

## CONSTITUTION & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Wednesday 9 <sup>th</sup> November 2022
<b>Report Subject</b>	Timings of Meetings and Meeting Format Survey
<b>Report Author</b>	Democratic Services Manager

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### Timings of Meetings

At the Annual Meeting of Council, on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> May, the Schedule of Meetings for the current municipal year was considered and approved. This was based on the previous year's Schedule.

It was recognised that the 'new' Council should make its own decision about when meetings should be held, and it was agreed that a survey of Members would be conducted during in 2022.

#### Meeting Format

We are required to broadcast all of our meetings as hybrid or remote. There is therefore a need to develop a Multi-Location Meetings Policy. The Constitution & Democratic Services Committee, at its November 2021 meeting, agreed an interim Multi-Location Meeting Policy until after the May 2022 election, and the new Council was in a position to make an informed decision. The Committee agreed to consult Members in the Autumn 2022.

This report seeks to combine the two surveys to obtain Members' views on timings of meetings and meeting format.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That the Committee agrees to the proposed approach to conducting the survey and approves the survey form to be used.
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## REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE TIMINGS OF MEETINGS AND MEETING FORMAT SURVEY
	<i>Timings of Meetings</i>
1.01	The current schedule and timings of meetings was agreed at the Council's Annual Meeting on 24 <sup>th</sup> May and was based on the previous Council's meeting schedule.
1.02	It was recognised that the 'new' Council should make its own decision about when meetings should be held, and it was agreed that a survey of Members would be conducted during 2022.
	<i>Meeting Format</i>
1.03	<p>The Local Government &amp; Elections (Wales) Act 2021 was given Royal Assent at the end of January. Section 47 of the Act, and part 1 of schedule 4 of that Act provides the statutory basis for what is now being referred to as 'multi-location meetings'.</p> <p>Multi-location meetings are defined in the Act as a meeting of a relevant authority whose participants are not all in the same physical place. Entirely physical meetings are not permitted by the legislation: meetings must be livestreamed and capable to be attended by remote means.</p>
1.04	<p>The Act also requires the Council to develop and publish a Multi-Location Meeting Policy.</p> <p>An <a href="#">interim policy</a> was agreed at the Constitution &amp; Democratic Services Committee meeting in November 2021. The Committee decided that the interim policy would be in place until the new Council was consulted after the May elections, suggesting this takes place in the Autumn of 2022.</p>
1.05	A copy of the proposed survey is included as Appendix 1. Questions 1 to 4 relate to the timings of meetings and Questions 5 to 7 relate to the meeting format.
1.06	<p>The survey allows both elected and co-opted Members to express opinions as to whether meetings should be held as they are currently, or whether to change timings which could include evening meetings.</p> <p>The results will be published anonymously, although names are requested at survey stage in case anything requires clarification.</p>
1.07	It is intended to use an electronic survey although paper copies will also be provided for Members if required.
1.08	The results of the survey will be reported back to a future meeting of the Constitution & Democratic Services committee. This will allow any proposed changes to be incorporated into the Schedule of Meetings for 23/24 and for the interim Multi-Location Meeting Policy to be reviewed and updated, before being adopted by Council.

<b>2.00</b>	<b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>
2.01	The holding of evening meetings would increase costs as it would be necessary to keep County Hall, or other buildings where formal meetings are held open later than the current 7pm close. Hybrid meetings (rather than wholly remote meetings) are also more demanding of resource from the Democratic Services team who must operate both the Zoom meeting and the webcasting equipment as well as taking minutes.

<b>3.00</b>	<b>CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT</b>
3.01	This report is being submitted to initiate consultation with Members.

<b>4.00</b>	<b>RISK MANAGEMENT</b>
4.01	<p>The time and format for meetings is an important consideration because it affects whether and the ease with which members/officers/the public are able to participate alongside their other time commitments. Welsh Government therefore saw the move to hybrid (or remote meetings) as an important policy step to support their aims of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Improving access to and participation in democratic processes by the public;</li> <li>2) increasing diversity amongst the elected Councillor cohort; and</li> <li>3) reducing carbon emissions.</li> </ol>

<b>5.00</b>	<b>APPENDICES</b>
5.01	Appendix 1 – Draft Survey Meeting Times and Format.

<b>6.00</b>	<b>LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS</b>
6.01	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Report</a> to Constitution &amp; Democratic Services Committee meeting held 17<sup>th</sup> November 2021 regarding Multi- location and Future Meetings Policy</li> <li>• <a href="#">Minutes</a> from Constitution &amp; Democratic Services Committee meeting held 17<sup>th</sup> November 2021, agreed on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2022</li> </ul> <p><b>Contact Officer:</b> Steven Goodrum, Head of Democratic Services  <b>Telephone:</b> 01352 702320  <b>E-mail:</b> <a href="mailto:Steven.Goodrum@flintshire.gov">Steven.Goodrum@flintshire.gov</a></p>

7.00	<b>GLOSSARY OF TERMS</b>
7.01	<p><b>Hybrid Meetings</b> - where some people are physically present, but others contribute remotely.</p> <p><b>Multi-location Meetings</b> – the term now widely used to describe both remote attendance meetings and hybrid meetings.</p> <p>Multi Location Meetings Policy – a policy to be adopted by the Council, taking into account statutory guidance, on such issues as the time and format of meetings, whether and how the public may participate</p> <p><b>Remote Attendance Meetings</b> – where all participants and observers are connected by a software platform. No one is ‘physically’ present at the meeting.</p>