

Background

1.

At its last meeting Council agreed the principle of instituting a committee structure for the new council year, and indicated its preference for a committee structure with four committees, including a planning committee.

2.

The general principles underpinning the proposed structures is that each committee, other than the Planning Committee, should have

- duties to scrutinize some area of the councils activities,
- delegated powers, to make decisions within clear boundaries, and
- the right to make policy suggestions to council which could be adopted after an appropriate resolution of council.

3.

During the discussion members indicated their concerns about the arrangements for the handling of complaints and grievances, and the arrangements for the management of the council's investments.

The difficulty with investigating grievances or complaints is that members of the Budget and Administration committee are most likely to be aware of the frameworks within which the council manages staffing issues and customer complaints; it therefore is reasonable to draw members who are to hear a complaint or grievance from that committee. Given council's previously expressed preference for committee membership of no more than nine, the appointment of more than three members to a sub committee to hear a grievance or complaint is likely to lead to difficulties with quorum.

Recommendations

It is therefore proposed that council adopt the proposed committee structure below, and recommend to annual council that it approve these terms of reference for its committees.

4. The Budget and Administration Committee will have

- i. A duty to scrutinize the management of the council's finances,
- ii. A duty to hear complaints from members of the public that the Proper Officer cannot resolve,
- iii. A duty to scrutinize the Correspondence Log,
- iv. A duty to scrutinize journal transactions and virements,
- v. A power to determine and approve the investment of reserves within the existing policy determined by council,

vi. A power to consider which complaints or grievances should be considered by a sub-committee of three or more councillors, and

vii. A power to nominate which councillors should consider a complaint or grievance.

5. The Local Services Committee will have

i. A duty to scrutinize the performance of environmental services work funded by the council,

ii. A duty to scrutinize the maintenance of play parks and other facilities funded by the council,

iii. A duty to scrutinize the provision of allotments,

iv. A power to propose new play parks, allotments or other environmental facilities for consideration by council,

v. A power to propose actions or policies designed to foster the regeneration of, or economic growth of, Berwick, and

vi. Within existing budgets, a power to spend or grant such moneys as may be allocated for the purposes outlined above.

6. The People and Communities Committee will have

i. A power to make grants, within existing budgets and grant schemes, to organizations benefitting Berwick,

ii. A power to propose changes to any scheme of grants or grant awarding criteria, subject to the approval of council,

iii. A power to make grants to enable events that benefit the people of Berwick, from a list of events approved by council and within existing budget provision, and

iv. A power to make proposals to Council as to the organization and promotion of events that benefit Berwick.

7. The Planning Committee will have

i. A power to consider and make decisions as to the council's response to development proposals in Berwick upon Tweed,

ii. A power to consider and make decisions on matters analogous to development control, such as tree preservation orders and rights of way issues, and

iii. A power to consider and make recommendations as to planning policy.