

To consider the revised committee structure proposed by the Policy, Finance and Performance Management Committee on 7th September 2022

1. Background

The Policy, Finance and Performance Management (PF&PM) Committee has considered changes to the Town Council's committee structure at its meetings on 11th May and 7th September 2022. What follows is a revised version of the briefing notes considered at those meetings.

2. Strengths and weaknesses of the current structure

The Town Council's existing committee structure was adopted in May 2007 and amended in July 2015 with the creation of the Planning & Consultation Committee and addition of Policy matters to the remit of the Finance & Performance Management Committee. Given the changes to the Council's range of services, partnership arrangements and policy objectives since that time it is important to review whether or not the existing structure could be improved.

The current committee structure has many strengths. In particular:

- the Policy, Finance and Performance Management Committee plays a strong governance role that is key to the Council's System of Internal Control;
- the Planning and Consultation Committee responds efficiently to Dorset Council's consultation on development proposals;
- the presence of outside representatives provides important community engagement.

There are, however, a number of weaknesses that could be addressed:

- there is a poor alignment between Council budgets and committees e.g. the Roads and Transport Committee has no budgetary management beyond setting car parking charges, but by contrast the Town Council has declared a Climate Crisis and pledged a considerable sum of money to implement its environmental plan, but there is no committee to oversee this work, only a working party;
- current committees are to some extent organised around Council departments (Operations and Tourism), but lack clear aims and objectives to drive their work;
- some services might be better aligned to different committees, for example car parking charges should arguably be considered alongside wider objectives regarding visitor numbers and support for local businesses; Beach Gardens, currently under the Tourism Committee, would arguably be better managed by a committee with a remit to promote local health and wellbeing.

A revised structure would provide the following benefits:

- improved alignment between the Council's corporate priorities and the management of properties, services and budgets;
- the remit of committees could be determined by their objectives, grouping the services that they oversee by shared purpose rather than by departmental management;
- greater sharing of responsibility for individual committees among members of the management team.

3. Overview of amended proposal for revised committee structure

Having considered draft proposals in detail, including potential committee names, the Policy, Finance and Performance Management Committee has recommended the adoption of the structure set out in the table below. A diagram showing this proposed structure has been included with these agenda papers.

Existing Name	Proposed New Name (and principal corporate objective)	Proposed Remit
General Operations	Community Services (Encouraging Health & Wellbeing and Enhancing Community Safety)	Oversight of Allotments, Bandstand, Bus Shelters, Memorial Benches, CCTV, SIDs, Godlingston Cemetery, Play Parks, Skate Park, Beach Gardens and Sporting Facilities, Public Conveniences, Town Hall and Public Help Desk. Also Health & Wellbeing projects and Public Transport.
Personnel	Personnel (Delivering Good Governance)	Consideration of appropriate staffing levels and recommendations regarding salary regrading; convene appeal panels in personnel matters.
Planning & Consultation	Planning & Consultation (Planning for the Future and Preserving our Heritage)	Providing consultation responses on planning and licensing applications and considering recommended changes to traffic management measures (including improvements to Station Approach); considering third-party consultation documents and responding on behalf of the Town Council; oversight of development of Neighbourhood Plan; maintenance of heritage assets and consideration of heritage-related projects.
Policy, Finance & Performance Management	Finance & Governance (Delivering Good Governance)	Receive quarterly finance and investment reports; consider the draft annual estimates each year; review the Council's priorities and monitor the Council's progress towards their achievement; consider draft versions of Council policy documents; consider internal audit reports; review risk register and insurance arrangements; consider write-off of bad debts.

Tourism	Tourism & Local Economy (Promoting Sustainable Tourism and Supporting the Local Economy)	Oversight of Information Centre, Beach Huts, Market, Events, Boat Park and Fishermen’s Huts, Car Parks and Taxi Permits, Festive Lights, Beach and Seafront (excluding environmental matters), Publicity and Promotion (of Swanage and Town Council facilities), Town Centre improvements.
Transport	Traffic Management Advisory Committee (Planning for the Future and Preserving our Heritage)	Considering requests for applications for new traffic management measures (including oversight of DC’s parking review) and formulating recommendations; considering proposals from DC for changed road layouts, speed limits, pedestrian crossings or other traffic management measures.
N/A	Environment (Protecting the Natural Environment and Addressing the Climate Crisis)	Oversight of Parks and Gardens, Peveril Point & The Downs Nature Reserve, Waste Management, Sustainable Transport (including EVCPs, Footpaths, Cycle Racks etc) Environmental Action Plan, Implementation of Green Infrastructure Strategy, Managing Relationship with Sustainable Swanage.

The key changes can be summarised as follows:

- Creation of new Environment Committee providing a forum to oversee implementation of the Council’s Environmental Action Plan and associated budgets alongside management of the Town Council’s open spaces.
- Creation of a Traffic Management Advisory Committee as a replacement for the Roads & Transport Committee. This will have an important role in overseeing Dorset Council’s on-street parking review and provide a dedicated forum to consider local residents’ suggestions for changes to parking and traffic flow around the town. It will report to the Planning & Consultation Committee bringing together all elements of the Town Council’s consultative role.
- Expanding role of Tourism Committee to incorporate the local economy, including improvements to the town centre and oversight of car parks.
- Changing the Operations Committee to a Community Services Committee, focused on health and wellbeing objectives including public/community transport matters.
- Bringing the Capital Projects Sub-Committee under the remit of the Finance and Governance Committee to make clear its scrutiny role.
- The Beach Management Advisory Committee would in future be able to report to both the Environment Committee and the Tourism & Local Economy Committee, depending on the matter in hand.

4. Other Considerations

The PF&PM Committee has recommended that if these proposals are agreed by full Council, the working of the revised committee structure should be reviewed by that committee in April 2023, prior to the next annual Council meeting in May.

If agreed, there will be a need to determine terms of reference for each committee. It is recommended that a draft be taken to the first meeting of each committee with the aim of making a recommendation to full Council. This process will also need to confirm the representatives of outside organisations to be invited to take up membership of each committee. In accordance with legislation, this will be in a non-voting capacity, as at present.

Decision Required

To consider acceptance of the PF&PM Committee's recommendation:

That the revised committee structure be approved, the arrangements to be reviewed by this committee (the Finance & Governance Committee) in April 2023, prior to the next annual Council meeting in May.

5. Membership and Chairing of Committees Items 8) b) and c)

If the revised Committee Structure is adopted there will be a need to review and confirm committee representation and chairs. Given that Members were appointed to the existing committees in May, representation on the unchanged and renamed committees would be as follows (the chairs are shown in bold):

Community Services Committee (formerly General Operations Committee)
Town Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillors Bishop, **Bonfield**, Finch, Harris, Monkhouse and Tomes.

Finance and Governance Committee (formerly Policy, Finance and Performance Management Committee)
Town Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillors Bishop, Bonfield, Harris, Trite, Tomes and Whitwam (+ Environment Committee Chair).

Personnel Committee (unchanged)
Town Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillors Bonfield, Harris and **Trite**.

Planning and Consultation Committee (unchanged)
Town Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillors Bonfield, Finch, **Harris**, Rogers and Whitwam.

Tourism and Local Economy (formerly Tourism Committee)
Town Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillors Bonfield, Finch, **Tomes** and Whitwam.

Beach Management Advisory Committee (unchanged)
Councillors **Bonfield**, Finch and Tomes.

The membership of the Environment Committee could be taken from the existing Environmental Action Plan Working Party, as follows:

Environment Committee (new)

Town Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillors Harris, Monkhouse, Rogers, Trite, Tomes and Whitwam.

The membership of the Traffic Management Advisory Committee could be taken from the Roads and Transport Committee, as follows:

Traffic Management Advisory Committee (new)

Town Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillors Bishop, Monkhouse and Whitwam.

Decisions Required

To review and confirm membership of existing committees and advisory committees and appoint Members to new committees and advisory committees.

To review and confirm the chairs of existing committees and appoint chairs to new committees.

6. Meetings Schedule

Item 8) d)

In order to ensure that the new committee structure is up and running for the 2023/24 budget setting process a draft calendar of meetings has been enclosed with these agenda papers for Council to consider. The Council's two sub-committees will continue to meet as and when required.

Decision Required

To review and confirm acceptance of the revised calendar of meetings.

Martin Ayres
Town Clerk

September 2022