

Constitution Committee

Date of Meeting: 6 April 2021

Report Title: Calendar of Meetings 2021-22

Senior Officer: David Brown, Director of Governance and Compliance

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. This report appends a draft Calendar of Meetings for Cheshire East Council for 2021-22.
- 1.2. The Committee is invited to recommend the draft Calendar to Council for approval.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. That the draft Calendar of Meetings for Cheshire East Council 2021-22 be recommended to Council for approval.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1. The Council is required to give public notice of its meetings in order to fulfil its legal obligations under the Access to Information Rules set out in the Constitution and to meet its obligations under the Local Government Act 1972. The Calendar will assist the Council in meeting these requirements and will provide certainty for Members.

4. Background

- 4.1. As set out in its Constitution (Chapter 3 – Part 1 para 1.1) the Council is required to decide when its meetings will take place. These are set out in a Calendar of Meetings.

Full Council must approve the Calendar.

- 4.2. Under Chapter 2 – Part 5 of the Constitution, the Constitution Committee is responsible for

“overseeing, monitoring, co-ordinating and implementing the Council’s administrative and political business, including.....administrative arrangements for the conduct of the Council and other meetings.”

- 4.3. The scheduling of meetings has taken into account the Council’s business planning/performance reporting cycle, together with a range of additional issues

arising from the implementation of the committee system, which will take place after the Council's Annual General Meeting (AGM). In brief summary, the Calendar no longer shows meetings of Cabinet, the existing four overview and scrutiny committees, or other bodies which will cease to exist following the AGM, such as the Constitution Committee.

- 4.4. The Calendar has been updated to include the six new service committees, a Finance Sub Committee, and the new Scrutiny Committee. The scheduling of these meetings has taken place following extensive work amongst officers to identify cyclical business, such as that which arises from the "financial cycle" and known forthcoming business. It should be noted that, given the scale of changes which arise from the introduction of the Council's forthcoming decision-making arrangements, there will be a period of time during which further changes might need to be made to the Calendar of Meetings, based upon the experience of the Council's new decision-making bodies. Such changes can be made in line with powers in law and the Constitution.
- 4.5. At the time of writing this report, the legislation which permits virtual meetings to take place, rather than requiring face to face meetings, expires on 6th May 2021.
- 4.6. Therefore, unless the legislation is amended, meetings from 7th May onwards will have to take place in the traditional way, in meeting rooms, with Members and the public being physically present.
- 4.7. In order to minimise risk at this stage of recovery from the pandemic, it has been determined that the inaugural meetings of the service committees should take place virtually. The business which they would be expected to deal with at their first meetings is non-formal business, such as training and awareness in respect of the committee terms of reference, meeting key officers, and giving thought to draft work programmes etc.
- 4.8. For that reason, and given that there appears to be no substantive formal business to conduct at this early stage of the Municipal Year, there is no need for formal face to face meetings to take place.
- 4.9. The arrangements for these meetings have not been finalised, but provisional dates for them (which could be subject to change) are as follows:
- 4.10. Finance Sub Committee– 17 May at 2pm
Highways & Transport Committee – 18 May at 10.30am
Corporate Policy Committee – 18 May at 2pm
Children & Families Committee – 20 May at 2pm
Economy & Growth Committee – 24 May at 2pm
Environment & Communities Committee– 25 May at 10.30am
Adults & Health Committee – 27 May at 10.30am
- 4.11. Members will be kept informed of any need to change the dates of these inaugural meetings.

- 4.12. The existing pattern of scheduling by those committees which remain unaffected by the new arrangements, has been largely retained. Some minor changes have been made to this scheduling, to accommodate such issues as arise from the financial cycle and to avoid meeting clashes, where possible. For example, it can be seen that there are a very small number of changes to the regular meeting day of Council.
- 4.13. The approach adopted to the construction of the Calendar of Meetings is based upon “cost neutrality” as set out in the report to Council on 19th November 2020, and the approved Design Principles for the new arrangements. Whilst careful attention has been paid to the business needs of the organisation, the draft Calendar proposes no more meetings than can be found in the existing Calendar of Meetings. The following principles, many of which will not be unfamiliar to Members, have also been observed:
 - 4.14. August has been retained for recess except for planning meetings.
 - 4.15. Meetings of full Council have been scheduled to be held on 21 July 2021, 20 October 2021, 18 November 2021, 15 December 2021, 24 February 2022, and 18 May 2022, with the start time of 11 am.
 - 4.16. Due to the uncertainty of virtual meetings, a provisional date of 22 June 2021 has been arranged for Full Council meeting. If not required, this meeting will be cancelled.
 - 4.17. Meetings of service committees have been scheduled to take place, based upon the business need of the Council rather than a set cycle of meetings . If there is a specific need for additional or fewer meetings, this can be dealt with under existing arrangements.
 - 4.18. Strategic Planning Board, Northern Planning Committee and Southern Planning Committee are scheduled on a four-weekly cycle of meetings on Wednesdays; with any site visits taking place on the Friday before the meeting.
 - 4.19. The Public Rights of Way Committee had been scheduled to take place quarterly, with the Audit and Governance Committee taking place six times each year and Licensing Committee meeting five times each year. Provisions exist for additional meetings to be called if needed.
 - 4.20. The scheduling of meetings of the Scrutiny Committee has been approached on a quarterly basis. It is acknowledged however that there may be the need to arrange ad-hoc meetings, when required to deal with bespoke external scrutiny matters eg external proposals by health providers, using the general powers of the Committee Chair.

- 4.21. The quarterly scheduling will provide for annual reporting, with flexibility around the dates of meetings, to suit business needs.
- 4.22. Due to the evolving nature of the Calendar, the usual Member consultations have not taken place. The Calendar has, however, been shared with the Corporate Leadership Team, Group Leaders, Group Whips, Constitution Committee members, and members of the Governance Working Group.
- 4.23. The Committee is asked to refer the Calendar to Council for approval.

5. Implications of the Recommendations

5.1 Legal Implications

- 5.1.1 There are no specific legal implications other than those identified in the main body of the report.

5.2 Finance Implications

- 5.2.1 There are no direct finance implications.

5.3 Policy Implications

- 5.3.1 There are no direct policy implications.

5.4 Equality Implications

- 5.4.1 There are no direct implications for equality.

5.5 Human Resources Implications

- 5.5.1 There are no direct implications for human resources.

5.6 Risk Management Implications

- 5.6.1 A published calendar of meetings enables effective business planning and decision-making procedures.

5.7 Rural Communities Implications

- 5.7.1 There are no direct implications for rural communities.

5.8 Implications for Children & Young People

- 5.8.1 There are no direct implications for children and young people.

5.9 Public Health Implications

- 5.9.1 There are no direct implications for public health.

5.10 Climate Change Implications

5.10.1 There are no implications for climate change.

6. Ward Members Affected

6.1. All Wards

7. Consultation & Engagement

7.1. The draft calendar of meetings has been circulated to the Corporate Leadership Team, Committee Chairmen, Group Leaders and Group Whips, and members of the Governance Working Group.

8. Access to Information

8.1. Background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the officer named below.

9. Appendices

9.1. Appendix A-Draft Calendar of Meetings.

10. Contact Information

10.1. Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officer:

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