



AGENDA ITEM 7

Chichester City Council

Chichester City Council Calendar of Meetings 2023-2024

Report to Council – 22 February 2023

Background

The timetable for Council and Committee meetings for the year 2023-2024 is attached for consideration.

Prior to considering this report, Councillors are asked to remind themselves of the minute of the meeting of Full Council held on 23 February 2022 (*included below*) when the present timetable of meetings was approved, taking particular note of the references made to meeting times.

The Council-in-Committee meeting to select the Mayor for 2022-2023 was held a few weeks later on 9 March 2022.

Councillors are also asked to note the methodology that has been applied whilst creating this calendar and the notification of potential clashes with Chichester District and West Sussex County Council meetings for 2023-2024 as advised to the City Council before Christmas 2022 (*included after this summary report*). It should be noted that discussions have taken place with the Monitoring Officer of CDC about timely notice being given to the City Council about additional CDC meetings. There have been instances – some recently – when City meetings have needed to be arranged due to the number of CDC/CCC members in attendance at the District Council and we have been unaware of those meetings. It follows that City Council staff will adopt a reciprocal arrangement with District colleagues.

How meetings need to be held (at present)

The present agreement regarding holding meetings in the working day, approved by the Council, followed on from the arrangements established under Covid Regulations when it was necessary to meet remotely. The present arrangements could have been quite legitimately revisited by the Council six months after that decision in accordance with Standing Order 11.

After the Covid Regulations ended, the Government issued a Call for Evidence in June 2021 seeking the views of Councils on the experience of holding meetings remotely. A number of comments from Councils were made in support of those arrangements, notably giving the option of extending the legal basis of meetings to enable them to be held face to face, or remotely, or in a hybrid form. i.e. some present physically, some in attendance remotely.

This latter arrangement operates in Wales.

To date, there is no news on the Call for Evidence as far as English local government is concerned, but the Town Clerk has been advised that at the Society of Local Council Clerks Practitioners Conference in February 2023 that the Minister, when quizzed said that this matter was high on his agenda and news was coming. Councillors must currently be present at meetings physically to be able both to vote and to be counted as formally present.

It is possible to attend a meeting remotely, but attendance does not formally count, nor does the ability to vote.

The Town Clerk continues to hold a view that the Welsh system represents a far more flexible and modern approach to the conduct of, and participation in, local democracy. He takes the view that the flexibility of this arrangement could be advantageous on occasions when a

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Councillor was unable to attend a meeting physically due an emergency that arose at short notice or delayed at work, as it would enable them to speak, vote and be recorded as in attendance. In fact, during Covid Regulation meetings, Councillor Joy was able to attend meetings on two occasions from outside the UK.

It is fully accepted that, with the forthcoming local elections in May 2023, some Councillors will have decided not to seek re-election and some Councillors will not be returned to office, so in line with a recent decision of the District Council, the timetable is recommended to the City Council for approval as to the dates, but that the question of meeting timings (with two exceptions) must be a question asked of the new administration. To save time on this latter consultation, action could be taken and be asked of all candidates when the Statement of Persons nominated for election is issued by the Returning Officer.

Issues applying in an election year

The views of the Mayor about his inability to attend day time meetings due to his employment and associated loss of income are also well known. Whilst the Mayor is not standing for re-election to the City Council, one of those interesting procedural issues applies on this occasion.

At the Annual Meeting of the City Council, the first item of business is the election of Chairman (Mayor) ie the Council MUST elect a Chairman (they MAY appoint a Vice-Chairman (Deputy Mayor). Thus, the Mayor still holds office until the Annual Meeting of the Council for the election of his successor under Item 1 but has only one vote, that being reserved to 'break the deadlock' in the event of an equality of votes. Once the vote is taken and the successor Mayor signs the Declaration of Acceptance of Office, his duty is done.

The date of the Annual Meeting of the City Council is Wednesday 17th May and this date was included in the agreed timetable of meetings for 2022/2023. However, in view of the Mayor's expressed views and the particular position he is in as a Mayor not returning to office, it is additionally recommended that the Annual Meeting of the City Council in 2023 commences at **6pm** and it would also make sense for the Council in Committee meeting, where the selection of new Mayor takes place to also commence at 6pm.

I am also recommending that the now dated phraseology of 'Council in Committee' be abandoned. It is something which has concerned me for a while now, but the current exercise has concentrated my mind coupled with the twists and turns of action needing to be taken in an election year. That terminology predates the 1972 Local Government Act and could be argued as being a questionable concept nowadays. The plain fact is that Council in Committee IS a Council meeting. It can be argued that it could be called a 'Selection Committee' as a Committee can comprise all members of the Council. There would be nothing wrong for Councillors to simply gather informally, and/or meet by Zoom to note the names selected for Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Bailiff which will be formally proposed and seconded at Annual Council and for the first gathering of a new Council, this could be the better course of action.

All councillors cease to hold office on the 4th day after the full council election so in 2023 (irrespective of the extra Bank Holiday) that will be Monday 8th May. As stated above, the Mayor holds office until the election of a successor at the Annual Meeting following the election. As he is not standing for election, on 10th May when the selection of the Mayor is made for 2023/24 he is still Mayor, but not a councillor as we would then have an additional Councillor. If the meeting on 10th May is called a Council meeting or Selection Committee, then the Mayor will also have no original vote, but only a casting vote. Councillors are reminded that there are issues around Council and Committee meetings regarding public notice, issue of agenda, production of minutes and exclusion by resolution 'where publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest'.

An added complication is that, if the meeting on 10th May is called a Council meeting, 3 clear days' notice (excluding Sundays and Public Holidays) so the only way to get the agenda out in

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time with the extra Bank Holiday this year would be to send the agenda to all candidates and tell those not elected to ignore it!

Added to this also is that the new councillors need to make and sign their declarations of acceptance of office at or before the first meeting after the election, so will need to do so if the 10th May meeting is called a Council Meeting (or be given permission to do so at a later meeting if they are not in attendance).

Meetings of the District and County Councils and the City Council's present policy on expenses

It is further noted that a short trial of holding evening meetings at Chichester District Council, resulted in a decision made in November 2022 that ***“the Monitoring Officer is asked to carry out a review of meeting times in June to August 2023 to assess new councillors preferred choices of meeting times; outcomes of that review to be reported to Council”***.

Both Chichester District Council and West Sussex County Council presently hold daytime meetings. Two City Councillors are also members of WSCC and 7 members (currently some 38%) of the City Councillors are members also of CDC and we will not know the number CDC/CCC dual hatted numbers until after the elections.

Although both WSCC and CDC operate a Scheme for Members' Allowances, the City Council resolved many years ago not to do this (although some other large Parishes operate such a scheme).

Payments to City Councillors are therefore currently limited to:

- a) An Annual Mayor's Allowance, currently £4000 a year,
- b) The option to request the reasonable supply of consumables in connection with duties as a Councillor e.g. printer ink cartridges and paper and
- c) Payment of expenses incurred in connection with approved training/attendance at approved external events.

The cost of evening meetings

Councillors will recall that City Council Committee meetings have previously commenced at 5.30pm and Full Council at 6pm. Parish Councils are, of course, creatures of evening meetings and some, including a number in the Chichester District hold meetings at 7pm, 7.30pm or even later. Beyond this, the City Council have expressed a wish for there to be more diverse membership of the City Council and the facility of holding evening meetings, particularly to permit working Councillors to attend meetings is a factor. (see also comment by Town Clerk about the methods by which meetings are held).

It is necessary to advise Councillors that should evening meetings return, they will come at a cost. This is currently estimated to be some £4,200 based on the present timetable of meetings.

This is mainly representative of staff costs for those Officers who are entitled to claim overtime.

Some Officer attendees are not entitled to claim overtime but entitled to time off in lieu, which can be difficult to address depending upon office workloads.

If a decision is made by the newly elected Council about returning to evening meetings then the newly appointed Town Clerk will wish to address work/life balance of staff. If past evening meeting times of 5.30pm for Committees and 6.00pm for Council are retained, the Town Clerk presently has a request from staff that Council meetings be held at 5.30pm to reduce both 'downtime' and further assist with cost saving. One option for those staff who do not live in Chichester could be to attend meetings remotely (other than for meetings of Full Council).

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Unlike the current requirement on Councillors there is no legal requirement for officers to be physically present at meetings.

Increasingly, the question of additional costs for energy must be factored in (our present fixed term contract ends in October 2023). It is estimated that based on past meeting arrangements, approximately 50% of meetings held are when the Council is the sole occupant of the building.

A meeting which commences at 5.30pm and finishes at 7.30pm can potentially incur an additional 3 hours of energy and staff costs in the dark season – this is because the Duty Front of House Officer would commence work at 5pm and a further half hour could be involved by the time the building was cleared, tidied, and locked up.

Councillors should note that, while it would likely help with work-life balance for Officers, the additional costs incurred by evening meetings in terms of staffing and energy, as well as the entitlement of the Officers attending by Zoom to claim the time back as TOIL or supplementary payment; would be unlikely to decrease with Office remote attendance.

In closing, I wish to extend my grateful thanks to my colleague, Gareth Bowen, the Member Services Support Officer for the time he has spent preparing the timetable of meetings and his painstaking research into CDC and WSCC meeting patterns and how they can be managed to avoid a clash with the City Council's timetable.

RECOMMENDED

1. That the **dates** in the timetable of meetings for 2023/24 be approved;
2. That a survey be undertaken, as soon as possible, of candidates standing for election to the City Council about their preferences about meeting timings and that the relevant factors set out in this report (and issues raised in the forthcoming discussion by Council) form part of a briefing paper;
3. That the meeting dealing with the Selection of Mayor on Wednesday 10th May and Annual Meeting of the City Council on Wednesday 17th May both be held at 6pm
4. That the meeting on 10th May to select the Mayor be no longer titled 'Council in Committee' and the Council determine the title and format of this meeting. Note – consideration will need to be given to the Civic Awards Council in Committee in October, which will need to have the formal status of a Council Meeting where executive decisions may be made.

Town Clerk
8 February 2023



Chichester City Council

Chichester City Council Calendar of Meetings 2023-2024

The following methodology has been used while compiling the Calendar of Meetings 2023-2024. It includes suggestions for changes to regularity of some meetings as well as an indication of potential clashes with District and County Council meetings as advised to the City Council prior to Christmas 2022.

Please note that meeting times are not included as this is an issue for Council to decide separately.

Principles for Committee and Council meeting dates:

- **Community Affairs**
 - o Remove January meeting
 - o Normal Committee meetings
 - 1st Monday of: March, June, September, December
 - o Grants meetings
 - 1st Monday of April and October (if a 2nd round is needed)
 - Grants deadlines to be 3rd Friday of March and September

- **Finance**
 - o Normal Committee meetings
 - 2nd Tuesday of June, September, November, February, April
 - Monitoring reports to all meetings? Don't currently take to June meeting
 - 2nd Tuesday of October to be one item agenda – Draft Budget

- **Planning**
 - o Fixed cycle every four weeks
 - o Cancel January meeting if it lands within one week of reopening after Christmas/New Year – delegated decisions to Committee Chairman and Planning Adviser.

- **Council**
 - o 4th Wednesday in June, September, February and April
 - o December meeting one week before closedown
 - o Council-in-Committee
 - Mayoral selection - 3rd Wednesday in March (unless in an election year)
 - Annual Awards - 3rd Wednesday in October

The proposed draft dates produce the following potential clashes with CDC and WSCC meetings – although the relative timings of these meetings and CCC's timings may mean that no actual clash occurs:

Date	CCC (Proposed)	CDC	WSCC
13 June 2023	Finance	Standards Committee (AM meeting)	None
28 June 2023	Full Council	Grants & Concessions (AM meeting)	None
4 September 2023	Community Affairs	Economic Development (AM meeting)	None
12 September 2023	Finance	Overview & Scrutiny (PM meeting)	Cabinet (AM meeting)

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Date	CCC (Proposed)	CDC	WSCC
10 October 2023	Finance (Draft Budget)	Cabinet (AM meeting)	Planning (AM meeting)
18 October 2023	Council-in-Committee (Annual Awards)	Licensing (AM meeting)	None
14 November 2023	Finance (Budget approval)	Overview & Scrutiny (PM meeting)	None
20 December 2023	Council	Development Plan (Start time TBC)	None
28 February 2024	Council	Licensing (AM meeting)	Children and Young People (AM meeting)
29 February 2024	Planning	Housing and Communities (AM meeting)	None
4 March 2024	Community Affairs	None	Community Highways Projects (AM meeting)
20 March 2024	Council-in-Committee (Mayoral selection)	Development Plan (AM meeting)	None
24 April 2024	Council	Development Plan (AM meeting)	None

This indicates that 13 meetings could potentially coincide with the dates of CDC and WSCC meetings.

Councillors should note that the draft City Council Calendar of Meetings 2023-2024 includes 35 meetings.

Member Services Support Officer
8 February 2023



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Chichester City Council

Meeting of the Full Council of the City of Chichester held on 23 February 2022

63. CALENDAR OF MEETINGS – 2022 – 2023

The Town Clerk presented the proposed calendar of meetings for 2022-2023 and thanked the Member Services Support Officer for his work on it.

He advised Members that, in compiling the calendar, efforts had been made to limit clashes between City, District, and West Sussex County Council meetings. Members were further advised that this was rarely reciprocated by the other authorities.

Councillor Sharp also thanked the Officers for their work on the calendar and reminded Members that the times of meetings had been changed during the pandemic from evenings to afternoons. She expressed the opinion that holding the meetings during the daytime might affect participation by those with jobs as well as employed people who might potentially stand as candidates at elections.

Members debated the positive and negative aspects of afternoon meetings as opposed to evening meetings at length with the Deputy Mayor and Councillors Quail, Barrie, Bell and K Hughes agreeing with Councillor Sharp's comments about participation.

Councillor Scicluna supported the calendar of meetings as presented but suggested that, following the elections in May 2023, the new Council might wish to revisit the meeting times. She also reminded Members that the District and County Councils held their meetings in the daytime and that a previous experiment by the District Council to move to evening meetings had not been successful with a low attendance at those meetings by Members.

The Deputy Mayor agreed that, as a working person with commitments around the country, attending afternoon meetings in person would prove difficult. He also emphasised that the Members of the City Council had volunteered to stand and did not receive remuneration so that should be taken into account when discussing meeting times and locations.

The Town Clerk reminded Members that the outcome of the call for evidence by the Government regarding remote meetings was still awaited. He expressed the hope that this would result in a change to the regulations to allow full Council and Committee meetings to be held via Zoom or as a hybrid combination of Zoom and in person.

Councillor Bell supported the previous comments and suggested that, while it might not be possible to publish the full calendar of meetings for the next year far in advance, a declaration by the Council ahead of the May 2023 elections to advise of any changes to meeting times might help persuade potential candidates to stand.

The Mayor expressed the opinion that, while Zoom had been a useful tool during the pandemic, his preference was for face to face meetings as the interaction and the ability to read emotions during discussions was much better.

Councillor Barrie informed Members that she felt it was important to distinguish between the location of the meetings and the timings of the meetings.

Councillor K Hughes agreed with the Town Clerk's comments about hybrid meetings and expressed the hope that this would be something that could happen after the call for evidence was announced.

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Councillor Plowman supported the suggestion that the new council from 2023 might wish to revisit the meeting times. He informed Members that statistics showed that the average age of councillors meant that they did not have the same constraints on their time as those who still worked.

In response to a question from Councillor Plowman about a date for the traditional Charter Dinner, the Mayor agreed that a date could be identified before the elections in May 2023. Councillor Carter suggested that UK Harvest be approached to cater this event.

CHICHESTER CITY COUNCIL
Calendar of Council and Committee Meetings
2023-2024

May 2023 Bank holidays 1st, 8th and 29th	Thursday 4 Local Elections	Wednesday 10 Council in Committee	Wednesday 17 Annual Meeting of Council	Thursday 25 Planning & Conservation	
June 2023	Monday 5 Community Affairs	Tuesday 13 Finance	Thursday 22 Planning & Conservation	Wednesday 28 Council Disc. Grants	
July 2023	Thursday 20 Planning & Conservation				
August 2023 Bank holiday 28th	Thursday 17 Planning & Conservation				
September 2023	Monday 4 Community Affairs	Tuesday 12 Finance	Thursday 14 Planning & Conservation	Wednesday 27 Council	
October 2023	Monday 2 Community Affairs Grants (Special) IF NEEDED	Tuesday 10 Finance	Thursday 12 Planning & Conservation	Wednesday 18 Council in Committee	
November 2023	Thursday 9 Planning & Conservation	Tuesday 14 Finance			
December 2023 Bank holidays 25th and 26th	Monday 4 Community Affairs	Thursday 7 Planning & Conservation	Wednesday 20 Council		
January 2024 Bank holiday 1st	Thursday 4 Planning & Conservation CANCEL?				
February 2024	Thursday 1 Planning & Conservation	Tuesday 13 Finance	Wednesday 28 Council	Thursday 29 Planning & Conservation	
March 2024 Bank holiday 29th	Monday 4 Community Affairs	Wednesday 20 Council in Committee	Thursday 28 Planning & Conservation		
April 2024 Bank holiday 1st	Monday 8 Community Affairs Grants (Special)	Tuesday 9 Finance	Monday 22 Annual Parish Meeting 6.30pm	Wednesday 24 Council	Thursday 25 Planning & Conservation
May 2024 Bank holidays 6th and 27th	Wednesday 15 Annual Meeting of Council	Thursday 23 Planning & Conservation			