

Timetable of Meetings 2023/24

For Full Council on Wednesday 14 December 2022

Summary

Lead Member: Councillor David Hayward – Cabinet Member for Governance and Transparency

Lead Director: Lee Colyer – Director of Finance, Policy and Development

Head of Service: Jane Clarke – Head of Policy and Governance

Report Author: Mark O’Callaghan – Scrutiny and Engagement Officer

Classification: Public document (non-exempt)

Wards Affected: All

Approval Timetable	Date
Full Council	14 December 2022

Recommendations

Officer recommendations as supported by the Cabinet Member:

1. That the Timetable of Meetings for 2023/24, as at Appendix A to the report, be agreed.

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The timetable of meetings sets out the meeting dates for the municipal year and includes all public meetings that deal with decision-making, advice-giving or scrutiny of decisions at Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.
- 1.2 It is good practice that the timetable be agreed in advance in order to provide members, the public, press and the council's officers as much notice as possible about when decision-making meetings of the council will take place.
- 1.3 The timetable may be amended at a future date to take account of specific circumstances that may arise.

Standing Guidelines

- 1.4 The Timetable follows a pattern which has been broadly consistent for a number of years. The following items have been taken into consideration when producing the draft for the forthcoming year:
 - 1.4.1 No Full Council meetings during public and school holidays. To help members of the council, officers and the public to attend these important meetings at what could otherwise be popular holiday times.
 - 1.4.2 No committee meetings in August (except Planning) or the last half of December and the first half of January. To help members and officers plan workloads and take due leave around popular holiday times.

Changes for 2023/24

- 1.5 Cabinet meetings were moved from day-time to evenings during the previous timetable period to allow greater public participation. Evening Cabinet meetings will continue for 2023/24.
- 1.6 In previous years, Mayor Making has been followed by special meetings of the Cabinet and the Audit and Governance Committee to note the relevant appointments made by the Leader. These were convenient at the time but circumstances are different and would now add an unnecessary burden at an already busy time. In future, appointments which are made by the Leader will be published as an when ready and 'noted' at the respective meetings at the first scheduled opportunity. The special meetings of Cabinet and the Audit and Governance Committee which would previously have been held in May are removed from the timetable.

- 1.7 At the request of the Planning Service, meetings of the Planning Committee will move to a four-weekly cycle, previously three-weekly. This will allow more efficient planning service workloads and a more regular frequency of meetings with fewer clashes with other committees. The overall number of meetings is only reduced from 14 to 13 and Planning Services have confirmed this should not be detrimental to the efficacy of the planning process.

Other Considerations

- 1.8 The Council will have priority access to the Council Chamber once the co-working arrangements are in place at the Town Hall. Scheduled meetings will be booked. Late changes may be subject to availability and additional cost.

2. Options Considered

- 2.1 To approve the Timetable.
- 2.2 To approve an alternative schedule.
- 2.3 To move to ad-hoc scheduling.

3. Preferred Option and Reason

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Timetable be approved (option 2.1). The Timetable has been carefully prepared in consultation with Heads of Service, Directors and Committee Chairmen. It takes account of tried and tested precedent, practical implications and helps ensure that the decision-making process is open and transparent.
- 3.2 Ad-hoc scheduling would be grossly inefficient and not accessible nor transparent.

4. Consultation on Options

- 4.1 Council officers, current committee Chairmen and Management Board have been consulted in the preparation of the Timetable. Feedback provided has been taken account of in the final draft.

5. Implementation

- 5.1 Meeting dates are published on the Council's website and at the Council's offices in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

6. Appendices and Background Documents

Appendices:

- Appendix A: Timetable of Meetings 2023/24

Exempt appendices (if any):

- None

Background Papers:

- None

7. Cross Cutting Issues

A. Legal (including the Human Rights Act)

In accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 the Council must give proper notice and summons of its decision-making meetings, and if a proper notice and summons are not issued, then the meeting may not be properly convened and the business transacted of no effect. The Timetable of Meetings 2023-24 assists in the efficient organisation of publication of the notices and summons of meetings, and gives Officers, Members and the public advanced notice (although not legal notice) of meeting dates.

Under schedule 12 of the Local Government Act 1972 the Council must hold its Annual Meeting within 21 days of the retirement of the Councillors in an ordinary election.

There are no consequences arising from the recommendation that adversely affect or interfere with individuals' rights and freedoms as set out in the Human Rights Act 1998.

Claudette Valmond, Head of Legal Partnership, 06 December 2022

B. Other Implications (Finance and Other Resources, Staffing, Risk Management, Environment and Sustainability, Community Safety, Equalities, Data Protection, Health and Safety. Health and Wellbeing)

There are no significant cross-cutting implications as a direct result of this report.

Mark O'Callaghan, Scrutiny and Engagement Officer, 02 December 2022.