

ARRANGEMENTS FOR FURTHER CONSULTATION

Portfolio Holder:- Cllr Norman Williams

Lead Officer:- Martin Jepson

Report Author:- Martin Jepson

Summary and Recommendation-

Discusses options for further consultation on the possibility of a Whitehaven Town Council.

Recommendation:- That the Working Party considers the options.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Working Party considered a report at its last meeting on 22nd December 2008 and decided:- “ a further report be made to a future meeting of the working party on options and costs of a referendum and a report be made thereafter with a recommendation on a referendum.”

This report provides options towards further consultation.

1.2 Following on from consultation last summer the Working Party asked for a bid for £15,000 for a Referendum to be submitted to the Resources Planning Working Party for consideration. That bid has proved to be unsuccessful

2. OPTIONS FOR CONSULTATION

2.1 Bearing in mind that there is no funding available for a Referendum and the resources of the Elections Unit are limited the following are the options available:-

- a. A free-standing Referendum;
- b. A postal Referendum;
- c. A consultation to take place at the same time as the Electoral Registration process during the autumn;
- d. None of the above.

2.2 Option a.

This Option would involve Polling Stations being opened for the day and a count taking place in the normal manner after close of poll. As a starting point it was envisaged that some explanatory material would be sent to electors prior to Polling Day and we have asked our printers to quote on the basis of

four A4 pages of information. However, the amount of information to be provided would be at the discretion of the Working Party

A likely indication of costs on this basis is:-

Printing including ballot papers, pollcards and information leaflets:- £3,100

Post (sending PollCards and Postal Votes):- £1,500

Polling Station fees (28 Polling Stations at £200 per station):- £5,600

Polling Station Staff fees:- £7,000

Count staff fees:- £1,000

Total £18,200

Bearing in mind that there are no funds to carry out such an exercise it is considered that the cost of this option is too prohibitive to be a realistic option.

2.3 Option b

This Option would be less costly than Option b.

Likely fees would be:-

Printing:- £3,612- on the basis of everyone having postal votes and information leaflets;

Post:- £6,000 (including postal vote prepaid envelopes for all voters);

Count staff fees:- £1,000

Total:- £10,612

Despite this reduced cost there is no budget for such an exercise. As with Option a. there might also be a danger that the votes cast might be minimal, thus bringing the validity of the exercise into question. For example, a recent referendum in Allerdale concerning The Cloffocks produced only a 4 per cent turnout.

2.4 Option c

This Option has previously been used before in 2000. As it was sent to all households in Copeland rather than all persons on the Electoral Register it might be considered to have less validity than Option b.

Likely fees would be:-

Printing (in house):- £500 (estimate);

Postal fees additional to the fees for return of the Electoral Registration form:- £1,000

Counting staff:- £1,000

Total:- £2,500

The advantages of such an approach would be that it would be less expensive than Option b and may be achievable within existing resources and budgets. Experience shows that there may also be a greater response than for Option b. A disadvantage would be that such an exercise has already been carried out and that Government has already advised that a repeat of such an exercise is not necessary.

2.5 Option d

There are several arguments for taking up none of these options. Firstly, legislation does not require a referendum to take place. What is likely to be the only affordable economic option (Option e) has already been carried out. The Resources Working Party has already authorised an exercise to take place regarding calculation of Special Expenses for the Whitehaven area. A copy of this report is also with the Agenda to this meeting. It may be opportune to wait, if consultation is to take place, until the option of Special Expenses has been considered and put to the electorate of Whitehaven as an alternative to a Whitehaven Town Council.

3. FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

3.1 As discussed above.

4. PROJECT IMPLICATIONS

4.1 In view of the number of options and the drawbacks to all no project plan has yet been prepared. Subject to finances and resources being available the first three Options could all be carried out this year.

Appendices- None

List of Background Papers- None

List of Consultees- Acting CX, HFMS, Elections Officer