

Committee	FULL COUNCIL
Date	15 February 2021
Agenda Item	12

To consider the Committee Structure at Halstead Town Council

At the interim audit carried out on 12 January 2021, our internal auditor pointed out that committee meetings held within the Full Council meeting, and attended by all councillors, were not actually functioning as committees, and could not be managed by separate Chairmen. This applies to the Planning and Finance sections of our current meetings.

At the Full Council meeting in January 2011, a decision was taken to review the structure for Council business. Before that date there had been Full Council meetings, an Amenities Committee, and the Finance and General purposes committee. These 3 types of meetings would have been held on different dates, and each would have had their separate Agenda and Minutes. Councillors serving on the council at that time have confirmed that this resulted in a lot of evening meetings and a lot of duplication. The change to subsuming Finance and Planning within Full Council meetings meant that they were no longer committees in their own right, but gave all councillors an equal voice on each proposal.

In May 2011 the words “ Planning Committee” appeared, and in May 2016 a “ Finance Committee” appeared in the Minutes of the Annual Town Council meetings. Neither of these were actually committees, because they did not have separately posted Agendas, meetings were not held separately with some but not all councillors, and there were no separate minutes. In the Minutes of our Full Council meetings, these sections now appear as Planning Applications, and Finance.

Our auditor has stated that there is nothing wrong in what we are doing and that business is being properly conducted, but that we cannot call the planning and finance parts of the meetings committees, unless we want to have 3 separate meetings. If they were committees, some councillors would have to be excluded from each.

To resolve this procedural dilemma, I would suggest that we retain the current system, which is efficient, and allows everyone a voice on all matters. The change we would need to make is to just call these parts of the Full Council meeting, Planning and Finance, and remove the word committee. Those who manage those parts of the meeting could be called Representative/Member in charge of and Deputy Representative/Member in charge of Planning or Finance. When a vote is called it would have to be the Chairman of the Council who calls for the vote, but all other parts of that section can be managed by the Member for planning or finance.

Recommendation : that HTC agrees to retain Planning and Finance as part of the Full Council meeting, led by a Representative .and Deputy Representative.



Sarah Greatorex Town Clerk