

Review of Council and Cabinet Meeting Arrangements

At the meeting of Council on 17th October 2019, Members considered a report on Meeting Arrangements. During the debate, views were expressed that a questionnaire or survey should be sent to all Members in order to secure their feedback upon the proposals which had been considered by the meeting.

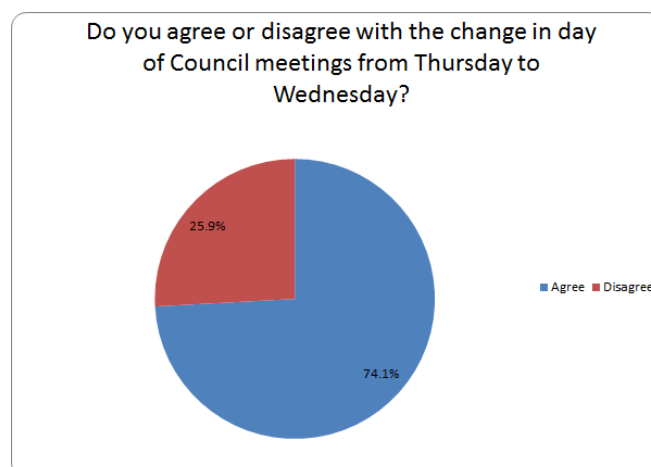
The following questions are based upon the relevant recommendations in the report, and provide an opportunity for Members to submit their views, which will be considered by the Constitution Committee on 21st November 2019.

A total of 63 Responses to this survey were provided by 7th November 2019.

Summary of results

1. The Constitution Committee proposed, that as a consequence of issues associated with Thursday Market Day in Sandbach, Council meetings should take place on Wednesdays with effect from the new Municipal Year.

Do you agree or disagree with the change in day of Council meetings from Thursday to Wednesday?



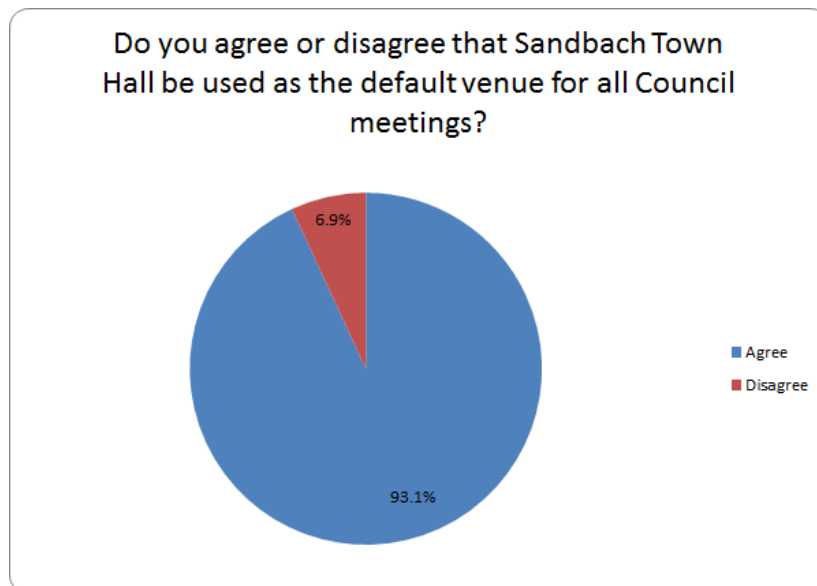
58 responses were made to this question

The below comments were made in response to question 1:

Thursday is more conducive to enable my attendance at meetings and is long set as the day which is used for Council business. I don't believe the Market Day/parking has ever created undue problems.
This would create issues for the Council's Planning Committees. It would be better to leave Council meetings on Thursdays.
Keep things as they are as many people have arranged their working week around Thursday
Saturdays
This is acceptable to me - PROVIDED Planning Committee Days can be avoided.
Monday Tuesday Friday could be considered too
Could also try Monday, Tuesday or Friday
The requirement is that most Scrutiny meetings take place on Thursdays therefore it makes it easier for any working hrs / time off to be established with any employee
I have no preference for either of the days. Wednesday is probably marginally better.
Agreed, market days best avoided. Would personally be open to any other weekday.
I have found it difficult to combine the Council Meeting with Market Day
I prefer Thursday, 2pm, at Sandbach
Disagree - for Council meetings to take place on Wednesdays. There are only 5 a year and parking at the council car park isn't a long distance and works fine, I don't see it as a problem as there isn't really much inconvenience. In fact I think it is good for the public to see councillors meeting makes them think we are doing something.

2. The Committee also proposed that Sandbach Town Hall be used as the default venue for all Council meetings, always accepting that other venues may be needed to respond to specific issues e.g. likely high attendance of members of the public, and Mayor Making at Tatton. Sandbach Town Hall has consistently been suitable in terms of central location in the Borough, and has good acoustics.

Do you agree or disagree that Sandbach Town Hall be used as the default venue for all Council meetings?



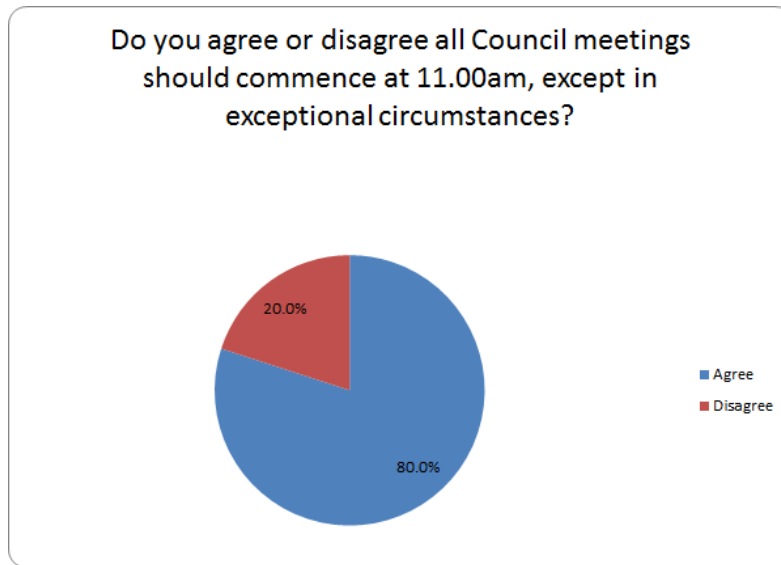
58 responses were made to this question

The below comments were made in response to question 2:

neither agree nr disagree
Although I've agreed it would be nice to have one full council meeting a year in Macclesfield
Tatton park is a perfect venue, or joderal bank
I would like us to try a different seating arrangement. At present it is difficult to get in and out of the rows as they are rather cramped and I would prefer to have us all facing the stage rather than facing across an aisle . It can be very confrontational and unpleasant facing your adversary for such a long time. I realise that public speaking would have to be reorganised also.
This is a central location, closest to the Council's Headquarters and with adequate parking nearby.
In the absence of a proper debating chamber, I think we should move around the borough where we can identify appropriate alternative venues.
Congleton and Macclesfield both suffer from acoustic issues but that does not mean the acoustics should be left as they are. Meetings in Macclesfield would be a good choice
It's the only building with decent acoustics!
Nantwich Civic Hall has been used some years ago
It has very good acoustics and is the right size
Alternate between Sandbach, Macclesfield, Crewe (football club)
Local research might show alternatives at reasonable cost from those companies wishing to provide "social value" to our council. Alderley Park and such venues might be checked for affordability and suitability.
There may be other reasonable cost venues or business premises such as the Conference area at Alderley Park. Those running may be willing to provide "social value" to CEBC?
Disabled parking needs to be reserved close to the venue for councillors and public
As my ward is geographically the most northern ward, my preference would obviously be for a venue closer to home but I have absolutely no problem getting to Sandbach either as I drive.
- use Macc.Town Hall Assembly Room.
Sandbach Town Hall to be used for Council meetings. Tatton Park is good for Mayor Making, makes it feel a little special.
Nantwich Civic Hall - very good acoustics and own sound technicians available

3. Whilst it was recognised that there were varying views, the Committee recommended that all Council meetings should commence at 11.00am, except in exceptional circumstances. Currently, meetings commence at 11.00am or 2.00pm, depending upon the time of year.

Do you agree or disagree all Council meetings should commence at 11.00am, except in exceptional circumstances?



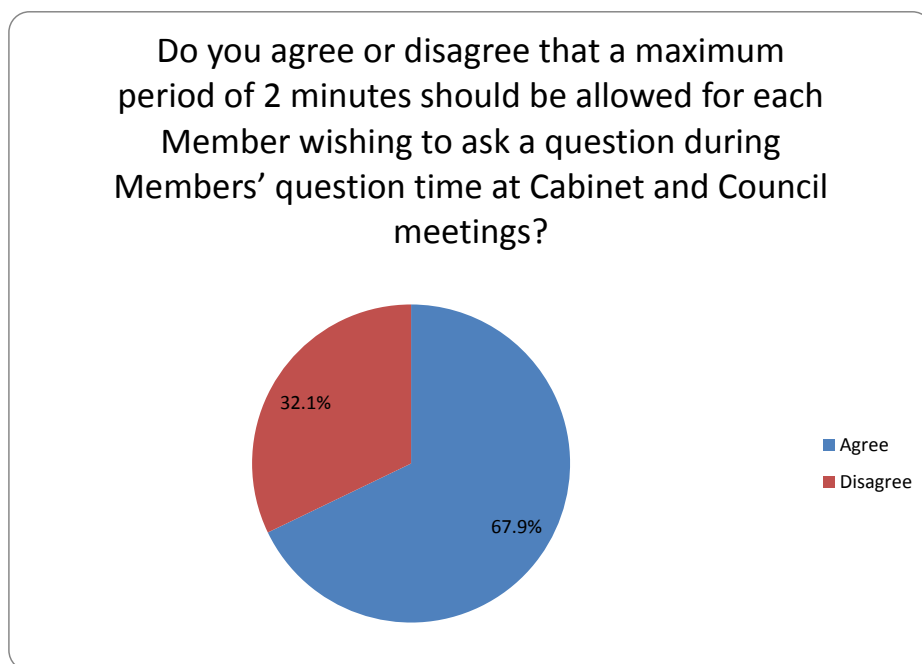
55 responses were made to this question

The below comments were made in response to question 3:

neither agree nr disagree
10am makes a better use of a working day
Meetings at 2.00pm make meeting access easier alongside working commitments, meaning that only half days need to be taken off work.
All meetings of Council should start at 2pm to enable sufficient time for Group Meetings to take place in the hours immediately before.
I think start time should be 13.30 or 14.00 in order to allow working members to only need to take leave, holiday or simply ask for absence for HALF A DAY
Attendance at 11.00am is inconvenient for people who work full time as it requires a full days absence from work
There would have to be a lunch break during any meeting starting at 11am. An 11am start means that many members will lose a full day off work rather than a half-day which may be difficult to organise with employers. Might deter members leaving before the end of meetings! On balance, agree
I'm actually ambivalent about this, so either way.
For working Councillors a 2pm start is better
Provided there is no break for lunch
I agree that more long standing members have difficulty driving at night.
Or at another suitable time 10am - 12 noon?
Due to the hopeful ever improving diversity of the elected Members to reflect the electorate we all have differing commitments so a fixed time say 11:00am suits those retired people and does not take into account working people who would need to be off the morning and afternoon. I personally would like to see the Council go further and consider 3:00pm onward meetings but again on the basis of a varied time. There seems to be an emphasis towards the 'retired' or non working councillors - for example "not driving home in the dark" - "not wanting to sit in peak time traffic" ,,,,,,
Earlier is better. As I work full time it would be more convenient to have evening meetings but I'm aware that's not included as an option above.
I think all Council Meetings should begin at 2pm to enable Councillors who work to attend. Starting at 11am means they have to take a whole day off. 2pm means half a day off
Should remain as 11 winter and 2 summer
Prefer 10am or 2pm. 10am and 2pm would benefit many people who work, then only taking half a day to attend meetings rather than spanning am and pm
Personally, I am available to attend at 11am and 2pm but feel that preference should be given to Councillors with work commitments.
If all meetings start at 11am the business will become protracted as some Councillors will have no regard as to the length of the meeting. A 2pm meeting causes a realisation that evening approaches and business speeds up

4. The Committee also proposed that a maximum period of 2 minutes should be allowed for each Member wishing to ask a question during Members' question time at Cabinet and Council meetings, and that a maximum period of 2 minutes be allowed for each member of the public wishing to ask a question or speak during public speaking time (with the Chair's discretion to extend this period).

Do you agree or disagree that a maximum period of 2 minutes should be allowed for each Member wishing to ask a question during Members' question time at Cabinet and Council meetings?

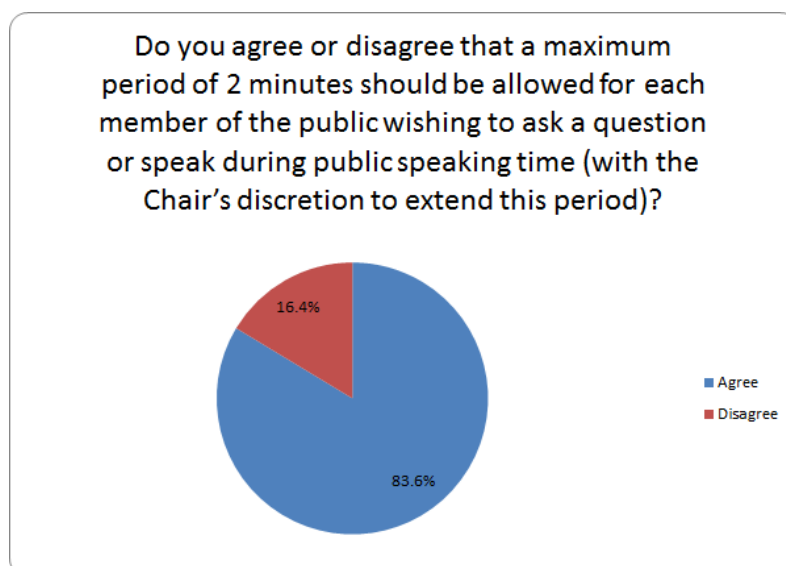


56 responses were made to this question

The below comments were made in response to question 4:

I also think the Leader needs to answer each question
Members should have at least 5 minutes to ask a question at Cabinet and Council meeting.
Two minutes on particularly contentious or detailed issues may not suffice and by making this change it adds more authority to the Chairman. In a culture engendering openness, transparency and public engagement, I believe that this move would be counter intuitive.
2 minutes is too short.
Two minutes is too short a time and it feels as if democratic rights to put questions at Cabinet and Council meetings are being fettered. I suggest 4 minutes limit per question.
In Planning Cttees, Councillors are given more time than members of the public, due to their elected status. I believe it should be the same principle here, so I suggest 3 minutes for Councillors as a minimum.
There should be an advantage to being a Member of the Council, over and above what is offered to an ordinary member of the public. I suggest an additional 1 minute speaking time.
Overall time for discussion should be limited to 20 or 30 minutes. Having 30 people talk for 2 minutes with repetition of the same point is not conducive to an effective meeting
agree PROVIDED the Chair does use their discretion to permit longer when questions relate to complex issues of those of particular public interest. Members have a duty to represent their constituents fully and sometimes two minutes may not be long enough.
With focus applied a question could only need 30 seconds at most. No doubt this would not be popular with those so wish to explain in full.
with the Chair's discretion to extend this period should be added
Most questions can be asked in 30 seconds or less
I believe a 5 minute window should be awarded to all members as we may need to pose a question that is multi faceted and may require longer speaking time to address issues which may require answers from several different departments.
Yes the lengthy statements, bringing up of historical events etc etc etc before even asking a question takes a considerable time.
I'm not certain that 2 minutes is long enough if background information needs to be provided about the matter being raised.
Stifling democracy to quicken up process. Often the background to the question needs to be explained, I see nothing wrong with the present arrangements.
2 Minutes should be plenty to allow a question to be asked or a salient point to be made. If someone wants to make a particularly complex address to Council, the 2 minutes could be extended with the advance permission of the Chair.
I think it is fair. Two minutes helps to focus your content and quite often people will repeat information. Also, if the question/speech is too long I think people stop listening.
Should be a minimum of 3 minutes - extended at discretion. Public 2 minutes.

5. Do you agree or disagree that a maximum period of 2 minutes should be allowed for each member of the public wishing to ask a question or speak during public speaking time (with the Chair's discretion to extend this period)?



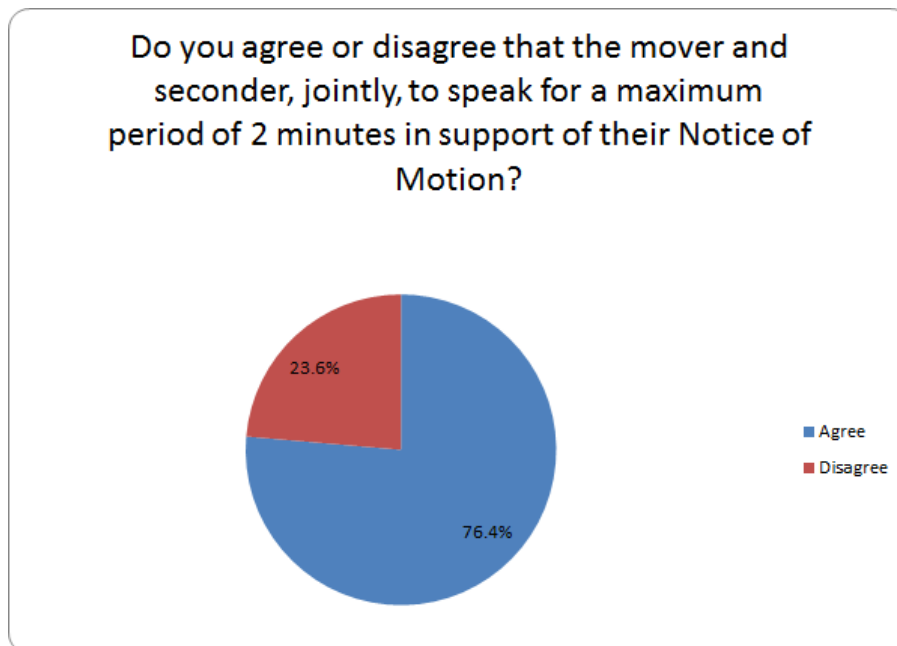
55 responses were made to this question

The below comments were made in response to question 5:

As per response to Question 4
Again too short a time. While council business is pressing and busy, the council should accommodate members of the public and give them ample time to ask a question or speak on a subject.
3 mins.
Same as answer to the question above.
As above
Members of the public generally have one issue that they wish to be addressed and therefore their question may not be as complex as that of a member/councillor and would suggest that less time be required to speak.
I think the Public should have a minimum of 2 minutes
As above
There is nothing wrong with the present arrangements
2 Minutes should be plenty to allow a question to be asked or a salient point to be made. If someone wants to make a particularly complex address to Council, the 2 minutes could be extended with the advance permission of the Chair.
Members of the public to speak for 2 minutes
Should be a minimum of 3 minutes - extended at discretion. Public 2 minutes.

6. The Committee recommended that new arrangements should apply to the way in which Council deals with Notices of Motion. Currently, there is no provision which allows the mover and seconder to speak. The new arrangements would allow the mover and seconder, jointly, to speak for a maximum period of 2 minutes in support of their Notice of Motion.

Do you agree or disagree that the mover and seconder, jointly, to speak for a maximum period of 2 minutes in support of their Notice of Motion)?



55 responses were made to this question

The below comments were made in response to question 6:

Two minutes shared is inadequate. The mover and seconder should be allowed up to 2 minutes each or up to 4 minutes jointly to state their case.
Both should have at least 2 minutes in support of their Notice of Motion.
They need time to put forward their ideas so I would ask for 2 minutes EACH is allowed
Mover and Seconder have time to speak to their proposals at whichever committee they are referred. If more information is considered necessary - this would be best included in the papers and reports.
The whole idea of NoMs is that they are written in advance. This is the chance for proposer and seconder to say all they want, there is no need to extend the process to give them a second go at it in already busy Council meetings.
I have assumed that the motion will be referred and not debated at the Council meeting
Two minutes is inadequate for this purpose.
The mover and seconder jointly should be allowed up to 4 minutes to speak in support of their motion, with the chairman having discretion to extend that period.
It is the decision making body who should hear the proposal
Council Meetings are expensive and the longer they go on for - the more expensive they become
In addition - it is noted that Members start to leave meetings
It depends on the content of the motion. If it is to be referred to a committee, 30 seconds is enough. If it is to be debated as to referral or to be determined there then, there should be a restraint subject to mayoral discretion
Do the basic anything else just tickles around the edges.
both should be permitted 2 mins each to speak ie proposer 2 mins seconder 2 mins
If they need that long, an impassioned lengthy speech is not necessary.
This makes perfect sense.
if adopted a rejoinder opportunity is required.
Should speak to explain fully why they are bringing the Notice of Motion forward, it will help people to understand. Though I think the time could be flexible 2 - 5 minutes maybe. Notice of Motion important and a speaker can help councillors understand why they need to support it, even if they don't necessarily agree with it.
I would like to see an indicative vote at the start of the debate. If everyone agrees, why do we have to talk for an hour whilst everyone says how much they agree (just so they can get their faces in the newspaper)?
Should be a period of 3 minutes allowed
Unless the motion is to be debated on the day the mover and seconder should not be allowed to speak as it is completely pointless and wastes everyone's time. there will be excessive publicity opportunity's created.
I have no need to listen to a proposer and seconder if the debate and decision will ultimately be in a forum where I have no vote.