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Member Feedback – Evening Meeting Trial

Response 1	In some ways it is more democratic. However for people living in the rural area their drives at night can be quite difficult and risky. For city councillors OK. Maybe evenings in the summer daytime in the winter.
Response 2	<p>I thought it was a good idea to trial evening meetings, in an attempt to attract younger people who, work during the day, to either become Councillors or comment as members of the public. There were, however, no comments at Full Council or the OSC meeting I attended, from the public. This was disappointing and personally I found the evening meetings disruptive to my Parish Council responsibilities. As a Southbourne District Councillor, we have always historically attended Parish Councils, which I do not think we could do if evening meetings continued. Another thing that was difficult was transport as I do not drive, buses don't run much past 9pm, and if I use the train there is a long, dark walk back to my house.</p> <p>I am sympathetic to the aim of evening meetings but am concerned that it impinges on our established routines and has a detrimental effect on staff.</p>
Response 3	With 5 parishes with evening meetings I prefer day meetings for Council.
Response 4	<p>I am vehemently against changing to evening meetings it is disruptive to home life, evening meals are missed due to other things happening before the meetings.</p> <p>Travel to and from during the evenings in the dark and potential wet/inclement weather is dangerous. Dark unlit roads home is a big concern especially in Winter.</p> <p>It did not encourage any more participation by members of the Public. I think we had zero additional observers than those that would have attended in any case. More attend the daytime meetings and stay longer</p> <p>One reason given for considering the change was so those with full time jobs can attend, I didn't see evidence of this one member who attended OSC left at 6.55pm to go home for a meal.</p> <p>Cllrs are given an allowance which covers any time missed form work, whether that is sufficient I don't know but if we want to encourage younger members then a higher allowance should be paid. Many business make allowances for attendance.</p> <p>I am aware there are staff with young families that do not find the evening meetings conducive to family life. Likewise being retired it doesn't suit me, my wife hates it, not knowing what time I'll be back home is very unnerving and detrimental to health. A finish time cannot be confirmed if imposed would lead to additional Meetings to cover the agenda. Far from being inclusive this discriminates against those that live in the north of the district especially women that wouldn't want to be out on their own on dark lanes at night.</p> <p>There are clashes with Parish Council meetings which we would have to</p>

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	<p>miss in order to attend CDC business.</p> <p>There has to be consideration for how much extra Evening meetings would cost in overtime or Time off in lieu, for Staff.</p> <p>Decision making would be poor due to tied Cllrs and Officers wanting to get away and not considering the content fully due to focusing on family, a meal, or other engagements. Much better with Daytime meetings.</p>
<p>Response 5</p>	<p>I thought the trial was very successful. I didn't have to take annual leave from work to be able to attend Full Council. It also meant I was able to attend O&S as an observer, which is something I wouldn't normally do.</p> <p>When I speak to other people who are considering standing for election to Council in May, one of their major concerns is meeting times and how they would manage daytime meetings with work and/or childcare commitments. It is clear from my conversations with anyone I speak to aged around mid-20s to early 50s that daytime meetings are a barrier to them standing for election, and this includes people who would contribute hugely through their experience to the work the Council does.</p> <p>I think having an evening meeting actually helped encourage people to get to the point and not to waste time at Full Council. No one wanted or wants a meeting that would drag on all night. (It is very frustrating to plan to take a morning off work, not start until 09:30 and then have a meeting drag on into the early hours of the afternoon, making it very hard to work a full afternoon.)</p> <p>I complete agree with the points made by Councillor Gareth Evans, re: issues that were highlighted, and would add a few further thoughts (in red), namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •I'm hungry – the meeting started at six and it is (for now) a one off so surely just eat before or bring a snack... •I won't be home until 11pm – We finished no later than many Parish Council meetings I've been to. •We could not attend Parish Council meetings – This was a trial and announced with not enough time for Parish Councils to re-arrange meetings. Were this the way forward I know Parish Councils would plan accordingly. There are after all only 6 full council meetings a year so not hard to do this with the right planning. Also a number of Parish Council meetings were bumped due to her Majesty the Queen's death so this was an unusual situation. <p>Most Parish Council meetings are set a year in advance, with memberships of committees being decided annually. There is no reason to think that PCs wouldn't try to plan around CDC Full Council meetings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •I will be tired for DPIP tomorrow – Again this was a trial and presumably plans could be made not to have back to back meetings in this way. <p>I also agree with Cllr Evans that it would be both fair and inclusive to have a mixture of daytime and evening meetings. It would not be practical to have Planning Meetings in the evening, due to their length. Not everything needs to be held late!</p> <p>I appreciate that evening meetings require officers to work late as well as</p>

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	<p>members. While I don't want to make things harder for people who are already under a lot of pressure, the first principle ought to be to ask ourselves what is required from the Council to be able to best serve residents? Many professions require employees to work outside of 9-5. I understand that it is asking someone to sacrifice an evening... Perhaps officers who have to work late could be given a Friday off for every two evenings they give up. A three day weekend has proven very popular where it has been tried!</p> <p>It might also be possible to have a summer and a winter calendar to reduce the number of meetings being held when it's dark. That said, it gets dark early in winter: 'daytime' meetings can easily finish after the light has gone so it's not like members aren't already having to make their way home in the dark as it is.</p> <p>I do get frustrated with the accusation that I and other working-age Councillors don't care about those who are quite old, especially when they make the argument that everyone who stands for election knows what they are getting themselves in to. The same could be said of anyone considering standing for election but who would be put off by evening meetings! Really though, we ought to be trying to be inclusive and not using 'this is the way we've always done it' as an excuse for not opening up. We should be trying to find a compromise that enables a wider range of candidates to stand and contribute.</p> <p>All things being equal, I prefer a morning meeting to an evening meeting. I'm generally fresher and like being able to walk / cycle / take the train to a meeting in the sun. But all things are not equal. Every time I attend a daytime meeting I have to take annual leave or unpaid leave. The Council loses out on the contributions that could be made by those whose employers are not as flexible as mine, or whose partners cannot look after children during the day. I have been a Parish Councillor and know how difficult it is juggling a lot of evening commitments. But I also have both a mortgage and rent to pay and am deeply concerned about the growing cost of living. I need to take time off work to spend time with my partner and to look after my own mental health. It is not sustainable for me to take several weeks off work every year simply to attend Council meetings that could be held at a time that would accommodate those with jobs.</p>
Response 6	<p>Evening meetings impose extra work out of normal hours on officers. It also interferes with the leisure activities of both officers and members. Daytime meetings gave more opportunities for people with young families to be councillors. What evidence is there that more members of the public attend evening rather than daytime council meetings. Evening meetings would be of most benefit to members who have full-time jobs elsewhere. A mix of evening and daytime might be a sensible compromise.</p>
Response 7	<p>I am and have always been against evening meetings. The age or situation of the councillor does not come into it. It is the quality of decisions for all residents that matter and Chichester has always had an excellent reputation on top of this some councillors have several Parish and community issues all in the evenings. Councillors know this when they stand. I have been told City Council have gone to day time meetings.</p>
Response 8	<p>If anything lower public attendance to Full Council on 27 September 2022 than in the afternoon meetings.</p>
Response 9	<p>I was delighted with the trial and the fact that there were several working councillors who were able to attend without having to take unpaid leave or</p>

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	<p>use their holiday allowance was a great thing for democracy. With regards to my circumstances, it meant that I did not need to cancel any lesson and my learners were not impacted.</p> <p>The meeting itself worked very well and the outcome of decisions was not impacted by it being an evening meeting. It ended at a reasonable hour, and I was home in good time and able to have dinner. Bear in mind I live the furthest from Chichester than any other councillor.</p> <p>Having a mixed approach to meetings seems to be a fair and inclusive way forward as you will never get the perfect blend. However, if 95% of councils in England and Wales can conduct evening meetings there is no reason we cannot.</p> <p>I was very disappointed with the Leader of the Oppositions response which seemed to have no inclination to engage with the process. I also was disappointed at the grumblings from several other (conservative) members who were openly negative about this and did not enter into the spirit of the trial.</p> <p>Some issues that were highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm hungry – the meeting started at six and it is (for now) a one off so surely just eat before or bring a snack. A number of oppositions members seemed equipped to do this. • I won't be home until 11pm – I was home by 9.40pm and live the furthest away so this is an exaggeration • We could not attend Parish Council meetings – This was a trial and announced with not enough time for Parish Councils to re-arrange meetings. Were this the way forward I know Parish Councils would plan accordingly. There are after all only 6 full council meetings a year so not hard to do this with the right planning. Also a number of Parish Council meetings were bumped due to her Majesty the Queens death so this was an unusual situation. • I will be tired for DPIP tomorrow – Again this was a trial and presumably plans could be made not to have back to back meetings in this way. <p>We also have to get beyond an individual position of I don't like it. Things need to change to allow inclusivity of people being able to run for office and to increase inclusivity for our residents.</p>
Response 10	<p>The meeting was not as vibrant as a daytime meeting and was not conducive to effective decision making.</p> <p>Would not like to move to evening meetings</p>
Response 11	<p>OSC clashed with Parish Council. Not in favour because:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is a bit district and those living in the north have nearly an hour to get home. 2. Extra expenses keeping EPH open, staff, heating, lighting. 3. Long day for officers and members when DPIP at 9.30am the next day. 4. Disruptive to meal times for everybody. 5. Note no public questions to take time up at this trial meeting.

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	6. Once councillor left at 7.30pm (half hour drive).
Response 12	I would prefer meetings to be during the day as we do at present. However, if an evening meeting is deemed necessary for some sort of democratic engagement perhaps one meeting per year could be in the evening.
Response 13	As a working councillor the later starts were easier. However, I think we could start at 3.30pm or 4.00pm and cap the finish time four hours later as per the trial. I recognise Planning and Licensing are best left unchanged but see the scope to adjust other Committees and potentially Full Council.
Response 14	I do not like evening meetings. Unable to make good decisions due to fatigue. Drive home on dark winter night not safe.
Response 15	Waste of time and disruptive to other stuff.
Response 16	<p>Excellent Worked very well Did not carry on too late Enabled all Councillors to attend inc those in work No one needed to take paid or unpaid holiday Allowed residents to attend who work</p> <p>Do not accept the issue with Parish Councils as this was a trial and in future we will organise in line with Parish Councils Meetings do not all need to be evenings, we should arrange a choice.</p> <p>I also do not accept that meetings should not be at night due to dark evenings.</p> <p>All Parish Council meetings are in the evening so I have to drive or cycle to meetings in the dark.</p> <p>CDC should introduce a mix of day, late afternoon, early evening meetings. This will enable all Councillors and future Councillors total flexibility.</p> <p>I am anxious to see younger & more working people on the Council and most of them can only do that if we offer a choice of times.</p> <p>CDC needs to move with modern times and not allow a short sighted view of the future.</p> <p>Some people seem concerned about evening meals... We are elected Councillors. I often eat early or late to accommodate meetings.</p> <p>When we introduce permanent evening meetings and advertise them residents will come to meetings and will be able to watch a livecast.</p> <p>I am committed to a mix of day, late afternoon & evening meetings being introduced from 2023, even though personally I now prefer day time</p>

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	meetings as I do not have a full-time job. This is for the good of democracy and transparency
Response 17	Cabinet meeting clashed with a Parish Council meeting as did Full Council. Regarding length of these CDC evening meetings consideration should be given to the length of the agendas compared with evening numbers and complexity of agendas.
Response 18	<p>Delighted to support this initiative</p> <p>The most compelling reason is so working age councillors do not have to take annual leave to attend council.</p> <p>I would support flexible times late afternoon / early evenings but no longer have any morning meetings so that workers can do at least a half a day of work.</p> <p>In theory this makes the meetings more accessible for residents who work as well.</p> <p>The meeting worked well and I have every confidence that this change would improve the state of democracy in the Chi District.</p> <p>I would support making permanent changes in meeting times for all member meeting and training to be held in later in the day.</p>
Response 19	Hate them. Buses stop at about 9.30. Ruins evenings. If I was in full time employment I wouldn't get a decent evening meal before meeting.
Response 20	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Luckily none of these meeting dates clashed with my 5 regular Parish meetings. 2. There was no increase in attendance by the public. ie none attended. 3. It was personally tiring to go out again at 6pm, so the decisions were possibly not good as might have been made during the day. I did not have time for any supper on those evenings. 4. The meeting itself was held 'at pace' so that we could all finish and go home. 5. The meetings in the evening require staff to stay at work for longer and hence the costs would be higher. Officers would be eligible for time off in lieu or for paid overtime. 6. The theory is that evening meetings are more convenient for Members who are in paid employment. However, Members who are attending other meetings or doing CDC correspondence during the day are just as tired as those who have been to work. 7. The time of the meetings was clearly published to prospective candidates before the election. Those who are in fixed employment are in the minority compared to the majority who are in flexible- or self-employment or are retired. 8. Overall conclusion: please do not change to evening meetings. If all the Panels became evening meetings too, this experimental arrangement would become much worse.
Response 21	I was happy with the evening Council meeting as there seemed initially more public than daytime meeting.

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Response 22	<p>Interested to see how many members of the public attend. 6 at opening of the meeting. 2 entered at 6.25pm. 6 left at 6.55pm, 1 in at 7.20pm.</p> <p>I don't believe this had the desired effect of encouraging more members of the public to attend. Also, at Full Council there were more than normal absentees declared.</p>
Response 23	<p>Found them to be disruptive to normal life. Impossible to have dinner when its an evening meeting. Driving home in dark, rainy nights on narrow winding roads is not conducive to a members wellbeing. I understand the theory behind the request is to encourage younger people to become councillors but cannot see that it will have the desired effect. If puts far more strain on officers. Not in favour.</p>
Response 24	<p>I would prefer not to meet in the evening.</p>
Response 25	<p>I think it is sad we didn't have many members of the public in attendance or asking questions. I do not know how to get more people to ask questions or engage with the Council. People are feeling powerless, depressed and overwhelmed by the attack on habitats directive the opening up of fracking, the cost of living crisis. We do need to engage more with our residents perhaps a youth council would help.</p>
Response 26	<p>I have a 45 minute+ journey home in the dark after an evening meeting. I got home at 9pm after the Cabinet meeting and at 10pm after the Council meeting. Had the Council meeting lasted until 10pm I would have got home at 11pm. I had not eaten before the meetings having left home at 5pm so I found myself having supper at 10pm after the meetings.</p> <p>Evening meetings have the potential to clash with Parish Meetings.</p> <p>I do not support evening meetings and will probably reduce my attendance if they become permanent.</p>