

Item 8 Appendix 1 – General Purposes Committee 12th February 2020.

To: **General Purposes**

From: Colin Hill – Town Clerk/RFO

Date: 12th February 2020

Subject: **Committee Structure/Frequency Proposals**

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The current structure of Committees and frequency of meeting held are unsupportable from within existing staffing arrangements, if Members are seeking quality support, and all items requiring action, dealt with properly and in time.
- 1.2 The frequency of meetings held is disproportionate to the size of Town Council, with the opportunity available now to feed direct issues of concern from Members back to Officers, who can then consider whether necessary to bring to Committee or action under advice to Committee Members.
- 1.3 Under the current system the opportunity to implement the actions arising from Committees is difficult to achieve ahead of the next cycle of meetings, especially during holiday absence, where it is difficult to take more than one week off at the moment, without causing issues in covering meetings.
- 1.4 The current number of Committees and frequency also impacts on Members time and potentially acts as a barrier to encouraging younger members who hold down full-time employment from seeking to be a Councillor

2. Existing Structure and Frequency

- 2.1 The existing Committees Timetable is as follows;:
- 2.2 Each meeting requires differing levels of support but outside of actions arising, just simple Agenda management, issuing of summons, minutes, copying papers, meetings themselves and support in issuing papers etc is are all time consuming , **excluding any work necessary for items on the Agenda or support for the Mayoral office or for items arising out of the Agenda for subsequent action.**

| Meeting | Number per annum | Estimated support time involved per meeting |
|------------------|------------------|---|
| Full Council | 9 | 15 |
| Mayors day | 1 | 15 (exc organisation) |
| Amenities | 9 | 17 |
| General Purposes | 9 | 17 |
| Staffing | 4 | 8 |
| Development | 13 | 17 |

| | | |
|--------------------|-----------|---------------------------|
| Neighbourhood Plan | 2 | 8 |
| Climate | 4 | 10 |
| | | Collective hours |
| Total | 51 | 765 hours per annum |
| | | 22% of available resource |

2.3 Simply supporting the democratic function of meetings currently takes approximately 22% of overall staff time available and this may be understated as for example the Town Clerk preparation, especially on policy type work may take considerably longer on specific items .

3 Rationale behind proposals to merge committees

3.1 In considering a way forward there are synergies with the nature of items considered that indicate options to merge committees would lead to more effective delivery and on occasions avoid repetition.

3.1 General Purposes and Amenities have a strong emphasis on money and resources whilst Development and Climate have similar roles in terms of influencing change - for example reduce flooding risk in new development, influencing traffic congestion, public transport, infrastructure.

3.2 Full Council with planning and thought could incorporate the Planning consultee role, when Development is not meeting to still comment.

3.3 Meetings can be scheduled within the year on a heavy / light basis to ensure that key aspects are covered in terms of operational need and then at other meetings a lighter Agenda focussing on specific areas.

3.4 The overall impact could be to reduce the number and frequency of meetings by up to one third yet still deliver the key requirements of this Council supporting the community.

4. Proposals

4.1 Taking into account the rationale above, proposals as are as follows:-

- a) General Purposes and Amenities Merge
- b) Development and Climate Emergency merge
- c) Full Council - bi meetings- Planning included

4.2 New terms of reference will need to be drawn up and Financial Regulations and Standing Orders amended accordingly

4.3 Pre- planned Agendas to include specific needs within Committee timetable in terms of "Heavy and Light" Agenda planning.

4.4 Number of meetings to be reduced to enable Officers to deliver.

4.5 Acknowledgment by Members that there may be an occasional need to call an Extraordinary Meeting if an important item that cannot wait is out of sync with the formal cycle

4.6 Working Groups would still need to be called as and when but more time and opportunity available to do so.

5. Comparison Summary

5.1 When comparing the existing with the proposed structure with the proposed structure (Appendix 2 to GP Council report), there is the potential to make considerable savings in both Member and Officer time excluding working groups

| Meeting | Number per annum | Revised Numbers |
|--------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Full Council | 9 | 12 |
| Mayors day | 1 | 1 |
| Informal | 1 | 1 |
| Amenities | 9 | 8 |
| General Purposes | 9 | |
| Staffing | 4 | 9 |
| Development | 13 | |
| Neighbourhood Plan | 2 | |
| Climate | 4 | |
| Total | 52 | 31 |

Way forward

6.1 It is accepted that this is a major change in the way TTC does its business.

6.2 There needs to be a willingness amongst Members to consider this change but in doing so also an agreement between Officers and Members that there may still need to be tweaks made should something not in practice be working out as anticipated.

6.3 Members are not restricted to bringing items only to Committee to require action. The processes introduced already to track and monitor actions required, can be circulated each month direct to Members, with the Town Clerk deciding if this needs Committee approval in the first place to take forward in case of a Policy rather than direct action nature.