

Committee: **People Scrutiny Committee**
Date of Meeting: **6th September 2022**
Report Subject: **Timing of Meetings Survey Results**
Portfolio Holder: **Executive Members People and Education & People and Social Services**
Report Submitted by: **Elizabeth Thomas, Scrutiny and Democratic Officer**

| Reporting Pathway | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------|----------------------|
| Directorate Management Team | Corporate Leadership Team | Portfolio Holder / Chair | Audit Committee | Democratic Services Committee | Scrutiny Committee | Executive Committee | Council | Other (please state) |
| | | 25.08.22 | | | 06.09.22 | | | |

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 To present to Members the results of the Timing of Meetings survey for the People Scrutiny Committee.
2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 As set out under Section 6 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, councils are required to review the times, frequency and length of meetings at least once in every term. The survey should be carried out no later than six months following elections.
 - 2.2 When considering the timing of council meetings Members should consider the impact on the diversity of the membership of the council and the impact on the council's ability to make decisions which are informed by and reflect the diversity of people living in the council area. Decision making should be informed by people of all ages and backgrounds as decisions are then likely to be more balanced and have more focus on sustainable and long term solutions in keeping with the principles set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
 - 2.3 The Measure states that it is important that councils do not simply continue to hold their meetings at the same time, in the way as they always have done. What may have been tradition or an arrangement which suited the previous cohort of councillors will not necessarily serve the interests of the current one.
 - 2.4 Members should have regard to equality and diversity issues when considering the length, times, intervals and locations of meetings which are convenient to its members. Some Members may find attending, sometimes lengthy meetings, in the day is incompatible with their paid employment and certain times of day are challenging for people with caring responsibilities such as young children.

- 2.5 All scrutiny committee meetings will initially be offered on a hybrid basis and members and officers are to inform Democratic Services of their preference.
- 2.6 As part of the cycle of meetings the People Scrutiny Committee is scheduled to be held on a Tuesday with the timing of the meeting to be agreed as part of this report.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

- 3.1 From the results of the survey the preferred meeting start time for the People Scrutiny Committee was 9.30am for the Agenda Management Discussion meeting, with the formal meeting commencing at 10.00am.
- 3.2 However, the People Scrutiny Committee now has a young person representative on the committee and Members are to consider if meetings could be held at alternative times, i.e. one meeting at the preferred time of 9.30 /10.00am and the next meeting at 4.00pm to ensure that the young person is able to attend meetings alongside their educational needs.

Option One

To agree the preferred meeting time which is 9.30am Agenda Management Discussion and the formal meeting to commence at 10.00am.

Option Two

To agree to alternative meeting times, ie. 9.30am for 10.00am and 4.00pm for 4.30pm.

4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

This report is required as set out in the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, and supports the principles set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

If a timing of meetings survey is not completed within six months of an election, the Council will not meet its statutory obligations as set out in the Local Governance (Wales) Measure 2011.

5.3 ***Legal***

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 requires the Council to undertake a Timing of meetings survey at least once every term, following an election.

5.4 **Human Resources**

5.4.1 There are no direct implications in relation to staffing.

Staff work flexible working hours, therefore, any changes to timing of meetings would not impact on staff.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 A Timing of Meeting survey was undertaken with all Elected Members during June 2022. 5 (55%) out of 9 members of the People Scrutiny Committee responded to the survey and the results are shown below:

| Meeting Start Time | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| 9.00 /9.30 | 9.30/ 10.00 | 1.30 /2.00 | 4.00 /4.30 | After 5.00 | Alternate | Rotate | Don't mind |
| 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 |

Note: some responses highlighted more than one preferred time.

6.2 The preferred meeting start time was 9.30 for the Agenda Management Discussion meeting with the formal meeting commencing at 10.00am.

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

By giving consideration to holding meeting at different times of the day would support equality and diversity issues, providing the opportunity for any members of the public to attend a democratic meeting which would take into consideration personal circumstances, i.e. working hours, childcare issues, similar to that of Elected Members.

6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

The intention of this survey is to consult with all Elected Members to seek their views.

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

Having more flexible meeting times, may encourage more participation from young people and those who are working or have caring responsibilities.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

Being more flexible with the timing of meetings should prevent dis-engagement from Elected Members who may find attending some meetings at certain times of the day more difficult owing to caring or working responsibilities.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

All Elected Members have been consulted on the timing of meetings survey.

6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***

All Council services are involved with the democratic functions of the Council. Flexible meetings times may also support officers in their work / life balance.

6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***

All democratic meetings are offered on a 'hybrid' basis to both officers and Members and will, therefore, reduce the need to travel to meetings.

6.9 ***Integrated Impact Assessment***

An Integrated Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is attached for Members' information.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

The timing of meetings is considered annually at individual democratic committee meetings and monitored by the Head of Democratic Services.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Appendix 1 – Integrated Impact Assessment