



Berwick upon Tweed Town Council

Local Services Committee

07 June 2021

Appendix B

Report of Town Clerk

Future of the Service Level Agreement between Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council and Northumberland County Council

Access Public

Background

1. The origins of the current Local Services agreement with Northumberland County Council (NCC) are worth describing in a little detail, since the Service Level Agreement (SLA) will expire at the end of this financial year. Council set out, originally, to enable itself to manage small repairs to its assets, (of which there are more than 500) and to support the environmental work carried out by NCC, especially in relation to litter and public spaces.
2. After a series of debates and discussions council chose to enter into a SLA with NCC, whereby council paid an agreed fee to NCC who would then employ additional staff to carry out the work specified by the agreement and through discussions between the Town Council and NCC.
3. Such an agreement is by no means unique to Berwick; however, each partnership delivered by an SLA is unique, and the experience of them, and degree of satisfaction with them, is very much a locally determined matter.
4. Other local councils partnership agreements include areas of work such as animal enforcement, environmental enforcement and other areas of public concern.
5. Partnerships between local councils (like the Town Council) and the principal authority (NCC) are just one way of funding additional environmental work; in other market towns of a similar size other partnerships, such as Business Improvement Districts (BID) have also been implemented, although it has to be noted that the Hexham BID was not well supported, and a proposal for a BID in Blyth was defeated at the referendum stage. Officers raise the point merely to remind councillors that there is no element of business contribution to the funding of the Town Council, and that it would be good practice for Town Council to give due weight to the opinions of all those to whom it is accountable when making decisions as to the allocation of resources.
6. That being said, council has previously adopted as if it were its own the economic plan prepared by the Community Development Trust on behalf of the Berwick Coastal Communities Team, which emphasizes the significant contributions tourism, hospitality and retail make to the economy of the town, directly or indirectly benefitting the majority of residents.
7. Council has previously considered whether it would be more cost effective to bring the work undertaken on its behalf inhouse; officers will discuss in the issues section below whether this can be decided at this point.

Issues

- 8. Officers believe that before an assessment should be undertaken of how any work is to be delivered, the following questions should be addressed:
 - a. Is there a consensus on whether the work being undertaken is effective, or represents good value for money?
 - b. Is there a consensus as to whether it is desirable to continue with this programme of work?
 - c. Is the work that is being undertaken relevant to the councils needs as an owner of assets or should the two streams of work be entirely separated?

Recommendation

- 1. That committee provide guidance to Officers in the preparation of future reports to Council by addressing the questions set out above, and any other areas of concern.

Author	GD	Town Clerk sign off (if required)	GD
Checked by	SC	Finance Officer sign off (if required)	N/A