

Part 3 – Responsibility for Functions

Committee Structure

1.01 The Council has established the following committees and panels to discharge its functions.

- a. Allotment and Environment Committee
- b. Community Committee
- c. General Appeals Panel
- d. Disciplinary and Grievance Panel
- e. Policy and Resources Committee

Allotments and Environment Committee

Purpose

The Allotment and Environment Committee is established to oversee the management and development of the town's allotments and to drive environmental initiatives that enhance the sustainability and visual appeal of the town. The committee will work collaboratively with tenants, community groups, and stakeholders to promote best practices in allotment management and environmental stewardship.

Structure & Meetings

- The Allotments and Environment Committee shall be comprised of six Members to be appointed at the Annual Meeting, or when a vacancy arises.
- The Chair will be appointed at the Annual Meeting.
- The meeting schedule will be set at the Annual Council Meeting.
- For the meeting to be quorate three members must be in attendance.
- The Town Clerk shall serve as an advisor and provide administrative support, either in person or via one of the office team.
- Non-voting representatives from allotment associations or local environmental groups may be invited to contribute expertise.
- The committee will develop an Allotment and Environment Strategy and action plan for service delivery.

Functions

Allotments

- To exercise the powers and duties of the Council in relation to the maintenance and usage of the Council's allotments.
- To take steps for the provision of allotments within the Bishop Auckland Town Council area and to undertake the management, regulation and control of any allotments so provided.
- To advise and make recommendations to the Council on any matters affecting the allotment service.
- To manage the Allotment and Environment budget, as set by the Town Council, and will provide regular updates on spend to the Policy and Resources Committee and Full Council.
- To assist with the setting of the annual allotment rent charges and discretionary charges such as the Water and Maintenance charge.
- To consider and make decisions on any matters affecting the allotments with the exception of items clearly excluded under Delegated Authority.
- Promote allotments as a means of sustainable food production, community engagement, and well-being, as well as encouraging best practices in cultivation and land management.

- To work with the Allotment Tenants to provide a well-managed and cost-effective service to allotment users, people on the waiting list and all residents of the Town.
- To carry out regular inspections of the allotments, in collaboration with the Allotments Officer.
- To consider cases where tenancy agreements, policies or rules are not being observed and support of the committee is needed to follow the enforcement procedure for non-compliance.

Environment

- To consider environmental issues affecting Bishop Auckland.
- To identify with a view to develop and implement environmental improvement projects that contribute to the town's sustainability, biodiversity, and green spaces.
- To advise on the Council public planting works across the town, including the hanging baskets and planters in the Town Centre, and the flower beds on Bob Hardisty Drive.
- To work with the Policy and Resources committee to look how the council can reduce the consumption of energy, water and CO2 across all council activities.
- Identify opportunities for funding, grants, and partnerships with external organisations to support environmental initiatives
- To facilitate community involvement in environmental activities, including tree planting, wildlife conservation, and green infrastructure improvements.
- To represent the Council on local environmental groups such as Green Matters, River Wears Trust and the Bishop Auckland In Bloom, and work with them in collaboration to improve the public spaces within the town, and report back to the Town Council on partnership Activity.

Reporting and Accountability

The Committee will report regularly to the Town Council, providing updates on progress, challenges, and recommendations for future action. Decisions requiring financial expenditure outside of the approved Allotment and Environment Budget or policy changes will require Full Council approval.

Review

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed **annually** to ensure they remain fit for purpose and align with the evolving needs of the town.

Community Committee

Purpose

The Community Committee is established to oversee and enhance engagement across the Town Council area. Its role is to support community development, ensure inclusivity, and promote the well-being and safety of residents. The Committee will work collaboratively with local organisations, service providers, and residents to strengthen community ties and deliver impactful initiatives. The Committee will oversee the events programme of the council.

Structure & Meetings

- The Committee shall be comprised of five Members to be appointed at the Annual Meeting, or when a vacancy arises.
- The Chair will be appointed at the Annual Meeting.
- The meeting schedule will be set at the Annual Council Meeting.
- For the meeting to be quorate three members must be in attendance.
- Representatives from relevant community organisations may be invited to contribute expertise.
- The Town Clerk or designated officer shall support the Committee administratively.
- The committee will develop an Community strategy and action plan for service delivery.

Functions

The Committee will:

Community Support

- To oversee the delivery of wider community support via the utilisation of Town Council buildings and assets. Such as venue provision for Citizens Advice Services and other community services.
- Manage the Community Support budget as set by Town Council for ensuring key community organisations are supported throughout the Town and the vital services they provide are protected. Regular spending reports will be provided to the Policy and Resources Committee and Full Council.
- Appraise applications to the Council's Community Fund, and make recommendations to full council for award quarterly.
- Champion initiatives for the elderly and vulnerable, ensuring access to support networks, social inclusion programs, and well-being initiatives.
- Support services for young people, including youth engagement programs, leisure activities, and partnerships with schools and youth organisations.

Community Engagement

- Work to enhance community engagement by fostering participation in local decision-making, volunteer opportunities, and neighbourhood initiatives. The Committee will look to have a representative on the local networks, and specialised community liaison groups where possible.
- The Committee will work with a range of public sector and community partners to understand residents' and organisations' opinions and expectations of Bishop Auckland Town Council, their needs and the needs of the wider town.
- To oversee communications plans, which encourages two-way communication with residents and organisations. Communication may include, but is not limited to, public meetings, business forums, notice boards, newsletters, electronic technology such as social media, councillor surgeries, resident surveys, etc.
- Identify funding opportunities, grants, and sponsorships to support community support.
- Maintain strong relationships with local stakeholders to ensure coordinated efforts in addressing community needs.
- Provide recommendations to the Town Council on policies, strategies, and initiatives that enhance local engagement and development.

Community Safety

- Promote community safety, working alongside law enforcement, emergency services, and residents to address concerns, improve public spaces, and encourage safety awareness campaigns.

Events

- Oversee the planning and delivery of inclusive local events, including civic celebrations, cultural activities, and seasonal festivals that bring the community together. These include:
 - Annual Town Council Youth Awards
 - Annual Remembrance Day Parade
 - Annual Christmas Festivities
 - Annual Heritage Festival
 - Centenary celebrations or significant event celebrations such as Jubilees, Anniversaries etc.
- Oversee the annual event/ engagement budget as set by the Town Council, and will provide regular updates on spend to the Policy and Resources Committee and Full Council.
- Liaise with the organisers of other events that the Town Council are involved with to ensure effectiveness of the in terms local community benefit, including:
 - Bishop Auckland Food Festival
 - Christmas Town

- Identify funding opportunities, grants, and sponsorships to support community events.
- Maintain strong relationships with local stakeholders to ensure coordinated efforts in developing community events.

Reporting and Accountability

The Committee will report regularly to the Town Council, providing updates on progress, challenges, and recommendations for future action. Decisions requiring financial expenditure outside of the approved Events & Community Support budget or policy changes will require Full Council approval.

Review

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually to ensure they remain fit for purpose and align with the evolving needs of the town.

Disciplinary and Grievance Appeals Panel

Purpose

The Disciplinary and Grievance Appeals Panel is established to review appeals relating to disciplinary actions or grievance outcomes within the Town Council. The Panel ensures that appeals are handled fairly, impartially, and in accordance with legal and procedural requirements.

Structure of Panel & Meetings

- The Disciplinary and Grievance Appeals Panel shall be comprised of three Members to be appointed at the Annual Meeting, or when a vacancy arises.
- The Chair will be appointed from among Panel members. In this instance the Chair will not have an additional casting vote.
- For the panel to be quorate full attendance of all three members is required.
- Members cannot sit on both the Human Resources Committee and the Disciplinary and Grievance Appeals Sub-Committee to ensure impartiality.
- The Town Clerk or an appropriate officer may attend to provide administrative support but will not have voting rights.

Functions

The Panel will:

- Hear appeals from employees or individuals affected by disciplinary decisions or grievance resolutions.
- Review the basis of the appeal, including procedural fairness and adherence to council policies.
- Consider representations from all relevant parties involved in the appeal.
- Assess whether the original decision was appropriate based on the evidence and council regulations.
- Provide a recommendation or ruling on the appeal, ensuring fairness and compliance with employment law and council procedures.
- Maintain confidentiality and professionalism throughout the appeals process.
- Advise the Town Council on potential improvements to disciplinary or grievance procedures if required.

Reporting and Accountability

The Committee will report regularly to the Town Council, providing updates on progress, challenges, and recommendations for future action. Decisions requiring financial expenditure or policy changes will require Full Council approval.

Review

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually to ensure they remain fit for purpose and align with the evolving needs of the town.

General Appeals Panel

The Panel will consider those matters referred to it for final determination in accordance with the Council's published compliments and complaints procedure, and other matters such as bans on individuals accessing council facilities or disputes of interpretation of allotment tenancy rules and regulations.

Structure of Panel & Meetings

- The Panel will consist of three Councillors Members to be appointed from all members when a panel is necessary.
- The Chair will be appointed from among Panel members. In this instance the Chair will not have an additional casting vote.
- For the panel to be quorate full attendance of all three members is required.
- No Member should be involved in the decision which is the subject of the appeal, i.e. if the matter is relating to Allotment Tenancies, none of the Members of the Allotment and Environment Committee be on the panel to ensure impartiality.
- The Town Clerk or an appropriate officer may attend to provide administrative support but will not have voting rights.

Functions

- The Panel is **not** authorised to:
 - Consider any matter which represents a challenge to, or complaint about a policy or policy decision of the Council.
 - Deal with any matters within the remit of the Disciplinary and Grievance Appeals Panel
- The panel will consider the evidence, based upon the criteria as set in the Council's Compliments and Complaints Procedure.
- They will deal with stage two complaints only.
- The panel will discuss the complaint, and will confirm in writing to the complainant the decision together with any action to be taken within 7 working days of the panel meeting. the decision of the General Appeals Panel will be final.
- There is no further right of appeal. The outcome of the panel will be reported to the next Town Council meeting.

Reporting and Accountability

The Committee will report regularly to the Town Council, providing updates on progress, challenges, and recommendations for future action. Decisions requiring financial expenditure or policy changes will require Full council Approval.

Review

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually to ensure they remain fit for purpose and align with the evolving needs of the town.

Policy and Resources Committee

Purpose

The Policy and Resources Committee is established to oversee the financial management, strategic planning, and resource allocation of the Town Council. The Committee ensures robust governance in key areas including finance, IT, audit, asset management, HR, policies, performance management, corporate responsibilities, administration and planning, supporting the effective operation and long-term sustainability of the council.

Structure of committee and Meetings

- The Committee shall be comprised of six Members to be appointed at the Annual Meeting, or when a vacancy arises.
- The Chair will be appointed at the Annual Meeting.
- For the meeting to be quorate there must be three members in attendance.
- The meeting schedule will be set at the Annual Council Meeting.
- Representatives from relevant organisations may be invited to contribute expertise.
- The Town Clerk or designated officer shall support the Committee administratively.

Functions

The Committee will:

Finance

- To make recommendations to the Council on the annual financial estimates and the Council's precept as to how these should be determined consistently with the Council's general priorities and policies.
- To formulate and present to the Council recommendations for annual expenditure.
- To supervise the Council's Accounts.
- To supervise and control borrowing by the Council and the investment of funds within the Council's control.
- To make recommendations to the Council on the capital programme, its content, phasing and monitoring.
- To execute and carry out, in the name and on behalf of the Council, all resolutions and instructions from time to time given with reference to finances and accounts.
- To examine from time to time the various bonds, securities and deeds relating to the offices and property of the Council.
- To have the direction and control of insurance in respect of the Council's property, members, and employees.
- To provide efficient financial services and advice for the benefit of the Council.

- To determine the making to individuals and organisations of grants, allowances and loans.
- To regularly review the Council's treasury management activities.

Audit

- To ensure that the Council's resources are safeguarded and that value for money is secured.
- To undertake and make the appropriate recommendations on the following matters:
 - A systematic appraisal of internal controls.
 - The review of financial procedures.
 - The development of an anti-fraud culture.
 - The agreement of audit plans.
 - The monitoring of audit delivery.
 - The securing of auditor / officer collaboration within agreed timescales.
 - The securing of timely preparation and response to audit reports.
 - The monitoring of the finalisation of annual accounts.
 - Ensuring the implementation of audit recommendations.
- To receive reports and recommendations from the Council's Internal and External Auditors and to make the appropriate recommendations to Council.
- To review the Council's Risk Management Strategy and quarterly updates of the corporate risk register.

Asset Management

- To recommend on the acquisition, use and disposal of land.
- To determine overall strategic asset management priorities on a medium-term basis by maintaining the asset management plan.
- To monitor and oversee the management of the Council Building, Kingsway Court, including compliance with legal requirements such as legionella testing etc.

HR

- Workforce planning - to establish a staffing structure, which will be effective for the needs of the business and keep this under review.
- To implement, monitor and review HR policies and procedures for staff.
- To oversee the recruitment process of staff:
 - The appointment of the Town Clerk will be on a recommendation of the Committee to be presented to full Town Council for approval.
 - Other Staff will be interviewed and appointed by the Clerk with the Mayor or one other member of the Human Resources Committee.

- To keep under review staff working conditions and health and safety, particularly in relation to changes to employment and health and safety legislation.
- To consider any health and safety or staff wellbeing matters brought to the committee's attention.
- To establish and review performance management including appraisals: The Town Clerks will be undertaken by the Mayor and Chair Policy and Resources Committee and Staff appraisals will be undertaken by Town Clerk.
- To ensure that learning and development is continued for staff.

I.T.

- To oversee, Review and approve IT infrastructure, cybersecurity measures, and digital transformation initiatives to enhance operational efficiency.

Performance Monitoring

- To make recommendations to the Council where appropriate in regard to targets and monitor performance against those targets reported from time to time and as directed by the Council.

Policies

- To ensure the Council's strategies, policies and procedures are undertaken in accordance with statutory and legislative requirements.
- To keep under review the policies and resources of the Council in relation to all services and to advise the Council on the future development of existing or the introduction of new services.
- To make recommendations to the Council on matters which, notwithstanding that they fall within the powers and duties of one or more other committees, are concerned with new or unformulated policy or the utilisation of resources related to policy.
- To consider and report to the Council upon all resolutions relating to Parliamentary matters and those resolutions passed by other local authorities and bodies and forwarded to the Council for consideration save where these are specifically assigned to other committees.
- To establish and foster civic relationships with such bodies or organisations as the Council may authorise.

Corporate

- To deal with all electoral matters affecting the Council.
- To make recommendations to the Council on all matters affecting the boundaries of the Council's area, and its wards.

- To advise the Council on matters of policy associated with the formulation and implementation of any Structure Plan, or Local Plan relating to the area of Bishop Auckland Town Council.
- To consider and make recommendations to the Council on any policy documents received from other organisations and affecting the area.
- To advise the Council as required on all matters affecting its Constitution and the procedures applying to the Council and its Committees.

Administration

- To maintain a continuous general oversight of the Council's administration.
- To deal with matters relating to the administration of the Council Offices.
- To deal with matters associated with the Coat of Arms.

Planning

- To respond to planning applications where the Council is consulted.
- To respond on behalf of the Council to Durham County Council in relation to planning applications.

N.B. All members of the Council will be sent information as to the planning applications which would be considered at each meeting of the Committee in order that they may, if they wish attend the Committee. Where necessary, because of timescale, the Town Clerk is authorised to respond on behalf of the Council provided that he has consulted with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee. All Members will receive details of planning applications which are dealt with under this delegation and may make comments.

Reporting and Accountability

The Committee will report regularly to the Town Council, providing updates on progress, challenges, and recommendations for future action. Decisions requiring financial expenditure or policy changes will require Full Council approval.

Review

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually to ensure they remain fit for purpose and align with the evolving needs of the town.