

SECTION 1A - To be filled in by submitter of the Motion:

Report from	Town Clerk
On behalf of	N/A
Date	18 th May 2023
For Meeting of Council/Committee	Full Council
Date of meeting	23 rd May 2023.
Agenda item no.	41/23-24(3)
Confidentiality	N/A
TITLE OF MOTION	COMMITTEES 3) To review the Committees' Terms of Reference and decide on Committee meeting frequency
MOTION(S)	Relevant sections highlighted in below: To review the Committees' Terms of Reference and decide on Committee meeting frequency; (a) Finance and Governance Committee. Proposed; monthly, conform '22-'23. Proposed to change quorum from 4 to 3 – see Motion Paper for details of this proposal. (b) Planning Committee: Proposed; monthly, conform '22-'23. (c) Personnel Committee; Proposed; quarterly, conform '22-'23. (d) Events and Markets Committee: Proposed to change frequency of meetings from every other month to quarterly – see Motion Paper for details of this proposal.
Background	A new meeting schedule has been prepared for the '23-'24 Civic Year (covered under item 44/22-23 on the same meeting agenda). This meeting schedule is, to an important part, based on the experience from the preceding year. Improvements to the schedule are being proposed here, which should benefit the Town Council by reducing overall costs and staff time resources, and should allow for more efficient Council decision-making processes.
Issues/items for consideration by the Council	The following two changes are being proposed. 1. To reduce the quorum from 4 to (the legal minimum of) 3 Members for the Finance and Governance Committee meetings. This for the following principal reasons: - Despite multiple formal calls throughout the year for more Councillors to join this Committee, the seats available (8) have never been filled. - The current low number of 6 Members has caused for the committee meetings to be cancelled in advance as it would otherwise not be quorate (x1 in '22-'23), or turning not becoming quorate on the meeting day (x2 in '22-'23). A lower quorum would have probably prevented these issues materialising. - As a result of meetings not taking place due to not being quorate, time-limited and legal duties linked to finance processing tend to create significant additional work for the RFO to reschedule or allow for alternative payment systems; avoiding this by a lower quorum would reduce staffing time needs and thus Council costs overall.

	<p>NB: As the Council has stringent inter-related financial checks in place, a lower quorum should not make any difference on financial risks.</p> <p>2. To change the frequency of meetings of the Events and Markets Committee from every other month to quarterly.</p> <p>This for the following principal reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In '22-'23 in total 7 meetings had been planned, as one (in June) had already been scheduled in previously. - Although this committee met in reality 6 times in '22-'23, it had nevertheless seen various challenges: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Only 4 meetings were held on those days they had been scheduled in. - Two of the scheduled meetings turned out to be not-quorate on the day. - A fifth meeting had to be postponed, as Working Groups preparing motions declared needing more time in between scheduled meetings to get their information together. - A sixth meeting was scheduled in as an extraordinary meeting, as the Working Group who asked for this extra meeting declared not having had enough time to prepare their motions for the scheduled meeting that took place just a few weeks before. - Throughout '22-'23 for every meeting the majority of motions prepared by Working Groups reporting to this committee were presented to the Clerk very close to (or after) the deadline given, often as a result of Working Groups needing a significant amount of time to research, discuss and other work to compile their paperwork & motions – by reducing the meeting frequency the need for Working Groups to have more time to do preparatory work in between meetings should significant benefit this committee and improve the quality of the motion papers to be produced for decision-making at the committee meetings.
Recommendations	<p>It is recommended that the Town Council approves these changes, to ensure:</p> <p>For both Committees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A higher percentage of meetings being quorate; - Reducing the need for significant additional staffing and Councillor time resources in rescheduling and re-administration of meetings where these become inquorate; <p>For the Finance and Governance Committee, in addition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To ensure that the chance of key risks materialising related to legal duties for the Town Council such as paying staff on time or paying for key services can be reduced. <p>For the Events and Markets Committee, in addition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To ensure that the various Working Groups reporting to the committee where the majority of motions originate from have more time to meet and prepare their motions adequately in between scheduled meetings. - To reduce the likelihood of meetings needing to be postponed (which proves to be very difficult in an otherwise already crowded meeting schedule) or additional meetings being called for as a result of the normal meeting frequency not allowing sufficient time to prepare motions – both would make a positive impact also on staff resources not being used unnecessarily.
Appendices	N/A
Documents:	N/A

SECTION 1B - To be filled in by submitter of the Motion:

Input needed from Clerk?	N/A
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PLEASE NOTE: Agenda item requests: in order to be considered for inclusion on the agenda, motions with all associated papers *must* be received by the Clerk in a final format at least 7 clear daysⁱ before the meeting at which you would like your item to be considered – if any input is required from the Clerk please provide sufficient additional time for the Clerk to schedule in for any feedback and/or additional research that may be required.

SECTION 2 - To be filled in by the Clerk:

Meets/links with Council objectives:	Council Efficiency	
Staffing Implications: ⁱⁱ	YES – both would reduce staffing resource demands – see above for details	√
Volunteer need implications:	N/A	
Equalities & Human Rights ⁱⁱⁱ	There are no equalities and human rights issues Details, where relevant: N/A	
Crime and Disorder ^{iv}	Crime and disorder have been considered Details, where relevant: N/A	
Biodiversity ^v	There are no (negative) bio-diversity implications Details, where relevant: N/A	
Sustainability	Is in line with the Council’s Plastic-Free Pledge - N/A	
Financial ^{vi}	There are no financial implications at this stage	
	There will be financial implications; Details: YES: reductions in room hire costs and reductions in staff time needs – see details above	√
	There is provision within the budget Budget heading & details: N/A	
	Decisions may give rise to additional expenditure; Details: N/A	
	Decisions may have potential for income generation; Details: N/A	
Other Resource implications (besides finance):	Details: YES – Both proposals will allow making better use of scarce Councillor time input into motion development and meeting attendance	√
Health and Safety implications ^{vii}	Details: N/A	
Legal	Power under which the spend can be actioned: ^{viii} N/A	
	GDPR - Data Privacy Impact Assessment: ^{ix} Details, where relevant: N/A	
	Other considerations: N/A	
Risk Management	Material risks ^x exist and these are considered and being assessed: Details: N/A	
Other Considerations:	N/A	

ⁱ Northstowe Town Council’s [Standing Order 9 b,d](#).

ⁱⁱ The Council has a legal duty to ensure it looks after employees’ health and wellbeing (the Health and Safety at Work etc act 1974).

ⁱⁱⁱ The key legislation regarding unlawful discrimination is the Equality Act 2010, which amongst other requires the Council to monitor for compliance with the Equality Duty.

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- ^{iv} The Council has a legal duty to act with due regards to crime and disorder in the area (Crime and Disorder Act 1998, s17).
- ^v The Council has a legal duty to have regard to conserving biodiversity (Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, s40).
- ^{vi} It is the RFO's duty to manage financial risks on behalf of the Council, as described in the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, reg 4.
- ^{vii} See also Town Council's [Health and Safety Policy](#).
- ^{viii} See here for an [Overview of relevant discretionary powers](#) beyond the General Power of Competence.
- ^{ix} See also the Town Council's [Data Protection Policy](#).
- ^x See Town Council's [Risk Management Plan](#).