

APPENDIX E

Public Feedback – Evening Meeting Trial

Response 1

It cannot possibly be democratic to hold council meetings only in the daytime . That excludes anyone who is in work, has caring responsibilities, children. You end up with a totally unrepresentative group of people as Cllrs/ . Which there are, mainly over 65. How are you going to consult properly on this beyond a social media post asking for emails with less than a weeks notice? Cllrs have already made up their minds as evidenced by the Chairs comments to a question at the end of the meeting. I understand Cllrs have a lot of meetings to attend and they can be long but a mix of the two would be more inclusive. What happens in other areas?

I would like to comment on your request for opinion about holding evening meetings. It cannot possibly be democratic and inclusive to only hold meetings during the day. From comments made by Councillors it appears there is a sizeable group who are very resistant to changing this. The Leader of the Council, when asked at the meeting if she thought the evening meeting had been a success replied that she definitely didn't. That rather pre empts the result of any consultation.

A successful council needs to attract people as councillors across the spectrum, but by sticking to day time meetings this only attracts the retired and a very few others. Working people, carers, parents who have school age children are all excluded. You are left with people who are therefore not representative of the residents who have elected them. Both Havant and Worthing Borough Councils both have evening meetings in addition to some in the day time.

Members of the public are also excluded if they are not able to attend day time meetings. This is not conducive to serious engagement with residents. In May 2023 the Council will change and to attract a more diverse group of councillors there needs to be change to better reflect the residents who will be voting. I hope there will be a commitment to do so.

Response 2

You should simply risk weight by specific topic / clustered topics to ensure complete transparency with the general public. The higher the weighting the greater the need to engage with out of hours communication initiatives. Maximum engagement and real-time transparency should be the priority. Please bear in mind that in general across the UK no one really trusts Councils (particularly Labour / Green) to not be scheming and divisive. Thanks

Response 3

...I strongly believe you should be holding meetings in the evenings. As it stands, being a councillor and engaging in council business is the reserve of those who are retired or have the privilege to quit their jobs. As a result, you have a council with an average age of over 65.

This is not representative of our community. Decisions are made to benefit those of that age and those with privilege. Our community is suffering profoundly as a result.

You must make being a councillor something accessible to ALL. You can do this by holding meetings in the evenings and transforming the electoral process to a single transferrable

APPENDIX E

vote system or proportional representation. FPTP benefits only the three major parties, who so far have failed to improve this district in the slightest.

The best way to be representative, deliberative and participatory is to hold a Citizens' Assembly for major council decisions. Indeed, this was the recommendation of your public consultation for the Climate Action Plan in 2021. If you're not willing to listen to your already flawed public consultations nor make being a councillor accessible to all, you cannot legitimately claim to be democratic.

Response 4

Yes, I agree some meetings should be in the evening.

Response 5

I had no idea you were holding evening meetings and suspect that the majority of the population are unaware of this. I am retired but would be happy to come out to an evening meeting as we do occasionally for a Parish Council meeting. I believe you're denying a large proportion of the district the opportunity to attend as they either work, have care responsibilities or like many of us retired, were actually extremely busy with clubs and activities during the day.

Response 6

We know the deadline for feedback on our council meeting timings has passed, however, this comment came in over last night and felt we should forward to you to form a response for them.

"I have just found this page so I know the deadline has passed! However if it's not too late I would like to say that I work in London so there's no way I could ever attend a daytime or even an evening meeting. However an evening meeting online would be absolutely fine & I definitely feel this is what should be happening given that we have the right to have our say but just can't. I was livid that the SEP 19th meeting about Whitehouse was postponed as a minute's silence for the Queen would have been fine & we could have gone ahead - for once I was free!! The development is awful, so ugly. Car parking should be underground and the land landscaped. The flats would then be in a park, not a sea of cars!! For goodness sake get something attractive built, not soviet-style blocks! It's already an absolute scandal that the area is being covered in concrete so the very least the councils can do is to make something appealing. Are the councils unaware of the dreadful irony of building a country park in an area that was farmland/nature? Please have your meetings in the evenings online - who minds being at home with a coffee & participating at a meeting? Better than having to go out on a cold, wet night after a long day at work! Thank you"

Response 7

My view is that, since you have a department for democratic services, it seems somewhat ironic that council meetings have been routinely held at times when most members of the public are unable to attend - that is, during the working day - thus negating the most obvious democratic service. I know many local authorities do hold their meetings, at least for potentially controversial / important decisions, in the evening to allow working members of the community to attend and follow the debate. Not so, Chichester. Some of the comments from council members that have been reported to me have been quite extraordinary. That "I will miss my supper", "I don't like driving in the dark" and so on. There seems to be a total unawareness that putting yourself forward to serve the community might, at times, cause a little inconvenience, as does employment in many jobs. If the residents of Chichester are to

APPENDIX E

be encouraged to be active participants in democratic processes, then they must be given the means to do so, beyond simply voting every few years for a representative. I am not suggesting that every meeting should be held outside normal working hours, but those that are clearly of significance to the community (major planning applications, planned closure of essential services, changes to education policies etc.) certainly should be. When I was teaching, we, for obvious reasons, held parent's consultations in the evening. I would not get home until eleven o'clock on these occasions, but it was obviously one of the necessary functions of doing the job. Councillors should behave in the same way, or democracy is not being fully served.

Response 8

@ChichesterDC Given the massive public interest the meeting should have been held in the early evening so people could attend after work. This is not democracy. Come on CDC start being more inclusive @AdrianGMoss @Ccc13Sarah.