

Review of Committee Meeting Arrangements

Report of the Democracy and Governance Portfolio Holder

Recommended:

That the frequency of Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings move to a 6 weekly cycle.

SUMMARY:

- This report reviews the pilot arrangements put in place to extend the time between regular meetings of Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny from 4 weekly to 6 weekly.
- The pilot arrangements were put in place in order to facilitate the business of the Council in a timelier manner and to better align with the Council's reporting deadlines.
- To confirm that meetings of the Council's Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee take place on a 6 weekly cycle going forward.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 At its meeting on 26 February 2021, Council approved pilot arrangements for the frequency of Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny (OSCOM) meetings.
- 1.2 Previously these meetings were held on a 4 weekly cycle. From Annual Council in May 2021, Cabinet OSCOM meetings moved to a 6 weekly cycle on a pilot basis.
- 1.3 The move to a 6 weekly cycle aimed to better facilitate the Council's business, in particular to better align with the financial deadlines of the Council. It was anticipated that greater time between meetings would allow for the business of the Council to be progressed in a more meaningful and effective way allowing Members and officers to develop work and report back to future meetings in a timely manner taking into account the legal requirements for agenda publication.
- 1.4 Council agreed that the arrangements would be reviewed at the end of the pilot period to consider whether they should continue. This report sets out details of the review of the pilot arrangements.

2 Review of Arrangements

- 2.1 At its meeting on 26 February 2021 Council resolved the following:

1. As a pilot and with effect from 19 May 2021, the frequency of Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny meetings be moved from a 4 week to a 5/6 weekly cycle, for the municipal year 2021/22.
 2. A review of the new arrangements be reported to Council in February 2022.
 3. That the draft Calendar of Meetings for 2021/22, as set out in the Annex to the report, be approved.
- 2.2 Since Annual Council in 2021, Cabinet and OSCOM have been meeting on a broadly 6 weekly basis. Feedback on the current arrangements has been sought from both officers and Councillors.
 - 2.3 Councillors were invited to comment on the current meeting arrangements for Cabinet and OSCOM. All feedback received was supportive of the new arrangements.
 - 2.4 The Chairman of OSCOM noted that the committee had a busy workload with responsibilities across the Council and beyond. During the pilot period OSCOM has been able to create and manage its work plan with more time to actively engage in key areas of work.
 - 2.5 The greater gap between meetings of the OSCOM committee has allowed Members more time to participate in a number of panels and report back to the next meeting with tangible progress. The meeting cycle has also allowed for additional round table strategy discussions.
 - 2.6 The new arrangements have allowed officers to better take forward areas of focus in a more effective and efficient way in between meetings. The increased stretch between meetings has resulted in more time for the research, consultation and preparation for projects and reports as there is a greater period in which to undertake work ahead of agenda deadlines.
 - 2.7 The new meetings cycle has continued to allow for alignment with the financial and other deadlines the Council must adhere to.
 - 2.8 During the pilot period no additional meetings of either Cabinet or OSCOM have been necessary in order to facilitate business that could not be accommodated by the new cycle. One Special Cabinet meeting was called due to a change in a financial reporting deadline however it is likely this would have been required whatever the cycle was.

3 Corporate Objectives and Priorities

- 3.1 The Council's Committees are required in order to progress the business of the Council in accordance with legislation. An efficient and effective calendar of meetings directly contributes to all of the Council's corporate objectives and priorities.

4 Options and Option Appraisal

- 4.1 Option 1 – to continue with a 6 weekly meeting cycle for Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This is the recommended option.
- 4.2 The 6 weekly cycle allows more time for officers and Councillors to effectively progress business between meetings.
- 4.3 It should be noted that should there be business that requires consideration between scheduled meetings there remains a number of options in place to ensure any items of business are progressed as needed.
- 4.4 The Chairman is able to call additional meetings of Cabinet or the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as required. There are also provisions for officers and portfolio holders to make decisions outside of committee on matters in accordance with the Constitution.
- 4.5 Option 2 – to return to a 4 weekly meeting cycle for Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 4.6 Option 3 – to adopt some alternative frequency for these two meetings.
- 4.7 More frequent meetings do not allow as much time for work to be progressed meaningfully between meetings.
- 4.8 Council approved the Calendar of Meetings at its meeting on 1 September 2021 which set out Cabinet and OSCOM meeting in a 6 weekly cycle. Should Council chose to return to a 4 weekly cycle, a revised calendar of meetings would need to be brought to Council for approval.

5 Risk Management

- 5.1 A Risk Management questionnaire has been completed and indicates this report does not require a risk assessment because the changes/issues covered by this report are not significant in terms of risk or have previously been considered.

6 Resource Implications

- 6.1 No additional resource implications have been identified.

7 Legal Implications

- 7.1 Full Council approves the Council's calendar of meetings each year. It is for Council to decide the frequency of meetings for each of the Committees.

8 Equality Issues

- 8.1 None.

9 Other Issues

- 9.1 Community Safety – none.
- 9.2 Environmental Health Issues – none.
- 9.3 Sustainability and Addressing a Changing Climate – none.
- 9.4 Property Issues – none.
- 9.5 Wards/Communities Affected – none.

10 Conclusion

- 10.1 Following a trial period it is recommended that the meeting cycle for Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee move to 6 weekly on a permanent basis. A 6 weekly frequency allows for the business of the Council to be progressed in a more meaningful and effective way therefore better facilitating the Council’s business whilst allowing better alignment with the financial and other deadlines of the Council.

<u>Background Papers (Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D)</u>			
Report to Council 26 February 2021			
Report to Council 1 September 2022			
<u>Confidentiality</u>			
It is considered that this report does not contain exempt information within the meaning of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and can be made public.			
No of Annexes:	None	File Ref	N/A
(Portfolio: Governance and Democracy) Councillor I Jeffrey			
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