

Agenda item 3

For decision: Taking forward the work of the Council Matters Committee

Author: Cllr Mel Usher

Summary

This report proposes three things: first, to have a standard agenda with generic items at each of the future committee meetings; second, at each meeting one part of the Council's estate will be considered in detail; third at each meeting there will be a discussion around a specific theme.

It is recommended that this approach to future Council Matters Committee meeting is adopted.

Background

This is how Standing Orders defines the remit of the Council Matters Committee.

The committee will:

- a incur expenditure where it has an allocated budget provision*
- b be responsible for financial administration, including investments, monitoring income and expenditure against the budget and making recommendations to Council accordingly*
- c be responsible for any projects related to participatory budgeting*
- d be responsible for all aspects of risk management and insurance*
- e be responsible for all aspects of reviewing Health and Safety policy, and monitoring health and safety incidents, such as staff accidents at work or accidents to the public on the estate*
- f be responsible for the Frome Town Hall and the Council estate*
- g be responsible for the work of the Environment Team in line with the Strategic Plan, including events on the Council estate*
- h be responsible for all processes related to communications and marketing and for monitoring implementation of, and reviewing, the Communications Strategy, including the adoption of the Annual Report*
- i be responsible for all ICT planning and delivery (including websites)*
- j be responsible for all aspects related to human resources, beyond the remit of the Town Clerk*
- k establish a group, as and when needed, comprising three Cllrs including the Chair to address staff disciplinary issues and disputes beyond the authority of the Town Clerk*
- l be responsible for all multi-year funding arrangements that support third party organisations*
- m oversee civic and twinning matters*
- n be responsible for reviewing progress against the annual work programme*

Discussion

This is quite a workload. Part of the Councillors' role is to monitor performance and I wonder whether we have ever fulfilled that sufficiently well?

It's fairly obvious that one of the characteristics that sets us apart from others in the local council world is our desire to touch issues once, make a decision, move on and get on with things. It may not feel like it at times but we have a high level of delegation to the staff and I wouldn't want to change that. Nor do I want to create too much extra work.

We will have 5 Council Matters Committee meetings in 2017/18 and they are 7 June, 6 September, 1 November, 21 February, 9 May.

Proposals for discussion at each committee meeting

A. There should be a standard list of items that go to every agenda in an agreed format (and if possible with some good at a glance graphics). They include:

1. Expenditure against budget, emphasising areas of under, overspend and no spend at all. Recent expenditure, work related to internal and external auditors, risk management.
2. Staffing matters, leavers and joiners in particular but also shifting roles and use of interim staff/consultants. Training completed or planned
3. Overview of the annual Work Programme showing major changes and/or progress. As we are only one month into the work programme, this will be considered in more detail at the meetings following the one on the 14 June.
4. Work completed and planned by Environment Team.
5. Update on communications and marketing
6. Town Hall issues and revenues whilst being established (2017-18 only)
7. Health and Safety Issues

We should invite relevant interested parties to each meeting.

B. At each meeting, we should consider in detail at one part of our open space estate.

As a council, we can get hung up on expansion and exciting ideas. Perhaps we need as much emphasis on maintenance. So, at each meeting we will plan for a discussion on a particular part of our open space estate, so that by the end of the year we will have discussed each one in detail.

Committee meeting on	Open Space	Focus of report
7 June	North Parade Rodden Meadow (including Millennium Green and new	For decision: management plan and next steps for North Parade For discussion: a review of the current

	piece)	management of Rodden Meadow. Plus: recommendations for Millennium Green and the additional land to the north of the main meadow
6 Sept	Welshmill The Roundhouse Garden	Reviews of the current management plans
1 Nov	Smaller sites, including: New Road; Tower View; and Packsaddle The Dippy	Initial management plan including results from PB project for approval And a review of The Dippy
21 Feb	The Old Showfield	Review management plan
9 May	Victoria Park & Mary Baily	Review management plan

Sometime in late summer / early Sept I would like to run a whole afternoon for councillors to walk/bus our lands in total.

C. At each meeting, we should also address one of four themes

1. 6th September - Communications.

- Review of comms and marketing strategy
- How are we doing?
- Are we hitting our target audiences?
- How skilled are we on social media, what are the pitfalls? How usable is our website?
- Where could external comms be improved? What's the future? What can we learn from the private sector on PR?

o

2. 1st November - staffing and organisational development.

- How do we want to handle HR matters in future (Paul Wynne and Jackie Wheeler are exploring this now)?
- Do we need to review staff policies and procedures, are they still relevant?
- Current and future workloads and pinch points.
- What staff development and training is required?
- Is matrix management likely to be a success?
- Cultural change and the organisation

3. 21st February 2018 - Finance a longer look.

- What are the risks to current income streams?
- How is the precept likely to change over time as more new houses are built (although some of the major developments may be outside of the parish boundaries)?
- What are the new sources of funding, if we foresee that precept declining or flatlining in future? The potential of crowdfunding, the internal fundraiser, Community Infrastructure levy, and what are the other sources?
- The commitments we have on loan repayments.

- How could budget be recut if we need to, % on staffing, % given away (which is now closer to £200k than £100K)?
- Role of participatory budgeting.
- Potential savings, future pitfalls.

4. 9th May - *The Future – the world is changing*

- What does the future look like for local councils?
- What does Frome as a town need?
- Where next for FTC?
- New ways of working
- New functions?
- New ways of communicating and technology.

There is an argument that this last section on *The Future* might be best considered earlier and in advance of the discussions on finance and communications. It is proposed to retain it for discussion in May 2018 for now and further soundings will be taken about bringing it forward.

Recommendation

Adopt the standard agenda, the thematic approach to future meetings and the in depth look at different parts of the Town Council estate as described above.