

COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

City Council Meetings Timetable and Meeting Times - 2012/13

15 March 2012

Report of the Head of Governance

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To approve the meetings timetable and meetings times for the Municipal year 2012/13 and, in particular, to consider 6pm start times for the Personnel and Standards Committees.

This report is public

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE HEAD OF GOVERNANCE

- (1) That the Committee considers the meetings timetable and meeting times for the Municipal year 2012/13, in particular changing to 6pm start times for the Personnel and Standards Committees, and either**
 - (a) agrees and approves a timetable and meetings start times for the Municipal year 2012/13 based on the draft timetable at Appendix B; or**
 - (b) makes recommendations on a timetable and meeting start times for the Municipal year 2012/13, for referral on to Council for debate on 11 April 2012.**

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Council Business Committee has delegated authority to agree the annual timetable of Lancaster City Council meetings. The following report is based on the schedule of meetings held in 2011/12 and, at the request of the Chairman of the Committee, the Committee is asked to consider changing the start times of two Committees, Personnel and Standards.

2.0 Proposal Details

- 2.1 The proposal is that the start time for the Personnel Committee be moved from 4.30pm to 6pm and that the start time for the Standards Committee be moved from 10.00am to 6pm. All other start times would remain the same as 2011/12, as shown at Appendix A.
- 2.2 It should be noted that the Localism Act 2011 has made changes to the Standards regime, as detailed in the Monitoring Officer's report to Council on 1 February 2012. The current Committee is a statutory committee and there

will be no requirement for the Council to have a Standards Committee under the Act. It is, however, likely that the Council will still keep a Standard's Committee in 2012/13 comprised of Elected Members on a PR basis.

- 2.3 The draft timetable attached at Appendix B shows the proposed dates of meetings assuming the number of meetings remain as they are this year and that the dates follow the same pattern with a couple of exceptions explained in 2.4 and 2.5 below.
- 2.4 It is proposed that the Licensing Regulatory Committee, which would normally be held on Thursday 15 November 2012, be brought forward to Tuesday 13 November 2012. The reason for this is that the elections for the new Police and Crime Commissioners are due to be held on Thursday 15 November and Democratic Support staff will all be required to work on the election.
- 2.5 That the dates of Budget and Performance Panel meetings, which would normally have been scheduled for 29 May, 28 August, 27 November 2012 and 18 February 2013, be moved to 12 June, 11 September, 11 December 2012 and 5 March 2013. This is because it became apparent, during the 2011/12 municipal year, that the timetabling of the Cabinet and Budget and Performance Panel meetings did not fit well with the Council's quarterly corporate performance reporting cycle. The dates for Budget and Performance Panel meetings in 2012/13 have therefore been drafted with regard to the performance reporting cycle and assume pre-scrutiny of the performance information prior to Cabinet. This accords with the view of the Panel, which was consulted on this issue at its meeting on 21 February 2012.
- 2.6 There is one further, minor, point which may arise from the proposed changes in start times to meetings. A Member Briefing session has been scheduled for 11 October 2012 at 6pm and this would clash with a Standards Committee meeting if the Standards Committee meeting started at 6pm. However, the Member Briefing would be rescheduled to Thursday 18 October 2012 if the decision is taken to change the start time of the Standards Committee from 10.00am to 6pm.

3.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

| | Option 1: To change the start times of the Personnel and Standards Committees to 6pm. | Option 2: Meetings times to remain the same as 2011/12. |
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| Advantages | Would allow Members who work 9-5 and have difficulty attending daytime meetings to serve on the Standards and Personnel Committees which currently meet in the day. | <p>Holding the majority of meetings in the daytime is preferred by Members with evening commitments.</p> <p>No financial implications as the two Town Halls are already open during weekdays.</p> <p>Long meetings would end at a reasonable hour.</p> |

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| <p>Disadvantages</p> | <p>Some Members may prefer daytime meetings and find evening meetings difficult.</p> <p>Might be difficult for Members who are also Parish/Town Councillors and attend parish meetings in the evenings to serve on Personnel or Standards.</p> <p>There could be slight cost implications for increasing the number of evening meetings (see Financial Implications).</p> <p>Personnel meetings that deal with grievance and disciplinary appeals, and Standards meetings that deal with hearings can often be lengthy meetings. It would not be feasible to start these meetings at 6pm. If such meetings, unlike the scheduled meetings, were to be held during the day, those members who have been appointed to the Committees because they work during the day would be unable to attend.</p> <p>Personnel hearings sometimes require participation by representatives from Trade Unions. These representatives may not be as readily available to attend in the evening.</p> <p>The Council does not provide food for meetings starting at 6pm. Some Members who have worked all day may find it difficult to find time to eat before the start of the meeting. Should Members wish to have food provided before Standards and Personnel Committee meetings this would be an added cost.</p> <p>Holding meetings in the evening is a way to allow members of the public who work 9-5 more opportunity to attend public meetings. However the Personnel and Standards Committees are unlikely to attract</p> | <p>It is difficult for Members who work full time to serve on the Standards or Personnel Committees.</p> |
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| | <p>the public. There is no provision for the public to participate, only to observe. The reports often relate to individuals and therefore the public would be excluded from large parts of these meetings.</p> | |
| Risks | <p>The Council may lose Members' expertise. Members who currently serve on the Personnel or Standards Committee and have developed expertise may be unable to attend if the meetings are moved to 6pm.</p> <p>May result in more substitutions and absences from Members who also sit on Parish or Town Councils where meetings are already held in the evenings.</p> <p>The support service for Members might be affected during the week 9am-5pm as Democratic Services staff take time off accrued from evening meetings (see HR implications).</p> <p>Decisions taken late at night following a lengthy hearing may be susceptible to legal challenge.</p> | <p>The Council may miss an opportunity to tap into Members' expertise. Members who work full time may be unable to serve on the Personnel Committee where they could contribute particular knowledge.</p> |

3.1 There is no officer preferred option and it is open for the Committee to propose any other options it feels would be appropriate.

3.2 As previously stated, it is within the terms of reference of this Committee to agree the annual timetable of Lancaster City Council meetings. However, the attached draft has already been circulated to all Members so, should the Committee wish to propose other options which might result in radical changes to the start times, dates or frequency of meetings, officers would advise the Committee to refer its recommendations on to Council to consider on 11 April 2012.

4.0 Training and Development

4.1 It should be noted that the timings of training and development events for Members have changed this Municipal Year to accommodate requests for evening sessions. All events now start at 6pm unless they will take too long to finish at a reasonable hour or the trainer is unavailable in the evenings.

5.0 Conclusion

5.1 Members are asked to approve the draft meetings timetable for the next Municipal Year, and the start times for meetings, or to make

recommendations for referral on to Council, having regard to the issues raised in this report.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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

None.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications as a result of this report. However, holding lengthy hearings and taking decisions affecting individuals' rights late into the night may be deemed to be contrary to the rules of natural justice and may lead to such decisions being challenged through the courts.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Starting meetings at 6pm would carry some financial implications but it is expected that these would be minimal, e.g. heating and lighting the meeting rooms and staffing the building outside office hours, but only if the meetings continued beyond 7.30 pm

If Members wished to have food provided before the start of evening meetings, this would be an additional cost, however this is not currently provided for other 6pm meetings.

OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Human Resources:

Where officers of the Council are required to attend evening meetings the provisions of the Flexitime Policy and/or the policy in place that allows staff to take time of in lieu of additional hours worked outside core hours (Toil Policy) will be utilised. An increase in evening meetings may mean that the Democratic Support office is unmanned at some points during the week because of this. At present it is possible to maintain at least skeleton cover all week from 9am-5pm.

Property services staff work longer hours when the building is in use at night.

Information Services:

None.

Property:

Heating and lighting costs referred to in the Financial Implications above.

Open Spaces:

None.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

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

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and her comments are incorporated in the report,

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Council Business Committee meeting papers
15 November 2007.

Budget and Performance Panel meeting
papers 21 February 2012.

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Ref:

Meeting Start times/venues 2011/12

(LTH = Lancaster Town Hall and MTH = Morecambe Town Hall).

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| Annual Council (ceremonial) | Ashton Hall, LTH | 12pm |
| Annual Council (business) | MTH | 6pm |
| Council | MTH | 2pm |
| Council Business Committee | MTH | 6pm |
| Cabinet | Alternating LTH, MTH | 10am |
| Overview and Scrutiny | MTH | 6pm |
| Budget and Performance | MTH | 6pm |
| Licensing Regulatory Committee | LTH | 1pm |
| Licensing Act Committee | LTH | 2pm |
| Planning & Highways Regulatory | LTH | 10.30am |
| Personnel Committee | LTH | 4.30pm |
| JCC | LTH | 2pm |
| Audit Committee | MTH | 6pm |
| Standards Committee | LTH | 10am |

The Appeals Committee is convened as and when necessary at LTH with no set day or time.

