



# COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Council name	<b>COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL</b>
Name and date of Committee	<b>ANNUAL COUNCIL - 3 JUNE 2020</b>
Report Number	<b>AGENDA ITEM (9)</b>
Subject	<b>APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES</b>
Wards affected	None specifically
Accountable members	Council
Accountable officer	Nigel Adams, Head of Paid Service Tel: 01285 623202 Email: nigel.adams@cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To consider changes to committee appointments and related arrangements proposed by the Administration.
Annexes	None
Recommendation/s	<i>(a) That the Council considers the proposed changes, and makes decisions thereon;</i> <i>(b) that, if changes to the appointment of Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs are agreed, appointments be made to those roles;</i> <i>(c) that the Constitution be amended to reflect any changes made.</i>
Corporate priorities	None specific
Key Decision	Not applicable - the matter is reserved to the Council
Exempt	No
Consultees/ Consultation	None

## **1. BACKGROUND**

### **Committee Appointments**

- 1.1. At its Annual Meeting, the Council is requested to make allocations/appointments to the Committees of the Council; and this item provides an opportunity for any changes to be made that the Council considers appropriate.
- 1.2. The current structure comprises:-
  - Planning and Licensing Committee - 15 members;
  - Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 8 members;
  - Audit Committee - 5 members.
- 1.3. There is also an Appeals Committee, which largely deals with objections to Tree Preservation Orders, but its membership (3 no.) is selected at any time of need for the Committee to meet.
- 1.4. The Administration has indicated that it wishes to amend Committee numbers for the coming year, as follows:-
  - Planning and Licensing Committee - 11 members;
  - Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 10 members;
  - Audit Committee - 7 members.
- 1.5. In summary, membership of the Planning and Licensing Committee will be reduced by four; and membership of the two other committees will each be increased by two.
- 1.6. The reasons for the proposed changes are as follows:-
  - Reducing the size of the Planning and Licensing Committee would enable business to be dealt with more efficiently. Given the reduction of the size of the Council by ten members in 2015 without any consequent change in the size of the Committee, the Administration believes this change is overdue.
  - By increasing the size of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Audit Committee, more Members will be involved in the important work these committees do scrutinising the Council's policies, decisions and finances. This should enable those committees to carry out more pro-active work.
  - From a democracy/governance perspective, a desire not to reduce the overall number of available places, either generally or to the political groups and non-aligned members.

### **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

- 1.7. Given the proposed increase in the membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and its intended role, the Administration proposes that a Vice-Chair be appointed. The Administration has indicated that its position that the Chair should be nominated by the Conservative Group remains unchanged and that it intends to nominate a Vice-Chair from the Liberal Democrat Group.

## **Cabinet**

- 1.8.** Membership of the Cabinet is within the gift of the Council Leader. Whilst this does not impact directly on the committee structure itself, there are associated committee membership restrictions - in that Cabinet Members cannot serve on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or the Audit Committee. The Leader has indicated that he intends to reduce the size of the Cabinet to eight for 2020/21.

## **Committee Chair and Vice-Chair Appointments**

- 1.9.** The Constitution currently provides that 'every Committee (with the exception of the Cabinet) at its first meeting in every year must, as its first item of business, elect a Chair and, unless otherwise agreed, appoint a Vice-Chair'.
- 1.10.** It has become custom and practice for each Committee to meet in turn at the conclusion of the Annual Council Meeting to make their respective Chair and/or Vice-Chair appointments - and agendas are included within the circulated papers attached for this purpose. However, the operation of a virtual meeting, adds complexities to dealing with three separate short meetings (each with different memberships) after the Council business.
- 1.11.** An alternative way forward would be for such appointments to be held over to the first business meetings of the respective Committees. The down-side to this is that the office holders will not be in place immediately; and will therefore not be known in time for any operational briefing held in advance of the first formal meetings.
- 1.12.** A further option would be to amend the Constitution so that the Council appoints the Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs, thereby removing the need to have the separate short Committee meetings after the Annual Council. This approach is adopted by other Councils.
- 1.13.** In practice, these appointments are agreed by the political groups in readiness for the Annual Council Meeting. Any contests can be dealt with by the Council, and as Committee memberships reflect the overall make-up of the Council, the same outcome(s) would be expected.
- 1.14.** In this way, the Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs will be known to everyone from the Annual Meeting; they can start working together straight away (particularly important where there is a change and in the case of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the event of there being a new Vice-Chair); and the Special Responsibility Allowances will all change on the same date (or be continuous where there is no change).
- 1.15.** This option is commended by the Administration.
- 1.16.** An initial Meeting of the Cabinet is not required in any event, as the Constitution provides that, by virtue of office, the Leader of the Council is automatically the Chair of the Cabinet.

## **2. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 2.1.** The appointment of a Vice-Chair for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would lead to an additional Special Responsibility Allowance, in a sum of £2,500 per annum.

- 2.2.** This increased cost can be accommodated within the existing Members' Allowances budget due to the saving of £7,500 in allowances due to the reduction in the number of Cabinet Members.

**3. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1.** It is within the Council's gift to appoint such committees as are considered necessary to carry out the business of the Council; and to determine the numbers on those committees.
- 3.2.** Committee seats are allocated to any registered political groups and non-aligned members in accordance with the overall membership proportionality of the Council.
- 3.3.** The current arrangements in relation to the appointment of Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs are a Constitutional, rather than legal, requirement.

**4. RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 4.1.** Not applicable.

**5. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

- 5.1.** Not required.

**6. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1.** Not applicable.

**7. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 7.1.** Other structures, numbers and arrangements could be determined; including the retention of the status quo.

**8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 8.1.** None.

(END)