

## FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Tuesday 24 January 2023
<b>Report Subject</b>	Timings and schedule of Council meetings and meeting format survey
<b>Report Author</b>	Democratic Services Manager

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The survey was undertaken during November and December 2022 that sought the views of both elected and co-opted Members about

1. whether meeting arrangements should remain as they are currently or whether to change timings to include evening meetings; and,
2. the preferred format of meetings: i.e. hybrid or remote.

A [report](#) was presented to the Constitution & Democratic Services Committee on 12 January that provided a high-level summary of the results. A copy of the report is included at Appendix 1.

The Committee agreed to set-up a working group to fully consider the responses to the survey, and to undertake a review of the [interim Multi-Location Meeting Policy](#) before making any final recommendation to Council about any changes to the meeting format and the adoption of a long-term policy.

The Committee agreed to recommend to Council that the Planning Committee be held in hybrid format as soon as possible.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1	To consider whether to accept the recommendation that Planning Committee meetings are held in 'Hybrid' format from 1 <sup>st</sup> March 2023.
2	That Council awaits a further report from the Constitution & Democratic Services Committee on the implications of hybrid working and a long-term Multi-Location Meetings Policy.

### REPORT DETAILS

<b>1.00</b>	<b>EXPLAINING THE FINDINGS FROM THE TIMINGS OF MEETINGS AND MEETING FORMAT SURVEY</b>
1.01	Members will be aware that the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 included changes to how formal meetings are held: specifically, that entirely physical meetings are not permitted under the legislation.

1.02	<p>In November 2021, in response to the Act, the Constitution &amp; Democratic Services Committee agreed an <a href="#">interim Multi-Location Meeting Policy</a>.</p> <p>The Committee recommended that the interim policy would be in place until the new Council was consulted after the May 2022 elections.</p>
1.03	<p>Since the election in May 2022, there has been some divergence away from elements of this interim policy, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Annual Meeting in May was held in hybrid format.</li> <li>• Ordinary Council Meetings have all been held in hybrid format.</li> <li>• Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committees have all been held in hybrid format.</li> </ul>
1.04	<p>After allowing for a reasonable period of settling in for the new Council, and to ensure that new Members could base any responses on their experience, Members were asked for their views on the schedule and timings of council meetings, as well as the format of meetings.</p>
1.05	<p>A <a href="#">report</a> providing a high-level summary of the results was presented to the Constitution &amp; Democratic Services Committee on 12<sup>th</sup> January.</p>
1.06	<p>The survey responses highlighted a number of views and considerations that need to be carefully reviewed and considered against the interim policy.</p> <p>This will ensure that a final draft of a long term Multi-Location Meeting Policy can be produced for consideration by Council.</p>
1.07	<p>It is a complex matter to resolve, and one that requires careful planning and preparation in order that any changes to the policy works effectively from the start.</p> <p>Other authorities who previously decided to make all of their meetings 'hybrid', have experienced some negativity from attendees due to the poor quality and difficulty with hosting the meetings.</p>
1.08	<p>The Committee agreed to form a working group to consider the full impact and implications of any changes to the Interim Multi-Location Meeting Policy, taking account of the views expressed by Members through the responses to the survey.</p>
1.09	<p>Following consideration of the report, the Committee felt that the Planning Committee should be hosted in hybrid format as soon as possible and determined that this would be recommended to Council.</p>
1.10	<p>The next Planning Committee meetings are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> February</li> <li>• Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> March</li> <li>• Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> March</li> </ul> <p>Given that arrangements are already underway for the next Planning Committee meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> February, it is proposed that the meeting scheduled for 1<sup>st</sup> March be hosted in hybrid format.</p> <p>This will ensure the working arrangements for the meeting will have been properly considered and tested in order for the meeting to be delivered successfully.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS		
2.01	Hybrid meetings (rather than wholly remote meetings) are more demanding of resource from the Democratic Services team who must be physically present to set-up the room, operate both the equipment in the room, as well as taking minutes.		
<b>Democratic Services Resource (assuming 2-hour meeting)</b>		<b>Hybrid</b>	<b>Remote</b>
Room set-up		Yes	No
Officers operating IT equipment		2	1
Facilitator		1	1
Officers hosting meeting Travel time to County Hall		3	0
Room set-up		Yes	No
Room clear-up		Yes	No
Officers hosting meeting Travel time from County Hall		3	0
The overall length of time to host a hybrid meeting by Officers is significantly longer.			
<b>Resource (assuming 2-hour meeting)</b>		<b>Hybrid</b>	<b>Remote</b>
Officers hosting meeting Travel time to County Hall		90 mins	0
Facilitator Travel time to County Hall		30 mins	0
Room set-up		60 mins	0
Hybrid test		90 mins	0
Meeting		360 mins	240 mins
Room clear-up		60 mins	No
Officers hosting meeting Travel time from County Hall		90 mins	0

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT		
3.01	Members were asked to complete a survey about the schedule and timing of meetings and to provide a view on the format of meetings. The responses were reported to the Constitution & Democratic Services Committee meeting on 12 January 2023.		

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT		
4.01	Holding meetings in the evening may cause problems to Members because of clashes with community and town council meetings and other community-based responsibilities as well as home life.		

<b>5.00</b>	<b>APPENDICES</b>
5.01	Appendix 1 – Constitution & Democratic Services Committee Report (12 January 2023)

<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</p> <p><b>Telephone:</b> 01352 702320</p> <p><b>E-mail:</b> <a href="mailto:Steven.Goodrum@flintshire.gov">Steven.Goodrum@flintshire.gov</a></p>

<b>7.00</b>	<b>GLOSSARY OF TERMS</b>
7.01	<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> <p><b>Multi-location Meetings</b> – the term now widely used to describe both remote attendance meetings and hybrid meetings.</p> <p><b>Hybrid Meetings</b> - where some people are physically present, but others contribute remotely.</p>