

## Full Council

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<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>Schedule of Meetings 2023-24</b>
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	<b>13 June 2023</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Lizzie Fuller, Committee Services &amp; Processes Officer</b>

### Purpose of the Report

1. To provide an update on the review of the Schedule of Meetings.

### Action Required

2. To approve the Schedule of Meetings up to January 2024.

### Background

3. At the January 2023 Full Council meeting, Members agreed to only approve the Schedule of Meetings up to August 2023, and asked Officers to review the frequency of all council and committee meetings for the rest of 2023/24. A suggestion was put forward to increase the number of CLR and P&R meetings from 4 to 6, to focus more on council services rather than planning matters.
4. Since that meeting, Officers have been reviewing the Schedule of Meetings. This report provides an update on that work and recommendations to ensure progress continues whilst balancing the need to fix meeting dates to assist Officer workload etc.

### Current Committee Frequency

5. Below shows a typical meeting schedule/frequency:

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>2022/23 Scheduled</b>	<b>2022/23 Actual</b>
Community, Leisure & Recreation (CLR)	4	4
Neighbourhood Plan Continuity (NPC)	8	7
Personnel	4	4
Planning & Environment (P&E)	17	14
Policy & Resources (P&R)	4	4
Full Council	7	10
Annual Town Meeting	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>45 meetings</b>	<b>44 meetings</b>

6. Last year (2022/23), four meetings were cancelled (and not re-scheduled – of which 3 were P&E) and three additional Full Council meetings were held (in all cases these additional meetings preceded/followed another meeting so did not occupy another Tuesday).

## Progress since January

7. Strategy – The Strategy Working Group Terms of Reference (Membership to be agreed at this meeting) were approved (Feb 2023) and a Strategy Action Plan created / circulated to all (April 2023). The Strategy work will be alongside the review of the committees and their Terms of Reference (ToRs) / responsibilities.
8. P&E committee – Having cancelled 3 of 17 P&E meetings in 2022/23 due to a lack of planning applications (perhaps reflecting rising cost of living/materials plus greater PD rights), Officers recommend reducing P&E from every 3 weeks to every 4 weeks. On several occasions P&E meetings have been less than 15minutes long – in one case just 3 minutes – which is not an effective use of anyone’s time. There is a risk that some call-ins may have to be done pre-emptively (e.g. before the meeting, but could be withdrawn) due to a strict 4-week call-in period from the consultation start date. Case Officers have been supportive of granting extensions to consultation periods in some cases by up to 3 weeks.
9. NPC committee – Officers recognise this committee is not functioning as effectively as it could and has a large number of working groups of which many do not meet or would be better reporting into a different committee. Until TNP2 is submitted to SODC (expected late summer / early autumn), it is recommended that NPCC continues in its current format after which point it may be more appropriate to report TNP2 updates / NPC working group updates to an alternative committee / Full Council. One option being explored is to merge P&E and NPC into a broader ‘Planning’ committee.
10. Personnel Committee – This has increased from 2 to 4 scheduled meetings since 2021/22, which is considered sufficient, and this committee can be more flexible with meeting, although its ToR do need reviewing.
11. CLR / P&R committee – Officers consider the first step should be to review their Terms of Reference to identify where greater delegations can be given to these committees. The Open Spaces Sub-Committee (formerly a Working Group) now has greater delegations so it can progress the Elms Park improvements. It may be necessary to change the Community Youth Centre Working Group to a sub-committee for the same reason. This would improve the decision-making process. There are several working groups that report into CLR/P&R (Fair, Market, CCTV) which do not have Terms of Reference however this will be reviewed and formalised to identify possibilities for greater delegations and efficiencies.

Until the committees ToRs have been reviewed, there would be little point adding 2 more CLR and 2 more P&R committees as it would create additional workload for little gain. There is always the option to call additional meetings if required.

12. Committee Responsibilities – The committee responsibilities document (as presented to Full Council 16/5/23) does not reflect current practices. As highlighted above, all committees/ToRs need to be reviewed to improve the decision-making process. At present, committees are being bypassed as they either cannot make the necessary decision or due to timeframes it goes straight to Full Council. Also, an item may be placed on a Full Council agenda as it does not sit in any of the committee ToRs but is a relatively minor matter that could be dealt with by a committee, or delegated to an officer. It may then be necessary to decrease the number of council meetings, so they can focus on

significant matters and ratifying committee decisions, which could enable a greater number of CLR/P&Rs to be scheduled.

13. It had been hoped that the Schedule of Meetings would have been ready to approve at the May Full Council meeting however significant workloads, particularly given the election year, have delayed the work. Officers recognise it is an important and significant piece of work, but it would be best to do this alongside the strategy work and to focus on improving committee ToRs rather than adding extra meetings at this stage whilst resources are limited. As highlighted above there is scope to change the frequency of meetings.

### Next steps

14. There is a need to confirm dates for meetings from an operational and workload planning perspective (budget setting in particular), but also for Officers and Councillors to have dates in their diaries to plan their personal lives around, as well as to confirm Town Hall availability.
15. Officers recommend the following:
  - The attached Schedule of Meetings for September 2023 – January 2024 be approved. This period will trial P&Es reduced to every 4 weeks. NPCs scheduled for November onwards may be subject to change depending on TNP2 progress.
  - Officers will use the quieter meeting period of September/October to undertake a thorough review of all committee / working group ToRs and responsibilities, alongside the strategy work.
  - Officers will work to present this and a Schedule of Meetings for February 2024 – May 2024 at the November Full Council meeting.

### Resource Appraisal

16. Any additional meetings place increased workloads on Officers. Each meeting requires agenda preparation (which involves the management team for CLR/P&R), report writing, publication of agenda/reports, managing apologies, requests to speak, minute-taking, minute writing etc and up to 3.5 hours of evening work for any officer in attendance which is then taken back through TOIL.
17. Maintenance Team time to set up room and clear away.

### Legal Powers:

- Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12, Part II, Sections 7-8

### Recommendation:

*It is recommended...*

- i) ***To approve the proposed Schedule of Meetings for May 2023 – January 2024.***