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Council

26 May 2022

Report of the Director of Corporate and Customer Services

CALENDAR OF MEETINGS OF THE COUNCIL AND COMMITTEES FOR THE 2022/23 MUNICIPAL YEAR

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To approve the Calendar of Meetings for the 2022/23 municipal year.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Calendar of Meetings for the 2022/23 municipal year be approved.
2. That consideration be given to the continued recording and livestreaming of Council and Committee meetings.

WARDS AFFECTED

District-wide

STRATEGIC LINK

The approval of the Calendar of Meetings underpins the Council's governance arrangements and provides opportunities for public participation and engagement in the decision making process.

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The calendar of Council and committee meetings for the 2022/23 municipal year is presented for adoption.

2 REPORT

Calendar of Meetings

- 2.1 The Council is required to annually adopt a calendar of meetings for the ensuing municipal year and this report is submitted to comply with that requirement.
- 2.2 The Constitution Working Group undertook a survey of Members earlier this year to seek views on moving the time of Council and committee meetings. This survey revealed that the majority of Members wished to continue to meet at 6pm. This has been reflected in the Calendar of Meetings presented for adoption at this meeting.

Recording and Livestreaming of Meetings

- 2.3 In the same survey, views were sought on the continued recording and livestreaming of Council and committee meetings. A majority of Members who responded to the

survey indicated that they wanted the recording and livestreaming of Council and Committee meeting to continue. The results were:

Do you support the recording of Council and committee meetings?

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0

Yes: 19 (79.17%)

No: 5 (20.83%)

Do you think that the Council should continue to stream Council and committee meetings live through YouTube?

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0

Yes: 14 (58.33%)

No: 10 (41.67%)

- 2.4 The responses to the survey indicated differing views on the pros and cons of recording and livestreaming meetings through YouTube. The majority of respondents felt that the current arrangements made the Council more transparent and assisted with engagement. Those who were not supportive indicated that the current arrangements undermined the personal safety of councillors who were known to be at meetings at Matlock Town Hall and some remarks hinted at an element of “performing for the camera”.
- 2.5 During the COVID-19 pandemic when local authorities met remotely through Zoom or Microsoft Teams there was a requirement in law to make meetings available to the public to view through virtual means. As Derbyshire Dales DC had previously livestreamed its meetings this meant that there was little change in citizens being able to view debates and decision making of the authority. Following the cessation of the regulations permitting local authorities to meet remotely, only Derby City Council Derbyshire Dales DC and North East Derbyshire DC have continued to livestream meetings. More broadly, unitary and upper tier authorities tend to have financial capacity and resources to accommodate the webcasting or livestreaming of meetings. District and Borough Councils do not tend to do this given the constraints on the available resources.
- 2.6 There is a cost to recording and livestreaming of meetings, although as technology continues to improve at pace this is already reducing. At the present time, meetings are recorded by either the Communications and Marketing Manager or the Democratic Services Team Leader. During the last municipal year, it is estimated that 82 hours have been spent in meetings that have had to be claimed back as time off in lieu. This equates to over two weeks of time that has not been spent on other work during the course of a year. When the time taken to set up and remove the equipment from the Council Chamber is taken into account this figure increases to over 99 hours, albeit that the time taken to set up is largely in normal working hours.
- 2.7 Any concerns held by councillors in respect of their personal safety should be raised with the Director of Corporate and Customer Services in order for a personal safety risk assessment to be undertaken. A resolution of Council to remove the livestreaming of meetings will not in itself remove any existing risks to Members.
- 2.8 Members should be aware that the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 specifying that any person attending a meeting must, so far as is practicable, be afforded reasonable facilities for reporting and may use any communication method, including the internet, to publish, post or otherwise share the

results of their reporting activities. Publication and dissemination may take place in the meeting or afterwards.

- 2.9 Any decision made to discontinue or change the current practice in respect of the recording and livestreaming of meetings should be accompanied by a reason for that decision.

3 RISK ASSESSMENT

Legal

- 3.1 There are no direct implications in respect of the proposed Calendar of Meetings as the proposed meeting dates ensure that the statutory deadlines for decisions, such as approval of the budget and council tax are met.
- 3.2 With regard to the open recommendation to consider whether to continue recording and livestreaming Council and committee meetings, Members should be mindful of the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 which provides attendees with the right to film, record and broadcast from meetings of the Council. Any decision to cease the recording of meetings through the Council will not remove the right of citizens to film, record or broadcast from Council or committee meetings.

Financial

- 3.3 There are no direct financial implications associated with this report as all costs associated with the recording and livestreaming of meetings are already accommodated within existing budgets.

Corporate Risk

- 3.4 There are no risks associated with this report.

4 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 An equalities impact assessment has been undertaken in respect of the recording and livestreaming of meetings and is attached as Appendix 2 to this report.

5 CONTACT INFORMATION

- 5.1 James McLaughlin - Director of Corporate and Customer Services
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6 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 6.1 None

7 ATTACHMENTS

- 7.1 Appendix 1 – Calendar of Meetings for the 2022/23 Municipal Year
- 7.2 Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment – Recording and Livestreaming of Meetings