

Report and Recommendations from Working Group on Decision-Making Structure Town Council 1 May 2018

RECOMMENDED

- (i) That the Open Spaces Committee, The Planning, Highways & Transport Committee and the Resources Committee should have a membership of 8 Councillors and a quorum of 5 Councillors
- (ii) That the meeting frequency be as follows:
 - Town Council- every 2 months
 - Planning Highways and Transport – monthly
 - Resources - every 2 months
 - Open Spaces - every 2 months
- (iii) That Committees be given delegated authority to agree expenditure on revenue items pertinent to the scope of the Committee provided that there is an approved budget containing sufficient funds
- (iv) That the tenure of a Committee Chair or Vice- Chair should be limited to a maximum of 2 years
- (v) That there is an expectation a Mayor will serve for 2 years and be succeeded by the Councillor who is Deputy Mayor at the end of the second term of office
- (vi) That draft amendments to Committee Terms of Reference, Town Council Standing Orders and Town Council Financial Regulations to reflect any agreed changes to the decision-making structure are presented to the 2018 Annual Town Council meeting for approval

Introduction

1. The Decision-Making structure working group was set up by the Town Council in January 2018 with a membership comprising The Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Chair of the Resources Committee, Chair of the Open Spaces Committee and Chair of the Planning, Highways and Transport Committee. The Terms of Reference for the Working Group are attached as Appendix 1

Issues considered by the Working Group

2. Committee Membership

Currently all Councillors sit on all committees which can lead to duplication and unnecessary time spent in meetings. One suggestion is that up to 8 councillors sit on each committee.

3. Meeting Frequency

Cutting down on the number of meetings would free staff up and be less onerous for councillors. Meetings will still need to meet on a frequency that will enable consultation responses to be dealt with in a timely manner e.g. responding to planning applications. It would be prudent to include an urgency procedure in the Town Council's Standing

Orders for the rare occasions when it is not practical to call a Committee meeting or Council meeting.

4. Decisions Delegated to Committees

Committees currently have delegated decision making authority pertinent to their areas of responsibility which includes authority to spend up to £5,000 on revenue items provided that there is an approved budget containing sufficient funds. The Town Council sets the annual budget which provides the budget framework for each committee. The Working Group believes that decision making could be more effective and timely if the £5,000 limit were removed so that Committees could make all spending decisions (within the scope of their specific responsibilities) provided that there was an approved budget containing sufficient funds.

5. Tenure of Office

Committee Chairs & Vice-Chairs

Whilst not a specified task within the Working Group's Terms of Reference, a suggestion was considered from a Councillor regarding limiting the tenure of Chairs and Vice-Chairs of committees; it was moot that these roles should change each year; but that would seem unnecessarily disruptive; if a set period were to be agreed then a 2 year limit would be preferable. Vice-Chairs could then be groomed to take over the chair thus ensuring continuity and succession planning. This would enable newer members of the council take such positions after a suitable period as Vice-Chair.

Mayor

To enable proper succession planning there should be the expectation that the Mayor will have a two year term of office and at the end of that term there should be an expectation that the Deputy Mayor will take over as Mayor. This can only be a working practice and expectation as the Local Government Act 1972 does require the Mayor (Chair of Council) to be elected at the Annual Town Council meeting and any Deputy Mayor to be elected and hold office until immediately after the appointment of the Chairman at the next annual meeting.