

Previous recommendation to Cabinet

The cost and delivery of this function to be reviewed

Consultation responses from Members of the Public

- Would like a stop on spending on civic events with the Chairman just chairing meetings.

Consultation responses from Working Groups, Unions etc

- I am attaching [copied below] the comments of one individual UNISON member concerning the review of the Chairman's functions at the end of this response, I hope that Councillors take the opportunity to read it as it contains many practical and alternative ideas. This, along with the proposal to cease Vision Magazine affects staff in the Council offices.

Response from an individual member of UNISON

There is a proposal to cut some of the Civic Functions.

1. The chairman as the First Citizen of the District should be recognised in this role. He/she can be the face of the Council as they are a-political. They can help to make inroads with businesses, the community and the public.
2. By cutting some of the Civic Functions you will lose some of the above.
3. Keep the Civic Service as this is a good networking opportunity between other Civic Heads, the Community and the profile of this type of event can be raised via the website and other media opportunities. However, there can be a reduction in the budget, by not offering those attending a proper afternoon tea, instead keep it minimal, and it could be tea/coffee and homemade cakes. This would possibly reduce the budget by half, therefore offering a 50% saving
4. The Civic Carol Service only has a tiny budget, but a saving of £250 (full budget amount) could be achieved by not holding one. Instead to raise the profile of the Council, the Chairman could actually be invited to a Carol Service within the District, as many parishes hold their own anyway. This would therefore mean a 100% saving, including some officer time.
5. Remembrance Service – This is a vital event to remain within the Civic Budget as there is no British Legion in Coalville. Also please note that 2014 is the 100th Anniversary of the Great War, and the pride and community working that goes with this event must not be lost. I have some ideas to make this something special, and am already receiving calls to ask that

planning for this event is started earlier than it would for normal remembrance services. As I do not know what is happening with this, I am unable to respond at the moment.

If it cannot remain within the Civic area, and sits within Specials Budget, then the full amount needs to be transferred over. There cannot be a reduction in budget as year on year the costs increase. For 2013 we have fewer Police assisting with the event, and keeping the public safe is paramount. Our internal team who do the traffic management do a fantastic job, and I am sure people are not aware of what goes on behind the scenes.

However, after the 2014 event, there could be possibly a small saving made, by working in partnership with Christ Church and invited guests go back there for tea/coffee and biscuits. This would save on overtime for the facilities officer, and may be saving on the officers time for serving teas/and coffees. This would need to be discussed in more detail with all parties to see if it is feasible.

6. Civic Dinner and Awards evening 2015 onwards. Two suggestions
 - a) The civic dinner – goes back to being a civic dinner only and is self financing
 - b) The Awards evening could be combined to one awards evening, instead of at present where we have officers on higher salaries than the Events officers organising their own ‘afternoon thank you teas, respect awards, and may be other events within the council, and could incorporate the ‘internal awards’. All of these small events take time and effort to organise. If sponsorship is sought then it could be one joint awards/thank you evening instead. Everyone likes to feel valued. Those officers currently working these other events could then be focused at a more strategic level within their role/s.
 - c) Therefore a saving of approx. £1000 would be achieved if sponsorship can be maintained, and the Civic Dinner is self financing.

These are small savings in the grand scheme of things.

7. Other Points

I think a consultation should be carried out with other Civic Officers to see what they are considering. If it is a similar situation, then may be one county-wide Civic Service could take place alternating the venue each year, and each authority could invite say 20 guests each. Each authority then only has to find the money every 7 years. This would be a countywide saving.

Also, the above could be achieved with the Carol Service, again giving county wide savings.

Consultation responses from the Executive Consultation Meeting

- Anne Nielson (UNISON Representative) gave the example of the suggested saving proposed in the Chairman’s Function stating that it amounted to cutting someone’s job

Consultation responses from the Coalville Special Expenses Working Party

- Councillor M B Wyatt stated that he strongly disagreed with the proposal to charge the Coalville Special Expense Budget for the Remembrance Day Service given that it acted as a focal point for commemorations in the entire District. He stated that this was highlighted by the fact that the Chief Executive and Chairman of the District attended the Coalville event.
- The Head of Community Services stated that the Coalville Special Expense Budget should fund the event as other parishes within the District host their own events which they fund themselves.
- Councillor L Spence stated that he agreed with the position taken by Councillor M B Wyatt and that he disagreed with the proposal in the strongest possible terms. He noted that he appreciated that some burden would have to transfer to the Coalville Special Expense Budget given the current economic climate. However, he said that he was astonished that it was being proposed to transfer the funding of the Remembrance Day Service for the same reasoning given by Councillor M B Wyatt.
- Councillor R Johnson stated that he thought the proposal was disgraceful and agreed that the cost of running the event should be taken from the General Fund.
- Councillor J Geary stated that he was bitterly disappointed with the proposal. He noted that other parishes within the District held their own events, but stated that parishes were able to raise Council Tax precepts to help fund such events whereas the Coalville Special Expense area had to liaise with Cabinet in order to do so. He stated that he felt the maximum increase in Council Tax should be requested.
- Councillor J Legrys suggested that the increase should be kept at 1.5% if the £3,500 cost of holding the Remembrance Day Service was returned to the General Fund.
- Councillor M B Wyatt stated that the large events that were currently held were important to the community and suggested that these should be maintained, at the expense of the smaller events.
- Councillor J Legrys proposed that the St George's Day Flags should be scrapped in forthcoming years, along with the annual Food and Drink Festival which he described as unnecessary. However, he noted that the Coalville by the Sea event had been well attended and appeared to be popular with the public and, as such, should be maintained.
- Councillor L Spence countered that the St George's Day Flags, much like the maintaining of the flowerbeds, made the town seem pleasant and welcoming to the public and should therefore be maintained. He instead suggested that the budget for each event should be capped.
- Councillor N Clarke suggested that, as a minimum, the Christmas and Picnic in the Park events should be maintained.

Consultation responses from the Policy Development Group

- None on this issue

Officer Comments

- In respect of civic events and budgets, there is a proposal to reduce these costs by £15,000, including a reduction in events, transport and activities.
- It is intended to maintain the profile and prominence of the Chairman's role whilst accepting that there is some scope to reduce the costs associated with hosting events.
- The suggestions have been noted but the proposal is to cease the hosting of events and this event is one such event.
- The Civic Carol Service is also highlighted as an event which will cease. The Chairman will be supported in attending local Community events and as such if invited may choose to attend other Carol Services.
- The Remembrance Day event will be hosted in 2014 and it is recognised that 2014 will be a very special year. However, all costs will be considered in detail through the event planning process and your suggestions are most helpful.
- The Civic Dinner is also highlighted as an event to be ceased from 14/15 onwards. The Green Footprints CAT are considering how to recognise the important work of the Green Footprints Challenge through a different format and this will be considered in due course and sponsorship will be considered for any costs related to a new format.
- Other civic officers across the County have been consulted with and ideas shared. However, each authority will make its own decisions of what is right for its locality within the resources it has available.

Officer Comments

1. Background

- 1.1 On considering the draft proposals for the general fund revenue budget at the meeting of Cabinet held on 24 September 2013, a decision was made that a review should be undertaken of the full range of duties carried out by the Chairman in order to establish a more cost effective service delivery and an achievable saving of £11,000. It was suggested that consideration should be given to reducing the role to

- (a) chairing the meetings of the Council
- (b) attending a reduced number of events in Leicestershire on behalf of the Council
- (c) supporting the Remembrance Day service.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 At present the total cost of delivering the Chairman's function is approximately £38,000 per annum including support costs.
- 2.2 There is a separate allowance set out in Scheme of Allowances for the Chairman and his/her Deputy. These currently stand at £3662.04 and £457.75 respectively. Whether these be retained or amended will be a matter for the Independent Remuneration Panel. Therefore for the purpose of this report it has been assumed that these will be retained and have not been included in the costs.

3. Consultation

- 3.1 Following the meeting of Cabinet, consultation was carried out with all staff and those views have been considered.
- 3.2 Consultation has also been carried out with the other local Authorities in the County to see if there are any proposals which would merit a joint approach. This demonstrated that other authorities are making similar efforts to our own to keep down the cost of the civic function.

Recommendation

In considering all the consultation responses the following recommendation are now proposed to Cabinet which recognise the importance of the Chairman's role as an ambassador for the district and his valued support at local community engagements.

1. It is intended to maintain the profile and prominence of the Chairman's role locally whilst accepting that there is some scope to reduce the costs associated with hosting events. The support afforded to the Chairman will in this reshaped role be retained whilst minimising the budget by approximately 28%.
2. Acknowledging the views expressed by Cabinet at the meeting on 24 September it is proposed that the Chairman will
 - (a) Chair the meetings of the Council with the continued support of Democratic Services.
 - (b) Attend, on behalf of the Authority, a number of events in Leicestershire at which the cost does not exceed an annual budget of £700 which will cover all associated costs (transport, tickets etc). A work plan will be drawn up by staff within Democratic Services at the beginning of each civic year and agreed with the Chairman.
 - (c) Support Remembrance Day. The costs will be reviewed by the portfolio holder in consultation with the Coalville Special Expenses Working Party to see whether a contribution can be agreed towards the total cost.
 - (d) Attend flag raising events in North West Leicestershire.
 - (e) Attend the Buckingham Palace garden party
 - (f) Continue to receive administrative support and assistance with diary management from Democratic Services .
3. In order to meet the objectives of ensuring a more cost effective service delivery it is proposed that the following areas of the chairman's function will no longer be funded:
 - (a) Civic church service
 - (b) Carol service
 - (c) Chauffeur driven car
 - (d) Civic dinner
 - (e) Attendance at events outside Leicestershire

- (f) Hosting events such as town twinning and charity cheque presentations.
- (g) Biographical leaflet.

These proposals would offer a saving of approximately £10,800 excluding support costs, the savings being made from the hire of transport, hospitality, civic events and general civic budgets.