

## **Devolution Report for BS & FP Meeting 08/11/2018**

Following FTC decision 1<sup>st</sup> November 2018 not to put Open spaces and verges as a Priority 1 category alongside Waterfront/Waterside priority, I hope in this paper to appraise you of the difficulties this decision may incur?

### Introduction:

The decision to move open spaces to a priority 1 was made following the complaints made by residents and STC Councillors relating to the standard of grass cutting, pathway clearance and general appearance of Saltash as a whole. It is recognised Saltash's appearance has declined considerably since Cornwall became a Unitary Authority. My decision to arrange a meeting with Cornwall Council, moved STC devolution plans up CCs devolution 'to do 'list and put STC on their priority list. The minutes of the meeting on August 1<sup>st</sup> with CC confirm this statement.

The previously discussed Waterfront devolution plans had stalled, but the Portfolio holders and Senior Officers at Cornwall agreed to put them back in as a priority with the open space's assets and verges.

### Pros & Cons.

#### Waterfront/Waterside Pros:

The Waterfront list as discussed at previous BS & FP meeting will, once handed over, give STC a possible income stream going forward including mooring fees, approx £40K. This will be made up from the boat park income, trailer park income and slipway charges. At the moment, there are no other income generator envisaged except for removal and cutting up of old boats and for the undertaking of maintenance work for CC around the Waterfront/Waterside area.

#### Waterfront/Waterside cons:

Currently staffing costs for our Town and Waterfront Wardens are circa £80/85K pa. If as agreed at FTC 1<sup>st</sup> November, we get our priority wish list, to achieve income from the slipway we will need to employ a minimum of 2 wardens at any one time to collect slipway revenue? STC are committed to provide Warden cover 365 days per year for the Pontoon berthing clients, as well as a duty of care. To comply with our duty of care and provide a quality service we STC must look at our staffing level with regard to Waterfront cover and ongoing operational requirements, statutory or otherwise. STC also need to look at whether we are capable/equipped to put on/allow events to go ahead on the Water front?

Another issue to be considered is the need for grass cutting on the 3 greens Waterside and Waterfront, which will be maintained by FTC if those assets are transferred?

STC have through our decision making improved the Waterfront/Waterside area to a level recognised and appreciated by all users. To continue with this

level of service Members will need to look at whether to raise the precept, to sustain the level through continuous improvement.

### Open Spaces, Verges and Grass cutting Pros & Cons.

#### Pros:

By devolving open spaces and verges to STC, we as a Council can proactively plan our maintenance of the areas we have asked to be devolved, without paying for supplementary work, outside of the CC laid down standard and cycle. We will also use the Longstone depot as our Centre for our continuing maintenance and upkeep of the Saltash Estate. Part of the plan to devolve open spaces and verges will be to receive payment from CC for taking on the assets, and importantly we will have the authority to grant permissions for usage to outside bodies and organisations. We will be able to TUPE over trained Staff with all of the required certificates of competency and statutory requirements. STC will also be able to terminate current grounds maintenance contracts, making a considerable saving to Council outgoings. STC have already proven we can cut costs as shown by taking over weed kill from CC, where we reduced that item from £13500 to £3500pa.

#### Cons:

To proceed further, STC with this plan will need to decide what staffing level is needed? What also needs to be considered is the ability of the Waterfront Wardens to take on grass cutting and equipment levels needed to operate.? The Services budget has to take into consideration every aspect of these proposals and the continued delivery of a Service to our Residents, which they the Residents have already vociferously argued for.

#### Conclusion.

It is my view that devolution of Services and assets have not been considered in the wider context of the ongoing benefit to our Residents, the Ratepayers. As a Council, we put ourselves forward for election, were elected, to do our best for our community and provide services and Value for Money?

I have asked the Town Clerk to invite Catherine Thompson to the BS & FP meeting on Thursday and hope we can have an open and honest debate without personalities being involved.

We will also have to consider the make-up and number of a working party to move the devolution process forward

John Brady