



*Atherstone Town Council*

# Agenda reporting sheet.

Insert the date of meeting here: 16<sup>th</sup> May 2024

<p><b>Agenda Item:</b></p> <p>Insert wording to appear on the agenda. The recommendation the motion/resolution that you are seeking i.e., “to resolve to...” “To note that ...”</p>	<p>To propose that Atherstone Town Council establishes a 30 minute monthly open forum [ scheduled ahead of the Full Council or Committee meetings]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- where local people are able to share their views about the services we provide; influence decisions and shape future plans</li> <li>- which enables ideas, thoughts and questions to be expressed In an open welcoming environment; information to be shared; encourages dialogue , involvement and engagement</li> </ul>
<p><b>Background Information:</b></p> <p>Insert as much information as possible so that councillors have the detail, they need to make an informed decision e.g., cost, time, long term/short term project, where, how, when why??</p>	<p>The traditional meeting format for TC meetings means that the public nor elected members seldom have the opportunity or time to raise or discuss important issues.</p> <p>if the ATC wishes to promote local democracy, be accountable understand and respond to the views and ideas expressed by local people about the services it provides ; and be able to influence and advocate on their behalf ,</p> <p>then it needs to consider alternative ways to do this .</p> <p>The TCs action plan [ 2024 to 2026] commits us to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 2.1 .3 Promote and ensure public sessions of council meetings are welcoming.</li> <li>- 2.3.1 Create opportunities for community engagement with residents, get input and feedback on issues</li> </ul> <p>Evidence that the council seeks out and responds to the views and ideas expressed by local people, is a prerequisite for most grant applications and for achieving the national Quality Award.</p>



# Atherstone Town Council

<p><b>Background Documents:</b></p> <p>Insert names of documents to be sent out with the meeting papers.</p>	<p>PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A MONTHLY OPEN PUBLIC FORUM (see below)</p> <p>Example of an existing community forum:  <a href="http://Community Forums   Harbury Parish Council (harbury-pc.gov.uk)">Community Forums   Harbury Parish Council (harbury-pc.gov.uk)</a></p>
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<b>Implications to be completed by the Clerk:</b>	
Staffing Implications	An officer is usually in the building from 6:30pm – if community forums are to be held from 6:30pm-7pm there should be minimal staffing implications for this.
Council objectives:	This proposal supports the following objectives: 2.1 .3 Promote and ensure public sessions of council meetings are welcoming. 2.1 .3 Create opportunities for community engagement with residents, get input and feedback on issues
Equalities & Human Rights	This proposal does not create any issues regarding equalities or human rights providing the council maintain & improve alternative methods of community engagement
Crime and Disorder	There are no significant implications relating to Crime & Disorder
Biodiversity	There are no significant implications relating to biodiversity.
Financial	There are no financial implications at this stage
	There will be financial implications
	There is provision within the budget
	Decisions may give rise to additional expenditure
	Decisions may have potential for income generation
Legal	Power under which the spend can be actioned
	GDPR - Data Privacy Impact Assessment
	Other considerations:
Risk Management	The Town Council would need to carry out a risk assessment for any new activities in the community forum at this stage it is not anticipated that this would differ significantly from the existing meeting format.

## PLEASE NOTE

Agenda item requests: these must be received by the Parish Clerk at least 6 working days before the meeting at which you would like your item to be considered.

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## **PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A MONTHLY OPEN PUBLIC FORUM MEETING – TO BE HELD BEFORE FC AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

**Commence date: June 2024**

**Review date: December 2024**

### **Introduction**

Town Council meetings currently follow a traditional format which combines decision making; information sharing by other organisations; a public session where the public are *invited to give their views on issues [ max 3 mins ] already on the agenda or raise issues for future consideration* and wider discussions .

A major problem with this approach is that the public and elected members seldom have the opportunity or time to raise and discuss issues , get residents views in any depth . When topics require more discussion and input , then they may be scheduled as EGMs , or as workshops /working party meetings to which the public are not usually invited.

If the TC wishes to promote local democracy, understand and respond to the views and ideas expressed by local people about the services it provides; to gather evidence to influence and advocate on their behalf , then it needs to find other ways of doing this.

The TCs action plan [ 2024 to 2026] commits us to :-

- 2.1.3 Promote and ensure public sessions of council meetings are welcoming.
- 2.3.1 Create opportunities for community engagement with residents, get input and feedback on issues

Evidence that the council seeks out and responds to the views and ideas expressed by local people, is a prerequisite for most grant applications and achieving the national Quality Award.

As described in the action plan there are many ways of doing this – through surveys, online social media presence, interactive website, attending community events etc and “walking the beat “

Whilst consideration is being given to these other methods as part of the action plan , this proposal seeks to take the simple but structured step of establishing a regular open forum meeting to which any member of the public can attend, raise and comment on issues of concern , and hold councillors accountable.

Before introducing an open forum, the Town Council will need to weigh carefully the risks as well as the benefits associated with such a process, the rules and procedures that need to be followed, and consider if there are better, alternative ways of achieving the desired outcomes.

It will be particularly important to ensure that there is no decision-making during these forums and that this is rigidly enforced.

## **PURPOSE OF OPEN FORUMS**

The agenda topics for a forum meeting will be flexible, shaped by local people, local councillors and partner organisations.

Their purpose might be to consider: -

- wider issues that council believes would benefit from public awareness, input and debate eg Canal Transfer Proposal; Public Space Protection Order; Climate Change; access to cost of living support
- ideas and views on projects in early stages of development eg replacement of St Marys Play area, cemetery extension, use of arcade.
- forward planning – priorities, review of action plan, budget setting and precept rises and planning matters.
- information sharing, communication and feedback on local services provided by ATC.

## **CONSIDERATIONS**

The council will need to adopt a set of procedures and identify the leadership and support needed for these forums:

- Dates, times, notice and topics for forums should be scheduled and publicised in advance.
- Written material for discussion should be sent out to Councillors at least three days prior to the meeting.
- The Mayor or other designated elected member should lead and chair these forums.
- Elected members, employees, consultants and other participants shall disclose their financial and conflicts of interest in matters to be discussed.
- Interests are to be disclosed in accordance with the provisions of the Act as they apply to ordinary council meetings.
- A brief written record should be kept but, as no decisions will be made, this record need only be a general record of items covered; it should record disclosures of interest.
- The views of police, borough and county councillors about possibly using these open forums in the future to consider their regular reports and engage with Atherstone residents and businesses should be sought and discussed.