

# **COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE**

## **City Council Meetings Timetable and Meeting Times - 2008/09**

**15<sup>th</sup> November 2007**

### **Report of the Chief Executive**

#### **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To consider the meetings timetable and responses regarding preferred times for City Council meetings for the year 2008/09.

**This report is public.**

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- (1) That the times and venues for meetings be considered and that Council be advised of those recommendations.**
- (2) That the timetable of meetings for 2008/09, as set out in the Appendix C to the report, be considered and that Council be advised of those recommendations.**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

1.1 At its meeting, held on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2007, the Council Business Committee considered a report reviewing the start times for meetings included in the timetable for 2007/08.

#### **2.0 Commencement Times of Meetings**

2.1 In accordance with the decision to review the start times for all meetings included in the timetable for 2007/08 following the elections in May 2007, a survey was carried out amongst all Councillors.

2.2 The results of the survey proved inconclusive with no clear preference for daytime or evening meetings, but recognition that a variety of start times provided the best opportunity for Member participation.

2.3 The Council Business Committee, therefore, decided to collate some additional information with a view to making any changes for 2008/09, recognising that many Members will have chosen their Committees for this year on the basis of the current start times and their own availability. The Committee advised that all feedback received would be taken into account in setting the timetable for 2008/09. Details of the resolution are set out below:

- (1) That the start time of Council Business Committee meetings be amended from 4.00 pm to 4.30 pm for 2007/08.
- (2) That the Council meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2007 commence at 4.00 pm on an experimental basis.
- (3) That an item be included on the next agenda of all scheduled meetings requesting consideration of the most appropriate start time for that meeting.
- (4) That Group Administrators be requested to obtain information from their political groups on any Members unable to attend their choice of committee due to its current start time.
- (5) That all feedback received be taken into account in setting the timetable for 2008/09.

2.4 In accordance with the above all meetings included on the Timetable have been consulted and their views are set out in Appendix A to the report for Members consideration.

### **3.0 Implications**

3.1 As previously reported to the Committee in making its decision Members should be aware of the following implications of moving to evening meetings:

#### **3.2 Public engagement:**

Meetings such as the Cabinet and Planning and Highways Regulatory Committee have schemes encouraging public engagement through speaking at meetings. Members may feel that these meetings should be held in the evenings in order to encourage public participation but this needs to be balanced against the knowledge that both Cabinet and Planning can be lengthy meetings and dealing with complex issues late at night is not ideal. The scheme for the Planning and Highways Regulatory Committee is popular despite being during the day, with the general public requesting to speak at meetings on a regular basis. Meetings of this Committee commence at 10.30 am in the morning.

Public speaking at Cabinet is a new initiative and it is as yet too early to judge on its success, but feedback to date has not indicated that the daytime meeting is a drawback.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee also invites the public and representatives from outside organisations to attend meetings and for this reason its start time has been fixed at 6pm, with the Budget and Performance Panel at 4.30pm.

#### **3.4 Participation by other Organisations:**

A number of meetings require participation by representatives from other organisations. Members are requested to consider the requirements of each prior to making a decision on the commencement of each meeting. In a number of cases representatives of other organisations may not be available to attend evening meetings.

### **3.5 Constitutional changes:**

If there were changes to the 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).

### **3.6 Operational issues:**

There are a number of operational issues that will affect Service delivery within the Council. With regard to Democratic Services, for instance, a move to all evening meetings would require a change to their working practices which will impact on the way in which the service is delivered during normal office hours. Changes to terms and conditions will also need to undergo the usual process of consultation and negotiation with the staff concerned and unions. This would also be the case if the number of evening meetings were increased beyond a threshold of what is sustainable under the current working arrangements, say 50% of meetings commencing at 6pm or later.

There would also be staffing issues with regard to Property Services who would be required to cover the opening of Council buildings in the evenings/provide refreshments etc and Officers from other Services who may have to attend meetings to present reports and provide specialist advice to Members. There are also potential health and safety issues to be addressed such as door security during the evenings.

## **4.0 Consultation**

4.1 A survey of Members was undertaken after the experimental move of the 26<sup>th</sup> September 2007 Council meeting start time to 4.00 pm to which 62% of Councillors responded. The results of the survey indicated that the majority of Members preferred the start time of Council to remain at 2.00 pm.

60 % of those who responded to the survey preferred a 2.00 pm start time.  
11% preferred a 4.00 pm start time  
29% did not express a preference.

4.2 Feedback from the meetings that have been consulted is set out in Appendix A to this report.

4.3 Group Administrators have also been consulted and no comments have been received indicating that Members have been excluded from committees of their choice due to the current start time.

## **5.0 Meetings Timetable**

5.1 The Committee is also requested to consider the timetable of meetings for 2008/09, set out as Appendix C to the report.

5.2 The timetable of meetings for 2008/09 has been prepared for the most part following the same principles as previous years 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:

<u>Committee</u>	<u>Number of meetings per year</u>
Audit	4
Full Council	11 (including Annual, Budget and Special Councils)
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

- 5.3 The figures above include an additional council meeting in the Autumn as a Special Meeting in line with the Constitution as it has become apparent that using one of the existing dates leaves too long a gap between meetings to deal with any business that arises.
- 5.4 It is also suggested that the date for the 2009/10 Annual Council be fixed at this stage to enable advance arrangements and publicity to commence.
- 5.5 The Budget Council which has for many years been held during the last week of February has been moved to a later date following receipt of information that the Police Authority's precept will not have been received in time for a February tax setting meeting.
- 5.6 With the amendments made to the Terms of Reference of Personnel Committee, including the increase in the scope of the Officer Scheme of Delegation and the Committee hearing personnel appeals, there has been a reduction in the required number of scheduled Personnel Committee meetings with cancellations recently through lack of business, but an increase in the number of ad-hoc meetings to hear appeals. Therefore, it is proposed to reduce the scheduled Personnel Committee meetings to quarterly, which would bring this in to line with the Audit Committee and Joint Consultative Committee.
- 5.7 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.

## 6.0 Conclusions

- 6.1 The results of the consultations undertaken with other meetings included on the Meetings Timetable are attached as an Appendix to this report. In making any recommendations to Council the Committee should consider those responses together with the need for more public engagement/involvement particularly where there is interest from the general public in the Agenda, or where they may be invited to partake in some way.
- 6.2 The timetable of meetings for 2008/09 has been prepared for the most part following the same principles as previous years in terms of frequency of meetings.

- 6.3 Whilst this committee has delegated power to agree the timetable and related issues on behalf of full council it is suggested that on this occasion the Committee's recommendations be referred to full Council for a final debate to ensure that all Members have had every opportunity to make their views known on the start times of meetings.

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

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

None.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

If an increased number of meetings were to be held in the evenings there may be additional costs associated with the opening of the building and staffing and whilst there is some flexibility within the existing Democratic Representation budget, if Members wish to make large scale changes to the timetable as currently published this will need to be evaluated.

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

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

#### **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.

#### **MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments

#### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Committee consultation responses contained in the minutes of meetings.

**Contact Officer:** Stephen Metcalfe  
**Telephone:** 01524 582073  
**E-mail:** smetcalfe@lancaster.gov.uk  
**Ref:** Sjm

**APPENDIX A**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Decision</b>
Audit	That the committee's current meeting time of 6pm should be recommended to remain unchanged.
Budget and Performance Panel	That the Council Business Committee be advised that the Budget and Performance Panel prefers a commencement time of 4.30pm for its meetings.
Cabinet	That meetings of Cabinet continue with the existing commencement time and that the Council Business Committee be advised accordingly (i.e. 10.00 a.m.).
Licensing Act	That the Council Business Committee be advised that the preferred commencement time for the Licensing Act Committee for the year 2008/09 be during the daytime.
Licensing Regulatory	That the Council Business Committee be advised that the preferred commencement time for the Licensing Regulatory Committee for the year 2008/09 and the remainder of the year 2007/08 should be 1.00 pm.
Overview and Scrutiny	That the commencement time of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee remain at 6.00pm and the Council Business Committee be advised of this decision.
Personnel	That it be recommended that the Personnel Committee meet at 4.30 pm for the Municipal Year 2008/09.
Planning	That the Council Business Committee be informed that Members of the Planning Committee wish the start time of the Planning and Highways Regulatory Committee remain as 10.30 am.
Standards	The Committee discussed the issue and agreed that meetings of the Committee should be in the day time, with some members preferring afternoon meetings.

## APPENDIX B

### Current and recommended times and venues of scheduled meetings

The Committee is requested to consider the times and venues of scheduled meetings. Current and recommended times for scheduled meetings, together with venues are set out below:

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Current Time</b>	<b>Recommended start time as a result of consultation responses</b>	<b>Venue</b>
Annual Council (Ceremonial)	12 noon	12 noon	LTH
Annual Council (Business)	6.00 pm	6.00 pm	MTH
Council	2.00 pm	2.00 pm	MTH
Council Business Committee	4.30 pm	4.30 pm	MTH
Audit Committee	6.00 pm	6.00 pm	MTH
Budget and Performance Panel	4.30 pm	4.30 pm	LTH
Cabinet	10.00 am	10.00 am	LTH/MTH alternating
Licensing Regulatory Committee	1.00 pm	1.00 pm	LTH
Licensing Act Committee	2.00 pm	2.00 pm	LTH
Overview and Scrutiny Committee	6.00 pm	6.00 pm	MTH
Personnel Committee	2.00 pm	4.30 pm	LTH
Planning and Highways Regulatory Committee	10.30 am	10.30 am	MTH
Standards Committee	10.00 am	2.00 pm	LTH

More details on the recommendations of each meeting are set out in Appendix A. Details of the survey relating to the commencement times of meetings of Council are contained within the consultation section of the report.

MEETINGS TIMETABLE 2008/2009

APPENDIX C

2008

2009

	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	
Mon					1 Planning			1 Planning SV						Mon
Tue			1 Cabinet		2 Cabinet			2						Tue
Wed			2 JCC		3 Overview and Scrutiny Com	1 Overview and Scrutiny Com		3				1		Wed
Thur	1		3		4 Licensing Reg	2		4	1 Bank Holiday			2 Licensing Reg		Thur
Fri	2		4	1	5	3		5	2			3 Will Park Board	1	Fri
Sat	3		5	2	6	4	1	6	3			4	2	Sat
Sun	4	1	6	3	7	5	2	7	4	1	1	5	3	Sun
Mon	5 Bank Hol	2 Planning	7	4	8	6 Planning	3 Planning SV	8 Planning	5 Planning SV	2 Planning SV	2 Planning SV	6	4 Bank Hol	Mon
Tue	6	3 Cabinet	8	5	9 Budget and Performance Panel	7 Cabinet	4 Personnel	9 Cabinet	6	3 Personnel	3	7 Personnel	5 Planning SV	Tue
Wed	7	4 Overview & Scrutiny Committee	9 Overview and Scrutiny Committee	6	10	8 JCC	5 Overview & Scrutiny Com	10 Overview & Scrutiny Committee	7	4 Council	4 Budget Council	8 Council	6	Wed
Thur	8	5 Licensing Act	10	7	11 Standards	9	6	11	8 Licensing Reg	5	5	9 Standards	7 COUNTY ELECTIONS	Thur
Fri	9	6	11	8	12	10	7	12	9 Will Park Board	6	6	10 Bank Holiday	8	Fri
Sat	10	7	12	9	13	11	8	13	10	7	7	11	9	Sat
Sun	11	8	13	10	14	12	9	14	11	8	8	12	10	Sun
Mon	12	9	14	11	15	13	10 Planning	15	12 Planning	9 Planning	9 Planning	13 Bank Holiday	11 Planning	Mon
Tue	13	10 Budget & Performance Panel	15 Budget & Performance Panel	12	16	14	11 Cabinet	16	13	10	10	14 Planning SV	12	Tue
Wed	14	11	16	13	17 Council	15	12	17 Council	14 JCC	11	11 Overview and Scrutiny Comm	15	13	Wed
Thur	15	12 Licensing Reg	17 Licensing Act	14	18 Council Business Cttee	16 Licensing Reg	13 Council Business Cttee	18	15 Council Business Committee	12 Licensing Act	12 Council Business Committee	16 Licensing Act	14	Thur
Fri	16 Annual Council	13	18	15	19	17	14	19	16	13	13	17	15 2009/10 Annual Council	Fri
Sat	17	14	19	16	20	18	15	20	17	14	14	18	16	Sat
Sun	18	15	20	17	21	19	16	21	18	15	15	19	17	Sun
Mon	19 Business Council	16	21 Planning SV	18	22	20	17	22	19	16	16	20 Planning	18	Mon
Tue	20	17	22 Personnel	19	23	21 Budget & Performance Panel	18	23	20 Cabinet	17 Cabinet	17 Cabinet	21 Cabinet	19	Tue
Wed	21	18 Council	23 Council	20	24 Audit	22 Council	19 Council	24	21 Audit	18	18 JCC	22 Audit	20	Wed
Thur	22	19 Standards	24 Licensing Reg	21	25 Licensing Act	23	20 Licensing Reg	25 Bank Holiday	22 Standards	19 Licensing Reg	19	23 Council Business Committee	21	Thur
Fri	23	20	25	22	26 Will Pk Board	24	21	26 Bank Holiday	23	20	20	24	22	Fri
Sat	24	21	26	23	27	25	22	27	24	21	21	25	23	Sat
Sun	25	22	27	24	28	26	23	28	25	22	22	26	24	Sun
Mon	26 Bank Hol	23 Planning SV	28 Planning	25 Bank Hol	29 Planning SV	27	24	29	26	23	23	27	25 Bank Hol	Mon
Tue	27 Planning SV	24	29 Cabinet	26 Planning SV	30	28	25 Budget and Performance Panel	30	27 Budget & Performance Pane	24 Budget & Performance Panel	24	28 Budget and Performance Panel	26	Tue
Wed	28	25 Audit	30	27	29	26	26	31	28 Overview and Scrutiny Com	25	25	29	27	Wed
Thur	29	26 Council Business Committee	31	28	30	27 Licensing Act		29	29	26	26	30	28	Thur
Fri	30	27 Will Pk Board		29	31	28		30	30	27	27		29	Fri
Sat	31	28		30		29		31	31	28	28		30	Sat
Sun		29		31		30					29		31	Sun
Mon		30 Planning									30			Mon
Tue											31 Budget & Performance Panel			Tue