

Full Council

Date:	2 March 2021
Title:	Annual Town Meeting
Contact Officer:	Cassie Pinnells, Acting Town Clerk

Purpose of the Report

1. To **consider** how and whether to hold the Annual Town Meeting on Tuesday 30 March 2021.
2. The purpose of this report is to provide background for the discussion on the structure and content of a “Virtual” Zoom Annual Town Meeting on Tuesday 30 March 2021 or to cancel this year annual meeting.

Background

3. The Annual Town meeting scheduled in 2020 was cancelled following Government Guidelines not to hold face to face meetings due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
4. This meeting is a meeting of the electorate, not the Town Council, and at the meeting, the electorate are entitled to raise any question on any public matter, although normally only on topics relating to the parish.
5. The Local Government Act 1972 Part III requires that an annual parish meeting takes place between 1st March and 1st June each year. There is no duty for the Parish Council to convene this although it is customary that it is convened by the Parish Council Chairman at a date and time set by the Parish Council. There is no effective sanction should the Parish Council not set a date and time for this to occur or if the Chairman does not convene the meeting.
6. The proposed agenda is:
 - a) Minutes from previous year (mandatory)
 - b) Community presentation from the Thame Youth Projects Group
 - c) Town Mayor’s report
 - d) Open Forum – Questions from Electors (the main purpose of the meeting)
7. Managing the questions at the Open Forum
 - a) To continue to use a formal panel – made up of the Mayor (who will Chair if present), the Chairman of each Town Council Committee, a District Councillor, and the Acting Town Clerk – to provide answers to each question raised, or a commitment to take them away for further investigation and provide a later response.
 - b) Please note that no invitation will be given to Oxfordshire County Council to attend the Annual Town Meeting due to elections and the Purdah period commencing on the 29 March 2021. Any questions raised would be deferred to Fix my street for the resident to investigate on themselves.

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- c) When a physical meeting is held the maximum attendance is denoted by the fire regulations which state 80 seated or 100 standing, an attendance sheet is signed upon entry into the Upper Chamber.
 - d) Moderating Zoom numbers will be investigated with the current facility to accept 100 people into the meeting which would be in line with a physical meeting.
 - e) To aid management of the virtual meeting we propose that the same rules apply that the zoom link password is requested by those who wish to attend. This enable knowledge of contact details before the meeting which will aid Officers if questions need to be clarified and answered after the meeting.
 - f) Officers are looking at how best to manage answering questions during the meeting one possible solution is using the chat box and denoting a Q at the beginning of the message or a show of a hand.
8. Officers are open to suggestions by Councillors to make the virtual meeting operate as smoothly as possible for the electorate to engage with the Town Council.

Resource Appraisal

9. There are no financial implications to highlight.

Legal Powers

- Local Government Act 1972 sch 12 para 7 (1), 14(1) and (3)
- Localism Act 2011 s1
- The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

Recommendation:

- i) To **approve** to hold a Virtual Annual Town Meeting on Tuesday 30 March 2021.