

Wiltshire Council

Council

18 October 2016

Notice of Motion No. 39

Delegation to Elected Members

From Councillors Chris Caswill and Chris Hurst

Also supported by Councillor Jon Hubbard

To consider the following motion received in accordance with the Council's constitution:

"Council notes that Section 236 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 gave the power for Local Authority delegation to individual Councillors.

Council further notes that a significant number of Local Authorities have arrangements in place which delegate budgets to individual Members, and that these include:

- The London Boroughs of Haringey, Hillingdon, Lewisham and Westminster
- Cornwall, Cumbria, Devon, Hampshire, Hertfordshire, Kent, Lancashire, Northamptonshire, Suffolk and Warwickshire County Councils

and that although the majority of these delegations relate only to community grants, at least two, Hertfordshire and Suffolk delegate funding for highways improvements. Council notes that Suffolk County Councillors have a £10,000 locality budget for 'local projects in their Division that benefit the local community' and each also has a highways budget of £15000, which can be rolled forward.

Council recognises that the increasing pressures on the Wiltshire budget have resulted in rationing systems and delegations to town and parish councils that have left individual members with reduced roles. And also that those financial pressures are expected to increase, and with that further reductions in the ability of individual members to contribute locally, and deliver their responsibilities as local representatives, community leaders and 'champions of their divisions', as set out in Part 12 of the Constitution ('Roles and Responsibilities of Members').

Council supports the creation of individual grant and highways budgets for elected Wiltshire Council Members as an important step to reverse that trend, and because of the benefits it will bring, including:

- Expressed trust in the qualities and judgements of individual members
- Enhanced roles for Members in their local communities
- Encouragement of small scale and local community awards
- Enhanced engagement of the public with individual members
- An enhanced role for elected members of Wiltshire Council, and hence an increased incentive for candidates of quality from all walks of life to put themselves forward for election to the Council
- More flexible and speedy decision making
- Increased accountability of individual Members to local communities

Council recognises four particular challenges in making this change:

- a. Accountability : In addition to the record keeping required by the 2007 Act, there are opportunities for regular reporting to the local communities via meetings of the Area Boards, and by easily accessible reports on the Council's web site
- b. Adequate budgets : this will require increases in the amounts delegated by Cabinet and from Officer delegations, which is to be welcomed in its own right
- c. The relationship with Area Board community grants : Community Area funds can and should be retained for Area-wide applications. Councillor budgets would be complementary, smaller, and used for purposes local to their Divisions. It should also be possible for two or more members to pool their funding for local applications that cross Division boundaries
- d. Managing the flows of funds; Council is confident that Wiltshire Council's officers and systems are at least as capable of coping with this requirement as those in the other Authorities which already operate this kind of delegation

Council accordingly resolves:

- 1. That the Leader be asked to initiate a system of Member delegated budgets, and that these should be in place prior to the May 2017 elections, so as to help attract a diverse range of good quality candidates**
- 2. And that those delegated budgets should include funds for community grants and minor highways works, alongside some fund retained for Community-wide grant applications**
- 3. And that accountability to the public will be achieved by annual presentations of decisions and outcomes at Area Board meetings, and on the Council web site**
- 4. And that the aim should be for Member annual budgets to be initially £ 2000 for local (Divisional) community awards and £10,000 for minor**

highways works, with the option of increasing these amounts in future years

- 5. And that the Leader and officers be asked to bring detailed proposals for this to the February Council meeting, so that they can be publicised before the May 2017 elections, and in place during the Financial Year 2017-18”.**