

Results from Councillor Survey

During October and November, a survey was sent to councillors, asking for views and comments about the timings of Dorset Council committees. 54 responses were received.

Findings

The results from the survey show that the proposed calendar of meetings mostly meets the majority views from the survey. Comments made as part of the survey show that councillors have a range of commitments and as such many councillors expressed an understanding that it would be difficult to devise a calendar of meetings that suits everybody's requirements.

Results from survey in detail

The first questions asked councillors to note what times they considered best for each committee. The options included morning, afternoon, evening, any, N/A and other.

Table 1 – Number of responses received for each committee and preferred timings of meetings

	Morning	Afternoon	Evening	Any	N/A	Other
Full Council	8	3	33	9	0	0
Cabinet	22	4	11	9	1	1
People and Health Overview	16	7	6	8	3	1
People and Health Scrutiny	16	7	6	8	4	1
Place and Resources Overview	22	6	7	6	3	1
Place and Resources Scrutiny	18	8	6	8	4	1
Eastern Area Planning	18	2	4	6	9	0
Northern Area Planning	19	4	7	7	6	0
Western and Southern Area Planning	19	2	4	7	7	0
Strategic and Technical Planning	16	6	5	8	7	0
Audit and Governance	15	3	5	11	4	0
Appeals	8	5	4	14	6	1
Corporate Parenting	5	8	4	10	6	2
Harbours	10	5	3	9	8	0
Pension Fund	6	3	3	12	9	0
Police and Crime Panel	9	3	3	11	8	1
Licensing and Licensing Sub	12	3	3	10	7	0
Health and Wellbeing Board	7	5	5	9	7	0
Dorchester Markets Informal Joint Panel	4	4	6	12	8	0
Public Health Board	6	6	3	11	6	0

The second question asked if councillors wished to make any comments about the timing of meetings and these were the responses:

- A variety of times ought to be tried for the majority participants to take part, to encourage those who have a day job, can take part, or observe.
- Appeals & licencing could be mornings or afternoons
- As I have domestic duties to perform in the shape of transporting my grandchildren to school, a 10am start to committees that I attend is ideal.
- Because Full Council is in the evenings and sometimes finish late into the evening some councillors who live an hour plus from County Hall have difficulty travelling home on winter nights. Can we start full Council meetings say at 2pm during the winter dark nights
- Day meetings simply do not work for those councillors who have a 'day job'. Daytime meetings discourage participation from younger (and less well off) people who are more likely to work full time hours.
- Ensure parking available for committee members onsite
- Evening and afternoon meetings make it more assessable for working members, currently I am unable to advise my employer when I may return from a morning meeting
- Evening meetings are not doable.
- Evening meetings for Full Council and Executive are most convenient for the public to attend.
- Formal meetings can take place during the day. Informal meetings need to cover early evening so that young people and partner organisations can attend.
- Holding meetings in the morning allows them to be prolonged if they are agenda heavy. Evening Council is difficult for those who are not close to Dorchester, particularly in terms of eating. Whilst officers can and do eat their pack lunch in the Chamber, Councillors cannot and if they have had to leave meetings elsewhere to get to Full Council, often with an hour to hour and half travel, there is little opportunity to eat. If the meeting goes on past 9pm a lot of people are flagging.
- I do understand the need from some councillors and members of the public for evening meetings, but we cannot please everyone. Many Councillors have commitments in the evenings, be that attending Town or Parish Council meetings or other organisations where many of us have commitments, such as Youth Clubs, Rotary, charity work etc. Also, DC staff's work time will need managing and support if more meetings are run in the evenings. Councillors need to recognise that when staff are working to cover an evening meeting, they will not be in the office to answer the phones during the daytime.
- I would like consideration to be given to some meeting of each committee being in the morning and some in the evening or it may be possible to alternate them. I am content with times as they stand. The only strong opinion I have is that afternoons are by far the least suitable option, especially for working Councillors
- I would suggest meetings the public regularly attend (Full Council, Cabinet and Planning) should be in the evening to make it more accessible for them to do so. Currently we exclude working age residents from engaging with our meetings. Could morning be 8am or 9am? As 10am is well into the middle of the morning and you regularly lose most of the working day. For less formal meetings can we consider using a more appropriate room. The chamber is a poor room to have a conversation

as everybody is far apart, the air conditioning is broken, it is dated, and it does not have any natural light.

- I am a member of other groups, and they are often on the same date and time. Is there any way they could be arranged so they do not clash? I do not expect action for me personally, but it might be beneficial for others as well.
- In the main I would like to see more meetings held in the evenings to encourage younger councillors who are working during the day, but I understand that with the number of meetings it is not possible. Plus, councillors need to attend Parish meetings that are held in the evenings. Dorchester Markets Panel should be held in the afternoon on a Wednesday, so the Market provider is able to attend if they wish.
- Is there a significant number of members of the public in the gallery who:
 - are not verbal protestors?
 - are unable to access an online live stream or recording?

It is noted that the public gallery barrier is not secure, work needs to be done so that the voting members of any committee are identified (e.g. names displayed digitally). This is to help any viewer of a live stream or recording. I think that more can be done to help casual viewers by highlighting where in the agenda papers the committee happens to be at any time.

- It is more valuable to have a regular day of the month so other work can be scheduled. Parish and Town council meetings usually meet in the evening and should be attended.
- It would be good to hold meetings of Full Council in the afternoons. This would have many advantages: saving on heating costs in the winter, less security would be needed because County Hall would be open anyway. Travelling a long way home in the dead of winter is not very safe or pleasant.
- Late afternoon and evening meetings are better for people who work, and we need to attract more young people (who usually work during day).
- Mornings are better (except Mondays)
- Most of the meetings are in the morning and it could be mixed up a bit to have some of the shorter meetings in the afternoon. Full Council should be moved earlier during winter, it was in the morning at Dorset County Council, and I feel better decisions are made earlier in the day.
- My only issue is that it would be helpful if Cabinet meetings were not on the morning of the last Tuesday of the month as this puts me in a difficult position where it clashes with a parish council meeting.
- Personally, I am happy with the current arrangements, but I completely appreciate that those who may wish to be more involved would find it difficult if they were in full time employment and we do want to encourage the younger people. This needs to be balanced with officer time though.
- Starting the Northern Area Planning Committee at 2pm works well. It suits members and officers who have some distance to travel, it allows plenty of time prior to the meeting to make all the IT and room arrangements and to fix things if necessary. Occasionally, if the agenda is very full, we can bring the meeting forward to 11am. I do not support evening meetings. As a rural member with nine parishes my evenings are already very full. As it is, I sometimes must send apologies to a parish council meeting because it clashes with Full Council.
- I think we should have a mix of times including evenings to make it much easier for those who work.
- The evening full council meetings are difficult for members that travel a distance as you must leave home around 4pm and do not get home until gone 10pm. If evening

meetings continue, consideration to providing sandwiches before the meeting start should be given.

- Where parents are invited to attend, then timings should be variable to suit the parents.
- Wherever possible significant meetings such as Full Council and Cabinet should be in the evening to allow councillors who work to attend. It would be good to have other meetings not just at a specific time but varied for the same reason. Residents should not have to take time off from work to attend meetings. Plus sticking to the timetable is vital - I book carers and need several weeks' notice to enable me to be at meetings.
- You cannot get full interaction with residents if you hold meetings while they are working, and you cannot encourage people to become councillors if it does not fit with their work lives