

REPORT TO COUNCIL

Open					
Lead Member: Cllr J Moriarty E-mail: cllr.James.Moriarty@west-norfolk.gov.uk			Other Cabinet Members consulted: Cllr T Parish		
			Other Members consulted:		
Lead Officers: Lorraine Gore E-mail: Lorraine.Gore@west-norfolk.gov.uk			Other Officers consulted: A Baker, B Box, S Winter, M Drewery		
Financial Implications	Policy/ Personnel Implications	Statutory Implications	Equality Impact Assessment required	Risk Management Implications	Environmental Implications
YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO

Date of meeting: 13 July 2023

COUNCIL MEETING ARRANGEMENTS

Summary

The report presents the findings of the Corporate Performance Panel Informal Working Group looking at meeting arrangements, and the subsequent meetings held to consider the recommendations. Council on 9 March 2023 agreed that the new Council should consider the matter and take decisions on the timing of meetings.

RECOMMENDATION

In relation to the Motion to Council on 23 February 2022, Council consider the recommendations by members at CPP:

1. The Planning Committee and Licensing Committee should remain during the day as per current arrangements.
2. The Panels should determine their meeting start times. There was no agreement by the IWG on a recommended start time.
3. Cabinet will continue to determine the start times of their meetings.
4. Full Council meetings to continue to start at 4.30pm.
5. The arrangements for live streaming and hybrid meeting arrangements should continue. Officer presentations and audio quality to be kept under review.

Reason for Decision

To respond to the Motion to Council on 23 February 2022 and the arrangements for council meetings as covid restrictions are removed.

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 (IWG) for evidence gathering and preliminary analysis. The IWG met on 6 June 2022 and 4 July 2022 and the findings of the IWG were reported to CPP on 4 January 2023.
- 1.2 The findings of the Corporate Performance Panel (CPP) Informal Working Group and the recommendations from Corporate Performance Panel on the future working arrangements for Council bodies were submitted to Cabinet on 8 February 2023 to Council at its meeting on 9 March 2023. The following was agreed:

Cabinet recommendation from its 8 February meeting to 9 March Council meeting was:

RECOMMENDED: That the arrangements for council meetings as detailed in section 2 of the report continue and should members wish to change this after the election, Council reconsider the timings.

Council on 9 March 2023 agreed with those recommendations below:

Re- CAB132: Council Meeting Arrangements

Council debated the recommendations with opinions for and against start timings expressed. It was clarified that should the new council wish to debate and take a decision on this matter before 6 months it would be acceptable. On being put to the vote the recommendations were agreed.

RESOLVED: That the recommendations above from the Cabinet meeting on 8 February 2023 be approved.

- 1.3 Council now has the report before it with the recommendations from CPP (in 2 below) and Cabinet and the previous Council in order to consider the arrangements and whether it wishes to continue to stream meetings.

2. ARRANGEMENTS FOR COUNCIL MEETINGS

Following consideration by members at CPP the recommendations were

- 2.1 The Planning Committee and Licensing Committee should remain during the day as per current arrangements.
- 2.2 The Panels should determine their meeting start times. There was no agreement by the IWG on a recommended start time.

- 2.3 Cabinet will continue to determine the start times of their meetings.
- 2.4 CPP recommended that full Council meetings to continue to start at 4.30pm.
- 2.5 The arrangements for live streaming and hybrid meeting arrangements should continue. Officer presentations and audio quality to be kept under review.

3. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The Democratic Services team have continued to deliver live streaming and hybrid meeting arrangements which were introduced during the response to covid, utilising a temporary additional corporate apprentice resource to assist with the additional workload during the recovery period. As these arrangements are now recommended to continue it will be necessary to review the associated resourcing implications for the service on a permanent basis and a separate report with associated recommendations will be presented to Cabinet following consideration of Council's decision.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The financial implications of resourcing the continuation of live streaming and hybrid meeting arrangements as detailed at 3.1 will need to be considered as part of the separate report.

5. STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 Following the expiry of the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 in May 2021, local authorities no longer have the option to hold Council meetings remotely. All decision makers at a Council meeting must therefore be in the room.

- 5.2 This Council made the discretionary choice to continue to livestream and keep recordings of Council meetings available on Youtube, as it was considered this has a positive benefit on openness, transparency and public engagement. Cabinet also previously approved the attendance of 'non-decision makers' attending Council meetings remotely if they wished. The updates issued by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities continue to indicate that they intend to bring forward primary legislation to provide the permanent power to hold remote/hybrid meetings, however there is no current date provided on when this will happen.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Minutes of the Informal Working Group meetings of 6 June 2022 and 4 July 2022.

Report to CPP on 4 January 2023,
Cabinet agenda and minutes 8 February 2023
Council Minutes 9 March 2023