

POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Date: Monday 27 January 2019

Title: Annual Town Meeting Format

Contact Officer: Democratic Services Officer – Nicky Cayley

BACKGROUND

The Annual Town Meeting, the holding of which is a statutory requirement, will be held in the Corn Exchange on Wednesday 11 March 2020. THIS IS NOT A TOWN COUNCIL MEETING. The format of this meeting remains the same, due to the fact that it is principally a meeting for local electors to meet any Town Councillors who may be present to discuss parish affairs.

Thames Valley Police participate in the meeting by giving a short presentation on the Neighbourhood Policing in Witney and answer local electors' questions, which has proved useful. The Town Clerk has already brought the meeting to the attention of the TVP. An invitation will also be extended to Witney District and County Councillors to attend.

It is customary for Chairmen of Committees to compile and present a report at the Annual Town Meeting giving details of the work of their Committee over the preceding year. The Town Clerk presumes that this practice will continue.

It is a statutory requirement to advertise the meeting in a local newspaper. In addition to this it will be advertised via the Town Council's website and social media, notices displayed on public noticeboards and distributed to Councillors to display as appropriate, in the Witney Library and West Oxfordshire District Council Town Centre Shop, and entry in the 'Witney Advertiser' and inclusion in the 'What's On' section on BBC Radio Oxford.

Refreshments

In the past the Council has offered tea, coffee and biscuits, both occasions the Burwell Meadow Gardening Group and the Oxlease Meadow Park Group took the opportunity to use it as a fundraiser by selling cakes (with the Council providing the ingredients for the tea/coffee)– Members are asked to give consideration to offering this opportunity to a community group again. Refreshments will be offered from 6:45pm for a 7:30pm prompt start.

Opportunity to engage with and seek public opinion on services?

This is a statutory meeting and therefore there is a set agenda for the official part of the meeting. But it shouldn't be a missed opportunity to engage with the electors. For the last

two years, following the meeting, tables were set aside representing the Council's Committees so that the residents could engage with Councillors. Members are invited to consider what, if any, 'part 2' of the evening's proceedings should be.

Members are also asked to note that the Policy, Resources and Governance Committee of 25 November 2019 recommended that both Anti-Social Behaviour and the Climate Emergency should be central topics for this year's meeting. Members are asked to give consideration to how they wish to present these items.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind 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 is a charge for advertising the Annual Town Meeting, but unfortunately this is a statutory requirement. If Members wish to offer refreshments there may be a cost to provide this (as well as a resource implication for a member of staff to be in attendance to serve refreshments if a community group isn't secured).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is requested to make its recommendations on the format for this year's Annual Town Meeting, namely:

1. Should District and County Councillors be invited to attend and participate in the meeting?
2. Will reports be compiled by Committee Chairmen or one report by the Mayor for presentation at the meeting?
3. Does the Committee have any further suggestions for advertising the meeting?
4. Does the Committee confirm the attendance of Thames Valley Police to participate in this year's meeting?
5. How would the Committee like to present items on Anti-Social Behaviour and the Climate Emergency?
6. Suggestions to seek public opinion on Council run services or a 'part 2' to the evenings proceedings;
7. Should refreshments be offered?