



## Committee Timetable 2017/18

1 March 2017

### Report of Council Business Committee

#### PURPOSE OF REPORT

To consider the recommendations of Council Business Committee and agree a timetable of committee meetings for the 2017/18 municipal year.

**This report is public**

#### RECOMMENDATIONS OF COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

- (1) That the draft timetable, set out at Appendix 1, be recommended to Council.
- (2) That it be recommended to Council that:
  - a) the start time of Annual Council be changed from 6.30pm to 6pm.
  - b) the start time of the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) be changed from 4pm to 5pm and Personnel Committee to start at 6:10pm, 'or at the rise of JCC, whichever is the later' with the Chairman to use their discretion regarding an earlier start for JCC depending on the amount of business to be considered
  - c) the venue for Audit Committee be changed from Morecambe Town Hall to Lancaster Town Hall.

#### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 At its meeting on 26 January 2017, Council Business Committee (CBC) considered a report with two draft timetables. One was based on the usual arrangement of meetings, the other was drafted to illustrate a recommendation to CBC from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC), asking for OSC meetings to be timetabled for the Wednesday prior to Cabinet meetings instead of two weeks and a day following Cabinet meetings. This was to allow pre-scrutiny of the Cabinet agenda by the whole OSC committee. The full report which went to CBC is attached, and both draft timetables are appended to that report for members' information.

#### 2.0 Proposal

- 2.1 CBC Members considered the issues raised in the report and agreed with the suggestions regarding changes to the timing of Annual Council, the Joint Consultative Committee and the venue for Audit Committee meetings (this is covered in recommendation 2 to Council, above).
- 2.2 Members noted that the timetables had been drafted after careful thought about the best dates to provide timely quarterly monitoring information to both

Cabinet and Budget and Performance Panel. However, they expressed a preference for Budget and Performance Panel meetings to be scheduled as they had been in 2016, with meetings in July and September, rather than June and August. That is reflected in their recommendation to Council (this is covered in recommendation 1 to Council, above). The Committee was also supportive of the request from OSC for pre-scrutiny and preferred the draft timetable at Appendix C of the report, with OSC meetings scheduled one week before each Cabinet meeting and it is that timetable that they are recommending to Council.

- 2.3 It was noted in the report that there was no existing mechanism for formally feeding in any pre-scrutiny comments from OSC to Cabinet if it met four days before the Cabinet meeting. It would not be feasible to draft a report in such a short timescale. The Monitoring Officer agreed to consider this issue and it is covered in paragraph 3.4 of this referral report.

- 2.4 For clarity, the draft timetable being recommended to Council by CBC is shown as Appendix 1 to this report.

### **3.0 Officer Comments**

- 3.1 Since the Council Business Committee meeting in January, officers have had time to reflect on some of the timetabling issues and put forward a further option which was not included in the report to CBC in January (for reasons explained in Paragraph 4.0).

- 3.2 Members need to bear in mind that the OSC has a very full work programme for 2016/17 and is likely to have as much, or more, work lined up in 2017/18. Pre-scrutiny is only one aspect of effective O&S; it is also important to carry out time-limited, in depth task group work, which can make a real and lasting difference to the life of residents in the district, as well as contributing to policy development in its early stages. Carrying out scrutiny of the Cabinet agenda in ordinary meetings of the full OSC is likely to add around two hours onto each meeting, with the risk that this could overshadow other important aspects of the scrutiny workload (see below). It is also likely to require the attendance of various Chief Officers which will eat into the time they have available to advance vital high-level projects which Council wishes to take forward.

- 3.3 It is also important to recognise that there is a well-established pre-scrutiny process already in operation, whereby the pre-scrutiny Champion, Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of both OSC and B&PP meet with Democratic Support officers to go through the Cabinet agenda in detail. This is carried out in the daytime and meetings can last up to two hours, with only four Members involved in the discussion (the pre-scrutiny Champion this year is also a Vice-Chairman).

- 3.4 As stated in the report to CBC, four days is insufficient time to draft a written report from OSC to Cabinet with pre-scrutiny feedback. Representations could, of course, be made verbally if Cabinet agreed to receive them. For example, the Chairman or Vice-Chairman of OSC could report in person at the Cabinet meeting, if the Leader of the Council was minded to allow 'Pre-scrutiny Input' as a Standing Item on each Cabinet Agenda.

### **4.0 Another option**

- 4.1 When drafting the report for CBC, officers had not been fully aware of the reasons why O&S had recommended re-scheduling their committee meetings to allow pre-scrutiny. At the CBC meeting, it was clear that some Members felt the limitations of the current pre-scrutiny process (being restricted to a maximum of five Members) did not allow sufficient input for all nine members of OSC.

- 4.2 With that in mind, an alternative to carrying out pre-scrutiny during public meetings of OSC would be to open up the existing pre-scrutiny sessions to include all nine Members of OSC. This would allow the opportunity of all OSC members to scrutinise the Cabinet agenda without cutting into committee time and reducing the capacity available to deliver the scrutiny workplan. There is the risk that the discussion could take longer, if all nine Members of the Committee were involved, but its effective would be monitored and evaluated; if need be further changes could be considered in due course.
- 4.3 There is currently no formal mechanism for pre-scrutiny feedback, but if that was felt to be necessary, then the comments in paragraph 3.4 would apply.
- 5.0 Conclusion**
- 5.1 Council is asked to consider the recommendations of CBC, and the officer comments in this report, in setting a timetable for committee meetings in 2017/18.

#### **CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

**(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)**

None directly arising from this report.

An equality impact assessment has not been carried out because the report does not directly affect staff, customers or other members of the public. However, it should be noted that, anecdotally (no figures exist), Democratic Services have noticed an increase in the public participating in and observing full Council meetings since those meetings moved from the afternoon to the evening, indicating that evening meetings may be easier for the public to attend.

#### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

None directly arising from this report.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The cost of meetings are covered by existing budgets, however it is likely that OSC meetings will be lengthened by the inclusion of pre-scrutiny in the scheduled meetings which may have small cost implications for keeping Morecambe Town Hall open and staffed later into the evening.

#### **OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS, such as HR, ICT, etc.**

**HR:** If O & S intend to scrutinise Cabinet reports it is likely that there will be a need for Chief Officers and other Senior Officers to be in more regular attendance at O & S, which has a consequential impact upon officer working times. As outlined in the report, whilst working times can be adjusted by officers this will divert resources away from other key activities and outputs and therefore the proposal outlined at 4.0 above would be a suitable alternative.

**Property:** Please see financial implications above.

#### **SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

**MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

The Monitoring Officer's comments are incorporated in the officer comments in the report at paragraph 3.0.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

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