

CABINET

8 April 2014

Title: Programme of Meetings 2014/15	
Report of the Leader of the Council	
Open Report	For Decision
Wards Affected: None	Key Decision: No
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Accountable Divisional Director: Fiona Taylor, Head of Legal and Democratic Services	
Accountable Director: Graham Farrant, Chief Executive	
Summary This report relates to the proposed programme of meetings for the forthcoming municipal year 2014/15 and seeks the Cabinet's confirmation of the proposals underpinning the programme. The 2014/15 programme has been based on well established principles for the annual calendar but also reflects specific arrangements associated with the 2014 Local Elections and the associated Member Development programme, as well as the pre-election period for the 2015 Parliamentary Elections.	
Recommendation(s) The Cabinet is recommended to agree the basis of the programme of Council meetings for 2014/15 as detailed in the report.	
Reason(s) To accord with the requirements of the Council Constitution.	

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The annual programme of meetings covers all of the main political structure meetings and typically relates to the 12 month period from mid May each year.
- 1.2 The general principles underpinning the programme are well established. Wherever possible, clashes between meetings are avoided and meetings scheduled outside of school holiday periods, although certain statutory deadlines or other legitimate reasons mean that this is not always possible / practical.

- 1.3 The 2014/15 programme has been designed around these principles but has also taken account of the Local Elections on 22 May 2014 and the Parliamentary Elections on 7 May 2015, which impact on the programme in several ways.
- 1.4 Local Elections normally take place in the first week of May but were put back to 22 May 2014 to coincide with the European Elections. As a consequence the Annual Assembly meeting, at which appointments to committees are made, will take place on 12 June 2014 which reduces the capacity to schedule a full programme of meetings in that period before the main school summer holidays.
- 1.5 The period leading up to the main school summer holidays will also be used to deliver an extensive Member Development programme, agreed through the Member Development Group. An extensive programme was first introduced in 2010 and was very well received by councillors, particularly those new to the Council. A series of Member Development workshops have therefore been scheduled for June and July 2014 and other informal sessions will also be held during this period.
- 1.6 The latter end of the 2014/15 programme takes account of the pre-election period for the 2015 Parliamentary Elections which is due to commence on Monday 30 March 2015. During the pre-election period, local authorities are prohibited from undertaking certain activities and the Council has typically kept to a minimum the number of meetings during that period, holding only those meetings that are necessary.

2. Proposal and Issues

- 2.1 In terms of a formal meeting structure, the period from Annual Assembly to the end of the school summer holidays has been designed to only include meetings such as the Development Control Board, Licensing and Regulatory Board and Personnel Board, which have a quasi-judicial role and must consider matters within prescribed timescales, and the main decision-making bodies such as the Cabinet, Health and Wellbeing Board and Pensions Panel.
- 2.2 The Select Committees, Standards Committee, Employee Joint Consultative Committee and the Employee Joint Health Safety and Wellbeing Committee would begin their formal meeting structure after the school summer holidays.
- 2.3 With the above factors in mind, set out below are the proposals in respect of the Council's main meetings for 2014/15:

Assembly

The Assembly has been scheduled to meet on five occasions during the 2014/15 municipal year, which is considered sufficient. There are two key dates during the year, namely the end of February for the budget / Council Tax setting and mid May for the 2015 Annual Meeting. The proposed scheduling avoids school holidays.

Cabinet

There are nine meetings of the Cabinet proposed for the 2014/15 municipal year, typically on a four-week schedule but taking into account the main summer and winter school holidays and the final meeting taking place at the end of March 2015, prior to the pre-election period for the Parliamentary Election.

Development Control Board

These have typically been scheduled four-weekly in order to ensure that applications are considered within statutory timescales.

Health and Wellbeing Board

There are seven meetings proposed for the 2014/15 municipal year, typically on a six-week schedule but taking into account the main summer and winter school holidays and the final meeting taking place mid-March 2015, prior to the pre-election period for the Parliamentary Election.

Licensing and Regulatory Board

These have typically been scheduled fortnightly in order to ensure that applications are considered within statutory timescales. Where there are no applications to consider, meetings would be cancelled.

Pensions Panel

These have been scheduled on a quarterly basis.

Personnel Board

These have typically been scheduled fortnightly but where there are no cases to consider, meetings would be cancelled.

Standards Committee

In the light of changes to the Standards regime as a consequence of the Localism Act 2011, it is considered sufficient for the Committee to continue to meet on an approximate quarterly basis rather than every two months as was the case under the former, more complex legislative arrangements.

Select Committees

The Constitution refers to Select Committees meeting approximately every six weeks (eight times a year). To keep the immediate period after the Annual Assembly as clear as possible for the reasons outlined above, the first meetings of the Select Committees have been scheduled to commence in September, which in effect takes two meetings per committee out of the calendar. However, the loss of meetings will be compensated by the dedicated Select Committee training which will be delivered as part of the Member Development programme during the summer period and other informal arrangements planned by the Democratic Services team.

Between September 2014 and March 2015, the Living and Working, Children's Services and Health and Adult Services Select Committees have each been scheduled to meet four times. The Safer and Stronger Select Committee has five meetings in the calendar as its March 2014 meeting has been cancelled and the Public Accounts and Audit Select Committee also has five meetings to reflect its overview role in respect of the budget savings exercise which will resume this year.

This scheduling is also based on the probability that the Select Committees will need additional meetings to consider the respective budget savings proposals. Rather than set the dates for those meeting at this stage, bearing in mind that the arrangements and timetabling for the 2015/16 budget savings will not be finalised

until after the Local Elections, capacity has been built in to the overall programme to enable additional meetings to be arranged as and when necessary.

- 2.4 Meetings of the Employee Joint Consultative Committee and the Employee Joint Health Safety and Wellbeing Committee have been scheduled quarterly, in line with normal arrangements, although the first meetings in the municipal year would not take place until after the school summer holidays. There are a number of other meetings, such as the Housing Forums and school governing bodies, which are also included in the full Council calendar. The scheduling of these meetings is determined by the bodies themselves but they are asked to have regard to the Council's programme when setting their respective schedules.
- 2.5 The proposed programme for 2014/15 can be viewed on the Council's website via <http://moderngov.barking-dagenham.gov.uk/mgCalendarMonthView.aspx?GL=1>.

3. Options Appraisal

- 3.1 The proposals within this report generally reflect the standard approach to the annual calendar. There is always some flexibility within the calendar to allow for in-year changes.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 The key principles which underpin this report have been agreed in consultation with the Chief Executive, Leader, Labour Group Secretary and relevant officers. Once the Cabinet has approved them, the full programme of meetings will be made widely available.

5. Financial Implications

Implications verified by: Jon Bunt, Chief Finance Officer

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

6. Legal Implications

Implications verified by: Fiona Taylor, Head of Legal and Democratic Services

- 6.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

7. Other Implications

- 7.1 **Corporate Policy and Customer Impact** - The arrangements for the 2014/15 municipal year follow the same general pattern as previous years and are therefore not considered to have any material impact on customers.
- 7.2 **Property / Asset Issues** - The Council's meetings are typically held in the Civic Centre or Town Hall due to their accessibility and to minimise costs.

Public Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report: None

List of appendices: None