

Report to the Council

Subject: Calendar of Council Meetings 2015/16

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 16 December 2014

Portfolio Holder: Councillor J Philip
(Governance & Development Management)

Recommendation:

(1) That the Calendar of Council Meetings for 2015/16, as attached at Appendix 1 to this report, be adopted.

Report:

1. The Democratic Services Business Plan requires a review each year of the Calendar of Council Meetings, and in particular the frequency of individual Committees. As a result, Democratic Services submit the draft Calendar of Council meetings each year to the Cabinet for consideration prior to its adoption by the Council.

2. The draft calendar for 2015/16 is based on the current year's calendar, with approximately the same number of meetings, and proposes - where possible - the following guidelines:

- (a) all Cabinet and Cabinet Committee meetings to be held on a Thursday;
- (b) all Planning meetings to be held on a Wednesday;
- (c) all Overview and Scrutiny meetings to be held on a Tuesday; and
- (d) all Miscellaneous Committee meetings to be held on a Monday.

3. The proposed calendar continues to keep Friday evenings free of meetings and any encroachment into August has been kept to a minimum. Members are requested to note that the proposed calendar is very congested and the organisation of any additional meetings will need careful consideration. Wherever possible, meetings have not been scheduled to coincide with major religious festivals.

4. The attention of the Council is drawn to the following proposals.

Council

5. Regular Council meetings have remained on their traditional Tuesday night. With the elections returning to the first Thursday in May in 2015, the Annual Council has been scheduled for Thursday 28 May 2015. This is two days later than normal but this amendment will give extra time to complete the appointments process and prepare the papers for the meeting.

The Executive

6. With two of the Cabinet Committees now meeting on a Thursday evening as this is more convenient for Members and Officers, the main change this year has been to schedule all Executive Committee meetings on a Thursday evening. As a consequence, the meetings of the Miscellaneous Committees that previously met on a Thursday evening have been rescheduled for Monday evenings.

7. The Council Housebuilding Cabinet Committee is not included on the calendar as it will only meet when evaluations for the various sites are received. Meetings will therefore be arranged by Officers in consultation with the Chairman of that Committee when required.

Overview and Scrutiny

8. The Council is currently undergoing a review of its Overview & Scrutiny Panel structure, and this review is not due to report until March 2015. Consequently, 25 dates have been set aside for Scrutiny Panel meetings in 2015/16 and these dates can be allocated to the new Standing Panels before the start of the new municipal year. One of these scheduled dates in September 2015 is on a Monday evening to avoid the Jewish festival of Rosh Hashanah (13 to 15 September 2015) the previous week.

9. An opportunity has also been taken by Officers to revamp the organisation of the Overview & Scrutiny function in 2015/16. Following the initial meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in June 2015, to confirm the membership and Chairmen of each Scrutiny Panel, there will be 5 Scrutiny cycles during the year with each cycle spread out over 2 months and culminating in a meeting of the main Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

10. This structure will result in a small reduction in the number of meetings throughout the year, and assist in the Scrutiny Panels reporting direct to the main Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

Planning Committees

11. It is recommended that the four-week cycle be maintained for the Area Planning Sub-Committees, with one week after the local elections being reserved to enable Member training to take place. The one exception to this is in late September, as any Planning Committee scheduled for Wednesday 23 September 2015 would clash with the Jewish festival of Yom Kippur. This has necessitated a five-week gap between the Sub-Committees from September to October.

12. The District Development Control Committee continues to meet every 8 weeks throughout the year, with the one exception being a nine-week gap between the August and October meetings to accommodate the Jewish festival of Yom Kippur as outlined above.

Licensing Sub-Committees

13. Currently, no evening meetings of the Licensing Sub-Committee have been scheduled following the review of this arrangement by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee last year. However, ad hoc evening meetings of the Sub-Committee can be arranged if the Chairman of the Licencing Committee feels that a review of a Premises' Licence warrants this.

Miscellaneous Committees

14. Both the Youth Council and Local Highways Panel have not been included in this

schedule as it is considered that they are meetings which sit outside the Council. The Youth Council have their own programme, and the Highways Panel involves both the District and County Councils.

15. Two meeting of the Appointments Panel have been scheduled for the Thursdays following the Local Elections, on 14 and 21 May 2015 respectively prior to the Annual Council on 28 May. This arrangement has been repeated in May 2016.

Parish and Town Council Meetings

16. With 24 Parish and Town Councils within the District, it is extremely difficult to avoid some clashes and many Local Councils wait for the District Council calendar to be published so that they can work around it. It is considered that the attached calendar meets the concerns of the dual-hatted Members as far as possible.

17. We recommend as set out at the commencement of this report.