

Title: Length of Council, Cabinet & Committee meetings
Lead Officer: Phil Grafton Monitoring Officer
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Day
Wards of the District directly affected: None

Summary

The report brings forward proposals for length of meetings of the Council/Cabinet and Committees.

Recommendation(s)

The Cabinet recommends to Council that Council procedure rules are amended so that:

1. A formal break in the meeting is to be taken, of no less than 10 minutes, after no later than two and a half hours into a meeting, at the at the conclusion of an item, unless at least half of those present agree to continue;
 2. That no item of business will be started after 9.30pm unless at least half of those present agree to proceed. The proposal must be moved by the Chairman of the meeting, duly seconded and voted upon; and
 3. If the motion in 2 is lost any remaining business will either be adjourned/deferred to a time and date fixed, which is to be no earlier than 6.00pm the next working day, by the Chairman; but if no date is fixed any item not considered will stand deferred to the next scheduled meeting of the Council/Cabinet/Committee.
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1 Background/Information

- 1.1 The proposals are brought forward following discussion with Group Leaders.
- 1.2 An investigation into a complaint, about the handling and determination of a planning application, highlighted the potential risks and impact of taking decisions late into the evening, especially on more technical matters
- 1.3 Informally officers and Councillors have raised concerns about length of Council/Cabinet and Committee meetings after working during the day.
- 1.4 Lengthy and/or late finishing meetings can also pose a wider risk to health, safety and well-being of those participating and this report seeks to provide some assurance and mitigations against long meetings.
- 1.5 In essence the proposal formalise the understanding currently in place with Chairmen on a break after two hours and to minimise meetings going on significantly past 10.00pm. The recommendations provide a framework to support those decisions so they are clear and transparent for all parties.

2 Alternative Options available

- 2.1 The Cabinet could decide not to progress with the proposals and or amend the proposed times, however the proposal provides a structured approach which allows for variation at individual meetings.

3 Consultation and Member's comments

- 3.1 The report has been discussed with the Group Leaders who support the proposals.

4 Implications of the proposal

4.1 Legal/Human Rights Implications

- 4.1.1 The proposals at the discretion of the Council within the Constitution regulations. They are considered reasonable and proportionate and could be considered as contributing to the Council's duty as an employer, under the Health & Safety at Work Act.

4.2 Financial

- 4.2.1 The report does not impact on the budget of each Council.

4.3 Council Plan

- 4.3.1 There are no direct implications for the WDC Business Plan.

4.4 Environmental/Climate Change Implications

- 4.4.1 The report does not directly impact on the Climate Emergency Action Plans of Council.

4.5 Analysis of the effects on Equality

- 4.5.1 The report does not directly impact on the protected characteristics defined within the Equalities Act.

4.6 Data Protection

- 4.6.1 There are no direct implications.

4.7 Health and Wellbeing

- 4.7.1 . There are no direct implications.

5 Risk Assessment

- 5.1 There are no significant risks associated with the report and its recommendations. .

6 Conclusion/Reasons for the Recommendation

- 6.1 The report proposals are considered a reasonable approach to provide clarification on current informal practices, so that process for these are clear for everyone.

Background papers: None

Supporting documents: None

Report Information Sheet

Please complete and submit to Democratic Services with report

Committee / Date		
Title of report		
Officer / Councillor Approval *required	Date	Name
Ward Members(s)		
Portfolio Holder	21/2/22	Andrew Day
Financial Services *		
Legal Services (*SDC)		
Other Services		
Chief Executive(s)	21/2/22	
Head of Services(s)*	15/2/22	Phil Grafton
Section 151 Officer	21/2/22	Mike Snow
Monitoring Officer	15/2/22	Phil Grafton
CMT (WDC)		
Leadership Co-ordination Group (WDC)	21/2/22	
Other organisations		
Final decision by this Committee or rec to another Ctee / Council?	No Recommendation to: Council	
Contrary to Policy / Budget framework?	No	
Does this report contain exempt info/Confidential? If so, which paragraph(s)?	No	
Does this report relate to a key decision (referred to in the Cabinet Forward Plan)?	No	
Accessibility Checked?	Yes	