


Report to: Council

Date of Meeting: 4 December 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 Council considers the results of the survey and the recommendation by the Democratic Services Committee and confirms the arrangements for the timing and venues of Council and committee 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

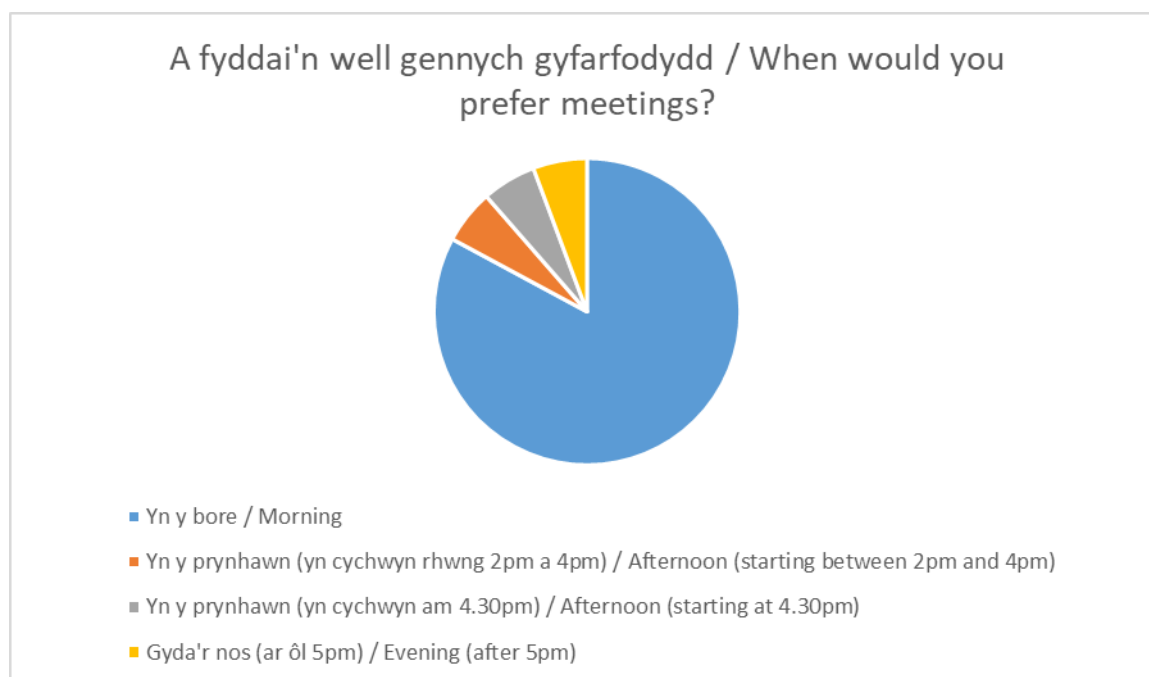
- 4.2 In 2016 the Council established a task and finish group with six members being nominated by the political groups to take part. The Group's remit included consideration of the timing of meetings. As part of this they reviewed the timing of meetings of the other Welsh local authorities and how the 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 Caledfryn, 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.

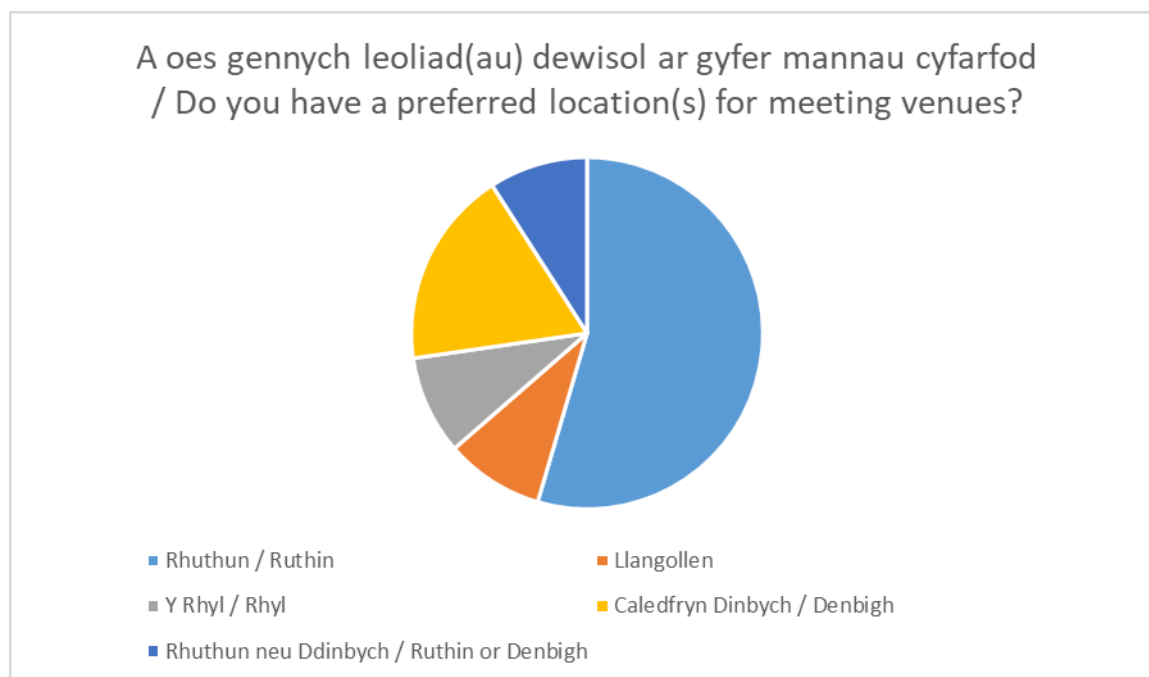
2018 Survey

- 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:



- 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.



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.

The Democratic Services Committee considered the survey on the 19th October 2018 and recommended to Council the retention of the current arrangements for the timing and location of meetings.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

Utilising the meeting rooms in the Council's main offices during 'office hours' as at present avoids incurring direct costs associated with external room hire or from keeping Council buildings open outside of their normal opening hours. The financial impact of changes to the current arrangements would depend on the extent of those changes.

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