

**COUNCIL 09 NOVEMBER 2011****1. Local Governance Review – Parish Wards**

- 1.1 Members will recall that the outcome of the electoral review of Northumberland was queried as it was thought to alter the Town (Parish) boundaries and this has now been clarified.
- 1.2 It is confirmed as indicated by County Councillor Lang that there has been no change to the boundary of the County Council Electoral Divisions affecting Newbiggin. It remains as indicated by the green line on the attached plan between Newbiggin Central and East ED and Seaton with Newbiggin West ED however the former Wansbeck district ward boundaries have disappeared.
- 1.3 The overall Newbiggin parish boundary is not affected but the Boundary Committee for England indicated that all parish wards would be co-terminus with county divisions. This contrasts sharply with the previous parish wards indicated by the red line on the same plan.
- 1.4 There has therefore been a change in the parish wards from an approximate 50:50 split of electors to nearer an 80:20 split with each ward represented by four councillors.
- 1.5 That creates a significant imbalance that can only be addressed through a Local Governance Review that would have to be undertaken by Northumberland County Council.
- 1.6 It is suggested that as the objective of the county review was to provide equality of representation for electors across Northumberland that the county council should be requested to undertake a Local Governance Review to re-establish the Parish Ward Boundary that was originally created for the town.

**Recommended that the Town Council request Northumberland County Council to undertake a Local Governance Review in Newbiggin by-the-Sea.**

**2. Northumberland Association of Local Councils (NALC)**

- 2.1 The Town Council is a member of the Northumberland Association of Local Councils and currently pays an annual fee of £446.01.
- 2.2 NALC is facing financial pressures through the withdrawal of support from the county council over the current and next financial years and has held preliminary discussions with member representatives about increasing fees to cover the shortfall.
- 2.3 A new formula approach has been proposed for acceptance at a Special General Meeting that will impose a small increase for inflation for the majority of local councils in Northumberland. It will include the national levy at 5.42p per elector; fixed charge of £22; 10.5p per elector for the first 1,000; 5p per elector beyond 1,000 replacing 3 previous bands producing a new charge of £569.97 for Newbiggin Town Council.

**Recommended that budget provision of £570 be made for 2012/13.**

### 3. The Local Council Charter for Northumberland - Consultation

- 3.1 Ahead of Local Government Reorganisation and the creation of local Town and Parish Councils in 2009 a Charter was agreed between Northumberland County Council and Northumberland Association of Local Councils but was not generally accepted by the new councils in particular.
- 3.2 Over the past two years discussions have been held to revise the charter and now a consultation draft has been issued in line with feedback which is much more about a working partnership arrangement between the respective councils and outlines rights roles and responsibilities.
- 3.3 Section 1 is about getting the relationship right and covers local democracy; communication; consultation and engagement; finance; advice and support. Finance is to be governed by overarching principles of equity, efficiency and transparency with the harmonisation of service arrangements across the county following diverse approaches under previous district councils.
- 3.4 Delivering services is the theme of Section 2 building on a harmonised baseline of core services that are consistently understood to be the responsibility of local councils. The following definitions have been provided:
- Local: Service predominantly benefitting residents within that parish/town council area. These services and assets will be the responsibility of the local council.*
- Non-local: Service that benefits residents from multiple local council areas; Service that is an integral part of the tourist infrastructure and visitor offer. These services and assets will be the responsibility of the County Council.*
- 3.5 The majority of local councils already deliver the local services including allotments; seasonal lighting; play areas; Town Twinning and from April 2012 the following services and assets will be the responsibility of all local councils:
- All public seats
  - Provision of new litter bins
  - Public Conveniences that meet local need
  - War Memorials
  - 'In Bloom' competitions
  - All Bus Shelters
- 3.6 Other local services to be phased from April 2013 will include local parks; playing fields or miners welfares; provision of local gateway signage; cemeteries. It will be for local councils to determine the most appropriate means of delivery.
- 3.7 Baseline service standards will also be specified for other service areas to allow local councils to consider service enhancements of quality or quantity.
- 3.8 The consultation period closes on 31 December and members are invited to consider any comments they wish to submit.