

Report for Policy and Resources Committee December 2022

Proposal to Appoint a Town Ranger/Community Warden

1. Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this paper is to set out a proposal to appoint Town Ranger/Community Warden for consideration by the Committee which, if approved will be presented to the January Town Council meeting.

2. Background

2.1 For a number of years the Town Council has commissioned a Community Warden function from Idverde for 22 hours a week. The intention was that this role would supplement activities undertaken in the town provided by Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWT) some of which are also delivered by Idverde.

2.2 In September Council officers were advised that Idverde were experiencing difficulties in delivering the 22 hours a week service and agreed to reduce the hours to 10 whilst it considered its options. At the beginning of November we were advised by Idverde that they would be ceasing to provide the Community Warden function with immediate effect. Since then we have had discussions with officers at SWT who will provide support if they are able to whilst we consider how we wish to proceed.

2.3 At the November Council meeting it was agreed that officers should do more work on a proposal that the Council should employ its own Community Warden and explore the option of also employing an apprentice role to work alongside it.

3. Considerations

3.1 Functions

3.1.1 Officers have considered what functions would be undertaken by a Community Warden/Town Ranger. In doing so it is important to be clear what functions SWT carry out either directly or through Idverde to avoid duplication and potential double funding of activities. SWT has confirmed the following:

- SWT is responsible for all dog waste bins and any park litter bins. All other litter bins are serviced by Idverde on their behalf.
- Idverde provide a Town Ranger for street sweeping / litter picking in the Town Centre.
- Idverde cover cleaning the Public Toilets in North Street Car Park and Wellington Park.
- Motorised road sweeping is by Idverde on SWT's behalf.
- Litter picking of parks is undertaken by SWT and streets are covered by Idverde on their behalf.
- Fly tipping is mainly cleared by Idverde for SWT but could be done by SWT depending on where it is.
- All parks are maintained by SWT with the exception of the Tonedale Play .Park which is the Town Council's responsibility.

3.1.2 On that basis the following functions could be carried out by a Town Council employed Community Warden/Town Ranger

- Defibrillator check/clean - weekly
- Litter picking in areas not undertaken by SWT.
- Event help – set up/take down, marshalling

- Inspect allotments / clearing / general cutting back etc.
- Tonedale Play Park checks – weekly play equipment checks, bin emptying, litter picking two times a week
- Check Green Corridor land including litter picking, path clearance
- Clean street furniture e.g. signs, benches
- Update notice boards
- Planting/watering of Town Council planters
- Liaise with office re footpath issues
- Check Town Council toilets – report cleaning issues to contractor and undertake basic maintenance/repairs. Larger scale issues are to be reported to the Assets & Events Officer
- Office General Maintenance e.g. internal decoration, putting office furniture together, fitting shelves, notice boards etc.

3.1.3 There is the potential for the role to grow as it becomes clearer what services will or will not be provided through the unitary council. However at this stage we do not believe that the activities outlined warrant a full time post, rather three days a week, nor employing a second person.

3.2 Equipment

3.2.3 Van – it is difficult to assess what size van would be required for this role initially. Based on the functions outlined above we do not think it is worth investing in a flatbed van at this time until it becomes clear that one is needed on a regular basis. On that basis we propose that a smaller van is purchased. We have looked at leasing but do not believe this is a proper use of public money as there would be no asset resulting from the payment. The cost of a new fast-charge electric Nissan Acenta model as used by Exeter City Council would be in the region of £33,000. Details are attached as an appendix to this paper (not yet!). We are exploring whether, if we chose this model, Wellington Nissan would be prepared to enter into a sponsorship deal if its name was on the van. Initially charging of the vehicle could be carried out in North Street Car Park and the van parked overnight behind the Town Council offices with the gate locked. The van would carry Wellington Town Council livery and, if an arrangement is agreed, the name of any sponsor.

3.2.4 Tools – again until the role evolves it is probably not worth investing in a large amount of expensive equipment, instead hiring specialist equipment if and when needed, until it becomes clear that purchasing it would be a better option. As a start we would suggest the following (this is not exhaustive, and we would need to react to specific issues as and when they arose):

- Strimmer
- Leaf blower
- General toolkit (hammer, screwdrivers, spanners etc)
- Litter pickers/hoops
- Shovel
- Brush
- Cones
- Warning Signs

3.2.5 Clothing/Safety Equipment – the postholder must be provided with branded uniform and Personal Protective Equipment provided. This can generally be purchased as a package. It is proposed that the following is provided:

- Boots
- Trousers
- Polo shirts
- Sweatshirt
- Rain jacket / fleece
- High Vis trousers, vest and padded jacket
- Gloves
- Eye protection
- Head protection
- Hearing protection
- First aid kits

3.3 Storage – the refurbishment of the Longforth Road toilet block provides an opportunity to develop storage space for the equipment outlined above and other equipment and materials owned by the Town Council. In the short term we are costing out installing a storage container behind the Town Council offices or hiring a storage unit at a site in Wellington.

3.4 Training – there will be a range for training required for the successful candidate to ensure they are able to carry out their duties safely including use of specific equipment, general health and safety, Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) etc

3.5 IT equipment – the intention is that we will use a software package to log work requests and see how they are progressing. The postholder will therefore require a mobile phone and tablet that will enable them to communicate with the office whilst out in the field and record work undertaken or report issues requiring attention using the software package which will include mobile apps.

3.6 Line Management – the role would be line managed by the Assets and Events Officer with all requests for work being processed through that post.

4 Financial Considerations

4.1 Based on equivalent posts elsewhere the proposed salary scale for the post is points 13 – 17 (£24,948 - £26,845 full time equivalent). For a 22 hour a week post the starting salary would be £14,968 plus on costs. Provision has been made for these costs in the 2023/24 budget.

4.2 The Community Warden budget line of £17,140 for 2023/24 can be used to contribute towards operational/running costs for that year whilst we establish what the true costs are based on workload. We will then review the budget lines for 2024/25 in light of that experience

4.3 It is suggested that a budget of £50,000 is set aside to fund the set up costs of the function to be drawn down from reserves. The bulk of the cost will be accounted for through the purchasing of the van – the balance will in all likelihood be more than sufficient to cover the

costs of purchasing equipment etc as set out above, but it allows flexibility to react to situations across the year.

- 4.4 To enable the Council staff to move this forward at pace, if agreed, it is recommended that authority for authorising spend against the budget is delegated to the Town Clerk for items up to £3,000 and that for items over £3,000 authorisation is required from the Town Clerk, Mayor and two other members of the Policy and Resources Committee to be agreed at the meeting.
- 4.5 As part of ongoing budget planning we will build in funding each year to cover repairs/maintenance/running costs of a vehicle and tools/equipment.

5 Decisions Required

- (i) Does the Committee agree to recommend to the Town Council that it should seek to recruit a Community Warden/Town Ranger for 22 hours per week on the basis set out in this paper and if so, what is the preferred title – Community Warden or Town Ranger?
- (ii) If it does agree to make the above recommendation does it also agree to recommend that the Town Council should establish a budget line of £50,000 to be drawn from reserves to fund the set up costs for the function as set out in this paper and that authority for authorising spend against the budget is delegated to the Town Clerk for items up to £3,000 and that items over £3,000 can be approved by the Town Clerk, Mayor and two other councillors who are members of the Policy and Resources Committee.

Dave Farrow

Town Clerk

December 2022

REPORT FOR POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE DECEMBER 2022

Proposal for a review of the Wellington Town Council Boundary

1. Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this paper is to consider a recommendation to request Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWT) to conduct a community governance review of the boundary of Wellington parish.

2. Background

- 2.1 SWT has powers under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to conduct community governance reviews in order to create a parish or to amend parish boundaries, and to implement the findings of any such reviews.
- 2.2 The Government recommends that principal councils (district, county, and unitary councils) should conduct such reviews regularly, and it suggests every 10 to 15 years as the sort of timeframe for doing so.
- 2.3 The parish boundary of Wellington was set when the last national reorganisation of local government was implemented in 1974 and the former Taunton Deane Borough Council (TDBC) came into being.
- 2.4 SWT was created in 2019 by the merger of TDBC and West Somerset Council.
- 2.5 Neither TDBC nor SWT have previously reviewed the parish boundary of Wellington, so, in 48 years there has been no change.
- 2.6 However, in those 48 years the urban area of Wellington has grown exponentially, and in particular there have been significant commercial and industrial developments along the eastern boundary of the parish.
- 2.7 It may be a surprise for some to learn, for instance, that the Chelston Business Park, which is a major employment centre for residents of Wellington, is not located in Wellington parish, meaning the Town Council has no direct influence on issues which may arise there.
- 2.8 Similarly, the Household Waste Recycling Centre in Poole, which serves the Wellington community, is not within the Wellington parish.
- 2.9 Junction 26 of the M5 motorway, the J26-Chelston distributor road, and Chelston roundabout, which is a key transport corridor providing access and egress for Wellington commerce, similarly lie outside the parish boundary and therefore beyond the direct influence of the Town Council.
- 2.10 Committee members will be well aware that with the vesting of the new Somerset Council on 1st April, 2023, we are entering a period where there is

going to be significant change in the way the Town Council operates and the services and facilities it delivers for our community.

- 2.11 It is therefore an apposite moment for the Town Council to be looking at its boundaries and its sphere of influence.
- 2.12 SWT is required to consider a community governance review on receipt of a petition signed by 10 per cent of the registered electors of a parish, in the case of Wellington approximately 1,200 electors. Or, SWT itself can also decide to hold a review.
- 2.13 Principal councils are advised that parish boundaries should be strong, clearly defined, and long-lasting, such as by using features like rivers, roads, and railways, and should aim to engender community cohesion.
- 2.14 The holding of such a review requires extensive community engagement, and the Government estimates that the whole process should take about 12 months to complete.
- 2.15 Should SWT decide now to hold a community governance review of the boundary of Wellington parish, it is likely therefore that the process would fall to be completed by the new Somerset Council which is being vested on 1st April, 2023.
- 2.16 A community governance review now would be timely for the new Somerset Council because some time after vesting day, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC) will begin a review of division boundaries for unitary councillors with the aim of reducing the number of councillors from 110 to something like 85 in time for the next local elections scheduled for May, 2027.
- 2.17 In reviewing unitary division boundaries, the LGBC will need to take account of existing parish boundaries, and therefore any potential changes to the Wellington parish boundary could be in place in time to aid the LGBC review.
- 2.18 Any physical changes to the Wellington parish boundary would not be implemented until the next parish elections scheduled for May, 2027.

3 Considerations

3.1 Committee members are therefore asked to consider recommending to the Town Council that it asks SWT to conduct a community governance review of the parish boundary of Wellington and

3.2 If the Town Council agrees with the recommendation, the Town Clerk be asked to write to our neighbouring parishes in the interests of good relations to keep them informed of our thinking.

John Thorne
Councillor