

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Council 31 January 2008
AUTHOR/S: Chief Executive / Democratic Services Manager

CALENDAR OF COUNCIL MEETINGS FOR THE 2008-2009 CIVIC YEAR

Purpose

1. To recommend a programme of meetings for the 2008-2009 Civic Year (May-May) for consideration and agreement by Council in accordance with Standing Order 2.1.

Options

2. It is proposed that five ordinary meetings be scheduled during the 2008-2009 Civic Year, plus an Annual Meeting in May 2009 and a meeting to set the budget in February 2009.

Date	Type of meeting
17 July 2008	Ordinary
25 September 2008	Ordinary
27 November 2008	Ordinary
29 January 2009	Ordinary
26 February 2009	Budget
23 April 2009	Ordinary
21 May 2009	Annual

3. The proposal above is considered to provide the 'best fit', given that the Council is obliged to hold meetings in February each year and May, in years in which elections take place. The proposal provides for an increase of one ordinary meeting on the schedule for 2007-2008 - the addition of a meeting at the end of January 2009. Whilst this meeting will overcome the long gap which otherwise would have arisen between meetings (November to February) and will relieve pressure on the Agenda at the subsequent budget meeting, Council should be mindful that the agreement of additional meetings is contrary to previous commitments to reduce the number of meetings, places heavy additional demands on Chief Officers' time and incurs substantial printing and associated costs.

Implications

4.

Financial	The cost of Members' travelling expenses is around £375 per meeting. The cost of paper and postage is around £100 per meeting. The agreement of additional Council meetings would result in these costs rising proportionally.
Legal	There is a legal requirement for the whole Council to meet at certain times to carry out functions only it can perform such as appointing the executive and committees, deciding the budget and approving the Performance Plan. There is no laid-down number of other ordinary meetings. In years where elections are held the Annual Meeting must be held within 21 days of the retirement of the outgoing councillors (Standing Order 1.1 and the Local Government Act 1972).

Staffing	Fewer meetings during 2007-2008 have released staff, Chief Officers in particular, to carry out other of their duties in pursuance of the Council's Improvement Plan and corporate objectives.
Risk Management	None specific
Equal Opportunities	None specific

Consultations

5. The draft report has been circulated to group leaders prior to its submission to Council for consideration and approval. The meeting dates proposed take into account meetings of the County Council and school term dates for 2008-2009.
6. The Convenor of the Independent Group has advised that he wishes to put the following proposal to the Council:

“The Council claims that “enhancing the contribution and role of members” is a major priority. However, the past six months has seen the contribution and role of members considerably reduced. One contributory factor is that we have gaps of two to three months between council meetings. Council hereby resolves that we should in general restore the previous arrangements for meetings every month.”

It is not considered that monthly meetings will allow the efficient and effective conduct of the Council's business, therefore this is not an option which officers are able to recommend.

Effect on Annual Priorities and Corporate Objectives

7. The scheduling of an appropriate number of Council meetings at which the policy and budgetary frameworks are agreed (and amended where necessary) and other business dealt with in accordance with Article 4 of the Constitution, is essential to the efficient and effective operation of the whole organisation. The agreement of a schedule of seven Council meetings per year will continue to allow Senior Management Team to concentrate on the strategic and operational challenges facing the Council and to allow it to meet its corporate objectives. As explained in paragraph 3 above, this schedule represents an increase of one ordinary meeting on the current schedule; any further increases may jeopardise the achievement of these aims.

Recommendations

8. Council is asked to resolve that meetings during the 2008-2009 Civic Year be scheduled as follows:

Date	Type of meeting
17 July 2008	Ordinary
25 September 2008	Ordinary
27 November 2008	Ordinary
29 January 2009	Ordinary
26 February 2009	Budget
23 April 2009	Ordinary
28 May 2009	Annual

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

The Council's Constitution

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