

Re: Town Council Structure

1. Purpose of the report

To recommend amendments to the existing Town Council structure and Standing Orders for proposal to Full Council.

2. Background

Some significant changes have occurred over the last year, which have highlighted the case for amendments to the existing Town Council Structure and in consequence Standing Orders. This will enable the Council to operate in a more relevant and efficient way.

2.1 The primary change was the Council's declaration of sixteen main objectives at the beginning of the Council Year. These have included a change of direction particularly with regard to the use of the Town Hall, improving relationships and liaison with outside bodies and the setting up of important Task Groups.

2.2 Secondly a change in Town Hall personnel has meant the creation of a new Town Hall and Facilities Administrator job, rather than the previous Town Hall Events Co-ordinator role. This supports the change in direction of use of the Town Hall from the many events previously organised by the Co-ordinator, to a more community led usage. Additionally the new role will assist and cover some of the day to day duties, which the Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk currently undertake. In fact this has meant a substantial savings in staff costs.

2.3 For various reasons, the Town Council is now working with more outside bodies in partnerships. This is a different scenario to the usual Town Council working group or sub-committee where there is a direct reporting line back to a Town Council Committee and then Council for decision taking or ratification. These partnerships are also closer and more supportive than previously with groups or bodies on which the Council has had representation in the past.

2.4 The Town Council budget for 2014/15 has been rationalised. Essential expenditure has been identified and removed from individual committee budgets and added into the main Town Council Administration Budget (now known as the Core Budget). The reasons for this were to identify core expenditure and to give greater clarity and control to Committees over that part of the budget which may be used at their discretion. This again has highlighted an unevenness in the remit of some Committees.

3. Proposed Changes

3.1 Discontinue Leisure and Youth Committee

3.2 Expand Town Hall Management Committee to include outside facilities and rename it 'Town Hall and Facilities Committee'.

3.3 Expand Planning and Environment Committee to include other external affairs and rename it 'Planning and External Affairs Committee'.

3.4 Expand Town Promotion and Tourism Committee to include more community and youth based projects, to oversee the gallery and liaise with the Town Team under the new title of 'Community and Economy Committee'.

3.5 Identify and describe two new types of 'groups', Partnership Groups and Task Groups.

4. Reasoning

The changes are proposed to enable Councillors to expand the remit of the Committees in a meaningful and effective way, to assist with the efficiency and running of the Town Council facilities and to rationalise costs. The following explains the main rationale by Committee:

TOWN HALL & FACILITIES COMMITTEE

The current Town Hall Management Committee takes on the overseeing of outside facilities from Leisure and Youth Committee. The main reasons for this are:

- Town Hall Management Committee no longer oversees a large programme of music and other events, nor the provision of wedding packages and wedding fairs as arranged by the previous Town Hall Events Co-ordinator and therefore has capacity to enlarge their remit.
- The new Town Hall and Facilities Administrator's role will cover both the Town Hall and outside facilities. So, it will assist with administration if there is only one point of governance i.e. one Committee, to which the Administrator and others will refer. Especially as the Maintenance Staff cover all facilities as well.
- The Town Hall and outside facilities will be all together in the Core Costs and Core Income part of the budget. This will ensure a clearer picture of the Council's net running costs and only requires one Committee to oversee this.

PLANNING AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

The current Planning and Environmental Issues Committee widens the scope of its remit for greater relevance to what it covers.

- Planning and Environmental Issues Committee role has expanded with the introduction of the representation on groups such as the Community Area Transport Group and Community Area Safety Partnership. These groups led by Wiltshire Council or MVCap, now interact with the Town Council to impart information and make decisions about local highways and with respect to the Police and Emergency Services in the Town. This way of managing local infrastructure is likely to increase and budget is set aside for this.
- To foster even closer supporting relationships with relevant 'partnership' groups, such as the Malmesbury Neighbourhood Steering Group.
- To oversee Task Groups, where appropriate such as the Emergency Plan Group. Unlike a working party, this has the on-going year on year task to assist in times of extreme weather or emergencies.

COMMUNITY AND TOWN ECONOMY COMMITTEE

The current Town Promotions and Tourism Committee widens the scope of its remit for greater flexibility and to better reflect what it covers.

- Now to include community projects, including youth projects which will no longer be looked at by Leisure and Youth Committee.
- To include oversight of the John Bowen Gallery, which is run by the Tourist Information Centre, but currently reports to Town Hall Management Committee.
- To act as a point of interaction and support for the Town Team, being a new 'partnership' group which the Town Council has representation on and is supporting, but which is independent of the Council. (It is envisaged that over time, some of the Council's town promotion and marketing may devolve to the Town Team, as part of a Town Action Plan or be undertaken in joint ventures).

Currently the Town Council recognises Sub-committees and Working Parties.

Sub-Committees usually have delegated functions from a main committee on an on-going basis and membership is solely of Councillors. These are specifically recorded in Standing Orders.

Working parties are usually set up to look at issues and bring their considerations or findings back to a Committee or Full Council, in order to agree proposals. These are not mentioned in Standing Orders.

Therefore there are no current definitions in Standing Orders of how the Town Council operates with a 'Partnership' group nor how a Councillor-led group undertakes a specific end task or project, especially involving a delegated budget.

Partnerships

A new definition will be shown in Standing Orders to describe a 'Partnership' group. This will be where the Town Council have a close relationship with a group and may be supporting it in some specified way.

- The Town Council has representation and liaison with a 'Partnership' group and their role and tasks overlap or interact in a significant way with our work.
- Although a non-Town Council group, we are supporting the 'partner' in some defined way, such as treasury function or administration or through a joint venture.
- Unlike a Town Council working party, we cannot make direct decisions on their behalf.

Examples of this are the Town Team and Malmesbury Neighbourhood Steering Group.

Task Groups

A new definition will be shown in Standing Orders to describe a 'Task' group.

- The Town Council or a Committee agrees to undertake a one off end task or project, which is delegated to a Councillor-led group to carry out. This group may also include non-Councillors.
- A budget may be delegated for this specific project (either part or whole), with the authority to the 'Task' group to carry out specific actions on behalf the Council or Committee.
- The Task group will report to the Committee (or Full Council) delegating the task or project.

An example of a Task Group would be the Councillor– led group (also including non-Council members) implementing the Malmesbury Hub.

5. Proposal

That the Town Council amends the Committee Structure and Standing Orders as described.

6. Financial implications and risks

There is a cost saving to reducing the number of committees and rationalising the budget.

7. Recommendations

Members are requested to agree the actions proposed.

Cllr .K. Power (Ch. P & R)
Cllr. J. Gundry
Cllr. S. Killane

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