

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C-086-2009/10
Date of meeting: 1 February 2010



Portfolio: Leader of the Council
Subject: Calendar of Council Meetings 2010/11
Responsible Officer: Simon Hill (01992 564249).
Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470).

Decisions Required:

- (1) That, subject to (2) below, the draft Calendar of Council Meetings for the period May 2010 to May 2011 attached at Appendix 1 be recommended to the Council for adoption; and**
- (2) That consideration be given to the feasibility of holding the meetings of the Finance & Performance Management Cabinet Committee & Scrutiny Panel in January 2011 on the same evening when considering the prospective budget for 2011/12.**

Executive Summary:

The Cabinet considers the calendar of meetings each year prior to final approval by the Council. The calendar has developed over time to meet the changing needs of the authority and, where possible, meetings of a committee have been standardised on a particular night of the week.

At the request of the Cabinet, Democratic Services have considered ways to reduce the number of member meetings being held by the Council. The proposed calendar shows a reduction of 5.4% in the number of member meetings for 2010/11, which would generate a total projected saving of £8,910.00.

The draft calendar keeps the current format of three area based Planning Sub-Committees. The number of Council meetings remains the same but the number of Cabinet meetings is reduced by one with meetings held every six weeks. For Overview and Scrutiny, there is a reduction of seven meetings in total, one for the main Committee and six for the Scrutiny Panels. The timing of the main Committee is changed so that it is held approximately one week before the Cabinet.

Licensing Sub-Committee meetings are moved from Thursday mornings to Tuesday mornings to allow for greater availability of Democratic Services Officers. There are no changes currently planned for the Standards Committee, Local Councils' Liaison Committee, the Housing Appeals and Review Panel, the Audit & Governance Committee and the Joint Consultative Committee, although there is the potential to reduce the number of meetings for the latter two Committees.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

Item for action within the Democratic Services Business Plan for 2009/10 & 2010/11.

Review of Member meetings as requested by the Joint Member & Officer 2010/11 Budget Working Group, to generate savings for the 2010/11 budget.

Other Options for Action:

Individual frequencies of meetings could be varied. In practice additional meetings are added as and when issues dictate. Similarly meetings can be cancelled if there is a lack of business.

Report:

Background

1. Within the current Democratic Services Business Plan, item 16 of the Action Plan for 2009/10 is to review the Calendar of Council Meetings, and in particular their frequency. At the first meeting of the Joint Officer & Member 2010/11 Budget Working Party, concern was also expressed at the number of member meetings that were taking place. Democratic Services was requested to review the Calendar of Council Meetings for 2010/11 and in particular to investigate ways of reducing the number of member meetings.

2. Figures are not available for the cost of each individual meeting per se. Accountancy hold figures for the costs of maintaining the Council Chamber and Committee Rooms, which would have to be borne by the Council, regardless of whether the rooms were used or not. The convention is used that 12% of the total costs of each room is energy usage during meetings and this has been factored into the projected savings. Further projected savings have been calculated in respect of Officer Committee Allowances, Refreshments, Agenda Printing Costs and Member Expenses.

3. Each section below outlines the changes in more detail for each particular category of meeting. Some of the changes are for operational reasons and are cost neutral.

Executive Meetings

4. It is currently not proposed to reduce the number of times that the full Council meets. A number of these meetings are required to agree the Budget, or the Accounts, or the composition of Committees at the Annual Council. However, the timing of some the meetings would change, mainly as a consequence of the proposed changes to the Cabinet schedule. The new schedule allows for a gap of at least a week between any meeting of the Cabinet and Council. The budget meeting would be held in mid-February, with a further meeting in late March.

5. For the Cabinet, the proposal is to move from a five week schedule for meetings to a six week schedule. This would reduce the number of meetings per year by one, which would effectively be the November meeting, and the December meeting would be earlier in the month. The budget Cabinet meeting would be held 15 days prior to the budget Council meeting. Allowing for an average Officer attendance of 12 at Cabinet meetings, this proposal could potentially save £703.56 in Committee Allowances.

6. All meetings of Cabinet Committees have been scheduled at least a fortnight before a Cabinet meeting. This is to allow time for the minutes to be produced and approved in time to be placed on the Cabinet agenda, with the aim of reducing the number of Supplementary Agendas issued. Meetings of the Finance & Performance Management, and Local

Development Framework Cabinet Committees have both been reduced by one. This will necessitate a change to the budget setting process, but it is expected that the advent of the Joint Member & Officer Budget Working Group would streamline the process. The need to have more than five meetings of the Local Development Framework Cabinet Committee per year has not yet been necessary, and the aim would be to reduce this Cabinet Committee to four meetings next year if possible. These measures would give rise to a further potential Committee Allowance savings of £703.56, based upon an average attendance of six officers per meeting.

Overview and Scrutiny

7. The number of meetings of the main Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been reduced by one due to the reduction in Cabinet meetings. This would again potentially save £703.56 in Committee Allowances. These have now been scheduled for approximately one week before the Cabinet rather than the current three or four days, to allow urgent reports from Overview & Scrutiny to be issued via a supplementary agenda to the next Cabinet meeting rather than be tabled.

8. The meetings of the Scrutiny Panels have been reduced to quarterly, with the exception of the Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel, which has an extra meeting to review the Budget. This gives a total reduction of 6 Scrutiny Panel meetings, which gives rise to projected savings of £2,110.68, allowing for an average officer attendance of six per Scrutiny Panel meeting.

Licensing

9. There is no planned reduction in the number of meetings of either the full Licensing Committee or Licensing Sub-Committees. However, the Licensing Sub-Committees have been rescheduled from Thursday mornings to Tuesday mornings. This is for operational reasons as agenda publishing takes place on Thursday mornings and the change will allow for greater availability from Democratic Services Officers.

Area Plans Sub-Committees

10. The Area Plans Sub-Committee meetings have been scheduled to continue to meet on a three-weekly cycle. This enables all members of the Council to participate in these meetings.

11. In December 2009, an initial draft of this report was circulated to Members and Officers via the Council Bulletin. That report included a suggestion for the replacement of the three area-based Planning Sub-Committees with two Planning Sub-Committees, one meeting every fortnight, both of which would consider any planning application from across the District. The response from members to that consultation was that they were not in favour of changes to the Planning Sub-Committees and that suggestion has not been pursued in this report.

Miscellaneous

12. There is no planned reduction in meetings of the Audit & Governance Committee for 2010/11, although further consideration could be given to reducing the number of meetings from five to four.

13. Although some of the scheduled meetings of the Housing Appeals and Review Panel have been cancelled this year due to a lack of business it is considered that it is better to schedule meetings each month and to cancel a meeting if necessary rather than reduce the

number of meetings. This enables members to reserve dates in their diaries. As these meetings are held in the afternoon, Committee Allowance is not an issue.

14. The Joint Consultative Committee remains at quarterly meetings, although it could be requested to consider whether it could function with only three meetings per year from 2011/12 onwards. The Local Councils' Liaison Committee remains at three meetings per year on a Wednesday. These meetings are arranged for weeks when there is no Area Plans Sub-Committee scheduled to be held at the Civic Offices, i.e., the same evenings as Area Plans-Committee South meetings which are held at a remote location. The Standards Committee will also continue to meet quarterly as at present.

15. The proposed calendar shows a reduction in Member meetings in comparison with 2009/10 which has been estimated to generate a total saving to the Council of £8,910.00.

A Joint Finance & Performance Management Cabinet Committee & Scrutiny Panel Meeting

16. Overview and Scrutiny have suggested that the meetings of the Finance & Performance Management Cabinet Committee & Scrutiny Panel should be held on the same evening when considering the prospective budget for 2011/12 in January 2011.

17. The proposed calendar shows the Committee and Panel meeting on separate evenings, albeit four days apart. The Cabinet is requested to consider whether the meeting of the Scrutiny Panel should be moved to the same evening as the Cabinet Committee (currently 17 January 2011), starting at 6.00pm with the meeting of the Cabinet Committee following at approximately 8.00pm.

Resource Implications:

The proposed Calendar for 2010/11 attached as an Appendix shows a 5.4% total reduction in Member meetings. This equates to a total reduction of 9 meetings, of which there would be 2 less meetings in the Chamber and 7 less meetings in the Committee Rooms.

	(£ rounded)
Total Committee Allowance Savings (as set out above)	£ 4,220.00
Committee Allowance on-costs at 17%	£ 720.00
Energy Savings for Meetings*	£ 680.00
• Total Costs for Council Chamber & Committee Rooms	= £104,480
• Total Energy cost @ 12% of total cost	= £12,537.60
• Net reduction of 5.4% for meetings @ Civic Offices	
• Therefore, projected energy saving = 5.4% x £12,537.60	= £ 677.03
Refreshments Savings	£ 130.00
• Water @ 5.4% of £960 = £50.00	
• Coffee, 7 less meetings in Committee Rooms @ £12 per time = £84	
Agenda Printing & Distribution Costs Savings	£ 2,850.00
• 5.4% of total Agenda Print/Distribution cost of £52,780pa = £ 2,850.12* see note in financial implications	
Members Travelling Expenses Savings	£ 310.00
• Total Travelling costs = £7,218.66	
• Assume 80% for Member meetings = £5,774.92	

- 5.4%% reduction of £5,774.92 = £311.85

Therefore, total **projected** Savings per annum:

£ 8,910.00

*Figures used to calculate Energy Cost supplied by Accountancy are on the basis of an estimated energy allocation.

**Figures for printing savings are reliant on Reprographics Section recovering their budgeted overheads either by other work or savings or increases in the non-distributable costs in compensation. Savings elements of these costs relating to variable costs will be achieved in any event.

Legal and Governance Implications:

None foreseen.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

Reduced energy usage and less Member journeys being undertaken from the reduction in Member meetings, would help the Council to meet its commitments under the Nottingham Declaration and 10:10 scheme.

Consultation Undertaken:

The Leader of the Council and Senior Officers at Management Board.
Members and Officers via the Council Bulletin.

Background Papers:

Reports of the Joint Member & Officer 2010/11 Budget Working Group.
Medium Term Financial Strategy 2010-14.

Impact Assessments:

Risk Management

That insufficient member meetings would be scheduled for a particular Committee to complete its business for the year; however, if this became apparent then additional meetings could be arranged as necessary.

Equality and Diversity:

Did the initial assessment of the proposals contained in this report for relevance to the Council's general equality duties, reveal any potentially adverse equality implications? No

Where equality implications were identified through the initial assessment process, has a formal Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken? N/A

What equality implications were identified through the Equality Impact Assessment process?
None.

How have the equality implications identified through the Equality Impact Assessment been addressed in this report in order to avoid discrimination against any particular group?
N/A.