

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Council

24 November 2011

AUTHOR/S: Executive Director (Corporate Services) / Legal and Democratic Services Manager

CALENDAR OF COUNCIL MEETINGS FOR THE 2012/13 CIVIC YEAR

Purpose

1. To recommend a programme of meetings for the 2012/13 Civic Year (May-May) for consideration and agreement by Council in accordance with Standing Order 2.1. This is not a key decision, but has been in the Forward Plan since August 2011.

Recommendations

2. That Council resolve that meetings during the 2012/13 Civic Year be scheduled to take place at 2 pm on the following dates:
 - (a) Thursday 26 July 2012
 - (b) Thursday 27 September 2012
 - (c) Thursday 22 November 2012
 - (d) Thursday 31 January 2013
 - (e) Thursday 28 February 2013 (Budget)
 - (f) Thursday 25 April 2013
 - (g) Thursday 23 May 2013 (Annual)

Reasons for Recommendations

3. It is considered that a schedule of seven Council meetings per year best provides a timely forum in which all Councillors can debate issues of concern to the district.

Considerations

4. It is proposed that five ordinary meetings be scheduled during the 2012/13 Civic Year, plus a meeting to set the budget in February 2013 and an Annual Meeting in May 2013.
5. The meetings schedule aims to make best use of members' and senior officers' time and it has already been acknowledged that business likely to be considered at the 31 January 2013 meeting could be carried over to the 28 February 2013 meeting. Bringing the January 2013 meeting forward a week does not match proposed meeting dates for Cabinet and Scrutiny and Overview Committee, and conflicts with meetings already scheduled by other authorities. Members are asked to include the 31 January 2013 meeting date in their diaries at this point, but to note that the meeting could be cancelled.
6. Cambridgeshire County Council and Cambridge City Council both operate on a two-yearly meetings cycle to allow greater forward planning, and so have already set their meetings and joint meetings for 2012/13 and 2013/14 and South Cambridgeshire District Council meetings will need to fit around dates of joint committee meetings and meetings of the full County Council so joint committee and dual-hatted members are able to meet all their commitments.

7. The meeting dates proposed take into account already scheduled meetings of Cambridgeshire County Council, the Joint Development Control Committee: Cambridge Fringes, school and bank holidays, and party conferences.
8. The proposed meeting dates are set out in the following table, providing for the same number of meetings as in the three previous civic years:

Date	Type of meeting
26 July 2012	Ordinary
27 September 2012	Ordinary
22 November 2012	Ordinary
31 January 2013	Ordinary
28 February 2013	Budget
25 April 2013	Ordinary
23 May 2013	Annual

Implications

9. Financial	The cost of Members' travelling expenses remains at around £375 per meeting. The cost of paper and postage remains at around £110 per meeting of the full Council. 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 committees and deciding the budget. There is no required number for ordinary meetings. In years where there are no election to be held, such as 2013, the Annual Meeting must be held in March, April or May.
Staffing	A higher number of meetings would entail a proportionately greater demand on senior officer time.
Risk Management	None specific.
Equality and Diversity	None specific.
Equality Impact Assessment completed	No. Setting the meetings schedule is largely an administrative process.
Climate Change	The Council meeting schedule is dictated by the business needs of the authority to ensure that there is a regular forum for members' debates. Workshops, training events and other meetings are regularly scheduled on the same day as meetings of the full Council to maximise attendance and opportunities for car sharing or use of public transportation, and to minimise the number of journeys to and from the Council office. These are primarily scheduled during the day to minimise additional heating / cooling, lighting and electricity requirements outside of regular office hours, in accordance with the 2011/12 Council approach to promote low-carbon living, and the South Cambridgeshire Climate Change Action Plan, which states "The vision is for South Cambridgeshire, by the end of 2013, to stand out as a local area leader in its contribution towards the national target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by a third in the next ten years". (See also Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change and the Council's 10:10 commitment)

Consultations

10. The following were consulted on the provisional schedule of meetings and start times:
- (a) Leader of Council;
 - (b) Major Opposition Group Leader;
 - (c) Acting Convenor of the Independent Group;
 - (d) Senior Management Team;
 - (e) Executive Management Team;
 - (f) Head of Accountancy, who has confirmed that the proposed schedule does not pose any problem, particularly for the date of the February 2012 budget-setting meeting;
 - (g) Equality and Diversity Officer, who noted that a partial Equality Impact Assessment on the timing of meetings had been conducted and its finding that there was no one meetings time suitable to all had been accepted by the Equality and Diversity Steering Group;
 - (h) Team Leader (Communities) as lead officer for sustainability and climate change issues, who provided the climate change implications detailed above;
 - (i) Cambridgeshire County Council, which confirmed that the proposed meeting dates do not clash with its Council meetings; and
 - (j) Cambridge City Council, which confirmed that the proposed meeting dates do not clash with joint committee meetings.

Consultation with Children and Young People

11. None.

Effect on Strategic Aims

12. 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. It is considered that a schedule of seven Council meetings per year best provides a timely forum in which all Councillors can debate issues of concern to the district, whilst allowing Officers and Members sufficient time between formal meetings to progress work towards meeting the Council's strategic aims.

Conclusions / Summary

13. The proposed meeting dates are almost identical to those of previous years, and have been found to provide a timely forum for conducting Council business.

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

SCDC Constitution
Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change
South Cambridgeshire Climate Change Action Plan
10:10 Campaign carbon reduction commitment

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