



WORKING GROUPS

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

REPORT 20/20

9 MARCH 2020

The purpose of this Report is to update Members on the background to the Town Council's Working Groups and their understanding of their remit and areas of work.

No. DETAILS

1) BACKGROUND

- a) Working Groups – sometimes called Advisory Groups – are used widely by Town and Parish Councils: to take just three examples to illustrate their common features:
 - A Council can form committees with delegated powers for specific purposes; however these must adhere to the protocols for public attendance, minute-taking and notice of meetings that apply to the main Council...a Council can also appoint advisory groups which are exempt from these constraints to give flexibility, but these have no delegated powers and cannot make financial decisions. Such groups may contain members who are not councillors. [Grafham Parish Council]
 - In addition to Full Council and the Planning Committee, Cringleford Parish Council also has several Advisory Groups which meet regularly. These meetings are non-decision making and so not held in public.
 - The only committee that this Council have is the planning committee ... all others are working groups who meet to carry out the ground work for items and report back for full decisions to be made by the Council as a whole. [Clanfield Parish Council]
- b) The benefits of the Working Group arrangement include:
 - the combination of experience and expertise within the Council's Members and Staff for detailed consideration of the matters they take on;
 - the informal context that allows free ranging discussion and introduction of proposals and identification of problems;
 - the privacy that provides the space for challenge and constructive disagreement; and
 - the opportunity for Members to be at the centre of emerging policy and practice and for senior staff to share their thinking and planning directly with Members.
- c) The safeguard of formal governance compliance lies in their advisory nature: they have no delegated decision making powers and the outcomes of their work are recommendations to the meetings of the Full Council.

2) VENTNOR TOWN COUNCILS WORKING GROUPS

- a) The origins of the Town Council's two working groups lie in the appointment of two senior Members of staff in 2012: a Community Development Officer and an Economic Development Officer with the development of a Working Group for the area(s) of work of each.
- b) The Assets and Services Working Group began its work as the Public Buildings Working Group set up by the Town Council meeting of 20 May 2013 when, following a discussion of the risks of losing a range of the town's buildings as set out in Report 42/13, the meeting unanimously resolved that:
a Public Buildings Working Group be established of the Deputy Mayor and Councillors Jim Toogood, Stewart Blackmore, Tony Marvin and Brian Lucas to work with the Clerk in identifying proposals for the future of the town's public buildings as the basis for strategic recommendations to future Town Council meetings.
- c) Its first meeting took place on the 11 June 2013 with the Notes recording that: *David welcomed Members to the first meeting of the group and outlined the differences between a Town Council Committee and a Working Group.*
- d) The Group was, and has remained clear, that it does not have delegated powers and that its role is to be focused on developing proposals and reviewing the detail of projects as the basis for recommendations to the Town Council.

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- e) As the extent of that work extended through a combination of the potential opened up by the Localism Act 2011 - in the Community Right to Bid and the Community Right to Challenge - and the Isle of Wight Council's Budget cuts to services the town needed to retain, the Group adjusted its designation to reflect the widening of its activity and became the Assets and Services Group from its meeting of 23 May 2017.
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3) REMITS

- a) Councillor Ian Bond has requested that consideration be given to providing written descriptions of the Remits of both the current Working Groups to be available to the public through the Town Council's web site.
 - b) As informal groups with no delegated powers, Terms of Reference are not required and would carry the risk of unnecessarily restricting their discussions and recommendations.
 - c) However some of the Town and Parish Councils with Working/Advisory Groups do provide brief summaries of their area(s) of focus as their Remit.
 - d) The meeting of our Assets and Services Working Group on 3 March considered a draft for such a Remit prepared by me based on the other examples I have seen that is attached to this Report.
 - e) The Group are content to proceed on this basis and recommend the Town Council to approve it.
 - f) A matching draft will be presented for consideration by the next meeting of the Community Development Working Group.
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4) RECOMMENDATION

Members are recommended to:
agree the draft Remit for the Town Council's Assets and Services Working Group attached to this Report and ask the Clerk to prepare a matching document for its Community Development Working Group in discussion with that Group.



1) *ROLE*

The Assets & Services Working Group is one of two Advisory Groups established by the Town Council to review areas of its work and make recommendations to the full Town Council about the management and development of the activities within its remit

2) *MEMBERSHIP*

- i) Its Membership consists of Members appointed at each Annual Town Council Meeting and related senior staff.*
- ii) Membership can be amended at the Town Council's monthly meetings.*

3) *MEETINGS*

- i) The Group meets regularly at dates and times it agree and notifies to all Members.*
- ii) As the Group has no delegated powers, its meetings are not open to the public.*

4) *REMIT*

The Group's remit includes, but is not limited to, the physical assets for which the Town Council has freehold or leasehold responsibility – currently Salisbury Gardens, Ventnor Central, Boniface Fields, Car Parks and Public Toilets – and the legal and insurance responsibilities of the services the Town Council delivers.
