

To: Council
Date: 25 November 2019
Report of: Head of Law and Governance
Title of Report: Council and committee programme
 11 May 2020 to 18 May 2021 and
 19 May 2021 to 31 May 2022

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	This report sets out a programme of Council, committee and other meetings for the 2020/21 and 2021/2022 council years (11 May 2020 to 31 May 2022 inclusive)
Key decision:	No
Cabinet Member	Councillor Susan Brown, Leader of the Council
Corporate Priority:	Efficient and Effective Council
Policy Framework:	None
Recommendations: That Council resolves to:	
1.	Approve the programme of Council, committee and other meetings attached at Appendix 1 for the council year 2020/21;
2.	Approve the programme of Council, committee and other meetings attached at Appendix 2 for the council year 2021/22;
3.	Delegate authority to the Head of Law and Governance, in consultation with Group Leaders, to make changes to this programme, in the event that there is a decision by Council to change the committee structure or remit which impacts on the programme of meetings; and
4.	Delegate authority to the Head of Law and Governance to set dates for additional training and briefing sessions for members, and, in consultation with the Head of Business Improvement, to set meetings of the Appointments Committee and Investigations and Disciplinary Committee (should they be required).

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Programme of Council and committee meetings for the council year 2020/21 in calendar format
Appendix 2	Programme of Council and committee meetings for the council year 2021/22 in calendar format

Introduction and background

1. This report and appendices set out the proposed schedule of Council and committee meetings for the next two municipal years, from 11 May 2020 to just after the Annual Council meeting on 18 May 2022.
2. Dates shown after the 18 May 2022 Annual Council meeting are indicative.
3. Setting the programme for all main Council and committee meetings in advance allows for good governance, open and efficient decision making and helps councillors and officers to plan their workloads and availability.
4. The programme may require alteration as the year progresses because of changing constraints and requirements for decision making. The Constitution contains provisions for cancelling meetings where there is no business and scheduling further meetings if required. Committees have the authority to amend their meeting schedules.
5. The programme of meetings is very busy so there is limited scope for meetings to be moved or added without creating diary clashes for members and officers.
6. Council has previously asked officers to as far as possible avoid scheduling meetings:
 - during school holidays; and
 - during certain religious festivals
7. The main Christian festivals coincide with public holidays. There are no significant clashes with major Sikh or Buddhist festivals. Major festivals for those of Muslim, Jewish and Hindu faiths taken into account are

Festival	Dates in 2020	Dates in 2021	Dates in 2022
Eid-al-Fitr	Sat 23-Sun 24 May	Wed 12-Thur 13 May	Mon 2 -Tues 3 May
<i>Ramadan</i>	<i>24 April-23 May</i>	<i>April 13-May 12</i>	<i>April 3-May 2</i>
Eid-al-Adha	Thur 30-Fri 31 July	Mon 19-Tues 20 July	Sat 9-Sun 10 July
Rosh Hashanah	Fri 18-Sun 20 Sept	Mon 6-Wed 8 Sept	Sun 25-Tues 27 Sept
Yom Kippur	Sun 27- Mon 28 Sept	Wed 15-Thur 16 Sept	Tue 4-Wed 5 Oct
Diwali	Sat 14 Nov	Thurs 4 Nov	Mon 24 Oct

8. The principle used in timetabling is that Council business must happen in a timely manner but the broader needs of members should be taken into account.
9. No meetings involving all councillors are scheduled on these dates apart from Annual Council in 2020 which falls in Ramadan (see paragraphs 20-22) and as far as practicable public committee meetings are avoided where this does not adversely affect the overall schedule. However some committee meetings need to be scheduled in school holidays or on festival days.

10. Members of most committees are able to appoint a substitute from the same political group if they cannot attend themselves.
11. Briefing sessions are scheduled to fall outside Oxfordshire state school holidays and to avoid the political party conferences as far as possible, where these have been set at the time of agreeing this programme.

The Programme

12. Appendices 1 and 2 set out in calendar format the programme for Council, Cabinet, all main committees and sub-committees, Shareholder and Joint Venture Group, Scrutiny Standing Panels and members' training and briefing sessions.
13. The timetable replicates as far as practicable that agreed for 2019/20.
14. The default start time for all meetings is 6.00pm with the exception of Council meetings which start at 5.00pm. Committees are able to vary this time and some committees have previously done so. The start time is subject to confirmation at each committee's first meeting.
15. Any committees wishing to vary the start time to later than 6.00pm must first consult the Committee and Member Services Manager to ensure that these meetings can be suitably resourced and supported by officers.
16. If Council decides at its annual meetings to make changes to the committee structure, a revised programme will need to be prepared and circulated. It is recommended that authority is delegated to the Head of Law and Governance, in consultation with group leaders, to make changes to the meeting programme as required following such a decision.

Council meetings in 2020

17. Following all-out elections in May 2020, the Annual Council meeting must be held between the 8th day and the 21st day after the day of retirement of councillors in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12 S1 (2) (a). Following the election on 7 May, the date of retirement and assumption of office is Tuesday 12 May, and Annual Council must fall between 20 May and 2 June.
18. The date of 20 May allows sufficient time for political groups to meet, decide if they wish to propose any changes to the committees, and nominate their committee members before the Annual Council meeting.
19. It is not practicable to avoid scheduling Annual Council in Ramadan as this ends on 23 May, immediately before half term week. Holding Annual Council on 1 or 2 June (the last possible dates) delays the election of the Lord Mayor and the Leader, committee appointments and the start of the decision making cycle until then, effectively creating a gap of nearly two months which will have implications for the Council's business such as dealing with planning applications in a timely manner.

Council meetings in 2021

20. The Council's budget meeting is on 17 February 2021, in the week of half-term (15-19 February). This has been difficult to avoid.
21. The City Council must set the council tax at a Council meeting following the other precepting authorities' budget setting decisions. The County Council budget meeting is currently scheduled for 16 February 2021.

22. The Council Tax must be set in time to allow around 60,000 Council Tax bills and direct debits to be produced before the start of the new financial year.
23. A date for a second Council budget meeting has been scheduled for 25 February 2021 in case Council is unable to agree a budget or set the council tax. In recent years this reserve date has not been needed.
24. The last ordinary meeting of the municipal year is scheduled on 29 March to avoid the start of Ramadan.
25. The Annual Council meeting is scheduled for 19 May 2021.

Council meetings in 2022

26. The Council's budget meeting is on 16 February 2022, in the week of half-term (15-19 February). The reasons for this are explained above. The County Council budget meeting has not been confirmed but is expected to be on 15 February 2022.
27. The last ordinary meeting of the municipal year is scheduled on 28 March to avoid the start of Ramadan.
28. The Annual Council meeting is scheduled for 18 May 2022, the earliest possible day following the local elections.

Cabinet and Scrutiny

29. The time between the Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet meetings is set to allow efficient executive decision making while continuing to allow sufficient time for effective pre-decision scrutiny of those decisions. Scrutiny Committee is generally scheduled to meet on a Tuesday and the Cabinet on the following Wednesday.
30. Additional dates for Cabinet and Scrutiny Committee are scheduled in August but are reserved only for decisions which must be taken then, and any pre-scrutiny of those decisions. If there are no such decisions these meetings may be cancelled.
31. Dates for scrutiny standing panels (Finance, Housing, and Companies) have been included in the programme but are subject to any changes made by the Scrutiny Committee at its first meeting after Annual Council. Scrutiny standing panels, once established, may amend their own meeting schedules having first consulted with the Committee and Member Services Manager.
32. The Scrutiny Committee may establish review groups and these will set their own meeting dates.

Planning Committees

33. The two area planning committees have scheduled monthly meetings.
34. The Planning Review Committee is also scheduled to meet monthly to allow for the call in of decisions taken by area planning committees. Recent experience is that Planning Review Committee meetings typically take place 3-6 times per year. The same date may be used as an adjournment date if the business for either area planning committee cannot be completed at its scheduled meeting. If not required for this or their original purpose, Planning Review Committee dates may be used for other committee meetings or briefings, or cancelled altogether.
35. If the remit of the planning committees changes significantly the schedule will be revised to take account of the increase or decrease in work and any changes Council makes to the committee structure.

Licensing Committees

36. The Licensing & Gambling Acts Casework Sub-Committee has to meet within set timescales and provisional dates for this sub-committee have been scheduled. This sub-committee currently starts between 5.00pm and 6.00pm as agreed with the sub-committee.
37. Meetings of the General Purposes Licensing Casework Sub-Committee have been scheduled regularly throughout the year. This sub-committee currently meets at 5.30pm.
38. The Head of Law and Governance can cancel or convene sub-committee meetings on these dates or arrange alternative dates after consulting with the chairs as required by the caseload (as set out in section 14.6 of the Constitution).

Audit and Governance Committee

39. The Audit and Governance Committee is scheduled to meet four times in the year.

Standards Committee

40. The Standards Committee is scheduled to meet four times in the year.

Appointments Committee

41. The Appointments Committee must meet to recommend to Council appointments to the position of Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive), Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer, and to make appointments to the position of executive director or assistant chief executive or posts of similar seniority.
42. It is recommended that authority is delegated to the Head of Law and Governance, in consultation with the Head of Business Improvement, to schedule meetings of the Appointments Committee, should they be required.

Investigations and Disciplinary Committee

43. This Committee would only meet to decide on disciplinary hearings involving a Statutory Officer, Executive Director or Assistant Chief Executive.

Shareholder and Joint Venture Group (SJVG) meetings

44. Shareholder and Joint Venture Group meetings are scheduled to provide for quarterly reporting on the progress, performance and financial position of the Council's companies and joint ventures. Prior to these quarterly meetings a meeting of the Companies Scrutiny Panel is scheduled to facilitate pre-decision scrutiny of matters coming to the Group.

Training and briefings

45. These sessions are to assist with councillors' learning and development and are not open to the public. Dates for training and for briefing sessions are included to allow councillors to plan ahead. Councillors are advised to note these dates in their diaries.
46. These sessions will typically run from 6pm to 7.30pm to accommodate members who work office hours.
47. A programme of training sessions and briefings on topical issues will be circulated separately by the Committee and Member Services Team.

48. It is recommended that the Head of Law and Governance is authorised to arrange additional training and briefing sessions to cover matters as requested by officers or councillors.

Publicising meeting dates

49. Meeting dates will be available online via the Council's website on the internet and intranet once these are finalised. This on-line diary is the most effective way to view accurate and up to date public meeting dates. In addition the meeting details can be downloaded into individual members' calendars.

50. Where meetings are cancelled or rescheduled during the year, the meeting details in members' calendars will not update automatically and members will need to update their calendars manually.

51. Committee and Member Services staff will send instructions to councillors on the downloading of calendars.

Legal issues

52. Meetings which the Council is required by legislation to hold have been included in the programme. There are no other issues arising from this report.

53. The Head of Law and Governance can cancel scheduled meetings where there is no business, or arrange additional or re-scheduled meetings after consulting with the relevant committee chair (set out in section 14.6 of the Constitution).

Financial Issues

54. There are no financial issues arising from this report.

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Background Papers: None	