

REPORT

SUBJECT:	TIMING OF COUNCIL MEETINGS
MEETING:	FULL COUNCIL
DATE:	9th November 2017
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	N/A

1. PURPOSE:

To consider the recommendation from Democratic Services Committee, in line with the Local Government Wales Measure, to review the timing of Full Council meetings for the current term of Council.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

That future meetings of Full Council alternate start times between 14:00 and 17:00 for a 12 month period, following which Democratic Services Committee will review the impact of the change in times and report back to Council with further recommendations.

3. REASONS:

Each local authority is required to review the times at which council meetings are held at least once in every term of the Council.

Guidance from the Welsh Government state that as a rule of thumb meetings will be held at times, intervals and locations that are convenient to the majority of members and that the Council should be willing to make changes to their pattern of working in order to retain new councillors with outside responsibility. Councils should also consider rotating meeting times due to the impossibility of pleasing all of their members all of the time.

4. KEY ISSUES / OPTIONS APPRAISAL:

The requirement to review the timing of council meetings was introduced as part of the Local Government Wales Measure in 2012.

Democratic Services Committee considered the item at its meeting on the 11th September 2017 and was presented with information and feedback from the review under the previous term of Council which consulted on holding meetings at 10:00, 14:00, 16:00 and 19:00.

The committee debated different options for timing of Council meetings and concluded to propose that alternating meeting times between

14:00 and 17:00 would ensure that councillors who work are not disadvantaged by holding meetings solely at a time that they would not be able to attend. Whilst holding meetings earlier in the day was considered such as 9:00 or 10:00, some members of the committee still felt this excluded councillors in employment and could also lead to the need to attend more frequently as pre-meetings could not be held on the same day, as they are currently.

Following the meeting, all members were invited to provide feedback on the proposal and those responses are included at appendix A for information. For comparison against other local authorities in Wales, appendix B shows the start times of other local authority full council meetings.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

No resource implications

6. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:

There are no sustainability implications of the timing of meetings. However working members may be adversely affected by a council meeting start time between the normal office working hours of 9 am to 5 pm.

7. SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

Where members have governor responsibilities meetings which start at 5pm or later may interfere with their ability to attend meetings of their governing body.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Local Government Wales Measure 2011 and supplementary Welsh Government statutory guidance.

9. CONSULTEES:

All Members
Democratic Services Committee

10. AUTHOR:

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Appendix A – Survey responses.

NAME	<u>For</u>	<u>Against</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Councillor D. Batrouni			
Councillor J. Becker	yes		Less trouble with childcare from 5pm, 11am would have been my optimum
Councillor D. Blakebrough	yes		Happy to be flexible
Councillor L Brown		no	<p>I would prefer them to be kept as they are, as there are already evening meetings for community councils and sometimes they go on until after 10pm, having had council meetings in the morning and afternoon, making it a very long day on occasions.</p> <p>I appreciate that those with work commitments prefer the evening meetings, when we tried a similar idea when a Borough Councillor at Cheshire East, those who requested the later meetings when we tried it out did not seem to increase the frequency of attendance despite requesting the change and imposing it on both elected members and Council staff, who no doubt would prefer to spend the evening at home with their family.</p> <p>It also created problems of member access to the staff in the daytime due to staff taking flexi- time for attending the late evening meetings, so had an unhelpful knock on staff resources effect. The majority of members wanted the day time meetings adjusted for the minority who still failed to attend, leading to the annoyance of those who tended to regularly attend, to have to put up with a period of both long and late Council meetings. So it then reverted back to the daytime meetings. I hope that Monmouthshire County Council does not have to go through this same process.</p> <p>In my opinion, in addition prior to implementation, the impact also on Council staff who would have to attend the later meetings should be surveyed. They will also be effected by these changes and there could be</p>

			<p>implications for their own family care such as child care or care of elderly relatives (where there is school or day time provision) during most of normal daytime working hours. For example, after school clubs only go on for a certain time after the end of the school day. It would also make it a long day for staff who have worked all day.</p> <p>I should imagine it may create difficulties for those with transport difficulties which are easier to arrange during day time hours.</p> <p>In summary, in my view, it would have a detrimental impact but appreciate others may have other views.</p>
Councillor P.R. Clarke			
Councillor A. Davies			
Councillor D.L.S. Dovey			
Councillor L. Dymock			
Councillor A. Easson			
Councillor R. Edwards			
Councillor D.J. Evans			
Councillor M. Feakins	yes		
Councillor P.A. Fox			
Councillor R.J.W. Greenland			
Councillor M. Groucutt			
Councillor L. Guppy			
Councillor R.G. Harris			
Councillor R.J. Higginson		no	<p>Who wants to attend a meeting convening at 5pm that could finish later than 9pm meaning return home not before 9-30pm at least.</p> <p>However, I appreciate Members will have their varying views but, I would prefer as stated.</p>
Councillor G. Howard	yes		
Councillor S.G.M. Howarth			
Councillor R. John			
Councillor D. W. H. Jones			
Councillor L. Jones			
Councillor P. Jones			
Councillor S. Jones	yes		<p>I welcome meetings being held in the evenings, whilst it makes little difference to me these days I would rather see us be flexible like this to help</p>

			those that have work commitments.
Councillor S.B. Jones			
Councillor R.P. Jordan		no	Leave it at 2pm
Councillor M. Lane		no	
Councillor P. Murphy		no	My concern about that is that we attend lots of evening meetings anyway and some Council meetings go on long enough now. We could be in them well into the night on some.
Councillor P. Pavia		no	To be honest, later meetings are more challenging because of the issues with childcare.
Councillor M. Powell		no	We tried it once before and the attendance was no better. There are many School Governors meetings and Town Councils already meeting in evenings. When I was Chairman 5years ago, we had a couple of meetings run late. I hate to think what time we would finish if we start in the evenings.
Councillor J. Pratt	yes		<p>I feel that Council Meetings should be held in the evening. The benefits of this would be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The general public, the majority of which work would be able to attend if they wish to 2. It would enable people from a more diverse range of backgrounds and communities to become Councillors, we have to attract younger Councillors and those from different backgrounds and communities that could make an important contribution. <p>I understand that it would be difficult for some committees to be held in the evening, for example planning when there are site visits and meetings that take place after these, but I would be very happy for Stronger Communities Select which I chair to be held in the evening. I suspect I am in the minority. I think we are probably an unusual Authority holding so many meetings during the day, I would welcome any facts and figures you may have on this.</p>

			I would feel very happy to attend evening meetings, I have sat in Budget meetings till past midnight in the past, this was all part of being a Councillor.
Councillor R. Roden		no	Leave at 2pm but willing to be flexible
Councillor V.E. Smith	yes		
Councillor B. Strong		no	We did trial starting a few meetings at 5pm a couple of years ago, but these meetings seemed to be less well attended than those that started at the earlier time.
Councillor F. Taylor	yes		
Councillor T. Thomas	yes		5pm meeting might clash with meetings as a member of Abergavenny Town Council.
Councillor J. Treharne		no	But I am happy to go with the consensus and cross any bridges that come my way nearer the time. I am also aware that there isn't one single time that will suit everybody.
Councillor A.C. Watts			
Councillor J. Watkins		no	I am a member of the Democratic Services committee and unfortunately my proposal was not taken forward. I was asked by a number of parents to represent the view that meeting should take place in school hours – if we were rotating meeting times I suggested some should start at 11am to minimise disruption to children. 2pm meetings already involve childcare being arranged. In terms of 5pm – this is a terrible time for parents – and some councillors have sole parental responsibility. 5pm (with an hour pre meeting) is not a time you can get a paid babysitter for as it involves the school run, tea, bathtime and bedtime. A parent or family member is needed for that time. I imagine that I will not attend as many full council sessions as I would do so at either 2pm or 11am.
Councillor A.E. Webb	yes		

Councillor K. G. Williams	yes		
Councillor S. Woodhouse	yes		During the winter months a 2pm start would be preferable to a 5pm start due to possible inclement weather conditions .

Timing of Full Council Meetings - Wales

Authority	Time of County Council Meeting
Blaenau Gwent	10:00:00
Carmarthenshire CC	10:00:00
Denbighshire	10:00:00
Pembrokeshire	10:00:00
Torfaen CBC	10:00:00
Conwy CBC	10:00:00
Ceredigion CC	10:00:00
Powys CC	10:30:00
Gwynedd CC	13:00:00
Anglesey	14:00:00
Flintshire	14:00:00
Neath Port Talbot	14:30:00
Cardiff City Council	14:30:00
Bridgend CC	15:00:00
Wrexham CBC	16:00:00
Caerphilly CBC	17:00:00
Newport Council	17:00:00
Rhondda Cynon Taf	17:00:00
Swansea City Council	17:00:00
Merthyr Tydfil	17:30:00
Vale of Glamorgan	18:00:00