

Dorset Council

14 December 2023

Calendar of Meetings 2024-2025

For Decision

Portfolio Holder: Cllr S Flower, Leader of the Council

Local Councillor(s): All

Executive Director: J Mair, Director of Legal & Democratic

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Report Status: Public

Brief Summary:

To consider the draft calendar of meetings for the 2023 -2024 municipal year.

Recommendation:

1. That the calendar of meetings for the period May 2024 to May 2025 be approved.
2. That, to ensure effective political management, authority be delegated to the Director of Legal and Democratic Services to make any necessary changes, in consultation with relevant Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen.

Reason for Recommendation:

Dorset Council procedure rules are required to have in place a programme of meetings to ensure effective and efficient decision-making arrangements.

1. **Report**

- 1.1 Members are asked to consider the draft calendar of meetings for the municipal year 2024/25 for formal adoption and is attached at appendix 1 to this report.
- 1.2 The calendar has been shared with the Leader of the Council, group leaders, and the senior leadership team as part of the consultation process.
- 1.3 The calendar of meetings follows the pattern set in previous years in terms of frequency of meetings, start times and meeting days for various committees.
- 1.4 Throughout the year there may be some unforeseen diary clashes or changes required to the calendar to meet business need. Members are asked to give delegated authority to the Director of Legal & Democratic to make any necessary changes to the calendar of meetings, in consultation with the relevant committee chairmen and vice-chairmen. This is to avoid the need to bring further reports to Full Council and to ensure effective political management.

2. **Key points to note in relation to the proposed calendar are:**

- 2.1 As with previous years, a short recess has been built into the month of August, but a few meetings do need to be held during this month. Where possible, a limited number of meetings are held during other school holiday periods.
- 2.2 The timing of Full Council, Cabinet, and Audit & Governance Committee are currently subject to a task and finish group and a report concluding this review will also be considered by members on 14 December 2023. The decision regarding the timings of these committees will be reflected in the final version of the calendar of meetings 2024-2025 and this will be circulated to all members once approved.
- 2.3 Members had previously asked if the programming of the budget meeting and its reserve date could be moved from a Tuesday to a Thursday for reasons of consistency, as all other full council dates were held on a Thursday. Having discussed the matter with the Head of Revenues & Benefits Service, there is a difficulty with this request as there also needs to be a contingency reserve date added to the calendar for budget setting.

- 2.4 Whilst, on most occasions the reserve date is not required, the timetabling for the billing of the council tax process must accommodate this possibility.
- 2.5 From the feedback above, the proposal to move these dates would place significant pressure on the revenues and benefits team, in terms of risk of delivery, cost to billing and the end of year process.
- 2.6 By moving to a Thursday in the month of February, the significant pressure is that if the reserve date was utilised it would be significant enough to push the council into a high-risk zone for the effective legal delivery of billing the council tax.
- 2.7 Therefore, in the proposed calendar, the risk implications and business need, outweigh a consistent approach to dates for the budget meeting and it is required that February's Full Council meetings continue to be scheduled on the second and third Tuesday of February.
- 2.8 Members are asked to approve the calendar of meetings for 2024-2025.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 Dorset Council will apply its scheme of allowances for the travel requirements for members to attend meetings. There may also be incidental costs because of venue bookings which are chargeable. Where other venues have been used the cost of using these venues has been minimised as far as possible.

4. Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications

- 4.1 Careful management of the calendar of meetings prevents unnecessary meetings and helps to limit the number of avoidable journeys travelled by members of the council. Webcasting and the option to contribute remotely provides an alternative means for people to follow meetings and engage with the Council without the need to travel.

5. Well-being and Health Implications

There are no negative well-being and health implications arising from the adoption of the calendar of meetings.

6. Other Implications

None

7. Risk Assessment

7.1 **HAVING CONSIDERED:** the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

8. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

This report does not contain a new strategy, policy or function and therefore does not require an impact equality assessment.

The availability of a set calendar allows members and other stakeholders to be aware in advance of meeting dates and to make the necessary arrangements to participate in the democratic process.

9. **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – draft calendar of meetings 2024-2025

10. **Background Papers**

There are no background papers.