

Item



## **2021/22 Area Committees, Additional Council Meeting and the Municipal Year 2022/23 (Indicative)**

**To:**

Civic Affairs Committee 22/09/2021

**Report by:**

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**Wards affected:**

None directly affected

### **1. Introduction**

The report seeks decisions on various committee meeting matters.

### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 To continue with Area Committees held virtually until April 2022 then review in May 2022.
- 2.2 To agree to an additional Council Meeting in w/c 28 February or 7 March 2022, with the already scheduled 24 February 2022 Council dealing with the Budget (HRA capital and General Fund BSR) only. The date for the additional meeting to be agreed by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Mayor and Group Leaders.

2.3 To remove the April 2022 council meeting from the calendar.

2.3 To comment and agree the meetings calendar 2022/23.

### **3. Background**

#### **Area Committees**

3.1 At Council on 27 May it was agreed to hold area committees virtually up to 31 December initially, with a review by Civic Affairs Committee in the autumn on a more permanent change.

3.2 As at 17 September, two for each area have met. The viewing figures and public speakers have been:

North-10 (June), 17 (September)  
West/Central-14, (June), 12 (September)  
South-9 (June), 17 (September)  
East-25 (June), TBC (September)

3.3 With hindsight, expecting to make a decision after just two rounds of area committee is premature if Members want to agree a permanent revert to meeting in person or decide to hold these meetings on-line only. The Council is investing in equipment to live stream its meetings from committee rooms and the council chamber from September. If Members want to make a permanent change to Area Committees it would be better to continue on-line for a further two cycles of meetings each to get a year's worth of experience, reviewing in May 2022. In the meantime any decisions will be made by officers following the debate had at an area committee eg. small community grants.

3.4 There is a wider debate to be had about Area Committees and the value added of the current format, agenda items and terms of reference which have been raised by Members for some time. A review being commissioned by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny on the Council's decision-making will contribute to this.

#### **Additional Council meeting**

3.4 At the Budget Council meeting on Thursday 25 February, all the business could not be dealt with so the meeting was adjourned to the

following Monday 1 March. Group Leaders agreed that an additional Council meeting should be included in the calendar as a matter of course, so one meeting dealt with budget setting only, the other would deal with all other business.

- 3.5 It is not unusual for Councils to have a dedicated meeting for budget setting. The additional meeting for 2022 should take place after the scheduled budget meeting on 24 February, on a Thursday within the next two weeks (Thursday 3 or 10 March-with subsequent moving of an area committee already scheduled).
- 3.6 As Members have agreed in recent years, it is proposed to remove the April Council meeting from the calendar.

### **Calendar 2022/23**

- 3.1 This committee sets the forward programme of dates for the Council and committee meetings, with Group Leaders having seen the draft calendar for any prior comment. The four Area Committees confirm dates at respective meetings in February-April each year.
- 3.2 The annual calendar avoids main school holidays and political party conferences where possible. Liaison with our partner Councils/authorities is done so the calendar seeks to avoid date clashes wherever possible.
- 3.3 If an additional Council meeting for 2022 is confirmed (as referenced above), the 2022/23 calendar will be amended to reflect this change.

## **4. Implications**

**(a) Financial Implications** - none

**(b) Staffing Implications**-none

**(c) Equality and Poverty Implications**

The calendar of meetings spreads the meetings across days of the week (Monday-Thursday) and hours of the day. There are more meetings in the late afternoon/evening to suit current councillor preferences. The 2022/23 calendar avoids meetings in school holidays following the committee's decision (19/17/CIV).

**(d) Environmental Implications** - none

**(e) Procurement Implications - none**

**(f) Community Safety Implications - none**

## **5. Consultation and communication considerations**

Group Leaders, the Monitoring Officer and s151 Officer have been consulted on the proposed calendar.

## **6. Background papers**

There were none.