

PART 1 - PUBLIC

Decision Maker: General Purposes and Licensing Committee

Date: 14th March 2012

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Non-Executive Non-Key

Title: PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS 2012/2013

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Chief Officer: Mark Bowen, Director of Resources

Ward: N/A

1. Reason for report

- 1.1 This report presents the draft timetable of meetings for the next Municipal Year for Members' consideration. The proposed timetable, which has been the subject of extensive consultation, is loosely based on the current timetable, but contains a slight reduction in the overall number of scheduled meetings. It is also recommended that the standard start time for Council meetings be confirmed as 7pm.
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2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That the proposed Programme of Meetings for 2012/2013 be agreed for publication, as set out in appendix 1.
- 2.2 That the normal evening start time for Council meetings be 7pm, subject to each body retaining the flexibility to start at a different time if necessary, and further daytime meetings be permitted where there is agreement of all the relevant Members.

Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing policy. A Programme of meetings is approved each year by this Committee.
 2. BBB Priority: Excellent Council.
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Financial

1. Cost of proposal: N/A
 2. Ongoing costs: N/A.
 3. Budget head/performance centre: Democratic Services
 4. Total current budget for this head: £344,054 (20011/12)
 5. Source of funding: Existing budgets
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Staff

1. Number of staff (current and additional): There are 9 posts (8.22fte) in the Democratic Services team
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: Preparation of the Programme of meetings, including extensive consultation, involves approximately two days of staff time.
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Legal

1. Legal Requirement: No statutory requirement or Government guidance.
 2. Call-in: Call-in is not applicable. The Programme does not involve an executive decision, and Council is recommended to take a final decision.
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Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): Copies of the programme of meetings are distributed to all Members of the Council and Chief Officers and are available to senior officers and partnership bodies on request.
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Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? No.
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: N/A

3. COMMENTARY

3.1 The Council's programme of meetings is agreed each year by this Committee, and the proposed programme for 2012/13 is attached at **Appendix 1**. This programme has been prepared closely resembling the programme for the current year, which for the first time consolidated all meetings (except full Council) on three evenings of the week, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. As in previous years, every effort has been made to avoid more than one meeting being held on the same evening but, having regard to other constraints a small number of clashes were found to be unavoidable. The programme reduces the overall number of meetings proposed by fourteen, allowing savings to be made in staff costs and other ancillary cost savings – heating, lighting, and preparing and distributing reports. Special meetings can still be arranged when necessary. The proposed numbers of each meeting in 2012/13, compared to those scheduled for 2011/12, are set out below –

Meeting	2011/12	2012/13
Council	5	5
Executive	10	9
I&E Sub-Cttee	4	4
Standards	2	1
SACRE	3	3
Development Control	6	5
Plans Sub-Cttees	26	25
GP&L Cttee	7	5
Audit Sub-Cttee	4	3
LJCC	4	4
Pensions Investment	4	4
A&C PDS	6	5
CYP PDS	8	5
Environment PDS	7	5
E&R PDS	10	9
PP&S PDS	6	5
R&R PDS	4	5
TOTAL	116	102

- 3.2 The proposed programme has been prepared on the basis that the current Executive and Committee decision-making structures will continue in the same form next year. If Members do make any substantial alterations to these (for example, changes to the remit of portfolios or any switch to a committee system as now permitted under the Localism Act) then the programme may need to be adapted accordingly. The Constitution Improvement Working Group will give further consideration to these issues in the coming months.
- 3.3 In response to Member comments, the draft programme includes various daytime meetings, including dates for the four thematic partnership meetings, the Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee and the Adoption Panel, which will meet during the day from May 2012 onwards.
- 3.4 The proposed schedule was considered by the Constitution Improvement Working Group at a meeting on 8th February 2012. The Working Group supported the approach taken to the programme, subject to further consultation. Since then, the draft programme has been circulated to all Members and to senior officers, and a number of detailed changes have been made in response to the comments received.
- 3.5 The Constitution Improvement Working Group also considered the start times of meetings. In the past, committee and other meetings always began at 7.30pm, with the exception of Plans Sub-Committees and the annual Council meeting, which began at 7pm. In recent years there has been more flexibility for meetings to start earlier, and the Executive and several of the PDS Committees now start at 7pm, with some meetings commencing earlier. Some meetings now take place during the day, for example Licensing Sub-Committee, the Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee and most partnership meetings. While this flexibility does help individual committees

to make their own arrangements to suit their needs, there is also a potential for confusion where there is not a generally accepted standard start time. Starting meetings earlier than 7.30pm will have small potential savings in terms of building running costs and overtime and will help to reduce the impact on the quality of decision making and the performance of senior officers of taking decisions late at night. However, it is also recognised that some Members feel that they would be unable to attend meetings any earlier due to work commitments, and earlier starts would preclude them from taking part in callovers and pre-meetings.

- 3.6 The Working Group concluded that 7pm should now be adopted as the standard start time for all evening meetings, subject to each body retaining the flexibility to start at a different time if necessary. It was also suggested that meetings could take place during the day where there was agreement from all the Members of the relevant body.
- 3.7 The Working Group also considered whether it was appropriate to introduce a guillotine to limit the length of meetings (there is a guillotine for full Council, but not for other meetings). Members did not consider that this was necessary, noting that meetings could be adjourned if they ran on too long, and that agendas could be shortened by reducing “to note” reports in conjunction with wider use of information briefings. The Working Group did also suggest that in some circumstances part 2 reports could be dealt with at the start of a meeting, to avoid officers having to wait until the end of the evening for their reports to be considered.

Non-Applicable Sections:	Policy/Financial/Legal/Personnel Implications
Background Documents: (Access via the Contact Officer)	Previous Programme of Meetings Reports Report and Minutes - Constitution Improvement Working Group on 8 th February 2012