



# Devolution of assets and services from Somerset Council Impacts and opportunities

# Somerset Council currently still provides other towns with services such as....

- ▶ Hanging baskets and floral displays
- ▶ Markets
- ▶ Street weed clearance
- ▶ Verge cutting
- ▶ Customer access points
- ▶ Earmarked funds for regeneration and projects
- ▶ Public toilets
- ▶ Play parks and open space
- ▶ Sports pitches and associated clubhouse facilities
- ▶ Cemetery grounds services inc. closed churchyards

# Minehead Town Council is ahead of the game and already provides:

- ▶ Public toilets - maintenance, cleaning and refurbishment
- ▶ Verge cutting and open space maintenance
- ▶ Floral displays throughout the town centre
- ▶ Subsidies to local bus service
- ▶ Litter and dog bins
- ▶ Play areas and open space
- ▶ Street weed clearance in hand

## In what way could services in Minehead be affected ?

- ▶ Litter and dog bins - fewer/less frequent emptying
- ▶ Parks and gardens - fewer cuts, less horticultural maintenance
- ▶ Street cleansing, sweeping and drain clearance - reduced service including reduction of litter picking
- ▶ Beach cleaning - reduced or no service
- ▶ Play areas closed - equipment not maintained/replaced
- ▶ Vandalism - damage not repaired
- ▶ Services - A reduction or removal of opening hours at places such as the library and the recycling centre

## How are other towns and parishes reacting?

- ▶ There is a lot of uncertainty in the absence of the potential financial implications and a 'one size fits all' model of taking on assets and services
- ▶ Some larger towns are preparing to take on most of the open spaces & street cleansing functions
- ▶ Some smaller towns and parishes are preparing to 'buy in' to services

## How are other towns and parishes reacting? Contd.

- ▶ A number of towns and parishes have written to their community asking for their feedback on what is important to them
- ▶ Others have identified an opportunity to engage further with and galvanise their community by investing in community focused staff
- ▶ Many are cautious about raising the precept

# Does MTC raise the precept?

- ▶ If Minehead Town Council wants to take on extra services or purchase assets it would need to raise the precept or borrow money
- ▶ Band D is £177.74 - 13<sup>th</sup> highest in the county
- ▶ Precept of £759,293 - 9<sup>th</sup> highest in the county
- ▶ Borrowing money would require raising the precept to repay the loan over many years and would need consultation with taxpayers
- ▶ Both options need to be carefully justified, no 'hoarding'

# Reasons to raise the precept

- ▶ Contingency fund for taking on extra services such as open space maintenance, litter collections, street cleansing etc
- ▶ To work with or subsidise any services that are under threat of reduction
- ▶ Work with and support existing community groups and encourage new ones around parks and gardens, the beach, sports etc



# Considerations for taking on assets and services

- ▶ Legal - Any transfer will need to follow a legal framework
- ▶ Financial - Once adopted all services require staff, equipment, ongoing maintenance etc
- ▶ HR - Some assets and/or service will have TUPE implications
- ▶ Contracts - Some existing services are contracted and some have existing fleet/equipment provision and maintenance contracts in place
- ▶ Inheritance - Some assets/service are already under the strain of the lack of investment
- ▶ Expertise - Many assets/services require subject matter expertise and on costs
- ▶ Public expectation - Any asset/service transfer could see an increase of public expectation especially if they've had a tax increase to pay for it!

# Conclusions

- ▶ There will still be a level of service provision come 1st April
- ▶ MTC need to 'be prepared' financially and practically to step in to support reduced services
- ▶ A pragmatic approach is required. If we want it, we'll have it. But at what cost?
- ▶ There is an opportunity to 'challenge' traditionally held views for the benefit of Minehead
- ▶ Community engagement is essential. What do our residents want?
- ▶ A galvanised community can increase civic pride/identity, Enhanced trust and provide both MTC and residents with cost efficiencies