

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.

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