

CLIMATE, BIODIVERSITY & PLANNING COMMITTEE

Date: Tuesday, 13 June 2023

Title: Committee Terms of Reference

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk - Adam Clapton

Purpose of the Report

To resolve whether the current terms of reference for this town council committee should remain as they are or be updated.

Background

The terms of reference set out the remit of the Committee and are closely tied to its visions and objectives. They are reviewed annually in May (or at any other point as requested) and help structure the Council's democratic process regarding day-to-day matters which require a Council resolution or longer-term projects and aspirations.

Current Situation

The current terms of reference for the Climate, Biodiversity & Planning Committee are:

Planning & Development

- a) To receive planning applications and to comment on them in the name of the Council within the time limit set by statute.
The Committee may decide, where time for consultation allows, to make a recommendation to the Council on any application considered to have a major impact on the Town.
- b) To consider any planning decisions, appeals, Planning Briefs and Tree Preservation orders, and recommend, if appropriate, any views that should be expressed by the Council, or any action that should be taken, in respect of these.
- c) To consider, and submit appropriate representations on behalf of the Council, applications in respect of Justices, Gaming and Public Entertainment Licences.
- d) To consider, and submit appropriate representations on behalf of the Council, in respect of consultations relevant to the sphere of Planning and Development.
- e) To consider the impact on the environment of all planning applications and comment in the name of the Council accordingly (within statutory consultee guidelines).
- f) To promote sustainable and active travel in the future planning of the town.

Climate & Biodiversity (Environment)

- g) To work to achieve net zero emissions in WTC vehicles, heating and electricity (scopes 1 and 2) by 2028, in line with the Council's Climate Emergency resolution made in June 2019. To identify ways for event's organisers to reduce the carbon footprint of events held on council ground. Any financial or policy change implications should be recommended to the Council.

- h) To manage the Council's Environmental Spaces, including Amenity Areas, Witney Lake and Country Park and Tiny Forest (except recreation grounds). Any financial or policy change implications should be recommended to the Council.
- i) To oversee the management of the Council's tree stock across the town.
- j) To engage with Central Government, West Oxfordshire District Council, Oxfordshire County Council, relevant stake holders and other organisations to initiate local action on climate change (towards achieving net zero carbon emissions) and environmental issues within the town.
- k) To encourage biodiversity and healthy recreation in the environmental spaces.
- l) To explore the expansion of community energy to keep the benefits of our local energy generation in our local economy.

General

- m) The Membership of the Committee shall consist of 6 Members plus the Town Mayor and the Leader of the Council ex officio with voting rights.
- n) The quorum of the committee shall be 4 members.

It should be noted that any Sub-Committees or Working Parties which may be created and are responsible to this Committee will have their own terms of reference presented at their first meeting.

New Councillors may like to refer to the Committee Structure provided in their induction packs for information relating to this and the other Committees of the Council.

The administration of trees has previously provided some confusion, with this Committee historically dealing with the new tree additions and planting to the tree stock with the Stronger Communities Committee dealing with existing tree issues. For the avoidance of doubt, it is recommended that all tree enquiries are dealt with by this Committee (i).

Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency, Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

Financial implications

There are no financial implications pertaining to the report. The budgets for each of the areas listed in the terms are covered in cost codes and centres in the accompanying report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO).

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following:

1. To amend or agree the Committee Terms of Reference if agreed appropriate.