



DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

9AM, THURSDAY, 19 OCTOBER 2017

COMMITTEE ROOMS 1/2 - PORT TALBOT CIVIC CENTRE

PART 1

1. To receive any declarations of interest from Members
2. Minutes of the last meeting on 27 July 2017 (*Pages 3 - 8*)
3. Feedback from the Member Support Officer Meeting held on 7 September, 2017 (Verbal)

To receive the Joint Report of the Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services and the Head of Legal Services

4. Access to Meetings in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 1972 (*Pages 9 - 16*)

To receive the Reports of the Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services

5. Civic Buildings - Accessibility Survey (*Pages 17 - 34*)
6. Outcome of Members' Survey on Timing of Meetings (*Pages 35 - 48*)
7. Democratic Services Committee Work Programme (*Pages 49 - 50*)
8. Any urgent items at the discretion of the Chairman pursuant to Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972

S.Phillips
Chief Executive

Civic Centre
Port Talbot

13 October 2017

Councillors: J.D.Morgan, M.Harvey, S.ApDafydd, S.K.Hunt,
S.Miller, M.Protheroe, L.M.Purcell, S.Pursey,
S.Renkes, A.J.Richards, A.J.Taylor and
R.L.Taylor

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

(Committee Rooms 1/2 - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

Members Present:

27 July, 2017

Chairperson: Councillor J.D.Morgan

Vice Chairperson: Councillor M.Harvey

Councillors: S.Ap Dafydd, S.Miller, M.Protheroe,
L.M.Purcell, S.Purse, A.J.Richards, A.J.Taylor
and R.L.Taylor

Officers In Attendance Mrs.K.Jones, S.John, R.George, R. Jenkins,
N.Evans, A.Manchipp and N.Headon

1. **MINUTES OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE OF 15 SEPTEMBER 2016**

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Democratic Services Committee of 15 September 2016, be noted.

2. **PRESENTATION ON THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE AND THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

As the Committee now comprised of both returning Members who were new to the Committee and also newly elected Members, the Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services gave a presentation on the Roles and Responsibilities of the Democratic Services Committee and the Head of Democratic Services.

Members then raised the following points:-

- Regarding the Timing of Meetings, this could be carried out on a Committee by Committee basis. This had been done during the last administration, however Members may now wish for further changes to the timing of meetings etc;
- Could the timing of meetings be perhaps on a rotation basis (am, pm or evening) as it was acknowledged that there was not

a “one size fits all” position due to Members’ different circumstances. This option would be included in the survey to be issued to all Members and referred to in Minute Number 3 below;

- Members asked that the survey be amended to allow Members to indicate any difficulty with the day of the week of meetings as well as timings.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be noted, and the survey instrument to capture Members’ preferences as to meeting arrangements be amended in light of Members’ feedback.

3. **REPORT OF THE HEAD OF CORPORATE STRATEGY AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

The Committees then considered the report of the Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services on the following:-

Head of Democratic Services – Role and Resources

The Committee noted the content of the report and in particular the proposed staffing structure of the Democratic Services Section. It was noted that the proposed structure included the temporary post of Senior Executive Officer which would provide support to the Executive. The proposals would be reviewed at the meeting to be held on 1 February 2018.

RESOLVED: That the basic role and responsibilities of the Head of Democratic Services and the Democratic Services Committee, as contained in the circulated report, be noted, and that the revised staffing structure, as contained therein, be approved and reviewed at the meeting to be held on 1 February, 2018.

Members’ Facilities

Members considered the report in relation to the improvements made to the Members facilities at the Port Talbot Civic Centre together with the proposals for the Neath Civic Centre.

Members noted that a survey had been undertaken prior to any improvements being undertaken, however concern was expressed regarding the disabled access to both Civic Centres. In particular the use of motorised wheelchairs was an issue as these would not fit into the lifts and there was no facility for motorised assistance in opening doors that provide access to the committee rooms.

There was a request for the provision of additional chairs in the Members' Room to cater for Members with mobility issues.

Members also mentioned the issues surrounding those users with hearing difficulties and noted that this had now been addressed.

Members were pleased with the workstations in the Members' Room in the Port Talbot Civic Centre and hoped that this layout would be mirrored in the Members' Room in the Neath Civic Centre. The Committee requested that a further survey be undertaken in relation to any specific needs.

RESOLVED: That the programme outlined in the report, be supported, subject to Officers incorporating the feedback from Members into the current programme of work. Further work to be undertaken to establish if there were any other reasonable adjustments that should be considered to improve disabled access for both Members, staff and the general public.

Overview and Scrutiny Development Update

Committee received the report in relation to the progress made on the development of the Overview and Scrutiny function of the Authority.

Members were pleased to note the improvements to date and felt that improved scrutiny led to better decision making. Members agreed that regular updates be provided to Committee and that the scrutiny champion, Councillor A.N.Woolcock, be invited to the meeting for that item.

In relation to the reports being considered at Scrutiny Committees, Members were advised that a report template had been developed and rolled out to all Officers, in order to standardise information being considered. Members were encouraged to bring to the attention of the Democratic Services Section, any reports that had information omitted, in order for the issues to be addressed as soon as possible.

Members noted the process by which the views of the Scrutiny Committee was considered by the Executive and that any views considered would be included in the Decision Record, for information purposes.

The development of Annual Reports to Scrutiny Committees was discussed and supported whereby the impact of scrutiny could be described.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

Timing of Council Meetings

Members were advised that, in accordance with Section 6 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, the Authority was required to carry out a survey of all Members, once during the administration, regarding the timing of meetings. Attached to the circulated report was an updated copy of the last survey undertaken, for Members' comments.

During the discussions Members asked for the following amendments to be incorporated within the questionnaire:-

- Question 2 to be amended to include Days of the Week;
- A further question be added at Question 6 for any further comments.

RESOLVED: That, subject to the above additions to the questionnaire, the proposal to undertake an all Member survey in relation to the timing of meetings be endorsed, and that the survey be undertaken in early September, with an end date of 1 October 2017 and reporting back to the Special Meeting on 19 October 2017.

4. **DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME VERSION 1**

Committee received a copy of the Democratic Services Work Programme for 2017/18. Following discussions at today's meeting it was:-

- RESOLVED:**
1. That the Planner be updated with the addition of a Special Meeting of Committee at 9am on 19 October, 2017, and that the following items be placed on that agenda:
 - An update on the Welsh Government White Paper on Local Government Reform including proposals relating to the broadcasting of Council meetings;
 - A review of the Members' ICT Scheme and consideration of the establishment of a Members' IT Reference Group;
 - An update on Overview and Scrutiny;
 - Review of the use of the Welsh Language within committee proceedings;
 - The outcome of the Members' Survey on Timings of Meetings;
 - Progress on Member Accommodation.

 2. That the Review of the Staffing Structure of Democratic Services be placed on the agenda for the meeting to be held on 1 February, 2018.

CHAIRPERSON

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NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

19 October 2017

Joint Report of the Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services and Head of Legal Services

Matter for Information

Wards Affected:

All Wards

Access to meetings in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 1972

Purpose of Report

To provide Members with an overview of the rules in respect of access to meetings and reports which apply to all meetings of the Neath Port Talbot County Borough Councils ("the Council) Council Meeting, the Cabinet, Cabinet Committees, Overview and Scrutiny Committees, the Standards Committee, and Regulatory/Other Committees (including Sub Committees).

Background

General Right to Access Documents

It should be noted that, save for where requests are made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Environmental Information Regulations 2004, members of the public do not have access to documents other than those reports and papers that are before the Council's Council meeting, Cabinet, Cabinet Committees, Overview and Scrutiny Committees, the Standards Committee, and Regulatory/Other Committees (including Sub Committees).

Access to Meetings and Reports

The requirements for access to meetings and reports was first established in the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960. It required that meetings of a body exercising public functions were to be open to the public except where the body resolved to go into closed session.

The body could only resolve to go into closed session when “*publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted or for other special reasons arising from the nature of that business or of the proceedings*”. (Section 1(2)) While the meeting is open to the public, the body did not have the power to exclude members of the public from that meeting and duly accredited representatives of newspapers attending for the purpose of reporting the proceedings.

Recognising that the rules needed to be further clarified and elaborated on, the Local Government Act 1972 (“the 1972 Act”) (as amended) contains the current set of rules which must be taken into account in respect of access to meetings and reports. These are further referenced in the Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Constitution (“the Constitution”) in Part 4 (Access to Information Procedure Rules).

The statutory basis in relation to access is clearly more complex than they would appear on first reading.

The basic intention of the law is clear i.e. that the public should have access to papers considered by Members in open session and should have that access in good time before a meeting to ensure that they have an adequate opportunity to understand matters which are before the Council and to make representations on those matters if they so wish.

The Courts do interpret legislation in accordance with this underlying intention. This does not prevent the holding of informal deliberations in private, with or without officers present, but these deliberations shall not take decisions, and neither do the provisions of these rules apply to such deliberations.

Restricting Access to Meetings and Reports

Section 100A of the 1972 Act provides that all meetings of principal councils (of the Council is classified) are to be open to the public. There are exceptions to this, these being:

- (a) There is an obligation to exclude when ‘confidential information’ is likely to be discussed (S100A(3) of the 1972 Act)
- (b) There is a power to exclude when ‘exempt information’ is being discussed (S100A(4) and (5) of the 1972 Act)
- (c) There is power to exclude individuals to suppress or prevent disorder behaviour. (S100A(8) of the 1972 Act).

Confidential information is narrowly defined at S100A(3) of the 1972 Act as being information furnished to the Council by a government department on terms that it should remain confidential or information the disclosure of which to the public is prohibited by or under any enactment or by the order of a court. However, where the meeting will determine any person’s civil rights or obligations, or adversely affect their possessions, Article 6 of the Human Rights Act 1998 establishes a presumption that the meeting will be held in public unless a private hearing is necessary.

Members of the public may be excluded from meetings whenever it is likely in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings that exempt information would be disclosed. The categories of exempt information are set out in Schedule 12A of the 1972 Act. In order to exclude the public on the basis that exempt information is likely to be discussed, the meeting needs to pass a resolution to this effect. The resolution must

- (a) identify the proceedings, or part, to which it applies; and
- (b) state the description of the exempt information giving rise to the exclusion of the public.

However, in some of the exemptions (as highlighted) there is a test that must first be satisfied, commonly known as the Public Interest Disclosure Test, details of which are set out below.

The current exemptions are:

Exempt Information	Qualification
12. Information relating to a particular individual	Public interest disclosure test (see below)

<p>13. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual</p>	<p>Public interest disclosure test (see below)</p>
<p>14. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the financial information of the Council)</p>	<p>Information falling within paragraph 14 is not exempt information by virtue of that paragraph if it is required to be registered under –</p> <p>The Companies Act 1985</p> <p>The Friendly Societies Act 1974</p> <p>The Friendly Societies Act 1992</p> <p>The Industrial and Provident Societies Act 1965 to 1978</p> <p>The Building Societies Act 1986</p> <p>The Charities Act 1993</p> <p>Public interest disclosure test (see below)</p>
<p>15. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and the employees of, or office holders under, the authority</p>	<p>Public interest disclosure test (see below)</p>
<p>16. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings</p>	<p>There is no public interest disclosure test here. This exemption is where a report is made which contains professional legal advice for consideration or which may have an impact on any decision making that must be made.</p>

<p>17. Information which reveals that the Council proposes:</p> <p>(a) to give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or</p> <p>(b) to make an order or direction under any enactment</p>	<p>Public interest disclosure test (see below)</p>
<p>18. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime</p>	<p>Public interest disclosure test (see below)</p>
<p>18A. Information which is subject to any obligations of confidentiality</p>	<p>Public interest disclosure test (see below)</p>
<p>18B. Information which relates in anyway to matters concerning national security</p>	<p>Public interest disclosure test (see below)</p>
<p>18C The deliberations of a standards committee or of a subcommittee established under the provisions of Part 3 of the Local Government Act 2000 in reaching any finding on a matter referred to it.</p>	<p>Public interest disclosure test (see below)</p>

The public interest disclosure test referenced above covers information which falls within any of paragraphs 12 to 15, 17 and 18 of Schedule 12 of the 1972 Act and in summary sets out that a report will only be considered exempt if, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

This is a test that must be satisfied at all times when reports are considered exempt and should be considered by the authors of any such report and Members in determining any recommendation.

Consequences of failure to allow access

It should be noted that failure to apply these rules correctly, could expose the Council to a judicial review of any decision made stemming from that report. If a judicial review is successful, options include the granting of a quashing order, which will effectively quash the decision made, which means the Council would have to go back and re-start the decision making process, a prohibition order, which effectively would prohibit us from doing something or a mandatory order, which would compel us to act. The Court can also order damages to be paid.

Dissemination of Confidential and Exempt Reports by Members

Members should note that where exempt reports are disclosed to Members that information should not be distributed further.

Article 2(b)(ii) of the Constitution provides that “Councillors will not make public information which is confidential or exempt without the consent of the Council or divulge information given in confidence to anyone other than a council or officer entitled to know it”.

The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales has issued guidance on the Members Code of Conduct, which as far as it relates to this matter reads as follows:

“ As a general rule you should treat items discussed in confidential sections of meetings (exempt items) as confidential. These reports have usually been assessed by the authority as containing sensitive information, following legal advice. The sensitivity of the information may decline over time, but you are strongly urged to take proper legal advice before disclosing it” (The Code of Conduct for Members of Local Authorities in Wales Guidance from the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales April 2010 page 16)

Financial Impact

Not applicable.

Equality Impact Assessment

Not applicable.

Workforce Impacts

There are no workforce impacts associated with this report.

Legal Impacts

The legislative requirements for access to information and meetings are as set out in the Local Government Act 1972 as amended.

Risk Management

Not applicable.

Consultation

There is no requirement under the Constitution for external consultation on this item.

Recommendations

That Members note the content of this report in respect of access to meetings and reports in accordance with the legislative provisions.

List of Background Papers

The Constitution of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

Officer Contact

Karen Jones - Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services

e-mail: k.jones3@npt.gov.uk

Telephone: 01639 763284

David Michael - Head of Legal Services

e-mail: d.michael@npt.gov.uk

Telephone: 01639 763368

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NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

19 October 2017

Report of the Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services - K. Jones

Matter for Information

Wards Affected:

All Wards

Civic Buildings - Accessibility Survey

Purpose of the Report

1. To update Members of the Democratic Services Committee following the completion of an accessibility survey for the Neath and Port Talbot Civic Centres and The Quays Civic Offices.

Background

2. At the previous meeting of the Democratic Services Committee held on 27 July 2017, improvements to facilities for the use of Members was debated.
3. As part of Members discussions a request was made to undertake further work to establish if there were any other reasonable adjustments that should be considered to improve disabled access for both Members, staff and the general public within civic buildings.

4. Work to undertake the survey was conducted by the Facilities Management team during September and the relevant report is attached at Appendix 1.

Progress

5. In relation to the assessment undertaken at Port Talbot Civic Centre the report details that the civic building was constructed in 1987, prior to the introduction of any significant legislation to improve access for disabled people.
6. A number of areas were identified in the report where facility improvement works potentially could be carried out to improve access arrangements. This included issues such as car parking, external ramps, reception areas and lobbies, toilet facilities, signage and acoustics.
7. In addition, the report highlighted those areas where modernisation works had been carried out to improve access. Areas of improvement included new disabled toilet facilities, lift car adaptations, call points as well as various other upgrade works.
8. In relation to Neath Civic Centre this building was constructed in 2005, while building work on the civic offices located in The Quays, Briton Ferry was completed in 2009.
9. As a result both civic buildings were designed and built to comply with Part M of the Buildings Regulations and aside from operational issues (i.e. change of use of certain rooms) the buildings are designed to be fully accessible.

Financial Impact

10. With regard to civic building access, all relevant costs and any potential improvements will be funded via facility accommodation budgets with all potential works being fully planned, costed and delivered subject to annual budget limits.

Equality Impact Assessment

11. A screening assessment has been undertaken but a full equality impact assessment is not warranted.

Workforce Impacts

12. There are no workforce impacts associated with this report.

Legal Powers

13. Part M Building Regulations 2010 - Part M

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-and-use-of-buildings-approved-document-m>

Risk Management

14. There are no significant risks associated with this report.

Consultation

15. There is no requirement under the Constitution for external consultation on this item.

Recommendation

16. That the Democratic Services Committee note the accessibility survey.

Appendices

17. Appendix 1 - Civic Offices Access Appraisal Summary

List of Background Papers

18. None

Officer Contacts

Karen Jones - Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services

e-mail: k.jones3@npt.gov.uk

Telephone: 01639 763284

Rhys George - Electoral and Democratic Services Manager

e-mail: r.j.george@npt.gov.uk Telephone: 01639 763719

Steve Lewis - Asset Manager Surveyor

e-mail: s.lewis2@npt.gov.uk Telephone: 01639 686252

Richard Jenkins - Building Premises Manager

e-mail: r.jenkins@npt.gov.uk Telephone: 01639 763284

PROPERTY AND REGENERATION

CIVIC OFFICES – ACCESS APPRAISAL SUMMARY

DATE: 27th September 2017

ISSUE : No.01

Introduction

The Equality Act became law in October, 2010. It replaced previous legislation (such as the Disability Discrimination Act 1995) and ensures consistency in what employers and employees need to do to make their workplaces a fair environment and comply with the law.

All buildings constructed after 1994 must comply with Approved Document M of the Building Regulations – Access to and use of buildings. Part M sets out minimum requirements to ensure that a broad range of people are able to access and use facilities within buildings.

All buildings occupied by Neath Port Talbot CBC are routinely surveyed, to assess their suitability for disabled users to access facilities and services, and to identify any reasonable adjustments to be undertaken. The survey identifies where the building fails to comply with the relevant legislation, ascertains what work is required to remove physical barriers and indicative costs to undertake the work. Buildings are graded on an A-D basis:

A	Fully Accessible Building. Compliant with DDA.
B	Largely Accessible Building. Largely compliant with DDA but some works still required.
C	Largely Inaccessible Building. Non-compliant with DDA requirements but could be made so subject to extensive works.
D	Inaccessible Building. Non compliant with DDA requirements and cannot be made so at reasonable expense if at all.

The access survey examines the following areas in a systematic approach, from entry to the building, within the building and to means of escape in an emergency. A survey template is included in Appendix A.

- 1 Approach, routes and street furniture
- 2 Car parking
- 3 External ramps (approx. £2.5K per 100mm rise)
- 4 External steps
- 5 Entrances
- 6 Reception areas and lobbies (if necessary)
- 7 Corridors
- 8 Internal doors
- 9 Internal ramps
- 10 Internal stairs
- 11 Lifts – If no lift available, new installation will cost around £40K
- 12 Platform lifts and stairlifts
- 13 WCs: general provision
- 14 WCs: wheelchair users.
- 15 Internal surfaces
- 16 Facilities
- 17 Wayfinding
- 18 Lighting
- 19 Acoustics
- 20 Means of escape

The following report is a summary of the findings from access audits undertaken at Port Talbot Civic Centre, Neath Civic Centre and The Quays.

Port Talbot Civic Centre – Access Grade B

Port Talbot Civic Centre was constructed in 1987, prior to the introduction of any significant legislation to improve access for disabled people.

The main areas identified in the report where access is inadequate are:

- 1 Approach, routes and street furniture – The building is located on a sloping site, presenting inherent access issues for disabled users travelling from the front of the building to the rear.
- 2 Car parking – Disabled parking spaces and a setting-down point should be located close to the building entrance.
- 3 External ramps – Entrance ramps are marginally too steep to comply with modern standards.

Ramp to rear entrance is too steep / long. The change in level is circa 2½-metres and would warrant a platform lift to comply with current standards.
- 4 Reception areas and lobbies – The main reception desk is compliant, however, other service counters will need to be assessed by their relevant sections to determine if the service is affected.
- 5 WCs: general provision – The general toilet facilities does not provide sufficient ambulant provisions.
- 6 WCs: wheelchair users – There are several disabled toilets located within the Civic and Princess Royal Theatre. Accessible toilet facilities should be located next to the general toilet facilities. There are no disabled toilets to the lobby area to the first and second floors.
- 7 Wayfinding – Signage is not available in braille form.
- 8 Acoustics – No induction loop system located to the Committee Rooms
- 9 Means of escape – Several of the final exit doors egress on to steps

Works undertaken in recent years to improve accessibility to the Civic:

- New accessible toilet facility located to 2nd floor adjacent to members room;
- Lift car adaptations to provide improved facilities for users with hearing issues, sight issues or in wheelchairs;
- Call points within refuge areas to enable wheelchair and ambulant users to obtain help in an emergency;
- Improvements to external steps and handrails to the building perimeter;
- Improvements within accessible toilets for users with colostomy issues;
- Improved induction loop system to The Chamber;
- New automatic doors to The Princess Royal Theatre;
- Visual fire alarm indication to Committee Rooms.

Neath Civic Centre & The Quays – Access Grade A

Neath Civic Centre was constructed in 2005 and The Quays constructed in 2009. Both buildings were built to comply with Part M of the Building Regulations and aside from operational issues (change of use of certain rooms), the buildings are designed to be fully accessible for disabled users.

APPENDIX A

Access Audit Template



BUILDING ACCESSIBILITY APPRAISAL

Property Name: _____

UPRN: _____

Date of Survey: / / 2017 Name of Surveyor: STEVE LEWIS

Condition Grading:

- A → Fully Accessible Building. Compliant with DDA.

- B → Largely Accessible Building. Largely compliant with DDA but some works still required.

- C → Largely Inaccessible Building. Non-compliant with DDA requirements but could be made so subject to extensive works.

- D → Inaccessible Building. Non compliant with DDA requirements and cannot be made so at reasonable expense if at all.

ACCESSIBILITY GRADING



1 Approach, routes and street furniture		Cost	£
1.1	Access route length (<i>reasonable walking distance of public Highway, public transport and car park</i>). Adequate seating?	<i>Comments:</i>	
1.2	Pathways – free of kerbs, sufficient width, even surfacing, slip resistant, free from obstruction (<i>bins, bollards, etc</i>), steep?		
1.3	Sufficient landmarks and signage to aid orientation? Segregation between pedestrians and traffic?		
1.4	Adequately lit?		
2 Car parking		Cost	£
2.1	Disabled parking bays clearly signposted from car park entrance? Sufficient number? Setting down points?	<i>Comments:</i>	
2.2	Disabled parking identifiable, to the correct dimensions and adequately lit? Smooth surfaces (<i>free of stones</i>)?		
2.3	Is parking close to building and access route to entrance acceptable (<i>drop kerbs and tactile warnings</i>)?		
2.4	Does parking bay allow enough space for transfer to wheelchair? Enough room for tail loading?		
3 External ramps (approx. £2.5K per 100mm rise)		Cost	£
3.1	Ramp accompanied by steps for ambulant disabled people (<i>if rise is greater than 300mm</i>)?	<i>Comments:</i>	
3.2	Ramp wide enough (<i>1500</i>), suitably graded, suitable handrails (<i>at 900-1000</i>), non-slip surface and protected edges?		
3.3	If no permanent ramp, is a portable ramp, platform lift present?		
4 External steps		Cost	£
4.1	Are there visual and tactile (<i>corduroy</i>) warnings at top and bottom of steps (<i>400 mm from steps; 1200 x 800</i>)?	<i>Comments:</i>	
4.2	Is lighting adequate and well positioned?		
4.3	Correct tread length (<i>280-425</i>), riser heights (<i>150-170</i>); adequate width (<i>1200</i>) and identifiable nosings? Consistent?		
4.4	Landing large enough and provided at intermediate levels in a long flight? Suitable handrails each side (<i>900-1000</i>)?		

5 Entrances			Cost	£
5.1	Main entrance clearly distinguishable from façade, easy to locate and clearly signed?		<i>Comments:</i>	
5.2	Is the door opening (750mm exist; 1000mm new) / lobby (1750 clear) wide enough and adequate opening space (300 clearance at door stile)? Outward opening doors clearly guarded?			
5.3	Level / flush threshold? Weather mat firm and flush? Weather protection (canopy)?			
5.4	Sufficient visions panel (500-800; 1.15-1.5)? Safety markings to glazing (850-1000; 1400-1600)? Sufficient access signage?			
5.5	Suitable height (750-1000) / type of door access system (for blind /mute users) and ironmongery (mobility)? Power assisted?			
6 Reception areas and lobbies (if necessary)			Cost	£
6.1	Clearly marked and sufficient quantity of signage (reception / main office; WC; lift; stairs)? Clearly viewed from external.		<i>Comments:</i>	
6.2	Reception desk suitable height?			
6.3	Surfaces suitable? Lobby doors suitable (same as entrance doors and provide 1750 mm clearance)?			
7 Corridors			Cost	£
7.1	Wide enough and free from obstructions (adequate space for wheelchair users to turn)? Recessed fixtures i.e. extinguishers?		<i>Comments:</i>	
7.2	Natural and artificial lighting avoiding glare and silhouettes?			
7.3	Suitable floor surfacing (slip resistant; bright / boldly patterned coverings avoided)?			
7.4	Directional, information and tactile signage provided and clearly visible?			
8 Internal doors			Cost	£
8.1	Glass doors – clearly visible when closed i.e.safety markings to glazing (850-1000; 1400-1600)?		<i>Comments:</i>	
8.2	Sufficient vision panels to view opposite side of door (500-800; 1.15-1.5)?			
8.3	Clear opening width (exist. 750–775, new 800–825); adequate opening space (incl .300mm to opening stile)?			
8.4	Handles easily gripped and operated? Light and easy to open? Appropriate door closer? Electromagnets linked to fire alarm?			

9 Internal ramps			Cost	£
9.1	Is there a ramp at any internal level change? Accompanied by steps where rise is greater than 300mm?		<i>Comments:</i>	
9.2	Wide enough and suitably graded with non-slip covering? Clearly signed / identifiable? Clear of door swings?			
9.3	Exposed edges protected to prevent accidents and suitable handrails?			
10 Internal stairs			Cost	£
10.1	Correct tread length (280-425), riser heights (150-170); adequate width (1200) and identifiable nosings? Consistent?		<i>Comments:</i>	
10.2	Suitable handrail each side (900-1000)?			
10.3	Landings big enough and provided at intermediate levels in long flight?			
10.4	Clearly identifiable signage (visual and tactile)?			
10.5	Adequate and well-positioned lighting?			
11 Lifts – If no lift available, new installation will cost around £40K			Cost	£
11.1	Passenger lift available in a building of more than 1 storey? Car dimension (1400 x 900) and openings (800) sufficient?		<i>Comments:</i>	
11.2	Support rails in car appropriately designed and positioned? Mirror to rear to aid wheelchair users to reverse (up to 900)?			
11.3	Adequate controls (in easy reach of users; distinguishable / visible from background), including emergency call?			
11.4	Voice indication of floor reached? Doors stay open for sufficient time / infrared override system?			
11.5	Floor indicator clear (visible from lift car i.e. "Floor 2") and call control within easy reach of all users?			
11.6	Lift location clearly defined by visual and tactile information?			
11.7	Sufficient unobstructed space for waiting and manoeuvring (at least 1500 x 1500 unobstructed landing space)?			
11.8	Alternative, suitable stairs?			

12 Platform lifts and stairlifts			Cost	£
12.1	Can platform lift / stairlift be conveniently and safely accessed (<i>independent usage</i>)? Clear Instructions?		<i>Comments:</i>	
12.2	Easily identifiable / reachable controls for standing / seated users? Adequate platform (1250 x 800) adequately guarded?			
13 WCs: general provision			Cost	£
13.1	Lobby door light enough to open? Lobby sufficient size (<i>1750mm clearance</i>)?		<i>Comments:</i>	
13.2	Slip resistant floor throughout?			
13.3	Fittings all easily distinguishable from backing (<i>effective visual contrast</i>)?			
13.4	Compartment door controls all easily gripped and operated?			
13.5	Sufficient space (in general WC's) for ambulant disabled people to manoeuvre?			
13.6	Sufficient sanitaryware (<i>WHB at accessible height; taps easily operated; low level urinal</i>) and disabled ironmongery (<i>grab rails; signage</i>).			
13.7	Sufficient travel distance and clearly signed?			
14 WCs: wheelchair users.			Cost	£
14.1	Adequate Facilities? Large enough (<i>2200 x 1500</i>) to allow manoeuvring into position? Unobstructed (<i>e.g. pipe boxing</i>)?		<i>Comments:</i>	
14.2	Hand and drying within easy reach of wheelchair seat?			
14.3	Sufficient travel distance and clearly signed (<i>no further than able bodied</i>)? Are WC's labelled left or right handed, or peninsula approach?			
14.4	Adequate door ironmongery, lightswitches, sanitaryware, taps, grabrails and audible alarm?			
15 Internal surfaces			Cost	£
15.1	Floor surfaces suitable for wheelchair passage and unobstructed?		<i>Comments:</i>	
15.2	Distinguishable fittings/fixtures (<i>no glare / reflection</i>)? Colours, tones and textures varied?			
15.3	Textured surfaces to aid orientation in people with impaired sight? Slip resistant floors; no bright / distracting coverings.			

16 Facilities		Cost	£
16.1	Sufficient / correct seating provided (<i>armrests; different levels; where waiting likely</i>)? Adjacent areas for wheelchair users?	<i>Comments:</i>	
16.2	Service desks / counters: space on both sides for wheelchair users? Induction loops installed?		
16.3	Telephones: Fixed at a height that allows easy use by wheelchair users? Is there a textphone?		
17 Wayfinding		Cost	£
17.1	Overall layout of building reasonably clear and logical?	<i>Comments:</i>	
17.2	Signs in logical position, readable and identifiable? Available in tactile form? Maps / plans guides available or required?		
18 Lighting		Cost	£
18.1	Lighting designed and sufficient to meet a wide range of users' needs? PIR Activated booster? Adequately positioned (no dark areas)?	<i>Comments:</i>	
18.2	Workspaces: is lighting controllable and adjustable? Is fluorescent lighting installed only where it is unlikely to interfere with hearing aids?		
19 Acoustics		Cost	£
19.1	Acoustic environment for intended use? Background noise kept to a minimum?	<i>Comments:</i>	
19.2	Quiet and noisy areas separated by buffer zone?		
19.3	Environment free of unnecessarily obtrusive noise (e.g. heating units)?		
20 Means of escape		Cost	£
20.1	Ground floor exit routes as accessible to all (<i>including wheelchair users</i>)? Vertical escape from upper or lower floors possible via fire protected lift with independent power supply?	<i>Comments:</i>	
20.2	If people with disabilities cannot completely evacuate the building, can they reach places of safety or refuges?		

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NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

19 October 2017

Report of the Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services – Karen Jones

Matter for Information

Wards Affected:

All Wards

Outcome of Members Survey on Timing of Council Meetings

Purpose of the Report

1. To update Members of the Democratic Services Committee on the outcome of the Members Survey on Timing of Council Meetings.

Background

2. Section 6 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 requires the Council to undertake a survey of Members regarding the timing, frequency and location of meetings of the Council and its Committees at least once during the term of administration.

3. The format and content of the survey was discussed and agreed by Members during the previous meeting of the Committee held on 27 July.
4. Supporting the Council's digital by choice - channel shift strategy, the survey was compiled as an online questionnaire and published on 21 September.

Evaluation

5. Following the expiry of the survey deadline on 9 October a total of 41 out of 64 Members (64%) completed the questionnaire. A summary of the main findings is provided below with the detailed results outlined in the appendix to this report.
6. In relation to the current/cycle timetable of meetings 83% of Members stated that they found the arrangements to be satisfactory, with a majority (58%) preferring to attend meetings either in the morning (9am-1pm) or Afternoon (2pm-5pm), and 7% of respondents requesting meetings be held during the evenings (6pm-8pm).
7. Members who commented in relation to the above questions raised some difficulties in attending meetings due to work or childcare commitments with a minority (20%) keen to examine the possibility of rotating meeting times or, alternatively, examining more flexibility to allow Members to attend specific meetings, potentially on a committee-by-committee basis.
8. Furthermore, Members were asked what day of the week they found most difficult to attend meetings. In response to this question 44% of Members stated that Friday meetings caused them the most difficulty in relation to meeting attendance with meetings on Tuesday and Thursday being considered optimum. Just over a quarter of Members (27%) stated that they had no difficulty in attending any weekday meetings.
9. Turning to the issue of meeting location the majority of Member (59%) expressed a preference for meetings to be held in Port Talbot Civic Centre with 29% of Members preferring Neath Civic Centre.

10. One Member expressed a personal preference for consideration of some meetings to take place in community locations and, longer term, to explore the possibility of remote electronic access attendance, subject to such options being made available in any future Local Government legislative reform.
11. On the matter of the frequency of Council and Committee/Sub-Committee meetings the overwhelming majority (95%) of respondents stated that the status quo arrangements remained satisfactory.
12. Members were also asked about the improvements made to the facilities in the meetings rooms in Neath and Port Talbot Civic Centres. In terms of the comments made the majority expressed a positive opinion on the works conducted to modernise and update Council facilities. However, a small number of Members highlighted that further consideration needed to be given to improving audio and lighting arrangements, particularly in relation to Neath Civic Centre.
13. To conclude the survey Members were asked to make any additional comments they thought were pertinent to the timing of meetings. A variety of comments were put forward, and, while it was clear that there are no arrangements which would suit all Members in relation to all formal meetings the majority of respondents outlined their support for the current cycle schedule.
14. Nevertheless, an underlying theme was highlighted with a minority of Members requesting the case for more flexibility in the timing of council meetings, to consider the further use of modern technology and to looking at ways, wherever possible, to adapt to help Members with family or work commitments in setting future meeting cycles.

Financial Impact

15. There are no financial impacts associated with this report. However, future changes to meeting times and/or venue locations, or the use of new technology, may have potential implications in relation to the costs associated with administering the governance arrangements of the Council.

Equality Impact Assessment

16. A screening assessment has been undertaken but a full equality impact assessment is not required.

Workforce Impacts

17. There are no workforce impacts associated with this report. However, all changes to existing meeting arrangements may have implications for those Officers who attend meetings of the Council.

Legal Powers

18. S.6 Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/mwa/2011/4/contents>

Risk Management

19. There are no significant risks associated with this report.

Consultation

20. There is no requirement under the Constitution for external consultation on this item.

Recommendations

21. That the Democratic Services Committee consider the findings in relation to the timing of council meetings survey.

Appendix

22. Detailed Summary - Members Survey on Timing of Council Meetings

List of Background Papers

23. None.

Officer Contacts

Karen Jones - Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services

e-mail: k.jones3@npt.gov.uk

Telephone: 01639 763284

Rhys George - Electoral and Democratic Services Manager

e-mail: r.j.george@npt.gov.uk

Telephone: 01639 763719

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Timing of Council Meetings

This report was generated on 10/10/17. Overall 41 respondents completed this questionnaire. The report has been filtered to show the responses for 'All Respondents'.

Name of Councillor	
Edward Latham	
Rachel Taylor	Sean Pursey
Dean Cawsey	Carolyn Edwards
Scott Jones	Alan Lockyer
Anthony John Richards	Simon Knoyle
John Warman	Sonia Reynolds
Chris James	Wyndham Griffiths
Robert Wood	Charlotte Galsworthy
Sandra Miller	Mike Harvey
Peter Rees	
Rosalyn Davies	
Helen Ceri Clarke	
Arwyn Woolcock	
Desmond William Davies	
Sian Harris	
Rhidian Mizen	
Doreen Jones	
Leanne jones	
Del Morgan	
Nicola davies	
Christopher John Jones	
Adam McGrath	
John Miller	
David Whitelock	
Angharad Aubrey	
Martin Ellis	
Susanne Renkes	
Steffan ap Dafydd	
Annette Wingrave	
Suzanne Paddison	
Christopher Williams	
Oliver Stewart Davies	
Matt Crowley	

Timing of Council Meetings

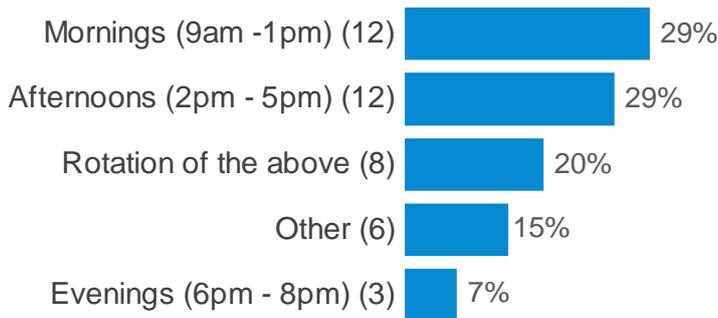
Do you find the arrangements for the current cycle/timetable of meetings satisfactory?



(Please specify:)

- It is ok, but it seems a lot of meetings are crammed into the first two weeks of a month.
- Often clashes with end of school day. Not always able to get time off work.
- Rotation maybe good
- Many arrangements are fine, but we do need to examine more flexibility for certain members.
- Yes but I can appreciate the difficulties for those who have full-time employment

Please indicate your preference in relation to the timings of meetings:



(Please specify:)

- 4-6pm/5-7pm
- Mornings or evenings but not afternoons.
- I support variance/rotation, but not necessarily the precise times shown (e.g. consider 4/5pm)
- Mornings/afternoons link won't work for ticking two
- I don't mind as long as I have reasonable notice.
- Anything to suit the majority & Staff

Timing of Council Meetings

Is there a day of the week that you would find it difficult to attend meetings?



Do you have any other issues in relation to the attendance of meetings? Please specify:

I've only selected Friday above because I couldn't submit when leaving it blank. There is no particular day of the week that I would find it difficult to attend meetings on.

N/A

None

I have other commitments during evenings so I would not be able to change the regime we have now

None

The date and time needs to be put in place with plenty of notice. i work flexi so can sometimes accommodate meetings but sometimes the pre meeting and meeting time has been changed with little notice.

I have no days of the week that give me issues. Morning or Afternoon as above. Did not want to choose any day but had to choose one to move on.

I work full time and have to use my own time to attend meetings, so 2pm onwards suits me as I can just have an early finish. I can sometimes do a Friday but as that is the busiest day for leave find this day hard to get off.

I can attend most meetings.

Thursdays and Fridays i am in uni but am free in the evenings

Unable to attend evening meetings

No

I work full time and my job is not a 9-5 type of job so I cant say from one week to the next which days I may be unavailable. As long as I have good notice of meeting dates I can manage my diary accordingly. However sometimes I'm away for several days during the week or have work commitments which cannot be altered because they involve a 3rd party. I have sufficient unpaid leave allowance to be able to attend meetings and do other council work. But it just doesn't always work out due to appointments etc

As I didn't expect meetings on Friday, I have arranged to provide free Welsh lessons on a Friday afternoon.

None

I Attend Fire Authority Meetings on Mondays generally

Timing of Council Meetings

Do you have any other issues in relation to the attendance of meetings? Please specify:

I am lucky in having a flexible job, but work Monday Wednesday and Friday currently. I have altered my days and hours to fit around regular meetings (Planning on Tuesdays for example). Mornings allow me to get a meeting 'out of the way' before going back to work on the days that I do work. Evening meetings would be problematic as there are various political meetings (4 a month) that take place as well as committee meetings for local groups I'm involved in. These already take up a lot of personal time in the evenings.

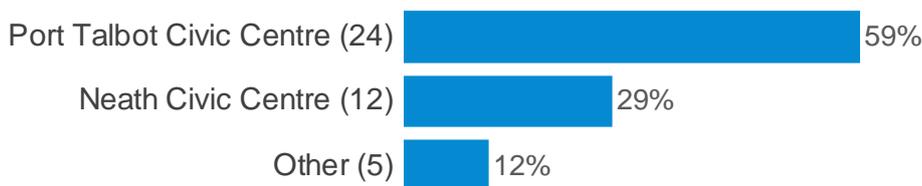
Many meetings , not only borough council meetings to attend so it would be better if the timing of the meetings were static or we had plenty of advance warning. E.g meeting this week changed at short notice to a pm meeeting and i had arranged an appointment so couldn't attend

Monday and Wednesday evenings are not good for me

I have difficulties if meetings are changed at relatively short notice. This is due to organising other Board level commitments

Work full time.

Please indicate your preference in relation to location of meetings bearing in mind the need for suitable arrangements to accommodate the larger Council/Committee meetings:



Any other comments: (Please specify:)

Both

Either I have no preference.

No particular issues with either Neath or Port Talbot but would not be happy with just one site only

I don't mind where as long as the venue is specified.

I have a relatively long distance to travel to either of the Civic Centres. Neither venue is realistically accessible to me via public transport. I fully accept this and benefit from the facilities available to members to work between meetings at both centres. However, I would like to see just some meetings were possible held in community locations particularly in the Valleys. This could make the workings of the Council more accessible to members of these communities. It may also be appropriate to consider in the long term, remote access via electronic means to meetings should members find themselves unable to travel due to lack of transport or physical disability.

Please indicate your preference in relation to the frequency of Council, its Committees or Sub Committee meetings:



Timing of Council Meetings

Please specify: (Other (please state your preference))

I think Status Quo with the room to adapt to need if and when for improvement etc

Sometimes the agenda is so short you wonder why a meeting has been called. This isn't often but doe.

Please indicate below how you feel about the improvements made to the facilities in the meeting rooms in Port Talbot and Neath Civic Centres:

Being a new member, the facilities were improved before i was elected, so it's difficult to comment.

Excellent facilities in both Civic Centres, I particularly like the air-con in the committee rooms in Neath Civic Centre.

Excellent improvements. However, we could do with a small office/meeting room where Councillors could meet with constituents and or officers of the council as and when needed. If this could be achieved, could Councillors be able to book this office/meeting room online?

N/A

Although I have an office at home where I tend to do most of my work I think the recent improvements made are first class I sometimes use the anti -room in the Neath Civic which I find useful it's normally quiet I so it meets the members requirements.

I think the facilities are good.

All very good

The seating is too rigid for my needs at Port Talbot.

No comments

Much improved & user friendly.

I am only recently elected so have no experience of what they were like before to compare them to!

The refurbishment of the committee rooms, including new furniture and microphone system, is welcomed. However, the refurbishment of the Members room in Port Talbot, although sorely needed, has resulted in it being a more of a work station than somewhere to relax prior to, or after a meeting. Whilst I agree that access to PCs and telephones are essential, the traditional "Member" room element has been taken away.

Okay

Sorry I didnt know what it was like before to comment on what it is like now.

Very pleased with the improvements

The IT facilities in Port Talbot are an improvement but there are not enough leisure areas for members who have to attend meetings all day.

Facilities are fine.

The continued improvements are helpful

From what Ive seen as a newly elected councillor i have no complaints

I'm a new member and can't comment on the improvements

No improvement needed

Not impressed with sound systems

The acoustics and lighting in neath are still fairly poor.

Either Neath or Port Talbot is easy for me. Every thing seems suitable.

Timing of Council Meetings

Please indicate below how you feel about the improvements made to the facilities in the meeting rooms in Port Talbot and Neath Civic Centres:

Council chamber is useful for, larger scrutiny meetings when committee rooms are not sufficiently "round table" Neath rooms A and B often feel over large and perhaps if tables are on wheels rearrangement would allow bespoke settings for meetings Cabinet style single table arrangements are not useful as communications along sides work against facemtomface

They are good

I don't mind as long as there is a reasonable notice of time and place.

I find the seating improvements practical and adequate. I do have an issue with the height of the monitors in the members room and the fact that they are not easily adjusted. For people that use reading glasses or varifocals they are too high.

The addition of microphones is much better.

Excellent facilities. No issues.

I have not been a councillor long enough to comment on improvements or facilities in either civic centre. I do not know what was in place prior to me being elected.

Very good although i do not use them

I am more than happy with both Civic Centres.

Would comment that in the committee rooms, that a reminder to use the microphones be made at the start of meetings. There also often doesn't seem to be quite enough of the new microphones with some far out of reach when in Regen in Neath Civic for example.

Adequate facilities

Committee. Rooms 1 + 2 could be iritis from oval shaped table for all members/visitors. To have eye contact (especially helping hard of hearing if lip reading) and aid communication

The Facilities are fine

Portable Microphone system in Neath has limitations. As I have to travel for meetings I can often spend considerable time at one or other civic centre. I am unimpressed by the quality of the refreshments available to purchase in the civic centre. Very bread based with limited consideration given to those who may wish to eat or drink more healthily or have gluten or similar concerns.

As a new member I was not able to comment as I didn't know the previous arrangements

I like them as they are all I have ever known

Good.

Please use the space below to make any other comments in relation to the timing of meetings:

Meetings either at the start of the working day or right at the end of the working day would be best for me, so that I don't have to sacrifice too much time from my job travelling to and from meetings.

At the very start of the day (8-9am start) or at the end of the (4-5pm start) would be useful.

N/A

Due to many new members having a full time occupation as well as being a Cllr, I think evening meetings would be more suitable to ensure a good attendance.

I think the timings of meetings is good I am self employed so I find meetings in the morning are good and then members are free do constituency ward work and attend to personal matters. I personally do not like afternoon meetings and I don't know why the full council meetings could not be held in the morning.

N/a

I find the status quo fine

Timing of Council Meetings

Please use the space below to make any other comments in relation to the timing of meetings:

I would not be able to attend evening meetings. And would be restricted on Fridays

The present arrangements are satisfi.

I understand that timing of meetings is a problem for those who are employed elsewhere & we should try to accommodate those who find it difficult to attend meetings in the day.

There does not seem to be enough consideration given to those with day jobs or childcare and caring responsibilities.

I believe that the existing times are correct i.e. 10.00 am and 2.00 pm for committee meetings, and 2.30 pm for full Council meetings.

It suites me to have 9 til 5 meetings but I do apprieciate some members work 9 til five. Those on shift work will be working what ever time of day meetings are called , afernoon ,night or morning.

I do not like morning meetings as they are difficult with work.

No comment

The timing of the meetings is appropriate.

I think it would be beneficial if timings of meetings were more flexible, as they have been a number of new councillors this year who are in employment it may work better

I'll just repeat my point that certain members need more flexibility, as they are working/caring/etc. - but I'd also add that council meetings are meant to be public meetings, and we need to take account of the public's accessibility as well

I am happy with meeting times and do not mind either Neath or Port Talbot civic centre

Due to my work commitments meetings after 2pm are best suited.

None

There is a legal requirement for employed councillors to time off work, the employer should be challenged if reluctant to release any councillors for meetings.

None

So far the times of meetings have been fine.

Generally works well but individually at times gives occasional overloads as to be expected. A range of times and days best all round

I have no other comment

See 7.

I am happy with the timing of meetings.

I am satisfied with the timing of meetings.

The meetings are well organised with timescales and excellent members of staff chairing the meetings.

I find timings quite well laid out.

Happy with the status quo arrangements

No other comments

None to make

See above, should remain the same time if already in schedule

Timing of meetings are workable as they are. It will never suit all. Evening meetings will have even more clashes as Cllrs constituency commitment / pact school performance and governance are at this time.

Timing of Council Meetings

Please use the space below to make any other comments in relation to the timing of meetings:

I work 8-5 Monday to Friday and find it extremely difficult to attend Council meetings. I understand that this is not the same for everyone and that I am probably in the minority but these are my observations. I would refer meetings in the evenings 6-8 as indicated as these would suit me better so that I could attend more. Many thanks

If the Council wishes to engage with the public and involve people of all ages and employment status as Councillors or in its work in general then timing of meetings must provide for ease of access to those in employment or with caring responsibilities almost in preference to those of us who no longer work full-time.

I have no problem with the current arrangements in relation to Council meetings

In social care sometimes I see need for more time for briefing discussions depending on Agenda.

Nil

**WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE –**

DATE	Agenda Items	Type (Decision, Monitoring or Information)	Rotation (Topical, ,Annual, Biannual, Quarterly, Monthly)	Contact Officer/Head of Service
1 st February 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Government Reform – Broadcasting of meetings 	Information/ Decision		Karen Jones
1 st February 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Welsh Language and the Translation Service 	Monitoring/ Decision		Karen Jones
1 st February 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Induction Programme and Training and Development: • Evaluate Member Induction Programme • Equalities Matters 	Decision		Neil Evans
1 st February 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member Champion for Member Support and Development: • Review of Member Learning and Development 	Decision		Neil Evans

1 st February 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home ICT: • Review Member ICT Scheme • Member IT Reference Group 	Decision		Karen Jones/Steve John
1 st February 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Arrangements around Annual Reports regarding report compilation; sample reports 	Decision		Annette Manchipp
1 st February 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apologies Policy – Publication of Reasons for Absence 	Monitor		Annette Manchipp
1 st February 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Staffing Structure of Democratic Services 	Decision		Karen Jones
1 st February 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview and Scrutiny Development Update 	Information		Stacy Curran

Councillor A.N.Woolcock, to be invited to the meeting for Scrutiny issues