

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Subject: Calendar of Meetings 2024/25

Date: 19 December 2023.

Portfolio Holder: Cllr S Kane

Recommending:

1. That, as attached at Appendix 1, the draft Calendar of Council Meetings for 2024/25 be adopted.

1. Democratic Services submit a draft Calendar of Council meetings each year to the Cabinet for consideration prior to its approval by the Council.

2. The focus has been to ensure that the correct report lines are created to allow the relevant committees to be informed, to scrutinise and make valuable contribution to the decisions of Council. Emphasis for 2024/25 has been on the financial framework, the scrutiny of the Medium-Term Financial Plan which includes the Budget Strategy and Capital programmes, and the scrutiny of the quarterly performance Management reports. Democratic Services held a workshop with various departments on 23 October 2023 to ensure that their requirements for reporting have been considered.

3. Friday evenings have continued to be kept free of meetings, and any encroachment into August has been kept to a bare minimum due to holidays. However, the Regulatory Committees have always continued to meet throughout August in the past and this practice has been continued.

The Executive

4. The Cabinet is scheduled to meet 9 times throughout 2024/25. The Council is scheduled to meet 6 times throughout the year, starting with the Annual Council meeting on 23 May 2024. The Council meeting originally scheduled for the first week in October has been moved back this year to 15 October 2024 to avoid clashes with the national party conferences.

Overview & Scrutiny

5. The structure of the Council's Overview & Scrutiny function was reviewed last year, which resulted in amalgamation of the Stronger Council Select Committee with the main Overview & Scrutiny Committee. This has appeared to work well this year and no further changes to the structure are planned for 2024/25.

6. At the workshop, Finance and Programme Management Officers highlighted the difficulty of preparing their quarterly monitoring reports in time for the agenda for the Overview & Scrutiny Committee at the end of each quarter. Therefore, the meetings of the

Overview & Scrutiny Committee in July, October and January have all been pushed back a week to facilitate this. It is also proposed that the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee that would normally happen in April also be pushed back to the first week of June, to allow the Quarter 4 monitoring reports to be considered. This meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday 4 June 2024.

7. The Communities and Place Scrutiny Committees have again been scheduled to meet 4 times during the year. The meeting of the Place Scrutiny Committee originally scheduled for 17 September 2024 has been pushed back to 1 October 2024 to avoid a clash with the national Party Conferences. An additional meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Committee will be scheduled for the Spring of 2025 and will be entirely dedicated to the District Police Commander and related Community Safety reports.

8. The proposed Scrutiny schedule does leave a gap between Overview & Scrutiny Committee meetings after January. However, if there are any items from the Communities or Place Scrutiny Committees that need to be considered by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee during their spring cycle of meetings then an extra meeting could be scheduled for April 2025.

Planning

9. The Area Plans Sub-Committees East and South continue to meet on a four-weekly cycle, with the District Development Management Committee and Area Plans Sub-Committee West meeting on a 6-weekly cycle. This was agreed by the Council as part of this process last year. The period between the local elections and the Annual Council meeting has again been kept free of Planning meetings. The first scheduled planning meeting in May is on Wednesday 29 May 2024.

10. A review of how the Council undertakes its Planning responsibilities is currently being undertaken and this might necessitate a change to the structure of the Council's Planning Committees, and/or the frequency of Planning Committee meetings. Any recommendations arising from the review will be reported to the Cabinet and then Council for approval and consequently, the proposed schedule could change before the end of the current municipal year.

Licensing

11. Licensing Sub-Committee meetings have remained on the first Tuesday morning of each month and additional meetings have been provisionally set aside on the third Tuesday of every month. This allows the Council to meet its statutory deadlines when considering Premises Licence applications. It is expected that some of these meetings will be cancelled due to a lack of business.

12. There have been no evening meetings scheduled for Licensing Sub-Committees in 2024/25, although a Premises Review could be held in the evening if the Chairman of the Licensing Committee felt that it would be in the public interest to do so. All members of the Licensing Committee continue to meet twice a year to consider policy and procedural matters.

Miscellaneous Committees

13. For the Audit & Governance Committee, two small changes have been proposed by Finance Officers, although the number of meetings throughout the year will remain as five. The first change is to move the meeting currently scheduled for July to September as this would ensure that the Treasury Management Monitoring Report would be available to be

reviewed. The second change is to bring the February meeting forward by one week to allow the Treasury Management Policy, the Treasury Management and Investment Management Strategies and the Capital Strategy to be approved by the Committee in advance of the Council's budget meeting on 20 February.

14. Both the Youth Council and the Local Highways Panel have not been included in this schedule as it is felt that they are meetings which sit outside the Council Calendar. The Youth Council have their own programme, and although the Local Highways Panel involves both the County and District Councillors, they are not organised by the District Council.

15. Meetings of the Appointments Panel have been scheduled for Thursday 8 May and Thursday 15 May in the period between the Local Elections on 1 May 2025 and the Annual Council on 22 May 2025. The Local Councils Liaison Committee will again meet twice in the year in September and March. The Constitution Working Group has had an additional meeting scheduled as the Council's Constitution is undergoing a thorough review. In addition, there may be various Portfolio Holder Advisory Group and Scrutiny Task & Finish Panel meetings which will be organised outside of the formal calendar process as well.

Religious Festivals

16. The meeting of Area Plans Sub-Committee South (West) has been re-scheduled from 2 October 2024 to 9 October 2024 to avoid the Jewish holiday of Rosh Hashanah. This has also necessitated the re-scheduling of Area Plans Sub-Committee West from 9 October to 16 October 2024, and Area Plans Sub-Committee East from 16 October to 23 October. This will affect the gaps between meetings for the three Sub-Committees for this cycle, but their normal frequency of meetings resumes from November 2024. The Jewish festivals of Yom Kippur and Pesach do not clash with any meetings.

17. The Hindu festival of Diwali is on Friday 1 November in 2024 and does not clash with any of the Council's meetings. Ramadan is the period between Friday 28 February 2025 and Sunday 30 March 2025, and if any meetings are required to be re-scheduled during this period, perhaps with a slightly later start time, then this can be considered by the relevant Chairman at the time of the request.

Party Conferences

18. The dates of next year's Party Conferences have been determined (or the date of this year's conference used if the date for next year is not known), and there have been no Council, Cabinet or Scrutiny meetings organised during these dates. For the regulatory and miscellaneous committees, substitutes can be organised by the Groups if a meeting falls during this period and a particular member is not available.

Conclusion

19. The Cabinet is requested to consider the draft Calendar of Council meetings for 2024/25, as attached at Appendix 1, and advise whether any further changes are required. However, it should be noted that the current Calendar is extremely congested, and the organisation of any additional meetings should be given very careful consideration.

20. We recommend as set out at the commencement of this report.