

Subject: Review of Meetings Timetable
Date of Meeting: 18 November 2008
Report of: Director of Strategy & Governance
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Wards Affected: All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 To look at the schedule of meetings as part of the 6-month review of the constitution and outline the changes that have been implemented and the proposed amendments to the timetabling of meetings for the municipal year 2009/10.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the changes to the timetable of meetings for 2008/2009 as a result of identifying work programmes and a more effective use of resources for certain meetings, be noted;
- 2.2 That the proposed timetable of meetings for 2009/10 be approved;
- 2.3 That a proposed timetable for 2010/11 be brought to the committee in March 2009, for consideration.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

Existing Arrangements

- 3.1 The timetable of meetings for 2008/2009 was based on the new executive arrangements for the council and was adopted as part of the approval of the new constitution in April.
- 3.2 Under the existing arrangements the Cabinet, Environment and Housing Cabinet Member Meetings meet on a 4-weekly cycle, the remaining Cabinet Member Meetings on a 6-weekly cycle, with the Regulatory Committees and Overview & Scrutiny Committees operating predominantly on an 8-weekly cycle.

- 3.3 The schedule of meetings approved by Council in April provided for a total of 176 meetings.
- 3.4 Having effectively run three cycles of meetings through June, July and September, it has become evident that a review of the number of meetings should take place.

Difficulty/Shortcomings

- 3.5 With the introduction of Cabinet Member Meetings (CMMs), it has become clear that the volume of business varies at each meeting and that with the development of a more comprehensive work programme for each Cabinet Member, the number and frequency of meetings should be altered.
- 3.6 The dynamic nature of the work programmes and Members' other commitments have led to some changes of meeting dates and some meetings being cancelled altogether.

Interim Measures

- 3.7 Following consultation with the respective Cabinet Members, it has been agreed that the Cabinet Member Meetings for Finance, Central Services, Culture, Recreation & Tourism and Enterprise, Employment and Major Projects should be held on a quarterly basis. This new arrangement is reflected in the proposed timetable for 2009/10.
- 3.8 The proposed timetable for 2009/10 provides for a total of 151 meetings, which is a reduction of 25 meetings (see Appendix 1).

Changes for 2009/10

- 3.9 The Environment and Housing CMM's would take place on a 6-weekly cycle rather than a 4-weekly cycle. In view of the level of business associated with the Housing and Environment portfolios it is considered that an 8-weekly cycle would not be an efficient use of resources or enable matters to be dealt with effectively.
- 3.10 The Cabinet would continue to meet on a 4-weekly timetable.
- 3.11 The Audit and Standards Committees would meet quarterly and the Governance Committee would meet on an 8-weekly cycle.
- 3.12 The Housing Management Consultative Committee would meet on 5 occasions a year and is scheduled to meet prior to a respective Housing CMM, in order to enable it to refer matters onto the Cabinet Member for consideration.
- 3.13 The Children & Young People CMM and Adult, Social Care & Health CMM would meet quarterly. The CMM's would also be held on different days to the respective Partnership Board meetings to enable any matters to be

referred onto the Boards and to take account of requests from Members for the meetings to be held on separate dates.

- 3.14 The Children's Trust Board and Joint Commissioning Board would move to an 8-week cycle from the current 6-week one.
- 3.15 The Planning Committee would continue to meet on Wednesdays and remain on a 3-weekly cycle.
- 3.16 The Licensing Committee would meet 3 times a year, but there would be regular Licensing Panel meetings throughout the year, and the Personnel Committee dates would be set on a monthly basis for the various appeal hearings that are held throughout the year.
- 3.17 There are no changes proposed to the scheduling of the Overview & Scrutiny meetings. The Overview & Scrutiny Commission and Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee would continue meeting on a 6-weekly cycle and the remaining scrutiny committees on an 8-weekly cycle.
- 3.18 In summary, the proposals are:-

Executive Meetings:

Cabinet meeting: 4-weekly

Environment CMM: 6-weekly

Housing CMM: 6-weekly

Adult Social Care & Health, Children & Young People, Finance, Central Services, Culture, Recreation & Tourism, Enterprise, Employment & Major Projects CMM's: quarterly

Full Council and Regulatory Committees:

6 Ordinary Council meetings, plus the Annual Council and Budget Council

Governance: 8-weekly

Planning: 3-weekly

Audit and Standards: quarterly

Licensing: 3 meetings a year

Personnel Appeals monthly

Overview & Scrutiny:

Overview & Scrutiny Commission: 6-weekly

Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee: 6-weekly

Adult Social Care & Housing, Children & Young People, Culture, Tourism & Enterprise, Environment & Community Safety Overview & Scrutiny Committees: 8-weekly.

Governing Principles for the Meetings Timetable

- 3.19 The following guidelines have been applied in reviewing the meetings timetable:
- As far as possible clashes of meetings have been avoided. However, inevitably, given the constraints of avoiding school/public/religious holidays and the number of meetings to be accommodated on specific days of the week, there are five occasions where there are overlaps of meetings. What appear at the moment to be “free” days will be filled by the various political Group meetings, and Committee Chairs' meetings.
 - As far as possible meetings have not been scheduled on Fridays.
 - As far as possible school holidays, religious holidays and party conference weeks have been avoided, although it has not been possible to keep those weeks completely clear.
 - Meeting start times generally are scheduled for 4pm or later to encourage public attendance. However, Cabinet Members and Committees can determine whether to continue with the programmed start time or if an alternative time would be more appropriate for their particular meeting.
- 3.20 There must be a sufficient number of meetings to enable the council business to be transacted. The schedule of Council and Cabinet meetings is designed to ensure that:-
- Committee and Scrutiny reports can be received without undue delay;
 - consideration of the various plans and strategies to be adopted by Full Council can be accommodated;
 - there is scope to accommodate city-wide debates if necessary; and public interest and participation through questions and deputations continues to be facilitated.
- 3.23 The Overview & Scrutiny Commission is programmed to meet once a cycle in line with the Overview and Scrutiny rules.
- 3.24 Whilst every effort will be made to keep meetings on the dates listed there may be a need to alter them and additional meetings may be required for dedicated debates on key issues or particular plans and strategies.
- 3.25 As usual, a number of further meetings, which are not part of the formal meetings cycle, have been programmed to meet on a regular basis e.g. the Community Safety Forum. In addition dates have yet to be finalised for the Cabinet Sustainability Committee, the Inclusive City Partnership and the Sustainability Partnership.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Leading Members, Directors and appropriate officers have been consulted on the proposed timetable and appropriate committee and council dates set to meet statutory requirements.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 There are no financial implications arising from the report.

Finance officer consulted: Patrick Rice 6 August 2008

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 The proposed timetables of meetings does not prevent the calling of Special Meetings or the use of Urgency Sub-Committee meetings should circumstances arise, however it does enable a more fluent scheduling of meetings to be maintained throughout the municipal year.
- 5.3 The proposed timetables allow for continued compliance with the Access to Information Procedure Rules set out in Part 8.1 of the Constitution

Lawyer consulted: Abraham Ghebre-Ghiorghis 6 August 2008

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 The majority of meetings are scheduled for 4pm or later to encourage public attendance and interest. Holiday periods are also avoided as far as is feasible.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 There are no sustainability implications arising from the report.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 There are no crime & disorder implications arising from this report.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 The scheduling of meetings aims to accommodate the decision-making processes for the year, but there is always the possibility of additional meetings having to be called.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 The scheduling of meetings accommodates the Council priority for open and effective city leadership

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Proposed Timetable for 2009/10

Background Documents

Timetable of Meetings for 2008/09