

16 January 2018

Report of	Assistant Director of Policy and Corporate	Author	Andrew Weavers
Title	Review of Meetings and Ways of Working Update		282213
Wards affected	Not applicable		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides the Governance and Audit Committee with an update on the progress of the Review of Meetings and Ways of Working, which took place during the previous municipal year. The aim of the review was to look at and improve processes around Colchester Borough Council Committee meetings. The report will also review a trial of the later start times of meetings.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 That the Committee note the progress made to date on the Review of Meetings and Ways of Working as contained within the report.
- 2.2 That the Committee consider whether to make a recommendation to Council in respect of the Review of Meetings and Ways of Working.

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 Following on from the conclusion of the review of meetings and ways of working this report provides the Committee with an update on all the different elements of the review.
- 3.2 The report also contains information collated following the end of the later start times trial period including feedback from both Councillors and Officers. The Committee are now invited to establish the next steps that they wish to take.

4. Background Information

- 4.1 The Governance and Audit Committee established the Review of Meetings and Ways of Working during the 2016-2017 municipal year.

Digital Agendas

- 4.2 The three month digital agenda trial commenced at the beginning of January. The Governance and Audit Committee, the Scrutiny Panel and the Revolving Investment Fund Committee have all agreed to be part of the trial.
- 4.3 As part of the trial, Councillors will no longer receive paper copies of the meeting agenda. Councillors will be required to access agendas from the website and use a PDF application to both read and annotate agendas. In line with legislative requirements, a paper copy will still be placed on deposit in the library and a reasonable number of paper copies will be made available for the public attending Committee meetings. Appropriate signage will be included in meeting rooms to highlight to members of the public that all agendas are available online and provide a link to the location.

- 4.4 A digital agenda training session demonstrating the method of accessing agendas and using the Adobe PDF application took place on 21 November 2017. This was attended by eleven Councillors. Further offers of training have been provided to members of all three Committees.
- 4.5 This meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee is the first meeting to use digital only agendas.
- 4.6 The circulation of e-Newsletters containing links to published agendas to Councillors and members of the public will continue. During the trial, to ensure that the visibility of Council agendas is increased, e-mails containing links to published agendas will be sent directly from the Democratic Service team to Councillors and relevant Officers.
- 4.7 Ready access to a power supply is likely to be a requirement for those attending these meetings. However, a fixed/permanent solution, given the restrictions on the listed building, is likely to be expensive. Accordingly, longer charging cables and multiple socket power towers will be provided for the different devices used by Councillors. In the meantime Councillors will be required to ensure that their devices are fully charged prior to attending meetings. Further work will be needed for a solution in the Council Chamber or Moot Hall.

Councillor ICT / Use of technology

- 4.8 The Democratic Services Team surveyed those Councillors participating in the digital agendas trial to establish whether they had a suitable device for meetings.
- 4.9 Councillors were offered one three different devices, all of which are capable of running the programs and applications for accessing digital agendas and Colchester Borough Council e-mail accounts. Below are the three devices offered;
- Android - Samsung Galaxy A Tablet
 - Apple - iPad (with Keyboard attachment)
 - Windows - Surface 3 laptop hybrid
- 4.10 A total of five devices have been provided on a loan basis and set up. All Councillors provided with a device have received an introduction on how to use the device, alongside offers of further support if required.
- 4.11 It should be acknowledged that further IT devices may need to be provided if a further roll out of digital agendas was considered.

Streaming of Committee meetings

- 4.12 Colchester Borough Council entered into a contract with Audiominutes following approval at the Council meeting on the 26 July 2017, this followed a short trial with the company.
- 4.13 The Audiominutes service provides a live streaming and archive streaming solution for all public Colchester Borough Council Committee meetings. Audiominutes is integrated into the Committee management system allowing for audio of the meeting to be located on the same webpage as the agenda and for recordings to be tagged under each agenda item. The system also automatically tweets both the beginning and end of live Committee streaming.

- 4.14 Audiominutes also provides a monthly and yearly report on the number of listeners. Below are listener statistics from the period between March 2017 and the last Committee meeting in December 2017.

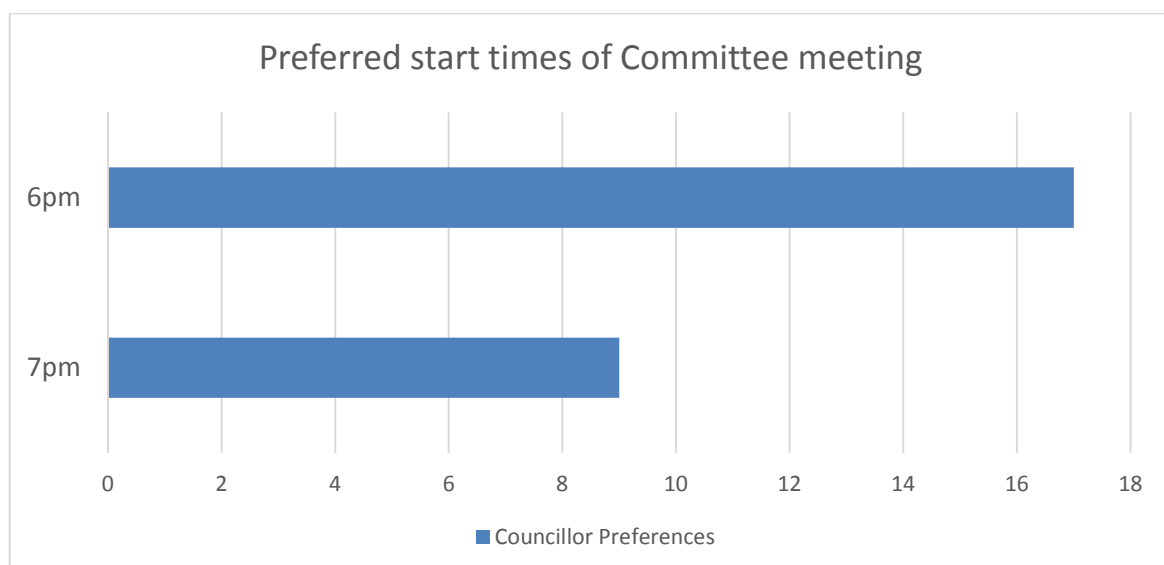
Statistic	Total
Total Live Listeners	488
Recorded meeting Listeners	2,716
Peak Live Listeners	92 (6 November 2017 – Local Plan Committee)
Most listened to meeting recording	313 (12 June 2017 – Local Plan Committee)
Amount of content listened to	338.4 hours

Shorter Meeting Agendas/Executive summary

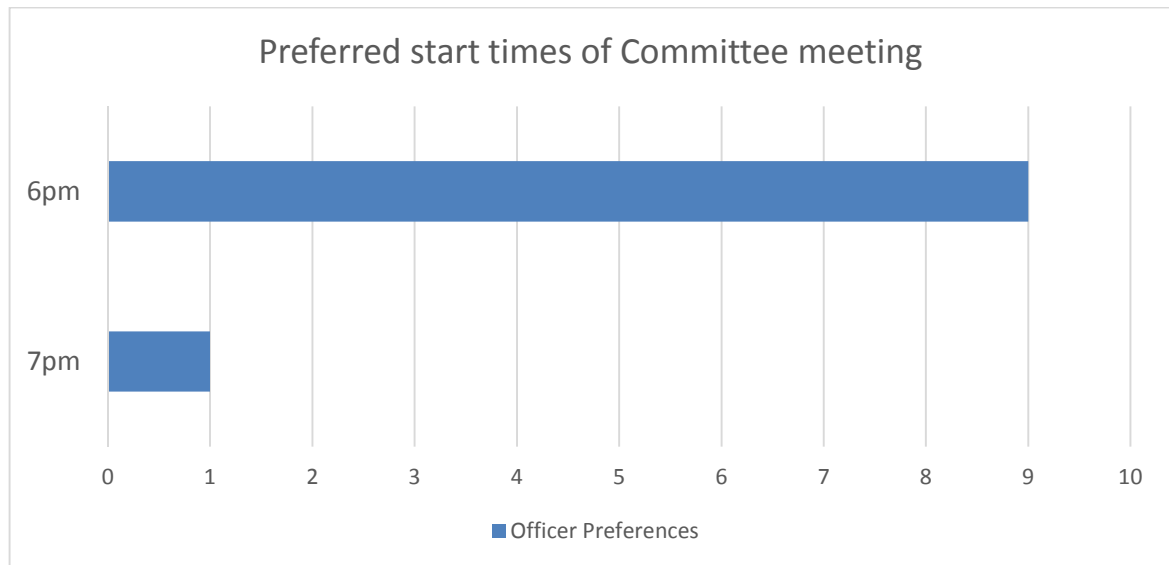
- 4.15 The Democratic Services team have rolled out new agenda format over the past few months. This has included more concise and simpler explanations of standard items on the agenda and public information sheets.
- 4.16 Report templates have also been reviewed and relaunched

Meeting Start times

- 4.17 The Governance and Audit Committee have held a total of five meetings at the later start time of 7pm. The average duration meetings of those meetings was 1 hour 19 minutes.
- 4.18 During that time the Committee received one Have Your Say! contribution from a member of the public and five contributions from Councillors. By way of comparison, not allowing for the different items of business which may prompt public interest the same period during the previous municipal year resulted in three public speakers and three Councillors attending to speak.
- 4.19 An online survey was launched for all Councillors on 7 December 2017 requesting feedback on the later start times. A total of 26 Councillors responded and a summary of the comments received is enclosed in **Appendix A**. The table below indicates the preferred start times of Committee meetings from Councillors.



- 4.20 A survey was also distributed to Officers and external partners who had attended a later start time Committee. Below is a table outlining the preference for Committee meeting start times, a more extensive summary of the responses received is included within **Appendix B** for the Committee to consider.



Review of Have Your Say!

- 4.21 Revised Have Your Say! provisions have been introduced at Committee meetings, with the exception of those committees exercising a quasi-judicial function. This entitles members of the public, at the discretion of individual chairmen, a further minute to address the public once they have received a response from the meeting that they are addressing.
- 4.22 Whilst not all members of the public who have spoken under Have Your Say! have wished to take advantage of this new arrangement, there has been some positive feedback from speakers about the opportunity to respond.

Social Media

- 4.23 The Democratic Services Team and Communications Team have continued to provide tweets when agendas for meetings have been published. The Audiominutes streaming service has also provided automated tweets at both the beginning and end of a Committee meeting.
- 4.24 Going forward, it is proposed that the tweet informing members of the public when an agenda is published be more informative and that a tweet also be sent out on the day of the meeting as a reminder and when the Cabinet meetings are published.

When Agendas are published

- The agenda for [Committee Meeting] at [Time] on [Date] is now online [Link]. Come along and #haveyoursay

Reminder on the Day

- Don't forget tonight's [Committee meeting] at 6pm at the Town Hall. Come along to #haveyoursay Can't make it? Check the agenda and listen to the live stream from 6pm here – [link]

Cabinet Minutes

- Missed yesterday's Cabinet meeting and want to see what was agreed? Minutes and meeting recording are now available here [\[link\]](#)

Member training issues

- 4.25 The Governance and Audit Committee requested that the Member Development Group examine whether there would be benefit in considering whether the range of subjects in which training and development is mandatory for Councillors should be widened. Possible examples suggested as part of the review were Chairmanship training for Chairman, scrutiny training for Scrutiny Panel members and safeguarding.
- 4.26 The Member Development Group considered this issue at its meeting on 14 December 2017. It made a recommendation to Cabinet that training on Safeguarding, Equality and Diversity and Data Protection be made mandatory for all Councillors from May 2018. In addition all new Chairman elected from May 2018 must undertake Chairmanship training, within three months of election, unless they already have extensive experience of chairing meetings in a local authority environment. The Group was also of the view that where mandatory training was not undertaken, the possibility of withholding allowances should be explored and Cabinet will be invited to seek the views of the Independent Remuneration Panel on this issue.
- 4.27 This recommendation will be considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 31 January 2018, and it will be for Cabinet to consider whether to make a recommendation on the issue to Full Council.

Members Room

- 4.28 The Governance and Audit Committee requested that the Group Leaders give further consideration to the issue of improving the members' room.

5. Standard References

- 5.1 At this time there are no particular references to the Strategic Plan; publicity or consultation considerations; or financial; equality, diversity and human rights; community safety; health and safety or risk management implications.

Appendices

Appendix A – Councillor Survey Responses

Appendix B – Summary of Officer Survey Responses

Background Papers

Previous Review of Meetings and Ways of Working Reports – 13 September 2016, 7 March 2017, 27 June 2017.