

Dorset Council

11 February 2025

Calendar of Meetings 2025 - 2026

For Decision

Cabinet Member and Portfolio:

Cllr N Ireland, Leader of the Council, Climate, Performance and Safeguarding

Local Councillor(s):

All

Executive Director:

J Mair, Director of Legal & Democratic

Report Author: Kater Critchel

Job Title: Senior Democratic Services Officer

Tel: 01305 252234

Email: k.critchel@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Report Status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

Brief Summary:

To consider the draft calendar of meetings for the 2025 – 2026 municipal year.

Recommendation:

1. That the calendar of meetings for the period May 2025- May 2026 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 to the calendar, in consultation with the appropriate Chair and Vice-Chair.

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 Councillors are asked to consider the draft calendar of meetings for the municipal year 2025 – 2026 for formal adoption as 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 As is the normal practice, the calendar of meetings follows the pattern set in previous years in terms of frequency of meetings, considering the newly agreed start times for certain committees following a change in political administration.
- 1.4 Throughout the year there may be some unforeseen diary clashes or changes required to the calendar for business needs. Councillors are asked to give delegated authority to the Director of Legal & Democratic to make any necessary changes to the calendar, in consultation with the relevant Chair/Vice- Chair. This is to avoid the need to bring further reports to Full Council and secure effective political management.

Key points to note in relation to the proposed calendar

2. As is normal practice a short recess has been built into the month of August. Where it is possible a limited number of meetings are held during other school holiday periods.
 - 2.1 The timing of Full Council, Cabinet, Audit and Governance Committee and Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee have all been set at 6.30pm. Other committee start times have also been reviewed by each committee's members and any changes are reflected in the calendar attached.
 - 2.2 The timing of the budget setting decision-making journey for 2026 – 27 has been agreed by the Executive Director for Corporate Development, following discussions with his team.
 - 2.3 Previously, some councillors had asked if the programming for the budget meeting and its reserve date could be moved from a Tuesday to a Thursday for reason of consistency in the calendar. Councillors are reminded that there 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 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 If the meeting was moved 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 Members are asked to approve the calendar of meetings for 2025-2026 as set out in the appendix.

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 2025-2026

10. **Background Papers**

There are no background papers

11. **Report Sign Off**

- 11.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)