

Agenda Item No:

Report No:

Report Title: Timing of Full Council and Cabinet Meetings from 2013/2014

Report To: Council

Date: 17 October 2012

Lead Councillor: Councillor James Page

Ward(s) Affected: All

Report By: Corporate Head – Legal and Democratic Services

Contact Officer(s)-

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Purpose of Report:

To present to Council the results of the questionnaire circulated to councillors regarding the timings of future Cabinet and Full Council meetings from the 2013/2014 municipal year.

Officers Recommendation(s):

- 1 That Council considers the summary of responses to the questionnaire in relation to the preferred timings (Question 1) of Full Council and Cabinet meetings from 2013/2014 (Appendix A).
 - 2 That Council agrees that the start times of Full Council and Cabinet meetings remain at 2.30pm from 2013/2014.
 - 3 That the Head of Democratic Services be authorised to draft the Meetings Timetable 2013/14 in accordance with the agreed start times for Full Council and Cabinet meetings.
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Reason for Recommendations

- 4 To ensure that the Council's meetings of Full Council and Cabinet scheduled from 2013/2014 onwards are convened at suitable times to enable and encourage participation by councillors and members of the public.

Information

- 5 A questionnaire was prepared and circulated to all councillors as part of the consultation in respect of the meetings timetable for 2013/2014. Councillors were asked for their preferred start times for Cabinet and Full Council meetings

and whether they had any other comments to make on the start times of Council, Cabinet or any other committee meeting.

- 6 A total of 23 questionnaires were returned. The responses to Question 1 (preferred start times) have been collated and summarised at Appendix A. Additional comments were made on some of the returned questionnaires. The summary and anonymised comments were circulated to all councillors for information.
- 7 The Meetings Timetable 2013/2014 will be drafted in accordance with Council's agreed preference for start times. The timetable will be circulated to all councillors and Chief Officers for comment before a final draft is presented to Cabinet and Full Council in early 2013.

Financial Appraisal

- 8 There are no financial implications arising as a result of these recommendations.

Environmental Implications

- 9 I have completed the Environmental Implications Questionnaire and there are no significant effects as a result of these recommendations.

Risk Management Implications

- 10 I have completed a Risk Assessment in accordance with the Council's Risk Management methodology and this report does not require a risk assessment.

Equality Implications

- 11 I have completed the initial Equality Impact Assessment screening exercise and no potential negative impacts were identified as a result of these recommendations. Therefore, a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required.

Background Papers

- 12 None.

Appendix

- 13 Appendix A - Summary of Questionnaire Responses.

Timings of Council Meetings and Cabinet Meetings in 2013/2014**Summary of Questionnaire Responses (QUESTION 1)**

23 out of 41 questionnaires were returned.

Q1. Please indicate which would be your preferred start time? (5 options were provided: 2.30pm, 5.30pm, 6.30pm, 7.30pm or Other).

Preference for **Full Council** Meetings:

	Returns
9.30am, 10am or 2.30pm	1
2.30pm	11
2.30pm, 5.30pm or 6.30pm	1
2.30pm or 7.30pm	2
Alternate between 2.30pm and 7.30pm	1
5.30pm	1
6.30pm	5
No preference	1

Preference for **Cabinet** Meetings:

	Returns
10am or 2.30pm	1
2.30pm	9
Alternate between 2.30pm and 7.30pm	1
5.30pm	3
6.30pm	3
No preference	1

Q2: Please outline any other general comments you may have on the start times of Council, Cabinet or indeed any other committee meeting. These comments have been anonymised.

- “For those of us with children, it’s vital the meetings avoid the school holidays. I’d prefer either a 2pm start so I have to get a couple of hours childcare after school, or an evening meeting so I get a babysitter. Starting at 5.30 or 6.30 fall between all stools.”
- “I am STRONGLY in favour of meetings taking place outside of office hours to enable the public and working councillors to attend.”

- “The only meeting that the public attend regularly is the Planning Applications Committee so there are no “public accessibility” issues.”
- “There is a problem if you represent the electorate at more than one level of local government e.g. too many evening meetings.”
- “The reason why I chose 6.30pm is to make sure those that work can attend.”
- “I am self employed so mostly am able to arrange my diary for any of the council meetings times shown above. 5.30 might be a good compromise time for most people, enabling them to be at work, but equally, allowing for a reasonably early finishing time!”
- “As previously commented, I think that altering the times of the meetings will make them more inclusive and accessible to both working members and working members of the public that may like to attend and engage in the decision-making processes.
- I have long-argued that a piloted scheme should be introduced to gauge the improvement or otherwise of attendance of councillors and public at meetings.”
- “If we had an early meeting, Councillors could easily return to their jobs after lunch.
- Parking is always a problem, so an earlier start would be helpful.
- A 10am start would normally finish at 1pm ish.”
- “I am actually prepared to consider morning meetings unless there is a real problem in doing that.
- I think 2.30pm for Council meetings breaks the day up, I would prefer 10.30am or 6.30pm.”
- “Seaford Town Council have all meetings at 7pm, evening meetings will be difficult for Seaford councillors.”
- “I am not happy about evening meetings as this would involve parking in car parks some distance from the meeting and having to return to car parks in the dark if meetings held in the evening, which is a safety issue especially for women.
- Also having town council meetings to attend most of these are evenings so more evenings used up for council work and do enjoy being able to participate in other activities which also happen in the evenings. Don't want to spend all my evenings away from home and partner.”
- “I am retired and can manage any of these times.”

- “The current start time being in the middle of the day acts as a disincentive to those who work and is a barrier to attendance by any interested members of the public.”