

Report to: Democratic Services Committee

Date of Meeting: 19 October 2018

Lead Member / Officer: Councillor Mark Young, Lead Member for Corporate Standards
Gary Williams, Head of Legal, HR and Democratic Services

Report Author: Steve Price, Democratic Services Manager

Title: Survey of Members on the Timing of Council Meetings

1. What is the report about?

A survey open to all elected members was circulated during August and September 2018. The results of the survey are shown in this report.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

An aim of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 is to promote and support membership of local authorities. The times at which meetings take place can be a significant factor in enabling current members to attend meetings and could also affect whether potential candidates stand for election. Under the Measure local authorities should survey their members on their preferred times and locations for meetings.

3. What are the Recommendations?

That the Committee considers the results of the survey and makes recommendations to Council on the timing and venues of Council meetings.

4. Report details

- 4.1 At present, the majority of Council and committee meetings are held during the mornings with some meetings held in the afternoon. This arrangement follows the results of a survey with members and endorsement by full Council in 2013. The Council's Prestatyn and Meliden Member Area Group (MAG) regularly meets in the evenings, at the request of the members of the MAG.

Task and Finish Group 2016

- 4.2 In 2016 the Council established a task and finish group with six members being nominated by the political groups to take part. The Group's remit included consideration of the timing of meetings. As part of this they reviewed the timing of meetings of the other Welsh local authorities and how the next survey should be conducted. In particular, the Group requested that short, basic questions be used

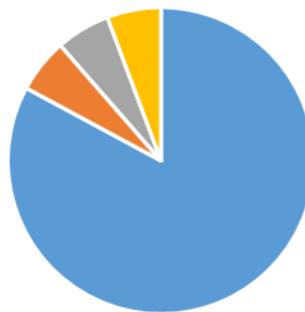
and asked for a user-friendly method of completing the survey. This time the survey was conducted using an online survey provider.

- 4.3 The Group was in favour of starting at least one committee's meetings at 4pm, though it did not advocate starting meetings any later than that.
- 4.4 In respect of venues the previous survey confirmed County Hall, Ruthin as the preferred venue for most members, many citing its central location within the county as an advantage. The majority of meetings in the current schedule are therefore held in County Hall with some use made of the Council's offices at Russell House, Rhyl and Caledfrynn, Denbigh. Any venue chosen needs to have appropriate facilities and, as the majority of meetings in the schedule are open to the public, need to be accessible and suitable for public meetings.

2018 Survey

- 4.5 A survey of members was conducted during August and September 2018 to ascertain preferences in respect of the timing and location of Council and committee meetings. A total of 35 responses were received which represents 74% of the Council membership. The results of the survey are shown in appendix 1.
- 4.6 The survey asked two main questions on the preferred timing of meetings and the preferred location of meetings. Supplementary questions were asked to clarify members' preferences on the timing of meetings.
- 4.7 For the main timing of meetings question (question 1) members responded as follows:

A fyddai'n well gennych gyfarfodydd / When would you prefer meetings?

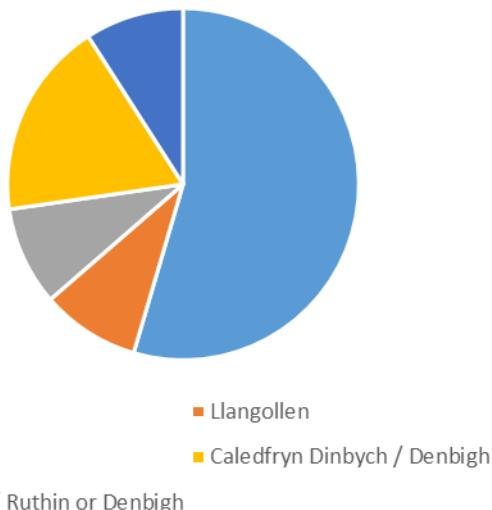


- Yn y bore / Morning
- Yn y prynhawn (yn cychwyn rhwng 2pm a 4pm) / Afternoon (starting between 2pm and 4pm)
- Yn y prynhawn (yn cychwyn am 4.30pm) / Afternoon (starting at 4.30pm)
- Gyda'r nos (ar ôl 5pm) / Evening (after 5pm)

- 4.8 The question on a preferred meeting venue (question 7) revealed that 60% of members had no preferred locations in mind. Of the responses from the 40% (14 members) who did, 11 respondents provided the preferred town or building as shown

in the chart below. Appendix 1 lists in full the responses such as moving meetings around the council area.

A oes gennych leoliad(au) dewisol ar gyfer mannau cyfarfod
/ Do you have a preferred location(s) for meeting venues?



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

No direct contribution.

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

The current arrangements for Council and committee meetings primarily utilise the main meeting room facilities at County Hall with some use of the Russell House and Caledfryn meeting rooms. These take place during the normal opening times of the buildings and no charges are raised for their use. Any changes to the current arrangements would be costed on the nature and scale of the changes proposed.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

An impact assessment is not required for this report.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

All members of the Council were invited to complete an online survey of their preferences.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

Not required.

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

As mentioned in section 2 above, the times at which meetings take place can be a significant factor in enabling current members to attend meetings and could also affect whether potential candidates stand for election.

11. Power to make the Decision

Section 6 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011

Responses to the survey

Question 1 – when would you prefer meetings?	Number	Percentage¹
Morning	29	83%
Afternoon (starting between 2pm and 4pm)	2	6%
Afternoon (starting at 4.30pm)	2	6%
Evening (starting after 5pm)	2	6%
Question 2 - Would you apply your preference to:	Number	Percentage
All committees	26	74%
Only committees you are a member of	5	14%
Only certain committees (please state below)	4	11%
Comments submitted: • Planning Committee • Full Council & all Scrutiny committees including Audit / Corporate Governance • Only full Council, all other committees should rotate. Arranging meetings to suit existing councillors may deter others to refrain from putting themselves forward for election due to the pattern of meetings • Full Council and Performance Scrutiny		
Question 3 – If one committee was to meet at 4.30pm which committee would you want that to be?	Number²	Percentage
None	8	23%
<i>Number surveyed who skipped this question</i>	8	23%
Planning Committee	5	14%
Full Council	4	11%
Member Area Groups	2	6%
N/A	2	6%
One I'm not on	2	6%
Partnerships Scrutiny	1	3%
Licensing Committee	1	3%
Health & Safety Committee	1	3%
The one with the least work	1	3%

¹ Percentages given relate to the total number of members (35) who took part in the survey. Totals are rounded up or down to the nearest whole number.

² 25 responses were submitted to this question. 8 members skipped this question.

Question 4 – Would you prefer to see the timing of meetings rotate?	Number	Percentage
No	26	74%
Yes	6	17%
No preference	3	9%
Question 5 – If [you answered] yes, would you like the timings to rotate for:	Number³	Percentage
All committees	1	3%
Some committees only (please list which committee(s))	9	25%
Comments submitted:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would rather them all not to rotate because it is easier to plan such things as my annual leave if I have the meeting dates in advance. I plan any holidays around Council and any committees I sit on so that I do not miss any. • Ones I'm not on • Only full Council and Planning • Depends / Not applicable [2 respondents] / None [3 respondents] 		
Question 6 – Are there particular times that would cause you difficulties?	Number	Percentage
No	14	40%
Yes (please state below)	21	60%
Comments submitted:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evening meetings because as a County Councillor I attend a large number of ward meetings in the evenings which include such meetings as community councils (in my ward I have three of these) and school governors (I have two schools in my ward) • Evenings [7 respondents] • Mornings • Evenings due to winter travelling conditions • School pick up times • As on voluntary committees at night is a problem • Third Thursday of the month • Evenings and afternoons • Evening meetings because of other commitments in my ward. Community council meetings, school governor meetings, etc etc, • Only if there are other meetings [I] need to attend • Yes, late afternoon as I have children • As I still work full time and only have 37hrs a year allowance from my employers, I have to be selective as to what committees I attend and what roles I would like to pursue • Weekdays during normal working hours 		

³ More respondents answered this question (14 responses) than replied that they wanted timings to rotate in question 4 (6 respondents wanted timings to rotate).

- Late afternoon
- After 6pm as I sit on several charity, community and government committees

Question 7 – Do you have a preferred location(s) for meeting venues?	Number	Percentage
No	21	60%
Yes (please state below)	14	40%

Comments submitted:

- Ruthin [6 respondents]
- Virtual meetings where possible or failing that at the venue that is closest to the majority of elected members
- Llangollen
- Rhyl
- I feel meetings should be moved around the Council area
- Ruthin or Denbigh
- Rotate around authority buildings
- Caledfryn Denbigh [2 respondents]