

# COUNCIL

## City Council Meetings Timetable and Meeting Times - 2009/10

4<sup>th</sup> February 2009

### Report of the Council Business Committee

#### PURPOSE OF REPORT

To consider the recommendation of Council Business Committee and agree a timetable of meetings and meeting times for the year 2009/10 for publication purposes.

This report is public.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That, having considered the report and the recommendations of the Council Business Committee set out in paragraphs 1.3, 2.2 and 3.2, the Council's timetable of meetings for 2009/10 be approved as set out in Appendix A and as follows, subject to any amendments required as a result of the decision in (3) below:

Meeting	Start Time	Venue
Annual Council (Ceremonial)	12 noon	LTH
Annual Council (Business)	6.00 pm	MTH
Council	2.00 pm	MTH
Council Business Committee	5.00 pm	MTH
Audit Committee	6.00 pm	MTH
Budget and Performance Panel	6.00 pm	LTH
Cabinet	10.00 am	LTH/MTH alternating
Licensing Regulatory Committee	1.00 pm	LTH
Licensing Act Committee	4.30 pm	LTH
Overview and Scrutiny Committee	6.00 pm	MTH
Personnel Committee	4.30 pm	LTH
Planning and Highways Regulatory Committee	4.00 pm	LTH (The meeting will return to MTH once works to enhance the Council Chamber have been undertaken)
Standards Committee	10.00 am	LTH

- (2) That Council consider the recommendation of the Council Business Committee, set out in paragraph 3.4, that the first meeting of all Task Groups should take place at 6.00 pm unless there are special circumstances.
- (3) That Council consider the option set out in the officer comments (paragraph 4.0) relating to the amalgamation of Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Budget and Performance Panel and, should Council wish to pursue this option, it

**approve at a future meeting the consequent amendments to Article 6 and Sections 12 and 13 of Part 3 of the Constitution, or specifically delegate authority to the Monitoring Officer or the Council Business Committee to do so.**

## **1.0 Timetable**

- 1.1 At its meeting, held on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2009, Council Business Committee considered the draft Council meetings timetable for 2009/10.
- 1.2 The timetable of meetings for 2009/10 has been prepared following the same principles as last year in terms of frequency of meetings with a recess over August and a short break at Christmas. Minor alterations to the dates of some meetings have been made where external deadlines have to be met. The number of meetings for each Committee is as follows:

<b><u>Committee</u></b>	<b><u>Number of meetings per year</u></b>
Audit	4
Full Council	10 (including Annual and Budget Council)
Council Business Committee	6
Cabinet	11
Personnel	4 (with additional meetings called as required)
JCC	4
Planning Regulatory	12
Licensing Regulatory	8
Licensing Act	6 (with Sub-committees called as required)
Overview & Scrutiny Committee	8
Budget & Performance Panel	9
Standards	4 (with additional meetings called as required)
Williamson Park Board	4

- 1.3 With regard to the Special Council Meeting which was to be held during Local Democracy Week, Council Business Committee agreed that this should be cancelled for 2009 in order to allow savings to be made in the Democratic Representation budget for this year, but should be re-instated in the 2010/11 timetable.
- 1.4 As in the previous year it is also suggested that the date for the 2010/11 Annual Council be fixed at this stage to enable advance arrangements and publicity to commence.
- 1.5 The Budget Council has for many years been held during the last week of February. However, this was moved to a later date last year following receipt of information that the Police Authority's precept would not have been received in time for a February tax setting meeting and in view of this the meeting has been scheduled again at the later date in 2010.
- 1.6 Efforts have been made to avoid school holidays wherever possible, although on occasions, due to the need to arrange meetings to report to each other and the requirements of the budget setting process, this is not always the case.
- 1.7 The Chairmen of the Budget and Performance Panel and Overview and Scrutiny Committee have advised that it would be preferable to timetable Budget and Performance Panel meetings prior to Overview and Scrutiny meetings on the Meetings Timetable for 2009/10 and meetings in June, July and September have been re-scheduled accordingly.

- 1.8 Members should note that whilst Audit Committee ordinarily meets on a Wednesday, the meeting scheduled for the end of June has been included on Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> June 2009. This is because this meeting of the Audit Committee is required to approve the closure of accounts for 2008/09 by the deadline of 30<sup>th</sup> June each year. This is a very tight deadline for Financial Services and with the last Wednesday of the month falling on 24<sup>th</sup> June in 2009 would be difficult to achieve.
- 1.9 The Committee is requested to consider the timetable of meetings for 2009/10 as set out in Appendix A to the report.

## 2.0 Venues

- 2.1 Meetings are held at both Lancaster and Morecambe Town Halls as set out below:

Meeting	Venue
Annual Council (Ceremonial)	LTH
Annual Council (Business)	MTH
Council	MTH
Council Business Committee	MTH
Audit Committee	MTH
Budget and Performance Panel	LTH
Cabinet	LTH/MTH alternating
Licensing Regulatory Committee	LTH
Licensing Act Committee	LTH
Overview and Scrutiny Committee	MTH
Personnel Committee	LTH
Planning and Highways Regulatory Committee	LTH (The meeting will return to MTH once works to enhance the Council Chamber have been undertaken)
Standards Committee	LTH

- 2.2 It is suggested that these continue unchanged with the exception of Planning Committee which has been moved to Lancaster during 2008/09 due to problems with available equipment. It is intended to move back to Morecambe Town Hall once the Council Chamber has been appropriately refurbished but for the time being this needs to be retained at Lancaster Town Hall.

## 3.0 Start Times

- 3.1 Council Business Committee considered a request that has been received from the Green Group that consideration be given to holding the majority of Council meetings in the evenings. Information has therefore been included within this report to enable Members to give further consideration to this matter as part of the setting of the timetable for 2009/10.
- 3.2 Council Business Committee considered the current start times and taking into consideration the request from the Green Group made the following recommendations as set out below:

Meeting	Current Start Time	Council Business Committee's Recommendation
Annual Council (Ceremonial)	12 noon	Remain the same
Annual Council (Business)	6.00 pm	Remain the same

Council	2.00 pm	Remain the same
Council Business Committee	4.30 pm	Start at 5.00 pm
Audit Committee	6.00 pm	Remain the same
Budget and Performance Panel	4.30 pm	Start at 6.00 pm
Cabinet	10.00 am	Remain the same
Licensing Regulatory Committee	1.00 pm	Remain the same
Licensing Act Committee	2.00 pm	Start at 4.30 pm
Overview and Scrutiny Committee	6.00 pm	Remain the same
Personnel Committee	4.30 pm	Remain the same
Planning and Highways Regulatory Committee	10.30 am	Start at 4.00pm
Standards Committee	10.00 am	Remain the same

3.3 Members should note that the original report to the Council Business Committee contained an error, in that the start time for Standards Committee was stated as being 2 pm. No change was proposed to this Committee since it is chaired by an independent Member who has not suggested that this time is either inappropriate or inconvenient. The start time has therefore been corrected in the table above.

3.4 In addition there are currently or have recently been the following non-timetabled meetings:

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Commencement Time</b>
<b>Ad hoc meetings</b>	
Appeals Committee	Various daytime meetings with a site visit.
Appraisal Panel	Various daytime meetings.
Lancaster and Morecambe Markets Cabinet Committee	Daytime.
Licensing Act Sub-Committee	Daytime
Standards Assessment Sub-Committee	Daytime.
<b>Cabinet Liaison Groups:</b>	
Canal Corridor	Various daytime meetings.
Festivals and Events	10.00 a.m.
Lancaster and District Chamber	5.00 p.m.
Morecambe Retail, Commercial and Tourism	6.30 p.m.
Planning Policy	Various daytime meetings.
Transport	10.00 a.m.
Universities	5.30 p.m.
<b>Task Groups:</b>	
Allotments	5.00 p.m.
Anti Social Behaviour	Varies mainly 6.00 p.m.
Canals	6.00 p.m. with daytime site visits.
Council Assets	6.00 p.m.
<b>Partnerships:</b>	
West End Partnership	6.00 p.m.
Poulton Neighbourhood Management Board	5.30 p.m.
CARP	7.00 p.m.
LSP	Daytime
Museums Partnership	Daytime
Luneside Regeneration	Daytime

- 3.4 With regard to Task Group meetings, Council Business Committee recommended that the first meeting of all Task Groups should take place at 6.00 pm unless there are special circumstances. The start time of future meetings and the frequency of these meetings would then be agreed at this meeting.
- 3.5 An analysis of the duration of timetabled meetings has been undertaken using the meetings timetable of 2007/08 as a basis, details of which have been set out in Appendix C to the report to enable Members to consider the practicalities of later start times in all cases.
- 3.6 In considering whether to hold all meetings in the evening, Members need to consider the impact this might have on the following issues:
- Wider choice of committees and ability to participate for working Councillors
  - Makes being a Councillor more attractive to a wider sector of the population
  - Improves public engagement
  - Hire of premises / Loss of usage by other paying organisations
  - Security / Heating / Lighting of premises
  - Provision of food / evening meal allowances for councillors / staff
  - Increased carers' allowance payable for councillors with dependants
  - Staff overtime / time off in lieu
  - Lengthy meetings may run on late into the evening – this can be mitigated by introducing a 'guillotine' to close meetings at a particular time, although this may result in meetings being required to adjourn and reconvene on another day.
- 3.6 Property Services have advised that, with regard to caretaking and costs of opening Council buildings in the evenings, the building attendants would be paid overtime for working in the evening at a rate of £9.56 per hour up to 8.00 p.m. and £11.48 per hour after 8.00 p.m., which includes an unsocial hours payment. It is not clear yet if or how overtime payments will be affected, or the building attendants hourly rate by Fairpay and both the unsocial hours payment and overtime payments will be subject to review as part of the Fairpay process.
- 3.7 As well as costs for attendants there would be additional costs for opening the Council's buildings in the evenings, such as heating and lighting costs. Heat and light costs for Lancaster Town Hall are approximately £25 per hour and £15 per hour at Morecambe Town Hall.
- 3.8 In relation to Democratic Services, the terms and conditions of Democratic Support Officers currently allow officers attending meetings beyond 6pm to choose between overtime payments or flexitime up to 7.30pm and time off in lieu after 7.30pm. This is currently subject to review as part of the Fair Pay exercise and it is likely that the facility to claim overtime will be removed. The impact will therefore be that additional overtime will become payable or, more likely as a result of the Fair Pay review, working hours of Democratic Support Officers will change with more hours being worked during the evenings, resulting in the office being unstaffed at times during normal office hours.

3.9 Changing the timetabled meetings included in Appendix C to meet in the evening, where they do not already, would result in 62 additional evening meetings for 136 total hours at an average meeting length of 2.11 hours. Averaged across the Democratic support section this could result in either an additional £2,500 overtime payments or reduced availability of staff who will take compensatory time off in lieu, either via the Council's flexi-time policy or by special arrangement for hours worked beyond 7.30pm.

#### **4.0 Officer Comments**

4.1 Since the Council Business Committee met to consider the proposed timetable, it has been suggested that one option is that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Budget & Performance Panel could combine into one Overview & Scrutiny Committee taking on the functions of both.

4.2 In terms of the timetable this may need to be reconsidered since whilst all the existing dates of both Committees would not be necessary it may be necessary to increase the number of Overview & Scrutiny Committee meetings in the year. A decision would also be required on the venue for the meeting, perhaps alternating between Morecambe and Lancaster in the same way as Cabinet. If necessary the Chief Executive could be authorised to finalise the timetable to include an appropriate number of meetings throughout the year in consultation with the current Chairman of Overview & Scrutiny.

4.3 Should Council wish to pursue this option it will be necessary for it to approve at a future meeting consequent amendments to the relevant parts of the Articles and Committee Terms of Reference in the Constitution, or to delegate authority to the Monitoring Officer or Council Business Committee to do so.

4.4 A saving of £3,235 (+ inflation) will be made in respect of the Special Responsibility Allowance currently payable to the Chairman of Budget & Performance Panel.

#### **5.0 Consultation**

5.1 Previous consultation with Members over their preferred start times for meetings has proved inconclusive, resulting in the 'mixed' arrangement currently in place. The Council Business Committee considered the meetings timetable at its meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> January and the recommendations that emerged are included within this report.

5.2 Other Lancashire local authorities have been consulted with regard to their meetings; details of responses are contained within Appendix B to the report, from which it can be seen that of the 11 councils in Lancashire from whom responses have been received, 5 meet wholly in the evening, 5 mostly during the evening (with Regulatory Committees being the exceptions for the most part) and only one holds meetings mostly during the day.

#### **6.0 Conclusions**

6.1 The timetable of meetings for 2009/10 has been prepared and incorporates the recommendations of Council Business Committee and the resolutions of Council last year following the same principles in terms of frequency of meetings. Members are requested to consider the proposed timetable and to indicate their preferences with regard to daytime and/or evening meetings as set out in paragraph 3.2 of this report.

**CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

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

None.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Whilst the cost of holding the meetings included in this timetable can be met from the existing Democratic Representation budgets, there would be some additional resource and financial implications involved in increasing the number of evening meetings. It is not possible to quantify these with any great certainty, but the following budgets could be affected to some degree:

- Hire of premises, reduction in income
- Building attendants, increased staff costs (subject to Fair Pay review)
- Increased heating and lighting costs of longer opening hours
- Increased catering costs
- Increased carers' allowances
- Additional overtime payments to Democratic Support staff (subject to Fair Pay review)

There is an element of flexibility with the existing Democratic Representation budget which would allow for some variation, however the catering budget was reduced from £9,700 to £7,000 in 2008/09 due to previous underspending and is now fully committed. The current Democratic Services overtime budget of £2,000 is also under pressure. These budgets would remain at current levels, therefore, but clearly they would be monitored regularly during the year.

The amalgamation of the 2 Overview & Scrutiny bodies would result in a saving of £3,235 (+ inflation) in respect of the Special Responsibility Allowance currently payable to the Chairman of Budget & Performance Panel.

**SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

The s151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments to add.

**LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

It is a legal requirement that the Council publishes its timetable of meetings by the commencement of each Municipal Year. Amendments can be made throughout the year provided at least 5 days notice is given.

If changes were to be made to the start times of meetings consideration may need to be given, in some circumstances, to amendments to other elements of the Constitution, particularly where a given timescale is set out for the production of Minutes (i.e. Cabinet minutes etc).

**MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Reports to Council Business Committee dated 15<sup>th</sup> November 2007, 15<sup>th</sup> January and Council dated 5<sup>th</sup> December 2007.

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**STATISTICAL DATA OBTAINED FROM OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITIES WITHIN LANCASHIRE**

Local Authority	When do your meetings take place? Day-time or evening Average duration of meeting	Evening arrangements (staff, electricity, heating etc) Other comments
Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council	Evening. Duration is approx 2-3 hours, although Council Forum can go on for longer.	No information on cost but the Buildings Team have to pay additional hours staff to lock up. (Under new flexi arrangements staff can work until 7.00 p.m. anyway.)
Blackpool Council	Regulatory committees during day (except Development Control), rest either 5 p.m., 6 p.m. or for Area Forums/ other Forums – 7 p.m.).	-
Chorley Borough Council	A few daytime, but most are evening.	-
Fylde Borough Council	Scrutiny Committees, Audit, Council and Cabinet meetings commence at 19:00. Development Control Committee meetings commence at 09:30 Licensing and Public Protection Committee meetings commence at 09:30. The Scrutiny Committees, Audit Committee, Council and Cabinet meetings can last between anything from 1 ½ to 3 hours. The Development Control Committee can last for up 4 hours.	To keep our Town Hall open to host these evening meetings costs: <b>Average Cost Per KWH for Electric</b> is - £8.29447 <b>Average Cost Per KWH for Gas</b> is - £1.57031 (KWH = Kilo Watt Hour) There is no charge for the custodians (caretakers) as these meetings are incorporated into their shift patterns.
Hyndburn Borough Council	Mostly daytime.  Duration time of meetings:  Council probably lasts 2- 3 hours; other meetings no more than 2 hours.	Council meetings are in the Town Hall (separate to the Council offices)  Area Council meetings take place at various venues - some Council-run (no charge); some in schools where the cost varies - £50 - £100  Whether there are daytime or evening meetings is the choice of the ruling group.
Lancaster City Council	Mixture of both. O&S and Audit start at 6.00 p.m. Budget and Performance starts at 4.30 p.m., but the rest are usually during the day.	As set out in the body of the report.
Pendle Borough Council	Evening.  Average length of a meeting is around two hours, although some of the area committee meetings can last up to three.	No costs available as the Council use a variety of different buildings in the Borough, particularly the area committees who move about quite a lot.

<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>When do your meetings take place? Day-time or evening Average duration of meeting</b>	<b>Evening arrangements (staff, electricity, heating etc) Other comments</b>
Ribble Valley Borough Council	All at 6.30 p.m. Meetings last anything from 1 hour to 3, the Council have a 'cut-off' at 9.30 p.m., unless voted upon to complete the meeting.	No breakdown of costs available, but the Council do have a member of staff on duty in the Council Chambers for the meeting duration.
Rossendale Borough Council	All in the Evening (except internal meetings).	
South Ribble Borough Council	Main committees meet mostly in the evening; working/task groups generally in the day time.	
West Lancashire District Council	Evening.	
Wyre Borough Council	Main committees meet mostly in the evening. Audit and Planning meetings alternate between daytime and evening.	No costings per room provided.

**APPENDIX C****MEETINGS DURING 2007/08 – TIMINGS**

<b>MEETING</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>LONGEST Hours/Minutes</b>	<b>SHORTEST Hours/Minutes</b>	<b>AVERAGE Hours/Minutes</b>
*Council	10	5.25	1.15	3.04
**Council Business Committee	7	2.36	0.40	1.30
Cabinet	12	4.20	0.26	2.15
Planning	12	3.50	1.00	2.55
***Overview & Scrutiny	11	3.10	0.50	2.02
**Budget & Performance Panel	10	1.56	0.44	1.25
Standards	4	1.32	0.35	1.08
Personnel	3	1.04	0.27	0.46
Licensing Act	5	0.20	1.12	0.42
Licensing Regulatory	9	3.50	0.47	2.28
***Audit	4	2.02	0.57	1.41

\* Council had 2 meetings starting at 6.00 pm that lasted 55 minutes and 20 minutes not included above.

\*\* These meetings currently commence at 4.30pm

\*\*\* These meetings currently commence at 6.00pm