

Report To: Council

Date of Meeting: 25 February 2014

Lead Officer: Democratic Services Manager

Report Author: Democratic Services Manager

Title: Committee Timetable 2014 / 15, Annual Review of Political Balance, and Appointment of Scrutiny Chairs

1. What is the report about?

This report contains information and requests decisions on committee-related issues.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

It is necessary for Council to approve a timetable for 2014/15 to enable meeting venues and resources to be confirmed, to publicise the timetable and to populate the Members' diary. As the new municipal year starts in May it is also appropriate for Council to consider changes in political balance and be aware of how Scrutiny chairing arrangements work.

3. What are the Recommendations?

That Council approves the draft timetable and considers the merits of extending the timetable over two or more years.

4. Report details.

4.1 Committee Timetable

The new municipal year begins with the Annual Meeting of Council in May, when the current timetable of committee meetings ends. The draft timetable for meetings is attached as appendix 1.

Some members voiced suggestions in 2013 that extending the timetable to cover a longer period would be helpful, and a discussion on this point was held with the Democratic Services Committee who debated the advantages and disadvantages of the proposition and sought the views of the full Council membership.

4.2 Annual Review of Political Balance

The Council is required to consider at least annually how the membership of its committees relates to the political balance of the Groups. Changes to the membership of committees and the strength of the political groups mean that not all committees are currently politically balanced, and these are shown in Appendix 2.

At the time of writing this report the recommendations in appendix 2 are relevant.

4.3 Appointment of Chairs of Scrutiny Committees

According to the principles for allocating Scrutiny chairs in the 2011 Local Government (Wales) Measure the Groups represented in the Cabinet (Independents, Conservatives and Plaid Cymru) will be entitled to 1 of the 3 scrutiny chairs, and it will be for those groups to decide amongst themselves which of their eligible members will be a chair. The Labour Group, as the only group which does not have members on Cabinet, is entitled to appoint 2 of the scrutiny chairs.

Neither the Measure nor the associated statutory guidance make provisions for changing or re-appointing scrutiny chairs, except where the political make-up of Cabinet changes or where a scrutiny chair is vacated for some reason. The appointment of chairs for the new municipal year is therefore a matter for the political groups to consider and to report any changes.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

The decisions and information arising from this report are central to the functioning of the democratic and committee systems which are essential elements of the Council's governance arrangements and contribute to the Council's corporate priorities.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

The costs of maintaining a committee system are covered within existing budgets. Services throughout the Council may contribute to the meetings included in the timetable, usually by contributing information, reports and officer time.

7. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others, and has an Equality Impact Assessment Screening been undertaken?

The annual timetable of meetings is an established process and meets the aims of the Equality Act. The principal 'service users' are the members of the committees and supporting officers although the press and public are also able to attend most meetings the interest of individuals or groups is likely to depend on the topic under consideration.

A survey of councillors was conducted in 2012 on the timing and location of meetings and the results have been taken into consideration. The Council uses the most suitable meeting rooms whenever possible (in terms of access, parking, toilet facilities, public transport).

8. Chief Finance Officer Statement

There are no additional costs arising from the recommendations in this report.

9. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

Failure to confirm a new meeting schedule and other committee-related issues in this report would be detrimental to the Council's governance arrangements.

10. Power to make the Decision

Schedule 12 of the Local Government Act 1972; Local Government and Housing Act 1989; Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.