

A Town Council for Whitley Bay

On 10 March 2008 there was a special [Area Forum](#) in Whitley Bay arranged to provide basic information about the idea of a Town Council for Whitley Bay. Town and Parish Councils already exist in many other local authority areas and I have chosen one within the area of East Devon District Council (EDDC) as an example. EDDC has 3 Town Councils and as many as 30 smaller Parish Councils. One of the Town Councils, that of Exmouth (ETC), is comparable to Whitley Bay in that it is a seaside town with a similar area and population (about 26,000). Below I have provided direct links to a variety of sources of information relevant to the topic. These include the websites of EDDC and ETC, the text of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and other PDF files that include reference to powers that may be devolved to appropriate Parish/Town Councils by the "Principal Council" - North Tyneside Borough Council in our case.

The aim in providing the information is to allow residents who are interested in the possibility of having a Town Council an opportunity of making an informed assessment before coming to a conclusion.

The website of [Exmouth Town Council](#) includes minutes of a variety of meetings - the Council itself, the General Purposes Committee and the Planning Committee. It is possible to get a flavour of what a Town Council can do by reading these.

The [East Devon District Council](#) website provides a [Parish Council Toolkit](#) (# link is to later edition published by Tameside Council) that gives guidance on governance and legal matters including that on the 'Powers and Functions of Parish Councils' and 'the Role and Responsibilities of Parish Councillors'. The EDDC website provides details of the [2009/10 Council Tax](#) (# updated for 2009/10) and there is a copy of the Council Tax booklet, '[Working Together in East Devon](#)' (# updated for 2009/10) as a large PDF file (1.13 MB).

[The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007](#) (c28) is 272 pages long and includes a section, Part 4 - Parishes - running from page 60 to 79 that covers issues of how a Parish Council may be formed - but I am still waiting for somebody to explain it to me! On page 66 chapter 2 has the heading, 'Power to Promote Well-being' and a short section on 'Extension of power to certain parish councils'. I believe this is the basis of the additional powers that can be devolved to Parish/Town Councils. The Department for Communities and Local Government have produced a report entitled, '[The Quality Parish and Town Council Scheme - The Quality Scheme Explained](#)' (only 60 pages long) which appears to explain how a Parish/Town Council can qualify to take on the promotion of WELL-BEING.

There is also a document, [Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 - Explanatory Notes](#) that is 85 pages long.

The '[Notes of the Whitley Bay Area Forum](#)' on 10 March 2008 provide a good introduction to the topic but they are not minutes of the meeting. I attended the forum and it was not agreed that a petition be circulated to residents of the Whitley Bay area seeking their views on the proposal. It was agreed that the

views of residents should be sought - but when it comes to a petition as envisaged by the 2007 Act the area for the proposed Parish/Town Council must be defined and responses should surely be on an informed basis rather than party political prejudice. I think we should await the outcome of consideration of the topic by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of North Tyneside Council first.

N.B. The system of Local Government in Devon is to be changed to one with Unitary Councils by May 2009, similar to what will happen in County Durham and Northumberland. District Councils will cease to exist and the latest proposal for Devon (by EDDC) is to have 4 Unitary Councils - see '[A Vision for Devon - A Concept for a Four Unitary Pattern of Local Government in Devon](#)'.

27 April 2008

29 July 2009