

Report Title:	2023/24 Programme of Meetings
Contains Confidential or Exempt Information	No - Part I
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Johnson, Leader of the Council
Meeting and Date:	Full Council – 24 January 2023
Responsible Officer(s):	Emma Duncan, Director of Law, Governance and Public Health & Monitoring Officer Elaine Browne, Head of Law and Governance
Wards affected:	All

REPORT SUMMARY

This report sets out the programme of meetings for the Council, Cabinet and the various panels, forums and other bodies administered by Democratic Services for the 2023/24 Municipal Year, for Council approval.

A comprehensive programme of meetings underpins the council's governance framework and decision-making processes which support the Corporate Plan 2021-26 objective 'a Council trusted to deliver its promises'.

1. DETAILS OF RECOMMENDATION(S)

RECOMMENDATION: That Full Council notes the report and:

- i) Approves the programme of meetings for the 2023/24 Municipal Year, attached as Appendix A**
- ii) Agrees to continue with the split of virtual meetings/in-person meetings agreed at Full Council in September 2021 for the 2023/24 municipal year.**
- iii) Notes that a further review of in-person/virtual meetings would take place if and when legislation is enacted to allow decision making meetings to take place virtually.**

2. REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION(S) AND OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Options

Table 1: Options arising from this report

Option	Comments
Approve the programme of meetings for 2023/24 and continued associated split of virtual/in-person meetings This is the recommended option	It is considered that the proposed schedule best reflects the operation of the Council from May 2023 onwards.
A number of variances to the 2023/24 meeting dates could be developed if Council wishes.	Although a number of variances to the meeting dates could be developed, it is considered that the proposed schedule best

Option	Comments
	Reflects the operation of the Council as detailed in the constitution.

The proposed Council programme of meetings for 2023/24 (attached as Appendix A) has been developed to align with the committee, panel and forum structure set out in the council constitution.

- 2.2 A number of panels, sub committees and forums meet on an ad hoc basis. Dates for such meetings will be publicised as and when arranged, in consultation with the relevant officers and Chairman.
- 2.3 Meeting dates for a number of forums considered as outside or associated bodies but administered by Democratic Services and supported by Council officers from the relevant service area, have been included in the schedule to ensure alignment with the corporate calendar. They are therefore included in Appendix A, but under a separate section.
- 2.4 The terms of reference for the three Overview and Scrutiny Panels state 'Each Overview and Scrutiny Panel shall ordinarily meet four times a year and the first meeting being held within 30 days of Annual Council meeting'. The programme therefore includes four scheduled meetings for each Overview and Scrutiny Panel. Each Overview and Scrutiny Panel can agree to call additional meetings to enable it to undertake its Work Programme. A further two meetings have been proposed for the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel, to enable it to undertake budget monitoring on a regular basis.
- 2.5 In September 2021 Full Council considered the appropriate split of virtual and in-person meetings for the remainder of the municipal year, in light of the benefits realised through virtual meetings held during the Covid-19 pandemic. As of December 2022, the government has not announced any proposals to allow Councils to again hold decision-making meetings in a virtual capacity. It is therefore proposed that the current split of in-person and virtual meetings continues for 2023/24. A further review would be undertaken if and when legislation is enacted to allow decision making meetings to take place virtually.

3. KEY IMPLICATIONS

3.1

Table 2: Key Implications

Outcome	Unmet	Met	Exceeded	Significantly Exceeded	Date of delivery
Full programme of Council meetings approved for the start 2023/24	Programme of meetings not approved	Programme of meetings approved.	n/a	n/a	Meetings to take place from 23 May 2023 onwards

Outcome	Unmet	Met	Exceeded	Significantly Exceeded	Date of delivery
municipal year.					

4. FINANCIAL DETAILS / VALUE FOR MONEY

4.1

The costs of holding the meetings detailed in Appendix B are contained within revenue budgets

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are a number of Acts of Parliament, Regulations, Statutory Instruments and guidance which govern meetings of the Council; the principal ones being the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Government Act 2000 and the Localism Act 2011.

Table 3: Impact of risk and mitigation

Risk	Level of uncontrolled risk	Controls	Level of controlled risk
Council business not transacted in a timely manner	Medium	Agreed programme of meetings in place	Low

6. POTENTIAL IMPACTS

6.1 Equalities. An EQIA screening has been undertaken (attached as Appendix B) a full EQIA is not considered to be required.

.2 Climate change/sustainability. Virtual and hybrid meetings have reduced the need for Councillors, officers, and members of the public to travel to venues around the borough. The virtual format has also enabled increased use of electronic agendas, thereby reducing printing requirements and paper usage.

7.3 Data Protection/GDPR. The council undertook a Data Protection Impact Assessment and published a Privacy Notice in May 2020 when virtual meetings first took place; the principles still apply for meeting participants attending meetings in a virtual capacity, whether or not the meeting itself is held fully virtually, or in a hybrid format.

7. CONSULTATION

7.1 Directors and Heads of Service have been consulted to ensure the programme aligns with the budget and policy framework. Partner organisations have been consulted where appropriate:

8. TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

8.1 The full implementation stages are set out in table 4.

Table 4: Implementation timetable

Date	Details
23 May 2023 onwards	Meetings to take place following Annual Council on 23 May 2023

9. APPENDICES

9.1 This report is supported by two appendices:

- Appendix A – EQIA
- Appendix B - draft programme of meetings 2023/24

10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

10.1 This report is supported by one background document:

- The [council constitution](#)

11. CONSULTATION

Name of consultee	Post held	Date sent	Date returned
<i>Mandatory:</i>		<i>Statutory Officers (or deputies)</i>	
Adele Taylor	Executive Director of Resources/S151 Officer	14/12/22	14/12/22
Emma Duncan	Director of Law, Governance & Public Health/ Monitoring Officer	14/12/22	14/12/22
<i>Deputies:</i>			
Andrew Vallance	Head of Finance (Deputy S151 Officer)		
Elaine Browne	Head of Law and Governance (Deputy Monitoring Officer)	15/12/22	15/12/22
<i>Mandatory:</i>		<i>Procurement Manager (or deputy) - if report requests approval to go to tender or award a contract</i>	
Lyn Hitchinson	Procurement Manager		
<i>Mandatory:</i>		<i>Data Protection Officer (or deputy) - if decision will result in processing of personal data; to advise on DPIA</i>	
	Data Protection Officer		
<i>Mandatory:</i>		<i>Equalities Officer – to advise on EQiA, or agree an EQiA is not required</i>	
Ellen McManus-Fry	Equalities & Engagement Officer	15/12/22	16/12/22
<i>Other consultees:</i>			

<i>Directors (where relevant)</i>			
<i>Heads of Service (where relevant)</i>			
<i>External (where relevant)</i>			
N/A			

Confirmation relevant Cabinet Member(s) consulted	Leader of the Council & Cabinet Member for Business, Corporate & Residents Services, Culture & Heritage and Windsor	Yes
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REPORT HISTORY

Decision type:	Urgency item?	To follow item?
Council decision	No	No

Report Author: Report Author: Oran Norris-Browne, Democratic Services Officer, 01628796251
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APPENDIX A - EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Essential information

Items to be assessed: (please mark 'x')

Strategy		Policy		Plan		Project		Service/Procedure	X
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Responsible officer	Elaine Browne, Head of Law and Governance	Service area	Governance	Directorate	Law & Strategy
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Stage 1: EqIA Screening (mandatory)	Date created: 14/12/2022	Stage 2: Full assessment (if applicable)	Date created: n/a
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Approved by Head of Service / Overseeing group/body / Project Sponsor:

"I am satisfied that an equality impact has been undertaken adequately."

Signed by (print): E. Browne

Dated: 14/12/2022

Guidance notes

What is an EqlA and why do we need to do it?

The Equality Act 2010 places a 'General Duty' on all public bodies to have 'due regard' to:

- Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act.
- Advancing equality of opportunity between those with 'protected characteristics' and those without them.
- Fostering good relations between those with 'protected characteristics' and those without them.

EqlAs are a systematic way of taking equal opportunities into consideration when making a decision, and should be conducted when there is a new or reviewed strategy, policy, plan, project, service or procedure in order to determine whether there will likely be a detrimental and/or disproportionate impact on particular groups, including those within the workforce and customer/public groups. All completed EqlA Screenings are required to be publicly available on the council's website once they have been signed off by the relevant Head of Service or Strategic/Policy/Operational Group or Project Sponsor.

What are the "protected characteristics" under the law?

The following are protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010: age; disability (including physical, learning and mental health conditions); gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation.

What's the process for conducting an EqlA?

The process for conducting an EqlA is set out at the end of this document. In brief, a Screening Assessment should be conducted for every new or reviewed strategy, policy, plan, project, service or procedure and the outcome of the Screening Assessment will indicate whether a Full Assessment should be undertaken.

Openness and transparency

RBWM has a 'Specific Duty' to publish information about people affected by our policies and practices. Your completed assessment should be sent to the Strategy & Performance Team for publication to the RBWM website once it has been signed off by the relevant manager, and/or Strategic, Policy, or Operational Group. If your proposals are being made to Cabinet or any other Committee, please append a copy of your completed Screening or Full Assessment to your report.

Enforcement

Judicial review of an authority can be taken by any person, including the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) or a group of people, with an interest, in respect of alleged failure to comply with the general equality duty. Only the EHRC can enforce the specific duties. A failure to comply with the specific duties may however be used as evidence of a failure to comply with the general duty.

Stage 1: Screening (Mandatory)

1.1 What is the overall aim of your proposed strategy/policy/project etc and what are its key objectives?

The overall aim of the proposal is to set the Council's programme of meetings for the 23/24 municipal year.

1.2 What evidence is available to suggest that your proposal could have an impact on people (including staff and customers) with protected characteristics? Consider each of the protected characteristics in turn and identify whether your proposal is Relevant or Not Relevant to that characteristic. If Relevant, please assess the level of impact as either High / Medium / Low and whether the impact is Positive (i.e. contributes to promoting equality or improving relations within an equality group) or Negative (i.e. could disadvantage them). Please document your evidence for each assessment you make, including a justification of why you may have identified the proposal as "Not Relevant".

Protected characteristics	Relevance	Level	Positive/negative	Evidence
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Age				<p>The setting of the programme of meetings does not affect persons with this protected characteristic, but in determining meeting venues issues of accessibility will be taken into account.</p> <p>People with this protected characteristic may experience difficulties using technology to access fully virtual meetings, although use of online meetings has increased across all age groups as a result of the pandemic.</p> <p>The ability to attend virtually or watch online both in-person and virtual meetings is a positive impact for those who may experience difficulties travelling to formal meeting venues.</p> <p>The virtual meeting technology used by the Council (Zoom) allows individuals to join the meeting via a telephone line rather than requiring a computer. The democratic right of residents to ask any questions/address Councillors is therefore maintained. Ensuring each speaker identifies themselves before speaking will help those joining by audio only.</p> <p>If an individual is not able to access either a computer or telephone, they would be permitted to nominate a spokesperson to speak on their behalf or submit a question or statement to Democratic Services in advance to be read out at the meeting.</p>
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				<p>Those unable to access technology to enable them to watch a meeting at home would be able to use borough libraries to view the livestream or video after the meeting date.</p> <p>Minutes summarising the debate and setting out any decisions will be drafted after the meeting and can be provided, upon request, to anyone without a facility to watch the live broadcast or view the minutes on the council website.</p> <p>There may be some positive impact for younger people or working age people who find it harder to attend committee meetings (particularly those held during the day) due to work, education or caring commitments but they will be able to observe the meetings live or via recordings.</p> <p>Positive for all age groups who would have previously had to travel to council offices in order to attend meetings particularly if they did not drive, have access to a car or had to rely on public transport.</p>
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Disability				<p>The setting of the programme of meetings does not affect persons with this protected characteristic, but in determining meeting venues issues of accessibility will be taken into account.</p> <p>People with this protected characteristic may find it more difficult to access fully virtual meetings.</p> <p>The virtual meeting technology used by the council (Zoom) allows individuals to join the meeting via a telephone line rather than requiring a computer. The democratic right of residents to ask any questions/address Councillors is therefore maintained. Ensuring each speaker identifies themselves before speaking will help those with a visual impairment of joining by audio only.</p> <p>If an individual is not able to access either a computer or telephone, they would be permitted to nominate a spokesperson to speak on their behalf or submit a question or statement to Democratic Services in advance to be read out at the meeting.</p> <p>Those unable to access technology to enable them to watch a meeting at home would be able to use borough libraries to view the livestream or video after the meeting date.</p> <p>Minutes summarising the debate and setting out any decisions will be drafted after the meeting and can be provided, upon request, to anyone without a facility to</p>
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				<p>watch the live broadcast or view the minutes on the council website.</p> <p>A transcript of the meeting will always be available via YouTube, which also allows for closed captioning to be enabled too.</p> <p>However, some users have found that audio and picture quality has improved in fully virtual meetings, having a positive impact.</p> <p>The ability to attend virtually or watch online both in person and virtual meetings is a positive impact for those who may experience difficulties travelling to formal meeting venues.</p> <p>The introduction of a new AV system in the Council Chamber, Town Hall in July 2022 has improved both audio and picture quality for hybrid meetings. A hearing loop is also a feature within this venue.</p> <p>For meetings that are not formal Council committees, such as the Disability and Inclusion Forum, the views of non-Councillor Members on the split between virtual and in-person meetings have been taken into consideration.</p>
Gender re-assignment				The proposals do not affect persons with this protected characteristic

Marriage/civil partnership				The proposals do not affect persons with this protected characteristic
Pregnancy and maternity				<p>People with this protected characteristic may find it more difficult to access in-person meetings.</p> <p>The ability to attend virtually or watch online both in person and virtual meetings is a positive impact for those who may experience difficulties travelling to formal meeting venues.</p> <p>The introduction of a new AV system in the Council Chamber, Town Hall in July 2022 has improved both audio and picture quality for hybrid meetings.</p>
Race				The proposals do not affect persons with this protected characteristic
Religion and belief				The proposals do not affect persons with this protected characteristic
Sex				The proposals do not affect persons with this protected characteristic
Sexual orientation				The proposals do not affect persons with this protected characteristic

Outcome, action and public reporting

Screening Assessment Outcome	Yes / No / Not at this stage	Further Action Required / Action to be taken	Responsible Officer and / or Lead Strategic Group	Timescale for Resolution of negative impact / Delivery of positive impact
Was a significant level of negative impact identified?	No			
Does the strategy, policy, plan etc require amendment to have a positive impact?	No			

If you answered **yes** to either / both of the questions above a Full Assessment is advisable and so please proceed to Stage 2. If you answered “No” or “Not at this Stage” to either / both of the questions above please consider any next steps that may be taken (e.g. monitor future impacts as part of implementation, re-screen the project at its next delivery milestone etc).

Stage 2: Full assessment

2.1: Scope and define

2.1.1 Who are the main beneficiaries of the proposed strategy / policy / plan / project / service / procedure? List the groups who the work is targeting/aimed at.

2.1.2 Who has been involved in the creation of the proposed strategy / policy / plan / project / service / procedure? List those groups who the work is targeting/aimed at.

2.2 : Information gathering/evidence

2.2.1 What secondary data have you used in this assessment? Common sources of secondary data include: censuses, organisational records.

2.2.2 What primary data have you used to inform this assessment? *Common sources of primary data include: consultation through interviews, focus groups, questionnaires.*

Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation

Protected Characteristic	Advancing the Equality Duty : Does the proposal advance the Equality Duty Statement in relation to the protected characteristic (Yes/No)	If yes, to what level? (High / Medium / Low)	Negative impact : Does the proposal disadvantage them (Yes / No)	If yes, to what level? (High / Medium / Low)	Please provide explanatory detail relating to your assessment and outline any key actions to (a) advance the Equality Duty and (b) reduce negative impact on each protected characteristic.
Age					
Disability					
Gender reassignment					
Marriage and civil partnership					
Pregnancy and maternity					
Race					
Religion and belief					
Sex					
Sexual orientation					

Advance equality of opportunity

Protected Characteristic	Advancing the Equality Duty : Does the proposal advance the Equality Duty Statement in relation to the protected characteristic (Yes/No)	If yes, to what level? (High / Medium / Low)	Negative impact : Does the proposal disadvantage them (Yes / No)	If yes, to what level? (High / Medium / Low)	Please provide explanatory detail relating to your assessment and outline any key actions to (a) advance the Equality Duty and (b) reduce negative impact on each protected characteristic.
Age					
Disability					
Gender reassignment					
Marriage and civil partnership					
Pregnancy and maternity					
Race					
Religion and belief					
Sex					
Sexual orientation					

Foster good relations

Protected Characteristic	Advancing the Equality Duty : Does the proposal advance the Equality Duty Statement in relation to the protected characteristic (Yes/No)	If yes, to what level? (High / Medium / Low)	Negative impact : Does the proposal disadvantage them (Yes / No)	If yes, to what level? (High / Medium / Low)	Please provide explanatory detail relating to your assessment and outline any key actions to (a) advance the Equality Duty and (b) reduce negative impact on each protected characteristic.
Age					
Disability					
Gender reassignment					
Marriage and civil partnership					
Pregnancy and maternity					
Race					
Religion and belief					
Sex					
Sexual orientation					

2.4 Has your delivery plan been updated to incorporate the activities identified in this assessment to mitigate any identified negative impacts? If so please summarise any updates.

These could be service, equality, project or other delivery plans. If you did not have sufficient data to complete a thorough impact assessment, then an action should be incorporated to collect this information in the future.

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