

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO COUNCIL

26 JULY 2017

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR OPERATIONAL AND PARTNERSHIP SERVICES

OUTCOMES OF THE TIMINGS OF MEETINGS SURVEY

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Council of the outcomes of a timings of meetings survey recently undertaken in respect of meetings of Council and its Committees, and to seek approval to use the data from this survey to set timings of meetings from 1 September 2017.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan / Other Corporate Priority

- 2.1 This report links to the following Corporate Priorities:

- a. **Supporting a successful economy** – taking steps to make the county a good place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focused on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions of all people in the county.
- b. **Helping people to be more self-reliant** – taking early steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services.
- c. **Smarter use of resources** – ensuring that all its resources (financial, physical, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the development of resources throughout the community that can help deliver the Council's priorities.

3. Background

- 3.1 Section 6 (2) of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, refers to local authorities having regard to statutory guidance in respect of the times and intervals at which meetings are held, in order to achieve a Programme of Meetings that is generally convenient to local Members, given their often differing yet demanding commitments.
- 3.2 At the Annual meeting of Council on 17 May 2017, Members agreed to approve a Programme of meetings for Council and Council Committees for the municipal year May 2017 – May 2018.
- 3.3 Members also agreed at the above meeting, that whilst dates and starting times for Committees included in the Programme of Meetings would be initially set from May 2017 – August 2017 in order to commence the Committee cycle, it was further agreed that a survey be undertaken of Members in order to obtain their preferences for starting times of meetings from 1 September 2017 onward.

- 3.4 The suggested choices of timings for meetings offered to Members as part of the survey, were 10.00am, 2.00pm, and 4.00pm. An opportunity for members to provide additional comments was included in the survey.
- 3.5 Members were requested to complete the survey and consider the following information as part of their deliberations:
- The Civic Offices is open between 07:30 and 18:30. Opening the building outside of these timings will incur additional cost and may have other resourcing issues.
 - To informally discuss preferred timings with other committee members. Other committee members who may not have any preference of meeting timings may be supportive of the requirements of other committee members.
 - To discuss timings with the lead officers for each committee as there may be other factors to consider relating to the timings of committee meetings.

4. Current Situation / Proposal

- 4.1 This survey has now been undertaken, the results of which are shown in the attached **Appendix 1**. This included a significant number of comments which identified specific timings and these were taken into account as part of the timing of meetings proposals.
- 4.2 There was a provision within the survey for Members to give additional comments regarding the survey which were received. Common themes included childcare arrangements, reliance on public transport and work commitments.
- 4.3 The responses have been considered in respect of the calendar of meetings and the following proposals have been identified:

4.3.1 Appeals Panel

The Appeals Panel meetings are formed by 3 of the 12 Elected Members appointed to the Panel. These meetings are usually planned to take a full day and do not form part of the calendar of meetings. They are arranged to meet the requirements of the appellants, the supporting officers and the Elected Members.

Therefore it is proposed that meetings of the Appeals Panel be considered as ad-hoc and not be planned to start at a specific time.

4.3.2 Appointments Committee

The Appointments Committee is not scheduled in the programme of meetings and therefore has been considered as an ad-hoc meeting. Meetings will be arranged to meet the requirements of the applicants, the supporting officers and the Elected Members.

It is proposed that meetings of the Appointments Committee be considered as ad-hoc and not be planned to start at a specific time.

4.3.3 Audit Committee

The majority of responses indicated that the start time of Audit Committee

meetings should be at 14:00. It is proposed that meetings of the committee be re-scheduled to start at 14:00 accordingly.

4.3.4 Council

A majority of responses/comments received requested that the starting time of the Council remain at 15:00. It is proposed that the meeting time of Council remain unchanged.

4.3.5 Democratic Services Committee

The majority of responses/comments indicated that the start times of Democratic Services Committee meetings should be at 16:00. Therefore it is proposed that meetings of the committee be re-scheduled to start at 16:00 accordingly.

4.3.6 Development Control Committee

The majority of responses/comments indicated that the start times of Development Control Committee meetings should be at 09:30. The Development Control Committee involves involvement from a number of officers in a variety service areas including Highways. The earlier start time is likely to preclude a briefing before the committee which is sometimes necessary depending on the complexity of the agenda and to ensure the effective operation of the Committee.

The change in time will also have implications for the Development Control training programme for Elected Members. Training may not be able to take place on Wednesday afternoon as this could clash with Council meetings. The current training programme has been arranged until the end of the year and whilst there is some flexibility for re-arranging sessions provided by internal speakers, this may not always be the case for external speakers who have already agreed dates and times. The current time slot of 12:45 - 1:45 on Thursday i.e. after the Development Control Committee, may need to be retained.

It is proposed that meetings of the Development Control committee be re-scheduled to start at 10:00. Officers will revise the arrangements for Development Control Committee training and other procedures associated with the effective operation of the Committee to meet this proposed revision to the meeting timing.

4.3.7 Licensing Committee /Licensing Act 2003 Committee

The majority of responses/comments indicated that the start times of the Licensing/Licensing Act 2003 Committee meetings should be at 09:30.

It is proposed that the meetings of the Licensing Committee/Licensing Act 2003 Committee be scheduled to begin at 09:30.

4.3.8 Licensing Act 2003 Sub-Committee

The majority of responses/comments indicated that the start times of the Licensing Act 2003 Committee Sub-Committee meetings should be at 09:30. These meetings deal with hearings under the Licensing Act 2003 and involve 3 Elected Members of the Licensing Act 2003 Committees. These meetings also involve outside agencies, members of the public and other legal professions who may not always be locally based and therefore an early start time is not always appropriate. The members sitting in support of these meetings are consulted regarding their availability and it is therefore proposed that meetings of the Sub-Committees be considered as ad-hoc and not be planned to start at a specific time.

4.3.9 Licensing Sub-Committees

The majority of responses/comments indicated that the start times of the Licensing Committee Sub-Committee meetings should be at 09:30. These meetings cover taxi driving matters including grant of licences, renewal, driving disciplinary issues and vehicle licencing. Many of these drivers are involved in school contracts not only for Bridgend Council but for other Authorities which would prevent them attending meetings before 10:00.

For consistency it is proposed that the Licensing sub-committee meetings will remain with a start time at 10:00.

4.3.10 Rights of Way Sub-Committee

The Rights of Way Sub-Committee is not scheduled in the programme of meetings and therefore has been considered as an ad-hoc meeting. Meetings will be arranged to meet the requirements of the supporting officers and the Elected Members of the Rights of Way Sub-Committee. It is proposed that meetings of the Rights of Way Sub-Committee be considered as ad-hoc and not be planned to start at a specific time.

4.3.11 Standards Committee

The majority of responses/comments indicated that the start time of Standards Committee meetings should be at 10:00. It is proposed that meetings of the committee be re-scheduled to start at 10:00 accordingly.

4.3.12 Town & Community Council Forum

The majority of responses/comments indicated that the start times of meetings of the Town & Community Council Forum should be at 16:00. The Town and Community Council Forum is currently undertaking a review of the Town and Community Council Charter and the procedures of the committee which may recommend alternative meeting arrangements be made. It is proposed that meetings of the Town & Community Council Forum remain at 16:00 until the Forum completes its review and any recommendations are received as a result of that review.

4.3.13 Scrutiny Committees

The majority of responses/comments indicated that the start times of the Scrutiny meetings should be at 09:30. It is proposed that meetings of all scrutiny Committees be re-scheduled to start at 09:30 accordingly.

4.4 Member Development

- 4.4.1 The majority of responses/comments indicated that the preferred days for Member Development activities to be undertaken were Tuesday and Wednesdays. The preferred timings were identified as 10:00-12:00 and 16:00-18:00. It should be noted that some of the diarised Member Development sessions cannot be rescheduled as they are from external providers.

It is proposed that where possible, future Member Development activities will be scheduled to be held on either a Tuesday or a Wednesday and the timings will be alternated between 10:00-12:00 and 16:00-18:00.

4.5 Cabinet Meetings

4.5.1 The timings of meetings of Cabinet, Cabinet Committee Equalities and the Cabinet Committee - Corporate Parenting are the responsibility of Cabinet to consider and do not form part of this report.

4.6 School Holidays

4.6.1 Comments received as part of the survey requested that school holidays be avoided. All efforts to minimise meetings scheduled to be held during school holidays have been made and only 4 meetings in the forthcoming municipal year have been unavoidably scheduled during school holidays.

4.7 Additional Changes

4.7.1 Prior to the survey the Licensing sub-committees requested a change of the day on which their meetings had been scheduled. These changes have been discussed with officers who had no objection to meetings being held on the following days:

- Thu 17 Aug 17 Licensing Sub Committee (B)
- Thu 21 Sep 17 Licensing Sub Committee (A)
- Thu 19 Oct 17 Licensing Sub Committee (B)
- Thu 16 Nov 17 Licensing Sub Committee (A)
- Tue 12 Dec 17 Licensing Sub Committee (B)
- Thu 18 Jan 18 Licensing Sub Committee (A)
- Thu 13 Feb 18 Licensing Sub Committee (B)
- Tue 13 Mar 18 Licensing Sub Committee (A)
- Wed 18 April 18 Licensing Sub Committee (B)

4.8 Review of the Programme of Meetings

4.8.1 Following the outcome of the survey a review of the current programme of meetings has been undertaken and the following additional changes are required to the programme of meetings:

- The Licensing Committee scheduled for 17 April 2018 is no longer required and is proposed to be cancelled.
- The Democratic Services Committee have requested an additional meeting to be held on 02 November 2017 to accommodate the timely delivery of its work programme.
- Due to the Scrutiny Committees being rescheduled to 09:30, those meetings planned to be held on Tuesday's would now clash with existing meetings of Cabinet Members and also meetings of the Corporate Management Board therefore the scrutiny meetings have been re-scheduled accordingly.

4.9 The revised programme of meetings is at **Appendix 2**. It should be noted that any changes to the proposed days of meetings may require further work to be undertaken to de-conflict meetings timings and procedure with other committee meetings to provide a workable programme of meetings.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules

5.1 None.

6. Equality Impact assessment

6.1 There are no equality implications in relation to this report.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 There are no financial implications in relation to this report.

8. Recommendation:

It is recommended that Council:

8.1 notes the outcome of the timings of meetings survey as detailed in Appendix 1 of this report;

8.2 approves the proposed Programme of Meetings as shown in Appendix 2, which has been compiled from the survey and developed using the rationale as outlined in paragraph 4 of the report.

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17 July 2017

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Background documents:

None