

## **Appendix One**

### **Data on possible Evening Committee Attendance for Governance Review**

#### **Background**

Governance group and the Leader have asked me to look at meeting numbers so that an understanding of the impact upon Councillors can be developed. This report sets out data on meetings both historical and best estimates for going forward using comparison data from other local authorities as well as our own modern.gov held data on meetings and attendance.

To assist members in considering the data I am mostly describing attendance as “councillor attendances”. By this I mean the number of members attending a meeting multiplied by the number of those meetings per annum. So if a meeting has 5 members required to attend, and it meets 10 times a year that would total 50 “Councillor attendances”.

#### **Data available**

We are aware of the current intention to hold (in 2022) 28 formal meetings being -

14 Committees

14 Panels or forums

Of those 8 have variable number of meetings per annum and in some of those, they rarely meet (for example fast track grants panel, investigation and disciplinary). It is impossible to do more than guess some of them will be required, with most requiring 5 or 6 members to attend. I have set out comparison data at Table 1 listing attendance for these classes of meetings, and others which I will now also describe.

However of the consistently held meetings they would be 104 planned formal meetings requiring 1485 “Councillor attendances” per annum along with an additional number of unplanned meetings (such as appeal meetings or licensing sub- committee meetings) which on historic data in table 2 is likely to require about 1000 additional “Councillor attendances” at roughly 2500 “Councillor attendances”.

I believe this to be an under estimate if moving to evening meetings in that some meetings are likely to extend beyond their current number of meetings because, for example, planning is unlikely to achieve its business in one session as it does when meetings are held in the day. My best guess is that the number of meetings is likely to be up to 150 meetings allowing for that, with an estimated requirement of 3000 “councillor attendances” per annum that is, an increase of about a sixth. It should be noted that this estimate is far lower than the Councillor attendances at Arun of over 5000.

I spent some time looking at Parishes (we have 68 in the district) it is simply impossible for me to say how many evening meetings they hold though on a short skim of a dozen parishes websites it is clear almost every evening Monday to Thursday one of our largest Parishes has a meeting of some kind. Obviously some wards have up to four parishes so the responsibility for meetings can be significant if members attend them all. If we assume that the 68 parishes and that parishes meet 3

times a month then this adds 2448 additional “councillor evenings” meetings. Obviously some, in particular larger Parishes, meet far more often and their demands are accordingly higher.

Additional to this are any appointed positions such as Tony Dignum appointed to the BID meetings and so on. There is a significant variance between members on how many meetings they are required to attend.

Even disregarding Parishes, my best estimate of the number of meetings per annum is therefore about 3000 evening member attendances, meaning that each Councillor will on average attend 83 formal meetings per annum, double that if the parish estimate is correct. Even this is far below the number of evening meetings attended on average at some local councils – I am told members typically attend four evening meetings a week at Arun so my estimates of how many additional days evening meetings take compared to daytime meetings may be an under estimation too (though they have committee rather than strong leader model so that has to be factored in too). See table 2 for more information on Arun “councillor attendances” which shows they have required over 5000 “Councillor attendances” though Arun committee memberships of individual committees, it should be noted, are typically larger than at Chichester so this is not an entirely “like for like” comparator, though it is the closest I am able to identify.

It is worth noting also that some of our members are also County members with further obligations to attend **those** meetings.

### Estimating attendance requirements with a move to evenings

With the smaller number of members (36) the absolute minimum number of evening meetings per year will be  $3000 / 36$  so 83 per Councillor – **about 2 evenings a week on average allowing for Christmas and summer reduction in meetings** will need to be spent at the Council. Members will be very aware of the geographical size of the district and the challenges of travelling into Chichester in the evening in a wet February in the dark from Lodsworth or Petworth. If our attendance was the same as Arun at 5000 “Councillor attendances” then the number of meetings **would be nearer 4 evenings a week**. Of course this may also go some way to explain the significant amount of non-attendance compared to Chichester. If we assume Councillors attend one Parish meeting per week – and members will know themselves how often they attend non District meetings of that kind - then an average member would attend evening meetings typically **every night of the week**. They would of course be free to work during normal day work times in normal career roles but members need to consider how to promote Councillor roles to employed persons if all evenings are required attendance at meetings, as well as assessing how much time would also be required to prepare for those meetings, and when.

It is worth noting that many of those external meetings at Parish and other bodies are already evening meetings, the concern for members to consider is how easy it will be to avoid diary congestion and clashes between meetings in the evening if you are already engaged on District business three to five days a week.

## **Staff and requirements at East Pallant House**

Assuming 100 officers support the above range of meetings, and they were to be entitled to unsociable hours payment of 6% (standard in national terms and conditions) and assuming those officers are paid at the higher rate of (say) £35K average then the cost of that will be approximately £230,000 per annum too which will need to be added to the corporate budgets.

Naturally the trial of meetings in November 2022 will establish the practical requirements of evening meetings such as fixed end times, door management and so on. It is not believed that there are any insuperable practical obstructions to evening meetings being held at East Pallant House.

## **Attendance Rates**

Members asked for a comparison of attendance with other Councils who have evening meetings to see if there is a significant difference.

At Chichester our attendance rate has been 97.8% in the last year (with 57 apologies given out of 1741 formal meeting seats).

For Arun (see table 2) the attendance rate in the same period was 87% with apologies offered 999 times out of 5083. In the last year where figures for attendance **in person** in evening meetings is available the figure was lower, 77.23%, anecdotally advice being that evening meeting attendance has been increased significantly by use of remote online meetings. This is currently unavailable for formal meetings going forward as members will recall.

I note that many Arun meetings have a higher membership than for Chichester.

Nicholas Bennett  
9<sup>th</sup> December 2021

**Table 1****Current Chichester Committee membership and meetings per annum data**

<i>Committee/ panel</i>	<i>Members (Typical)</i>	<i>Meetings P/A 5 yearly average</i>	<i>Member Attendances</i>
Alcohol etc. licensing	10	4	40
Sub committees	3	16	58
Assessment sub committee	3	0	0
Cabinet	7	12	84
Corporate Governance	8	6	48
Council	36	10	360
General Licensing	10	3	30
Grants Panel	8	5	40
Fast track panel	4	0	0
Disciplinary	5	0	0
O and S	11	8	88
Planning	15	16	240
Standards	6	1	6
Appeals	5	0	0
Boundary Review Panel	6	3	15
Business Routing Panel	5	1	15
Parking Forum	6	3	18
DPIP	10	12	120
Environment Panel	6	10	60
Growth Board / Economic	4	4	16
Joint Employee Panel	5	4	20
Strategic Risk Group	5	2	10
Community Forums	2	varies	
All Parishes	36	3	118
Task and Finish groups	5	27	135
Rural panel	5	2	10
TOTAL DAYTIME MEMBER ATTENDANCES			<b>2515</b>

**Note – this does not include members attending meetings to which they are not appointed.**

**Table 2**

**Arun evening meeting attendance data**

2019/20

<b>Party</b>	<b>Expected</b>	<b>Attended</b>	<b><u>Attendance</u> %</b>	<b><u>In</u> Attendance</b>
Total	4209	3548	77.23%	618

2020/21

<b>Party</b>	<b>Expected</b>	<b>Attended</b>	<b><u>Attendance</u> %</b>	<b><u>In</u> Attendance</b>
Total	5083	4411	87.27%	999