



COMMITTEE RESTRUCTURE

POLICY AND RESOURCES
COMMITTEE

PAPER B

11 NOVEMBER 2024

The purpose of this Report is to recommend Members to consider a restructure of the current Committee system.

1) BACKGROUND

- a) In May 2024, all existing committees and working groups were replaced with a new committee structure.
- b) The new committee structure took effect after the annual meeting on 20 May 2024.
- c) The restructure report presented to the Extraordinary Meeting on 15 May 2024 noted the following:
 - a. Effective decision-making happens when it is clear how, when and by whom decisions are taken, is supported by appropriate data and professional advice, done openly and minuted so that it is transparent and accessible to the public (both at the time and afterwards), involving elected members according to their knowledge and interests, and with maximum opportunity for those residents and businesses affected by or interested in the decision to participate. Significant decisions should be taken by the full council, but VTC should be able to progress business, within agreed policy and budget, without having frequently to call extraordinary meetings.
 - b. The Council has relied upon informal member-staff working groups to progress most of its business between council meetings. These meet in private, and have no formal powers other than the ability to be consulted by officers making decisions already delegated to them, which until recently were undocumented. The public has no right to attend working group meetings, nor is there any published agenda or record that can be inspected by those seeking information or to hold the council to account.
 - c. A review of decision-making by other town councils identifies that most employ a structure of committees and sub-committees to deal with business, with informal working groups typically used on a temporary 'task-and-finish' basis to allow councillors and staff to work on the detail of tightly-defined problems and issues.
- d) The current Committee structure is as follows:
 - Business and Community Committee
 - Buildings Maintenance Committee
 - Environment and Transport Committee
 - Planning Committee
 - Policy and Resources Committee

These committees operate with Terms of Reference as appended to Report 16/24 which was presented to the Extraordinary Meeting of 15 May 2024.

2) CURRENT STRUCTURE

- a) Since the Committee structure was implemented on 20 May 2024, the outcome has been as follows with regard to the new Committees (excluding Planning Committee):

Buildings Maintenance Committee

Number of meetings held: 3

Number of matters for discussion or information only: 2

Number of decisions: 5 (2 of which referred the matter to another Committee)

Number of matters referred to Town Council for decision: 0

Number of matters referred to another Committee: 2

Business and Community Committee

Number of meetings held: 6

Number of matters for discussion or information only: 26

Number of decisions: 3 (1 of which referred the matter to the Town Council)

Number of matters referred to Town Council for decision: 1

Number of matters referred to another Committee: 0

Environment and Transport Committee

Number of meetings held: 4

Number of matters for discussion or information only: 17

Number of decisions: 5

Number of matters referred to Town Council for decision: 0

Number of matters referred to another Committee: 0

Policy and Resources Committee

Number of meetings held: 6

Number of matters for discussion or information only: 11

Number of decisions: 14 (2 of which referred to Town Council for decision)

Number of matters referred to Town Council for decision: 1

Number of matters referred to another Committee: 0

- b) The Town Clerk has spent the following hours on Committee work since the structure was implemented:

June

Total hours work on Committees: 22.59 (Not included in the total – follow up actions)

July

Total Hours work on Committees: 21.19 (Not included in the total – follow up actions)

NB. The Assistant Clerk prepared papers and clerked for Planning Committee on 30

July

August

Total hours work on Committees: 18.54 (not included in the total – follow up actions)

September

Total hours work on Committees: 9.17 (not included in the total – follow up actions)

NB. The Assistant Clerk prepared and clerked the Planning Committee on 3

September

October

Total hours work on Committees: 12.08 (not included in the total – follow up actions)
NB. The Assistant Clerk prepared the Planning Committee

- c) There are areas of duplication in the current structure leading to matters being covered twice by different Committees or referred either to another Committee or Town Council.

3) PROPOSED COMMITTEE AND WORKING GROUPS STRUCTURE

A proposed committee and working groups structure is as follows:

HR, POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE: Council internal policies; budget monitoring (sends reports to council); governance; audit; insurances, staffing; HR matters; health & safety; training; website; media; newsletter.

PLANNING COMMITTEE: Planning, licensing, neighbourhood plan, heritage, local history, responding to the draft IOWC strategic plan.

PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND SPACES COMMITTEE: Maintenance of all buildings and structures managed and maintained by Ventnor Town Council.

BUSINESS & COMMUNITY WORKING GROUP: Health & wellbeing; charities, community events, tourism, supporting local business; arts & culture, youth service.

NO 31. BUS WORKING GROUP: To monitor the usage of the two-year grant from the Isle of Wight Council.

The proposed full terms of reference for each committee and working group are appended to this report.

CONSIDERATIONS

- a) Each committee will comprise five members, and the quorum will be three. The chair and members will be appointed as usual at the council's annual meeting.
- b) All committees will have published agendas and be open to the public (including other members of the council) to attend and participate (except, in case of the public, for confidential items of business).
- c) Committees will be able to form working groups of members and staff, if appropriate, to work on the detail of specific detailed issues, and report back with recommendations for decision by the parent committee.

- d) The full council will remain responsible for setting the budget, receiving financial reports (from the policy & resources committee), making significant changes to the budget (and hence for all significant new initiatives), deciding all member matters including appointments to committees, deciding the Standing Orders, Strategic Plan, Scheme of Delegations and Financial Regulations, for receiving reports (e.g. from IWALC) and presentations, and for wide-ranging discussions of strategic issues facing the town and parish.

- e) Committees and working groups will be able to arrange their meeting schedules, but the expectation is that Committees diary five during the year, in between council meetings (for example, in January, March, June/July, September & November). Under the current structure, the Committees have met more frequently, and it is not expected that the new structure will increase the overall number of meetings held across a year.

- f) The current Committee meetings are attended by staff and have agendas and minutes as per the legal requirements. It is proposed that the notes of Working Groups are published on the Council's website in the spirit of transparency.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are invited to consider a restructure of the current Committee structure for referral to Town Council to avoid duplications and streamline the decision-making process.

APPENDIX: TERMS OF REFERENCE OF COMMITTEES

HR, POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

General

The Committee is a Standing Committee governed by the Standing Orders and by regulations. The Town Council will appoint the Committee and determine its composition, quorum, role and functions. The Terms of Reference should be read in conjunction with the Town Council's adopted Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.

Composition

- a) The Committee will comprise five councillors.
- b) The Committee's Chair will be appointed annually by the Town Council.
- c) The quorum of the Committee will be three members.

Authority

The Committee:

- a) may expend funds within the budgets agreed by the council to fulfil its terms of reference (but not move funds between budgets, other than as set out below);
- b) may make recommendations to the Council;
- c) may establish subcommittees and/or working groups that report to the Committee;
- d) is empowered to consult, insofar as it might consider necessary or desirable, any other committee of the Council or with any other Council or outside body or person;
- e) may decide any specific such matters that are delegated to it by the Council from time to time.

Role and Functions

The Committee will meet as and when requirements dictate and at least five times each council year (typically in January, March, June or July, September and November), and have the following role and functions:

- a) To review with the Town Clerk and Responsible Finance Office and recommend to the full Council its Strategic Plan, annual budget, Scheme of Delegations and Financial Regulations;
- b) To draft, review, monitor and revise policies regarding councillors (including the Code of Conduct and Standing Orders) to be recommended to the Town Council for decision, and to be responsible for general policies not falling entirely within the remit of another committee, including those for HR, procurement, data protection, risk register, emergency planning, complaints procedure, and the publication scheme;
- c) To monitor the budgets and financial position of the Council, including the level of reserves, reviewing bi-monthly financial reports prior to their submission to each meeting of the full Council, and to be able to vire up to £1,000 between any budget lines of the council, provided this will not create an overspend (but not to spend the Council's reserves, which requires a council decision);
- d) To be responsible for arranging and oversight of the annual audit, and for any insurances required by the Council.
- e) To make representations and/or recommendations to the Council concerning member training, and to undertake training of its own members and/or seek professional external advice as necessary to support its role;

- f) To review the staffing structure, job descriptions and person specifications with the Town Clerk to best meet the Council's responsibilities and workload;
- g) To review as necessary with the Town Clerk the staff contracts, salary scales and associated terms and conditions and to receive any representations from staff members or their union representatives, determining pay and conditions for administrative and or project staff, and recommending to the Council for decision those for the Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer;
- h) To agree and implement appropriate recruitment and selection processes and to confirm appointments, but with those appointments for the Proper Officer & Responsible Finance Officer recommended to and formally confirmed by the Council;
- i) To review staff working conditions with the Town Clerk; including wellbeing and health and safety at work, ensuring that the Council complies with employment law and follows best practice, and to review annually in January all health and safety incidents recorded within the previous year;
- j) To monitor and review if required the exercise of the Clerk's delegated powers to manage staff, including annual performance & development reviews and staff training programmes, and staff requests for training for personal development or health and safety;
- g) To support and oversee together with the Mayor and the Chair of the Committee the Clerk's personal appraisal aims and objectives, to be agreed annually, and to monitor the leave arrangements of the Town Clerk, with the Mayor or Chair authorising these in a timely fashion;
- l) To hold delegated powers to deal with all personnel, employment and recruitment issues, with oversight of any process leading to staff redundancy or dismissal, and responsibility for the Council's Discipline and Grievance procedures including appointing investigators, hearing and appeals subcommittees, or a trained mediator if required for mediation, conciliation or arbitration;
- m) To lead on matters concerning communications including the Council's website, press relations, social media, and newsletter (the latter to be cleared with the Town Clerk and councillors before issue);
- n) To be responsible for decisions delegated to it by the full Council that need to be taken in between council meetings and do not fall within the terms of reference of any other committee, and for receiving reports from the Town Clerk of urgent actions that have been made by officers under section four of the Council's Scheme of Delegations.
- o) To review and recommend to a meeting of the full Council the levels of rents and charges to be made for occupation of (or use of, or access to) the Council's buildings;

PLANNING COMMITTEE

General

The Committee is a Standing Committee governed by the Standing Orders and by regulations. The Town Council will appoint the Committee and determine its composition, quorum, role and functions. The Terms of Reference should be read in conjunction with the Town Council's adopted Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.

Composition

- a) The Committee will comprise five councillors.
- b) The Committee's Chair will be appointed annually by the Town Council.
- c) The quorum of the Committee will be three members.

Authority

The Committee:

- a) may expend funds within the budgets agreed by the council to fulfil its terms of reference (but not move funds between budgets);
- b) may make recommendations to the Council;
- c) may establish subcommittees and/or working groups that report to the Committee;
- d) is empowered to consult, insofar as it might consider necessary or desirable, any other committee of the Council or with any other Council or outside body or person;
- e) may decide any specific such matters that are delegated to it by the Council from time to time.

Role and Functions

The Committee will meet as and when requirements dictate, typically monthly depending on the level of planning applications about which the council is consulted, and have the following role and functions:

- a) To make representations to the Local Planning Authority on any planning application referred to the Town Council, and on any other planning or licensing matters that affect the town, including tree orders, enforcement matters, and planning appeals. The Committee may refer an application or other planning matter of significant importance to the town for discussion by the full council;
- b) To allow members of the public to address the Committee about planning applications and other items on the agenda, and to agree its procedures for doing so subject to the requirements of Section Four of the Town Council's Standing Orders;
- c) To lead on the development and review, and to make recommendations in relation to the approval or otherwise, of any neighbourhood development plan or other strategy proposals under planning legislation affecting the town;
- d) To make recommendations on the involvement of the Town Council in the discharge of planning functions, in relation to any representations between the Council and the Local Planning Authority;
- e) To lead on matters concerning conservation areas, listed buildings, heritage and local history;
- f) To lead on and recommend to the council its response to Isle of Wight consultations on its Island Plan, Core Strategy, Coastal Management Strategy, and any other consultations that do not fall entirely within the terms of reference of another committee.

NOTE: The Town Council is not the Local Planning Authority, and therefore the Committee does not have the power to refuse or allow planning applications. The Committee, on behalf of the Town Council, is a statutory consultee in the planning process

PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND SPACES COMMITTEE

General

The Committee is a Standing Committee governed by the Standing Orders and by regulations. The Town Council will appoint the Committee and determine its composition, quorum, role and functions. The Terms of Reference should be read in conjunction with the Town Council's adopted Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.

Composition

- a) The Committee will comprise five councillors.
- b) The Committee's Chair will be appointed annually by the Town Council.
- c) The quorum of the Committee will be three members.

Authority

The Committee:

- a) may expend funds within the budgets agreed by the council to fulfil its terms of reference (but not move funds between budgets);
- b) may make recommendations to the Council;
- c) may establish subcommittees and/or working groups that report to the Committee;
- d) is empowered to consult, insofar as it might consider necessary or desirable, any other committee of the Council or with any other Council or outside body or person;
- e) may decide any specific such matters that are delegated to it by the Council from time to time.

Role and Functions

The Committee will meet as and when requirements dictate and at least five times each council year (typically in January, March, June or July, September and November), and have the following role and functions:

- a) To be responsible for the operational management, maintenance and cleaning of the Town Council's freehold and leasehold physical buildings, including Salisbury Gardens, all public toilets, the paddling pool, Ventnor Central, the first aid hut, the existing park buildings (kiosk, bandstand & gardeners' store, and the electrical supply), and maintenance of the Outfit gym;
- b) To lead on matters concerning Ventnor Park and other council-owned or managed open spaces within the parish including grounds maintenance, Boniface Fields, management of the allotments, the community orchard, Ventnor beach and floral Ventnor;
- c) To lead on management of the council's own car parks;
- d) To review and fulfil the legal and insurance responsibilities that come with these physical assets, including making appropriate risk, fire, utility and health inspections and assessments, and maintaining all alarms, CCTV, and signage;

BUSINESS & COMMUNITY WORKING GROUP

General

The Working Group is an advisory group of the Town Council which does not have the authority to make decisions or expend funds.

Composition

The Working Group will comprise five councillors.

Authority

The Committee:

- a) may not expend funds;
- b) may make recommendations to the Council;
- c) is empowered to consult, insofar as it might consider necessary or desirable, any other committee of the Council or with any other Council or outside body or person;

Role and Functions

The Working Group will meet as and when requirements dictate and have the following role and functions:

- a) To lead on matters concerning relations and joint working with local community groups, charities and other local organisations operating within the parish;
- b) To lead on matters concerning relations with and support for the local business community, including the economic vibrancy and sustainability of the town centre and Esplanade;
- c) To lead on matters concerning tourism and the town's visitor strategy and offer;
- d) To lead on matters concerning health and wellbeing, including the Wellbeing Café;
- e) To lead on matters concerning arts and culture within the parish, and for youth services;
- f) To be responsible for (working with, supporting or enabling local organisations as appropriate) community events organised by the Town Council;
- g) To discuss and suggest and seek to implement or assist with community initiatives for local residents that will help biodiversity, lower greenhouse gas emissions, educate and inform within its scope of activity, and build strong community and environmental resilience;

NO 31. BUS WORKING GROUP

General

The Working Group is an advisory group of the Town Council which does not have the authority to make decisions or expend funds.

Composition

The Working Group will comprise five councillors.

Authority

The Committee:

- a) may not expend funds;
- b) may make recommendations to the Council;
- c) is empowered to consult, insofar as it might consider necessary or desirable, any other committee of the Council or with any other Council or outside body or person;

Role and Functions

The Working Group will meet as and when requirements dictate and have the following role and functions:

- a) To monitor the usage of the No. 31 Bus
- b) To monitor the use of the two-year grant and make recommendations to Town Council as necessary
- c) To monitor signage and advertising of the No.31 Bus