

Council reports May 2021

5.1 Council structure.

Introduction

It has been put forward to amend the Council structure in two areas – planning and the Community Sports Centre.

Planning

We currently have a Planning Advisory Group that reviews all planning applications in private and then makes a report with recommendations to Council for approval. The new Tunbridge Wells Agreement requires the Council to make a decision and forward consultee comments within 3 weeks, so the group meets twice per month and reports to Council.

We have had a number of comments where residents feel the Council is just signing off in public the private discussions. This lacks transparency and does not allow for residents to speak – for or against – a planning applications in the key meeting debating the merits of the planning application i.e. during the Planning Advisory Group meeting.

It has been suggested to remove the Planning Advisory Group and move to a Planning Committee with delegated authority to make planning recommendations to TWBC. It would need to meet every three weeks.

If adopted, the Planning Committee would make the planning recommendations and report to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council on behalf of the Council, rather than all Councillors voting at Council.

Equally it would reduce the time required for Council meetings, that have dragged on over the allotted 2 hours on a number of occasions.

The draft terms of reference is attached.

Alternatively, we could continue with the Planning Advisory Group.

Options to consider

1. Planning Advisory Group – stay as we are
2. Planning Committee – delegated authority to comment on planning applications

Community Sports Centre

Currently the Community Centre Working group meets regularly and includes co-opted representatives, it has driven the project forward to planning stage. Also the project has been split into sections / sub groups and they would report to the appropriate body on progress.

It has been suggested that the importance of the project requires a specific Committee focused on delivery. Note a Council Committee can include non Councillors such as representatives of HCT 2018 Trust.

Draft Terms of Reference is attached.

Alternatively, the sub groups could report to SAP or to the Council directly or to the Community Sports Centre Working Group

Options to consider

1. Retain Community Sports Centre Working Group and subgroups report directly to Working Group
2. Community Sports Centre Committee - subgroups report directly to new Committee
3. SAP take lead – subgroups report directly to SAP
4. Council take lead – subgroups report directly to Council

5.2 AGM – Cllr Escombe verbal update

5.3 Councillor Code of Conduct May 2021 - attached

The Council adopts the current NALC Councillor Code of Conduct, attached.

5.4 Hawkhurst Home Working Policy – attached

The past year has seen staff working from home and the attached is a proposed Home working policy.