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**Meeting:** Full Town Council, Item 11.15

**Date:** 16th March 2021

**Authors:** Cllr Harrison, Chair, Cllr O'Connor and Charlotte Starkie, Town Clerk

**Subject:** To consider a more efficient and focused committee structure

## 1.0 Purpose of report

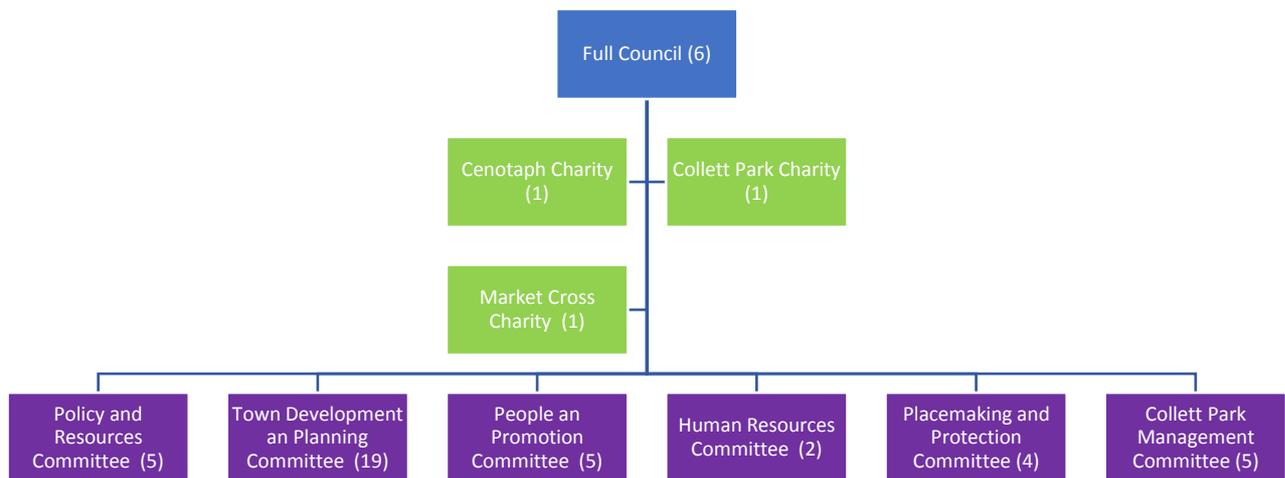
- 1.1 For councillors to give consideration to the current committee structure, and to consider alternative ways that might give rise to a more focused and efficient structure. This will take pressure from councillors who have committed to attend many meetings, but also take some strain from the staffing team. This report has been put together, having heard the concerns from many councillors, and with Input from the Chair, the Town Clerk, and Cllr O'Connor.
- 1.2 For Councillors to also be aware that there several priorities and aspirations of the council and that many are work in progress and to consider these priorities once the current projects are complete.

## 2.0 Background information

- 2.1 The current committee structure is below. There are also several working parties, though many have only met once and their work has been stalled or taken over by events.
- 2.2 Staff provide support at all meetings, and there are 47 planned meetings in the calendar for 2021/22. In addition to full council there are six committees, as well as three charities that require an annual meeting. As a minimum of 2 officers attend most meetings which last on average 2 hours, this is equivalent to 190 hours (of 5 weeks of full time work) of officer time just in meetings. In addition, there are several working parties, and extraordinary council/committee meetings which have not been factored into this sum. Councillors also need to view their time in a similar manner, to ensure that they are focused and results and action driven.
- 2.3 Councillor attendance at meeting is sporadic, and councillor numbers are not well balanced across the structure. Town Development and Planning, which meets every 3 weeks to fit in with

the planning application system, is at its lowest number (just 4 of the 8 seats re filled). Due to resignations there are 4 vacancies on the council currently, and this has also created some disruption on the committees as people leave and join the committee mid-year, without continuity. The situation is exacerbated by the vacancies, leaving 12 councillors to fulfil committee attendance for the next 2 months until these vacancies can be filled.

2.4 The current committee structure (with the number of meetings in a 12 month period):



### 3.0 Discussion

#### 3.1 Collett Park Management Committee and Place Making and Protection Committee

To consider the removal of one committee by merging functions: to have one committee that deals with all Infrastructure/assets of the council: To remove Collett Park Management Committee and to combine its responsibilities for park and asset repair and maintenance, new infrastructure and projects and environmental matters to Place Making and Protection Committee.

To move the responsibility of Collett Festival and other events to the People and Promotion Committee

This would give a saving of 5 meetings a year

#### 3.2 Charities

To continue to host the annual 3 charity meetings, but incorporate into an annual Place making and Protection committee.

### 3.3 **Policy and Resources Committee**

To change the composition of this committee to be made up of the Chairs of each committee plus maybe 3 other councillors and to continue with the Internal governance of the council, but also allow for a discussion between committee chairs.

To remove the function of community grant applications from Policy & Resources to the People and Promotion Committee

To reduce the number of meetings to 4 a year, with a saving of one meeting a year.

### 3.4 **Human Resources**

To retain the HR committee as It Is - 2 meetings a year

### 3.5 **Town Development and Planning**

To retain the Town Development and Planning Committee - every 3 weeks

### 3.6 **People and Promotion**

To retain and meet 4 times a year.

### 3.7 **Composition**

In addition, It Is also proposed to consider Councillors attendance at meetings as suggested:

Councillors should be on a minimum of 2 committees

Councillors should be on a maximum of 3 committees

No Councillor to be Chair of more than 1 committee

No Councillor to be Vice Chair of more than 1 committee

All Councillors should have to spend one year on the Town Development and Planning Committee in their 4-year term.

### 3.8 **Working Parties**

Working parties to be renamed Task and Finish groups and to be very focused. For them to be created with a very specific purpose and that purpose and scope be agreed in the terms of reference and that they close in line with the financial year. That they should aim to only meet 4 times. For working parties to meet at a time that suits councillors (outside of the working day, maybe before a council meeting) and that the working party be able to include members of the community who are either interested stakeholders, or classed as experts in the field of discussion. Working Parties do not make decisions, they are there to steer a discussion and make a recommendation to their parent committee and so need to be on a single, small scale project only.

### 3.9 **Staffing levels**

To review the staffing levels to ensure that they are adequate to meet current and future work streams, and to be aware that it might be necessary to employ some financial modelling in order to accurately assess staffing and costs. This would be undertaken at the HR Committee

### 3.10 **Priorities of the Council**

Councillors recently participated in a workshop that discussed their aspirations in line with the objectives of the town plan. No decisions were made but the conversation concluded the key priorities for remainder of the four-year term of office are as follows:

- i. To promote and encourage tourism
- ii. To offer supports to the arts
- iii. To develop a community space that can be for the benefit of community groups and provide an income stream to the council
- iv. To be responsive to the opportunity of purchasing a suitable community building
- v. To create a community woodland
- vi. To invest in cycle tracks
- vii. To develop the top end (by the buildings) of Collett Park to improve the play areas, the café and the toilet block, by undertaking a master planning exercise and public engagement
- viii. To create a new wooded area near Allyn Saxon Drive
- ix. To restore events to the park, post pandemic
- x. To recruit a marketing/community engagement officer
- xi. To recruit a part time grants officer
- xii. To run informal workshop to build engagement and offer support to the staff
- xiii. To hold more HR meetings to offer support to the staff
- xiv. To create some office space in the centre of town

These will be visited at the first meeting of the new financial year, when the Town Clerk is able to give an update on the legacy projects that are near completion (i.e. market resurface, signage etc)

### 4.0 **Financial Information**

- 4.1 The financial savings that come from being more streamlined, means better use of everyone's time, allowing the officers to focus on actions, and less on writing committee papers.

### 5.0 **Environmental Implications**

- 5.1 No Impact.

## **6.0** Town Plan Reference

- 6.1 To drive the council forward over the next 2 years, giving it a purpose: to improve and develop the future of the town, and being able to respond to societal changes, especially during the current climate, whereby we are encouraged to be neighbourly and support out local businesses whilst waiting for the current pandemic to run its course.

## **7.0** Recommendations

- 7.1 To discuss and agree to some the proposed amendments to the committee structure at para 3.1 to 3.6, to be implemented at the Annual Council Meeting in May 2021.
- 7.2 To discuss and agree to some amendments to committee composition at para 3.7
- 7.3 To discuss and agree to the streamlining and renaming of Working Parties at per para 3.8