

REPORT TO THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE 16 MARCH 2011**PORTFOLIO: OVERALL STRATEGY AND POLICY DIRECTION****REPORT FROM: HEAD OF LEGAL, ESTATES AND MEMBER SERVICES****SUBJECT: 2011/12 MUNICIPAL YEAR – MEETING ARRANGEMENTS****1 DECISION BEING RECOMMENDED**

- 1.1 That the timetable of meetings for the 2011/12 Municipal Year, as set out in the Appendix to this report (including the approach to be taken with regard to the Audit and Standards Committees), be approved.
- 1.2 That the proposed composition and procedural arrangements in relation to Community Forums be endorsed.
- 1.3 That the position with regard to achieving the overall per year savings target in relation to the Member Training and Democratic Representation budgets be noted.
- 1.4 That appropriate adjustments be made to the Constitution for endorsement by Full Council at its next meeting.

2 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 A formalised meetings timetable facilitates the management of Council business. Aspects of the composition of Community Forums/Committees will need to be included in the Council's Constitution and administrative arrangements in place in advance of the new Municipal Year. In developing the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), the Council identified savings in relation to Member Training and agreed an overall savings target from changes to the democratic representation budget on the basis that the latest position would be included in the report on the municipal timetable 2011/12.

3 DISCUSSION**Timetable of Meetings**

- 3.1 An aspect of the MTFS was a possible reduction in the number of meetings with effect from the 2011/12 Municipal Year. The Strategy paper made particular reference to removal of the Standards Board framework by the Government, which could mean there is no longer a need for a separate Standards Committee. In terms of Government proposals, it seems to be the case that the existing standards framework will be in place until the latter part of the 2011/12 Municipal Year at the earliest. Notwithstanding this, it would be possible to introduce an arrangement whereby the Standards Committee is amalgamated with the Audit Committee on the basis that, pending legislative change, a combined Committee reflecting the size of the current Standards Committee would be chaired by an Independent Member. Independent and

Parish Member appointees would need to be retained so that the Authority complied with the existing standards framework. In terms of business throughput, it would be practicable to schedule three meetings of a combined Committee (an Audit and Standards Committee) over the 2011/12 Municipal Year. This would reduce the number of meetings covering this area of work by four. As an alternative, it could be decided that the existing separation of the Audit and Standards Committees be maintained pending legislative change. The number of Audit Committees would be reduced from five to three.

- 3.2 The decision of the Council to move from Area Committees to Community Forum arrangement means a reduction of eleven in the number of meetings covering this area of work.
- 3.3 The Council's Constitution sets out some requirements in relation to meetings, specifically:-
- All ordinary meetings of Full Council take place in accordance with a programme decided at the Council's Annual Meeting.
 - There should be at least ten ordinary meetings of the Review Committee.
 - There should be at least four meetings of the Executive.
- 3.4 The dates scheduled for Full Council meetings will need to be included on the Annual Council meeting agenda for endorsement. Executive meetings scheduled in the timetable reflect the usual throughput of business, including the performance reporting timetable.
- 3.5 The appended timetable covers Council, the Executive, Community Forums and the regulatory/probity Committees. It replicates, where possible, the usual practice of scheduling Review Committee meetings on Tuesday evenings, Development on Thursday evenings and Executive meetings on Wednesday evenings. The timetable allows flexibility for both the cancellation of pre-arranged meetings and the scheduling of additional meetings if necessary.
- 3.6 In accordance with usual practice, the timetable includes training dates that have been agreed in advance. These cover a facility for part 1 (Induction/refresher/mandatory) and part 2 (competency/mandatory) training. There are six fewer dates than in the previous year.
- 3.7 Subject to the outcome of Government consultation on arrangements for the closure of Local Authority accounts, there may not need to be a Council meeting on the 28 June to deal with accounts closure.
- 3.8 The timetable includes provision for a Council meeting to consider parking policy and practices, as agreed at the meeting of Extraordinary Council on 25 January 2011 (Minute 26/11).

- 3.9 Two budget Away days have been scheduled – 26 November 2011 and 14 January 2012.

Composition and Procedural arrangements for Community Forums

- 3.10 Council has agreed (Minute 26/11):-
- (1) That there be four regular community forum meetings held annually, two in the West and two in the East of the District. Ward Members to be expected to attend the appropriate meetings so that their electorate may have this additional opportunity to converse with them. Representatives of the Police, Fire and Health Services to be asked to attend, as well as Essex County Council Members and Officers. There will be an open invitation to Parish/Town Councillors.
 - (2) That meetings be chaired by the Leader of the Council who will request the attendance of one or more Portfolio Holder, as deemed appropriate by the Leader. The Chief Executive, or exceptionally his representative, will also attend all meetings.
 - (3) That the dates of meetings will be included in the Council calendar and published accordingly.
 - (4) That it is accepted that there may be times when public attention is drawn to a specific subject but timing does not correspond with scheduled meetings. Should this occur, an additional meeting/s will be arranged in the format utilised for scheduled meetings.
 - (5) That none of these arrangements will affect the present system of public consultation and the presentations given by the Council, which in the recent past have included subjects such as recycling and The Local Development Framework.
- 3.11 Council recognised that specific detail on matters such as the precise composition of Forums and any procedures associated with the asking of questions would need to be concluded.

Asking of Questions

- 3.12 In accordance with previous considerations it is anticipated that a list of questions raised and answers given at Forums will be posted on the Council's website. Questions should be raised at the Forums rather than in advance, particularly given that there are other avenues for residents to raise questions on a day to day basis. If a question cannot be answered at a Forum the answer can be provided to the questioner after the meeting. Forums will be held in the evening.
- 3.13 During previous discussion the Executive has observed that, rather than introduce specifics around the duration of Forums (such as indicating that

they should be limited to two hours) or the nature of questions (such as indicating that a question will be rejected if it is substantially the same as one that has been asked in the past six months), much will depend on the approach of the Chairman. It would, therefore, be appropriate to see how the first few meetings operate rather than set strict parameters in advance. It would be appropriate for the Executive to endorse the approach to the asking of questions.

Arrangements for Panel

- 3.14 At the Council meeting on 25 January it was confirmed that, under the new proposals, Panels would consist of all Ward Members for the appropriate areas. In that there would be issues of practicability and appearance to residents if all Forum members were sitting as a Panel on a 'top table', it is anticipated that the finalised appearance best suited to interaction with residents can be reached in consultation with the Forum Chairman.

Composition

- 3.15 In terms of achieving near numerical balance, Forums could be composed of Wards as follows:-

East Forum

Ward	Number of Members
Ashingdon and Canewdon	2
Barling and Sutton	1
Foulness and Great Wakering	3
Hawkwell North	2
Hawkwell South	2
Hawkwell West	2
Rochford	3
Hockley Central	3
Hockley North	1
Hockley West	1
Total	20

West Forum

Ward	Number of Members
Downhall and Rawreth	2
Grange	2
Lodge	2
Rayleigh Central	2
Sweyne Park	2
Trinity	2

Wheatley	2
Whitehouse	2
Hullbridge	3
Total	19

- 3.16 The Chairman would request the attendance of Portfolio Holders as considered necessary. It would be appropriate for the Executive to endorse the approach to composition.

Achieving Savings Target

- 3.17 Through its work on the MTFS the Council has sought savings in relation to the budgets for Member Training and Democratic representation of £30,000 per annum, £12,000 of which would be from Member Training. The democratic representation budget element (£18,000) was based on savings associated with a move away from Area Committees and the need to identify alternative savings if such a move did not achieve the saving.
- 3.18 With regard to Member Training, changes are being made that will achieve savings of £13,627 per annum (related to adjustments in the number/location of events and changes to catering arrangements). With regard to the democratic representation budget, changes are being made that will achieve savings of £18,861 per annum (related to the move to Community Forums, other meeting reductions and an analysis of the budget for the Member drop). This means that total savings would be £32,488 per annum, against a total target of £30,000.
- 3.19 As part of background analysis of areas where savings could be achieved, officers have reviewed the current arrangements for sending committee papers and post out to Members in two courier drops per week. This identified that the savings associated with reducing the number of drops per week would be minimal and disproportionate to any benefit.
- 3.20 The Council's Constitution would need to be adjusted to reflect the introduction of a combined Audit/Standards Committee and Community Forums. Changes can be made to the Constitution for endorsement by the Council at its April meeting.

4 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Budget savings being achieved in accordance with the Council's MTFS are identified within the report.

5 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Some adjustments will be required to the Council's Constitution.

I confirm that the above recommendation does not depart from Council policy and that appropriate consideration has been given to any budgetary and legal implications.

SMT Lead Officer Signature: _____

Head of Legal, Estates and Member Services

Background Papers: None

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If you would like this report in large print, Braille or another language please contact 01702 546366.

MEETINGS TIMETABLE 2011/12

2011									2012				
May	June	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec		Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May
Mon			1										
Tue			2			1 Training							1
Wed		1 Review Committee training	3			2 Council				1			2
Thurs		2		4	1		3	1		2 Audit & Standards	1		3 District Elections
Fri		3	1	5	2		4	2		3	2		4
Sat		4	2	6	3	1	5	3		4	3		5
Sun	1	5	3	7	4	2	6	4	1 New Years Day	5	4	1	6
Mon	2 Bank Holiday	6	4	8	5	3	7	5	2 Bank Holiday	6	5	2	7 Bank Holiday
Tue	3	7 * Reserved for Car Parking	5	9	6	4 Mandatory Planning Training	8	6 Review	3	7 Review	6 Review	3 Review	8
Wed	4	8 Audit & Standards	6	10	7	5 East Community Forum	9 Executive	7 Executive	4	8 Executive	7 West Community Forum	4 Executive	9
Thurs	5 District Elections	9 Mandatory Appeals Training	7 Review Committee training	11	8	6	10 Training	8	5	9	8	5	10
Fri	6	10	8	12	9	7	11	9	6	10	9	6 Good Friday	11
Sat	7	11	9	13	10	8	12	10	7	11	10	7	12
Sun	8	12	10	14	11	9	13	11	8	12	11	8 Easter Day	13
Mon	9	13	11	15	12	10	14	12	9	13	12	9 Easter Monday	14
Tue	10	14 Review	12 Review	16	13 Review	11 Review	15 Review	13 Council	10 Review	14	13	10	15
Wed	11	15	13 Executive	17	14	12 West Community Forum	16	14	11 Executive	15	14 Executive	11	16
Thurs	12 Mandatory planning training	16 Training	14 Training	18	15	13 Training	17	15 Development	12	16	15	12	17
Fri	13	17	15	19	16	14	18	16	13	17	16	13	18
Sat	14	18	16	20	17	15	19	17	14 Budget Away Day	18	17	14	19
Sun	15	19	17	21	18	16	20	18	15	19	18	15	20
Mon	16	20	18	22	19	17	21	19	16	20	19	16	21
Tue	17 Annual Council	21	19 Training	23	20	18	22 Training	20	17	21 Reserved for Council Tax	20	17 Council	22 Annual Council
Wed	18	22 Executive	20	24	21 Executive	19 Executive	23	21	18	22	21 East Community Forum	18	23
Thurs	19 Mandatory Licensing training	23	21 Council	25 Development	22 Development	20 Development	24 Development	22	19	23 Development	22	19 Development	24
Fri	20	24	22	26	23	21	25	23	20	24	23	20	25
Sat	21	25	23	27	24	22	26 Budget Away Day	24	21	25	24	21	26
Sun	22	26	24	28	25	23	27	25 Christmas Day	22	26	25	22	27
Mon	23	27	25	29 Bank Holiday	26	24	28	26 Boxing Day	23	27	26	23	28
Tue	24 Training	28 * Reserved for Closure of Accounts	26	30	27 CE Appraisal	25	29	27 Bank Holiday	24	28 Council	27 Audit and Standards	24	29
Wed	25	29	27	31	28	26	30	28	25	29	28 CE Appraisal	25	30
Thurs	26 Development	30 Development	28 Development		29 Audit & Standards	27 Training		29	26 Development		29 Development	26	31
Fri	27		29		30	28		30	27		30	27	
Sat	28		30			29		31	28		31	28	
Sun	29		31			30			29			29	
Mon	30 Bank Holiday					31			30			30	
Tue	31								31 * Reserved for Budget				