

Chichester District Council

Council

28 November 2023

Meeting timings

1. Contacts

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2. Recommendations

2.1 That the Council do not amend the timing of statutory meetings.

2.2 That the Calendar of Meetings for 2024/25 (as set out in Appendix 2) be approved.

3.0 Background

3.1 The Council has debated the time of meetings several times in recent years.

The new Executive wished to revisit this issue with a stated intention of making meetings as accessible as possible to the public and to enable members to be efficient in their roles.

3.2 A consultation was carried out by the report author at the direction of the Leader the findings of which were inconclusive with no strong consistent view coming from the Councillors contributing (see Appendix 1).

3.3 All submissions noted issues with meetings at any time of day. Concerns about driving long distances, child care, clashes with Parish meetings or other responsibilities of members were each raised.

3.4 Several other actions to improve accessibility have been undertaken at the direction of members, such as changing timing of non statutory meetings (such as Panels), significant improvements to video streaming of meetings and review of accessibility tools for persons with disabilities to encourage greater engagement. Certain meetings have been moved from being held in private session (known as Part 2) to open meetings which the public can attend or more often watch online.

3.5 Some discussion came out of a wish to employ “hybrid” meetings with some persons in the meeting physically and some remotely as was the case through emergency covid legislation but which ceased to be applicable in 2021. The

legislation for this has not yet been put in place so this is not lawful, but the improved video streaming system has capability to deliver such meetings when legislation is ultimately established.

4. Outcomes to be achieved

4.1 The Council is required to set its timetable in its Annual meeting in May each year. A decision against the recommendation would enable officers to prepare timings and make arrangements for room set up changes and other tasks which require them to know the timing of meetings and the working hour spaces between meetings in readiness for that further Annual statutory report. A decision will therefore enable the Council to carry out its statutory duties to deliver an effective timetable efficiently and also let other partner organisations such as Parish Councils make their own decisions on timing in parallel with a clear timetable.

5. Proposal

5.1 As set out in the recommendations.

6. Alternatives Considered

6.1 The survey was designed to be “open” and encourage consideration by members for any and all committees to change their timings.

7. Resource and Legal Implications

7.1 No legal implications beyond those set out in this report. Variations to the recommendation could generate resource implications but these can be addressed through the Annual report which can include any budgetary changes which can be worked through by officers by April 2024.

8. Consultation

8.1 All members were consulted. The design of the consultation document was reviewed by the Leader of the Council.

9. Community Impact and Corporate Risks

9.1 A clear timetabling and meeting schedule enables community engagement and also enables partner agencies to settle their own scheduling in parallel with this Councils. The schedule and other actions listed at 3.4 have been carried out to engender positive community accessibility. There are risks to poorly established schedules. There is a corporate risk to changing committees without member endorsement, which endorsement is not clear from the results of the consultation.

10 Other implications

None.

11 Appendices

11.1 Meeting Timings Feedback

11.2 Committee Calendar of Meetings 2024/25

12 Background Papers

None