

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO COUNCIL

31 OCTOBER 2018

REPORT OF SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

DEMOCRACY DIARY 2019-23

SUMMARY

In an attempt to give clarity for Members and Officers regarding the diary of scheduled Council and Committee meetings for the next entire electoral period of office, work has commenced on the draft Democracy Diary of Meetings 2019 – 2023.

Council are invited to note the draft diary and invite Council to consider a proposed change to the time of Council meetings with effect from the 2019/20 Municipal Year.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended that:-

1. Council note the draft Democracy Diary for 2019/23 and that it be circulated to all Councillors/Officers for information.
2. Council agree the proposed change of time for Council meetings with meetings commencing at 6.00pm with effect from the 2019/20 Municipal Year.

BACKGROUND

1. The draft Democracy Diary (**Appendix 1**) has been prepared for the electoral period 2019 - 2023 with a view to key dates and scheduled meetings being confirmed to assist Members and Officers in their work planning for the entire electoral period.
2. Feedback obtained previously from both Officers and Members indicated support for advance certainty regarding the majority of Council and Committee dates as it facilitates service planning and gives Members the opportunity to manage other commitments around scheduled meetings and determine which committee times are most suitable for them to attend prior to them putting forward their nomination. It should be noted however that upon confirmation of the Chair/Vice and Members of each Committee at Annual Council, a Committee **could** decide to make changes to its scheduled date/time should it so wish; which we would advise only be done following reference to the Democracy Diary.

DETAIL

3. Consultation to date has taken place on the draft Democracy Diary with the following:-
 - Service Directorates responsible for – Planning & Licensing Committees, Select and Audit Committees, Health & Wellbeing Board, scheduled Consultative Bodies; and the Director of Finance regarding need for Special Council meetings for budget consideration;

-School Governing Body Section of Children's Services regarding dates of School Holidays.

4. Reference has also been paid to:-

- The current pattern of meetings of Joint Bodies, including the TVCA and the Fire Authority;
- LGA Annual Conference dates;
- SBC Events Team regards known dates of corporate events over the period.

5. The diary is based on the following principles as closely as they can be applied:-

- Council meetings being scheduled to consider Cabinet recommendations should any arise and held outside of the school holiday periods wherever possible,
- Cabinet meeting every four weeks with special meetings arranged as required,
- Meetings of the Executive Scrutiny Committee scheduled monthly but with the option of convening additional dates should a valid call-in of a Cabinet decision be received,
- Planning Committee now meeting every four weeks,
- Licensing Committee meeting every six weeks, Sub Committees as required,
- Indicative dates / times given for meetings of the Select Committees based on current timings and on the understanding that it would be the responsibility of the Committee itself to determine its own meeting requirements / cycle within the context of their agreed work programme and add/amend dates / times as necessary
- An August Recess with the exception of meetings considered necessary to carry out essential business that cannot be deferred; eg consideration of Planning and Licensing applications,
- Stockton Youth Assembly – it should be noted that the diary does not include currently any dates of meetings of this Assembly as its governance arrangements are at this moment under review.

6. The Democracy Diary also includes:-

- Health and Wellbeing Board meeting monthly
- Bi – monthly meetings of the Children and Young People's & Adults Partnerships, along with bi-monthly meetings of the Domestic Abuse Steering Group
- Bi-monthly meetings of the newly established Corporate Parenting Board
- Safer Stockton Partnership meeting on average every 6 weeks
- Cleveland Police and Crime Panel meeting a minimum 4 times a year.

7. It should be noted that any proposed dates contained within the draft Democracy Diary can be amended or cancelled as appropriate with the agreement of the Chair of the Committee should it prove necessary to do so at any stage. At present, start times for each of the meetings vary with two thirds being held either morning or early afternoon, with the remainder held tea time or early evening.

8. With regard to the start time for full Council meetings, with the exception of the Annual Council meeting (11.00am) it has been the custom and practice for many years now for these meetings to commence at 7.00pm. A proposal has been put forward that it may be more favourable to both elected members and officers for these meetings to now commence at **6.00pm** and not 7.00pm.

9. A similar proposal was considered informally in December 2014 with opinion split at that time amongst members and each political group. The perceived benefits to the earlier start time would be that both members and officers would potentially be able to attend the meeting after the normal working day and be home at a more sociable time; thereby improving the work/life balance for each.

10. It is therefore considered timely for this proposal to be considered by full Council once prior to the dates/times of Council meetings being confirmed at Annual Council on the 22nd May 2019.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

11. There are no Community Impact implications arising from this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

12. None specifically arising from this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

13. There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

RISK ASSESSMENT

14. Low risk.

COUNCIL PLAN POLICY PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES

15. Developing strong and healthy communities

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

16. As outlined at paragraph 3.

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Education related? No

Background Papers N/A

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors: All

Property

None