly related costs to the Mayoralty of Taunton.

Alternative funding options sourced:

N/A

| The below has been completed: | Name(s) | Date |
|---|--|-------------|
| Relevant ward councillor(s) consulted | All 16 Unparished Area Councillors for the Taunton Charter Trustees. | |
| The following are if appropriate / applicable: Yes/No. If yes the implications should be attached to this decision notice. | | |
| Finance implications | Yes | |
| Legal implications | N/A | |
| Links to corporate aims | N/A | |
| Climate and Sustainability implications | N/A | |
| Community Safety Implications | N/A | |
| Equalities Impact | N/A | |
| Safeguarding Implications | | |
| Risk management | Yes | |
| Partnership implications | Yes | |

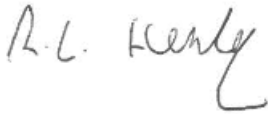
Any conflicts of interest declared by Leader or Executive Members consulted on the proposed decision. If Yes provide confirmation from Chief Executive to grant dispensation for the Leader's / Executive Member's views to be considered.

Four Executive Councillors are also Charter Trustees for Taunton (Cllrs Booth, R Lees, Smith and Smith-Roberts) and it is not proposed these Councillors should be the Portfolio Holder to approve the decisions.

Decision Maker

I am aware of the details of this decision(s), considered the reasons, options, representations and consultation responses and give my approval / agreement to its implementation.

Signed:



Name: Cllr Ross Henley (Executive Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources)

Date: 04/09/2020

Note – This decision record is for decisions taken by Executive Councillors. The decision(s) can be implemented following publication and the period for any call-in has expired.

Note: A copy should also be sent to the Governance Team – governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

Appendix A – List of typical Parish Council functions, powers and duties