

Borough Council of
**King's Lynn &
West Norfolk**



Corporate Performance Panel
Monday, 18th July, 2022 at 4.30 pm
**in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Saturday Market
Place, King's Lynn PE30 5DQ**

**Reports marked to follow on the Agenda and/or Supplementary
Documents**

1. **Report of the Informal Working Group - Council Meeting Arrangements** (Pages 2 - 14)

Contact

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POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL REPORT

REPORT TO:	Corporate Performance Panel		
DATE:	18 July 2022		
TITLE:	Council Meeting Arrangements – Findings of the Informal Working Group		
TYPE OF REPORT:	Operational		
PORTFOLIO(S):	Cllr Stuart Dark, Leader		
REPORT AUTHOR:	Lorraine Gore, Chief Executive		
OPEN/EXEMPT	Open	WILL BE SUBJECT TO A FUTURE CABINET REPORT:	Yes

REPORT SUMMARY/COVER PAGE

PURPOSE OF REPORT/SUMMARY:
To consider the findings of the Council Meeting Arrangements - Informal Working Group
KEY ISSUES:
The arrangements for council meetings have changed during the response to the covid pandemic. The temporary arrangements which allowed wholly virtual meetings during the immediate response to the covid pandemic ended on 7 May 2021. Further covid restrictions were removed by the Government from 24 February 2022 under their plans for living with covid. To ensure Member input into the consideration of council meeting arrangements it was agreed at Corporate Performance Panel on 13 April 2022 to establish an Informal Working Group for evidence gathering and preliminary analysis.
OPTIONS CONSIDERED:
The Informal Working Group met on 6 June 2022 and 4 July 2022. The minutes of these meetings are attached.
RECOMMENDATIONS:
The Informal Working Group recommendations for Council Meeting Arrangements are set out in section 2 of the report. A report be prepared for Cabinet on 20 September: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to set out the recommendations from the Informal Working Group • to set out proposals for additional resources within Democratic Services to ensure the required level of support is available for meetings
REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:
To respond to the Motion to Council and the arrangements for council meetings as covid restrictions are removed.

REPORT DETAIL

1. Introduction

- 1.1 To ensure Member input into the consideration of council meeting arrangements it was agreed at Corporate Performance Panel on 13 April 2022 to establish an Informal Working Group for evidence gathering and preliminary analysis. The Terms of Reference for the Informal Working Group are attached.

2. Findings and Recommendations of the Informal Working Group (IWG)

- 2.1 The minutes of the meetings of the IWG held on 6 June and 4 July 2022 are attached.
- 2.2 The IWG considered the timing of the Planning Committee and Licensing Committee and as both these meetings involve the attendance of external bodies and the volume and complexity of some of the documents under consideration it was recommended that these meetings should remain during the day as per current arrangements.
- 2.3 The timing of the panel meetings was discussed at length and there were differing views as detailed in the minutes. The IWG asked the Panel Chairs to seek the views of their individual panels and the responses received are also attached. The recommendation of IWG is that the panels should determine their meeting start times, but with a preference for a 4.30pm start.
- 2.4 Cabinet will continue to determine the start times of their meetings.
- 2.5 The IWG considered that full Council meetings should revert to evening meetings, with the recommended start time of 6pm.
- 2.6 The IWG recommended that the arrangements for live streaming and hybrid meeting arrangements to continue. Officer presentations and audio quality to be kept under review.
- 2.7 The IWG recommended that the interim member enquiries email arrangements continue and the Monitoring Officer be requested to prepare the appropriate update to the constitution to be included in the report to Cabinet.
- 2.8 The staffing resourcing implications of the recommendations of the IWG detailed above were referred to the Chief Executive to prepare proposals to be included in the report to Cabinet.

POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL REPORT

REPORT TO:	Corporate Performance Panel		
DATE:	13 April 2022		
TITLE:	Council Meeting Arrangements - Informal Working Group		
TYPE OF REPORT:	Operational		
PORTFOLIO(S):	Leader – Councillor Dark		
REPORT AUTHOR:	Lorraine Gore – Chief Executive		
OPEN/EXEMPT	Open	WILL BE SUBJECT TO A FUTURE CABINET REPORT:	No

REPORT SUMMARY/COVER PAGE

<p>PURPOSE OF REPORT/SUMMARY:</p> <p>At the full Council meeting on 23 February 2022 the following Motion was proposed:</p> <p>PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY The broad purpose of the equality duty is to integrate consideration of equality and good relations into the day- to-day business of public authorities. By continuing to hold Council meeting during “normal working hours”, this Council is preventing prospective and current Members with occupations, child or other caring obligations, that need to be fulfilled within these hours, from participating effectively in the decision-making process. To avoid discrimination against those whose daily lives embrace such characteristics and to ensure Part2 Article 2 Paragraph 2.04 “Roles and Functions of Councillors” can be met, this Council agrees that all future Council Meetings will be held no earlier than 6.30pm and will not start beyond 7.00pm. For the avoidance of doubt the word “Council” in this Motion embraces all types of Council Meetings as in Part 2 of the Constitution Article 4, Para.4.02 and all Scrutiny and Overview Committees (Article 6).</p> <p>Council resolved that the Motion should be referred to Cabinet and relevant Panels for consideration and recommendations back to Council. To inform the content of the report to Cabinet, it is proposed to establish an Informal Working Group to consider the above Motion and arrangements for council meetings as covid restrictions are removed. This report sets out the arrangements for the Informal Working Group.</p>
<p>KEY ISSUES:</p> <p>The arrangements for council meetings have changed during the response to the covid pandemic. The temporary arrangements which allowed wholly virtual meetings during the immediate response to the covid pandemic ended on 7 May 2021. Further covid restrictions were removed by the Government from 24 February 2022 under their plans for living with covid. To ensure Member input into the consideration of council meeting arrangements in a living with covid world it is proposed to establish an Informal Working Group for evidence gathering and preliminary analysis.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATIONS:</p> <p>1. That the informal working group terms of reference to be to evidence gather and provide preliminary analysis of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the issues identified in the notice of motion • the views of the various council panels and committees • the staffing resource implications • continuation of the arrangements for live streaming • continuation of the arrangements for hybrid meeting arrangements

- capturing the environmental benefits of hybrid meetings
- continuation of the interim member enquiries email arrangements

2. The Informal Working Group to comprise of five Members and be supported by the Chief Executive.

3. The Informal Working Group to hold their first meeting as soon as possible, elect a Chair and Vice-Chair, agree the required actions to fulfil the group's Terms of Reference and decide on the ongoing regularity of future meetings of the group.

4. Once the Terms of Reference are complete, decide on final conclusions and findings to be included within the report back to the Corporate Performance Panel, Cabinet and Council meetings.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

To respond to the Motion to Council and the arrangements for council meetings as covid restrictions are removed.

BOROUGH COUNCIL OF KING'S LYNN & WEST NORFOLK

INFORMAL WORKING GROUP MEETING ARRANGEMENTS

**Minutes from the Meeting of the Informal Working Group Meeting
Arrangements held on Monday, 6th June, 2022 at 2.30 pm in the Council
Chamber, Town Hall, Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn PE30 5DQ**

PRESENT:

Councillors I Devereux, C Hudson, J Moriarty, C Morley and Mrs V Spikings

Officers:

Lorraine Gore, Chief Executive

Wendy Vincent, Democratic Services Officer

1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

AGREED: Councillor Mrs V Spikings be appointed Chair.

2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Informal Working Group (IWG) discussed the background information circulated with the Agenda.

The IWG commented that it would have been useful to have the meeting start times set out within the schedule of meetings from other Norfolk authorities.

AGREED: The schedule to be revised to include meeting times of other Norfolk authorities and be presented to the next meeting.

3 TERMS OF REFERENCE

The IWG discussed the recommendations set at 1 out in the Terms of Reference agreed by the Corporate Performance Panel on 13 April 2022:

The Chair drew Member's attention to the Terms of Reference;

That the informal working group terms of reference to be to evidence gather and provide preliminary analysis of:

- the issues identified in the notice of motion
- the views of the various council panels and committees
- the staffing resource implications
- continuation of the arrangements for live streaming

- continuation of the arrangements for hybrid meeting arrangements
- capturing the environmental benefits of hybrid meetings
- continuation of the interim member enquiries email arrangements

The Chair outlined the benefits of holding meetings during the day and commented that it would be useful for the IWG to see the breakdown of potential cost savings of holding meetings during office hours.

The Chief Executive sought clarification if the IWG were to consider the start times of all meetings including Planning and Licensing or only the Policy Development Panels, Audit Committee, Full Council and King's Lynn Area Consultative Committee.

Councillor Morley outlined the rationale for his Motion to Council and stated that he had no objection and supported both the Planning Committee and Licensing meetings to be held during the day.

Councillor Moriarty commented that he did not disagree with the statement made by Councillor Morley and added that it was sensible for the Planning Committee to be held during the day to enable agents, etc to attend. Cabinet would determine its own start time, any ad hoc informal working groups could be held during the time and Panel meetings in the evening.

An informal discussion took place between the IWG and officers, a summary of which is set out below:

- Benefits of meetings being held at 4.30..
- Benefits of and resource required for hybrid meetings and livestreaming.
- Safety of women.
- Members Allowance Scheme contains Carers Allowance.
- Should an all Councillor survey be conducted on meeting start times. Following a discussion it was agreed that an email be sent to all Chairs of Panels, Audit Committee and KLACC to ascertain views of start times.
- Each Panel/Committee could be asked of preferred meeting times.
- Meeting start times could be determine by Chair of each Committee.
- Officers workloads of being in the office during the day and then attending evening meetings.
- Benefits of holding 10 am meetings – better decision making.
- Preference for officers giving complex presentations to be present in person rather than via Zoom.
- Pre-Covid Environment and Community Panel held earlier meetings – 3.30 pm.
- Importance and benefits of face to face meetings.

- Start times of meetings to be determined prior to the Election in 2023.
- All Councillors could be consulted on the start time for Full Council.
- Work Programmes of Panels/Audit Committee – L Gore advised this would be discussed at a forthcoming meeting with Panel Chairs.
- Members Enquiry Box.
- Pre-Council Briefings held pre-Covid. It was noted that ad hoc virtual Member Briefings had been scheduled and could continue to do so. Members could contact Democratic Services if a specific subject had been identified for a Member Briefing.

Councillor Hudson informed the IWG that meeting start times had been discussed at a recent Labour Group Meeting who had agreed that meetings should not be held later than 4.30 pm.

The Chair commented that it would be useful for the IWG to receive a breakdown on the cost of meetings if they were to be held at 4.30 pm, 5.30 pm or 6.30 pm.

AGREED: 1) An email be sent to Chairs of all Panels, Audit Committee and KLACC canvassing views on meeting start times.

2) A schedule setting out the cost of meetings if they were to be held at 4.30 pm, 5.30 pm and 6.30 pm to be available for the next meeting.

4 **FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS**

The next meeting would be convened during the next few weeks.

5 **TIMELINE/DATE TO REPORT BACK TO THE CORPORATE PERFORMANCE PANEL**

L Gore explained that the aim was to report back to the Corporate Performance Panel in July 2022.

6 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Democratic Services Officer canvass diaries to determine a date for the next meeting.

The meeting closed at 4.03 pm

BOROUGH COUNCIL OF KING'S LYNN & WEST NORFOLK
CORPORATE PERFORMANCE PANEL - INFORMAL WORKING GROUP
MEETING ARRANGEMENTS

Minutes from the Meeting of the Corporate Performance Panel - Informal Working Group Meeting Arrangements held on Monday, 4th July, 2022 at 3.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn PE30 5DQ

PRESENT: Councillor
 Councillors I Devereux, C Hudson, J Moriarty and C Morley

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mrs V Spikings

1 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 6 June 2022 were agreed.

2 **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR FOR THE MEETING**

RESOLVED: In the absence of Councillor Spikings who had previously been appointed Chair, Councillor Devereux was appointed Chair for the meeting.

3 **MEETINGS TIMINGS AND COMMENTS RECEIVED FROM CHAIRS OF BODIES**

The Working Group received a copy of the comments received from Chairs of some Panels/Committees. It was also reminded that at the previous meeting it had agreed that Planning and Licensing meetings arrangements should remain as they currently were.

The Chair commented that each meeting was different in its requirements and meeting timeframes, he felt it would be wrong to limit all meetings to the same start time, but that each entity should be able to decide for itself as he felt that when external invitees came to the meetings it should be in the working day. He also commented that when complicated matters were being discussed the earlier start was preferred.

Councillor Moriarty undertook to ask the Corporate Performance Panel's view at its next meeting.

Councillor Morley commented that he would be happy to start meetings at 10.30 am but he didn't feel it was good for democracy so they should start later.

Councillor Hudson re-iterated her previous comments that the Labour group had agreed they wished to maintain 4.30pm start at the latest. She drew attention to the ability for Councillors to receive time off for public duties such as councillors or magistrates. The link to the guidance is set out below:

[Time off work for public duties - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

A debate was held around recruiting new people to stand for the Council and the fact that meetings timings would affect the ability to recruit.

The Chief Executive drew attention to the resources required to run meetings and live stream them with the increasingly high workloads of the officers and Democratic services attending the meetings. She explained that additional resources were required in the team to deal with the increased workload. It was agreed that she would include this requirement in the report from the group.

The Group discussed the start time of the Full Council meeting which the Chief Executive pointed out that if members weren't able to attend they were not able to send any subs due to the expectation that all councillors would attend as they were all members of the body. She suggested that the Council meeting start at a later time. Members agreed with the suggestion and agreed to recommend a 6.00pm start.

Councillor Morley commented that he felt that officers giving presentations at meetings should be present in the room and not remotely. The Chief Executive explained that with the number of vacancies and the fact that the authority was in a competitive environment for attracting good quality applicants for jobs it was essential that flexibility was available. It was noted that at sifting meetings the discussion should be held with the Chair of the meeting to agree the approach.

In summing up the discussions it was agreed that Chairs of bodies ought to liaise with their members to agree on a start time for meetings whilst taking into account the resourcing implications.

Agreed: 1) That the start time for meetings of the Licensing and Planning Committees should remain as status quo.

2) It be noted that Cabinet would decide on its own start time for meetings.

3) That the start time for Panels be recommended as 4.30pm, with the ability for the Panel to agree an earlier time if it wishes subject to the workload and attendance of outside organisations.

4) That Audit Committee set its own timeframes according to its agenda and attendance of outside persons/organisations.

- 5) That Full Council be held at 6.00pm.
- 6) That adhoc meetings be held during the working day.
- 7) That streaming of public meetings be continued, along with the Member Enquiries Inbox.
- 8) That the resourcing implications for meetings be set out in the Chief Executive's report to the Panel.

4 **INFORMATION FROM OTHER NORFOLK LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

The information was noted.

5 **STAFF COSTS FOR MEETINGS HELD AT THE TOWN HALL**

The information was noted.

6 **TIMELINE TO REPORT BACK TO THE CORPORATE PERFORMANCE PANEL**

The Chief Executive agreed to draft a report for the next Corporate Performance Panel meeting on 18 July, this would then feed through to Cabinet on 2 August and the recommendations onto Council on 1 September 2022.

The report would be emailed to Members of the Group before publication. Councillor Moriarty acknowledged that the report would have to be published late - after the panel agenda was published.

The meeting closed at 5.10 pm

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE PANEL INFORMAL WORKING GROUP

Meeting	Current Time	Proposal by IWG	View of Panel/Committee
Planning Committee	9.30 am	To remain at 9.30 am	
Licensing Committee	During Office Hours	To remain during office hours	
Audit Committee	4.30 pm	View of Cllr Devereux Chair	<p>Colleagues, Following the IWG meeting I consulted with Michelle as the Principal Officer to the AC, Angie as Portfolio Holder (and former AC Chair) and Wendy Dem Services rep. I also managed to get some additional views of a cross-section of AC members (who were not involved at the IWG).</p> <p>Summary:- Background Factors:-</p> <p>A. The nature, purpose and content of the AC subject matter is highly technical and specialised - with responsibility for making significant decisions with existential consequences! This can need careful time management!</p> <p>B. At certain times The AC needs to interact with the External Auditor at mutually acceptable times.</p> <p>C. The content and proceedings depend very heavily on Officer presented material and explanation, with time for Members to scrutinise the detail and implications.</p> <p>D. Although some Elected Members may have significant commercial accountancy expertise, there is a need for specific Training to induct all AC Members into the special LG statutory obligations, requirements, processes, and practices. This is essential to delivering the effective opinion demanded of Members through the AC ToRs. So additional (Mandatory?) time needs to be scheduled flexibly according to Agendas and the work programme.</p> <p>The consolidated received wisdom is that:-</p>

			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Current 1630 start time is the latest acceptable 2. There was a strong case for starting earlier in the day: with a morning start suggested for onerous agendum requiring in depth consideration of complex issues. Particularly where extensive time might be required of a wide array Officer support staff. 3. At present the past practice of associating Member Training with ACs has fallen into disarray. The consequence is that proceedings can be disrupted by irrelevant forays into commercial finance practice reducing the effectiveness and efficiency of the time and resources available. This creates the challenge of scheduling associated training events , thereby compounding the time management issues. 4. The demographics of the existing elected AC membership implies greater potential for daytime meetings 5. The nature, variability, timing, and intensity of the work programme over the year could benefit from greater flexibility in meeting start times and durations: to meet Officer, Member, and external Visitor needs. This requires active leadership. 6. However, all of this needs to be fitted in with Facility availability and coordinated with related key meetings within the overall annual council meeting schedule 7. There is no scope for a "one size fits all" solution. <p>In conclusion, my view is that the start times and durations need to be planned by the Chair, Principal Officer, Portfolio Holder with support from Committee Members and Democratic Services based on the expected workload and key decision timing: for agreement with the Leader and Chief Executive for input to the Calendar of Meetings.</p>
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			I also believe it to be axiomatic, that any such arrangement should be re-addressed for any new administration following the four yearly Borough Election.
Environment and Community Panel	4.30 pm	To seek the view of the Chair/Panel	<p>Views expressed Chair / V Chair/ S Collop prefer 4.30 Bubb/Squire prefer around 5 – 6</p> <p>Note from Chair -To the best of my knowledge E & C Panel have had one request for a 6 o'clock start, one for any of 4-30, 5 or 6 o'clock and two for 4-30 starts. No reply from others so I can confirm that E & C Panel will continue with starting at 4-30 pm for all meetings.</p> <p>Part of our preference for the early start is that we often have presenters from the outside world, whether by Zoom or in person at the meeting and the earlier start helps them.</p>
Corporate Performance Panel	4.30 pm	To seek the view of the Chair/Panel	
Regeneration and Development Panel	4.30 pm	To seek the view of the Chair/Panel	
King's Lynn Area Consultative Committee	4.30 pm	To seek the view of the Chair/Committee	Cllr A Tyler prefers 4.30 start