

Report Title:	2024/25 Programme of Meetings
Contains Confidential or Exempt Information	No - Part I
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Werner, Leader of Council and Cabinet Member for Community Partnerships, Public Protection and Maidenhead Councillor Bermange, Cabinet Member for Planning, Legal & Asset Management
Meeting and Date:	Council – 11 March 2024
Responsible Officer(s):	Elizabeth Griffiths, Executive Director of Resources and s151 Officer Elaine Browne, Monitoring Officer and Deputy Director of Law and Governance
Wards affected:	All Wards

REPORT SUMMARY

This report sets out the programme of meetings for the Council, Cabinet and the other various panels, forums, sub-committees and other bodies administered by Democratic Services for the 2024/25 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 Council notes the report and:

- i) Approves the programme of meetings for the 2024/25 Municipal Year, attached as Appendix B**
- ii) Agrees to the split of virtual meetings/in-person meetings for the 2024/25 Municipal Year, attached as Appendix C**
- 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 2024/25 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 2024 onwards.

Option	Comments
A number of variances to the 2024/25 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 reflects the operation of the Council as detailed in the constitution.
Do Nothing	The Council would not have set dates for it's decision making meetings, which in turn could impact on statutory requirements and have significant financial implications.

- 2.1 The proposed Council programme of meetings for 2024/25 (attached as Appendix B) 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 the Chair of that meeting.
- 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 B, but under a separate section.
- 2.4 The terms of reference for the Council's 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, 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 November 2023, 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 split of in-person and virtual meetings shown in Appendix C is adopted for 2024/25. A further review would be undertaken if and when legislation is enacted to allow decision making meetings to take place virtually.
- 2.6 The dates of Cabinet meetings have been altered slightly compared to previous years, to better align with the financial timescales and to allow for reports to go through more in-depth reviews, before they are presented to Cabinet.

3. KEY IMPLICATIONS

Table 2: Key Implications

Outcome	Unmet	Met	Exceeded	Significantly Exceeded	Date of delivery
Full programme of Council meetings approved for the start 2023/24 Municipal Year	Programme of meetings not approved	Programme of meetings approved.	n/a	n/a	Meetings to take place from 15 May 2024 onwards

4. FINANCIAL DETAILS / VALUE FOR MONEY

- 4.1 The costs of holding the meetings detailed in Appendix A 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.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT

Table 3: Impact of risk and mitigation

Threat or risk	Impact with no mitigations in place or if all mitigations fail	Likelihood of risk occurring with no mitigations in place.	Mitigations currently in place	Mitigations proposed	Impact of risk once all mitigations in place and working	Likelihood of risk occurring with all mitigations in place.
There is a risk that Council business may not be transacted in a timely manner	Moderate 2	Medium	A programme was agreed and is adhered too	n/a	Minor 1	Low

7. POTENTIAL IMPACTS

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

- 7.2 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.

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Executive Directors and Deputy/Assistant Directors have been consulted to ensure the programme aligns with the budget and policy framework. Partner organisations have also been consulted where appropriate.
- 8.2 Lead Officers were contacted and informed of the proposed dates in October 2023.

9. TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- 9.1 The full implementation stages are set out in table 4.

Table 4: Implementation timetable

Date	Details
15 May 2024	Meetings to take place following Annual Council on 14 May 2024

10. APPENDICES

- 10.1 This report is supported by three appendices:
- Appendix A – Equality Impact Assessment
 - Appendix B – Draft Programme of Meetings 2024/25
 - Appendix C – Virtual/In-Person Split of Meetings

11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- 11.1 This report is supported by one background document:
- The [Council's Constitution](#)

12. CONSULTATION

Name of consultee	Post held	Date sent	Date returned
<i>Mandatory: Statutory Officer (or deputy)</i>			
Elizabeth Griffiths	Executive Director of Resources & S151 Officer	29/11/23	29/02/24
Elaine Browne	Deputy Director of Law & Governance & Monitoring Officer	29/11/23	29/11/23
<i>Deputies:</i>			
Andrew Vallance	Deputy Director of Finance & Deputy S151 Officer	09/02/24	09/02/24
Jane Cryer	Principal Lawyer & Deputy Monitoring Officer		
Helena Stevenson	Principal Lawyer & Deputy Monitoring Officer		
<i>Mandatory: Procurement Manager (or deputy) - if report requests approval to go to tender or award a contract</i>			
Lyn Hitchinson	Procurement Manager	n/a	
<i>Mandatory: Data Protection Officer (or deputy) - if decision will result in processing of personal data; to advise on DPIA</i>			
Samantha Wootton	Data Protection Officer	n/a	
<i>Mandatory: Equalities Officer – to advise on EQiA, or agree an EQiA is not required</i>			
Ellen McManus-Fry	Equalities & Engagement Officer	15.11.23	15.11.23
<i>Mandatory: Assistant Director HR – to advise if report has potential staffing or workforce implications</i>			
Nikki Craig	Assistant Director of HR, Corporate Projects and IT	06.02.24	07.02.24
<i>Other consultees:</i>			
<i>Directors (where relevant)</i>			
Stephen Evans	Chief Executive		
Andrew Durrant	Executive Director of Place		
Kevin McDaniel	Executive Director of Adult Social Care, Health & Communities		
Lin Ferguson	Executive Director of Children's Services & Education		
<i>Assistant Directors (where relevant)</i>			

Confirmation relevant Cabinet	Leader of Council and Cabinet Member for Community	Yes
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Member(s) consulted	Partnerships, Public Protection and Maidenhead Cabinet Member for Planning, Legal & Asset Management	Yes
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REPORT HISTORY

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

Report Author: Oran Norris-Browne, Principal Democratic Services Officer - Governance, 07717 801478

Appendix A - Equality Impact Assessment

For support in completing this EQIA, please consult the EQIA Guidance Document or contact equality@rbwm.gov.uk

www.rbwm.gov.uk



1. Background Information

Title of policy/strategy/plan:	<u>Programme of Meetings 2024/25</u>
Service area:	<u>Democratic Services</u>
Directorate:	<u>Resources</u>

Provide a brief explanation of the proposal:

- What are its intended outcomes?
- Who will deliver it?
- Is it a new proposal or a change to an existing one?

The overall aim of the proposal is to set the Council's programme of meetings for the 24/25 municipal year.

2. Relevance Check

Is this proposal likely to directly impact people, communities or RBWM employees?

- If No, please explain why not, including how you've considered equality issues.
- Will this proposal need a EQIA at a later stage? (for example, for a forthcoming action plan)

Yes

If 'No', proceed to 'Sign off'. If unsure, please contact equality@rbwm.gov.uk

3. Evidence Gathering and Stakeholder Engagement

Who will be affected by this proposal? For example, users of a particular service, residents of a geographical area, staff
Residents, External Speakers, Officers of the Council and Councillors
Among those affected by the proposal, are protected characteristics (age, sex, disability, race, religion, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, marriage/civil partnership) disproportionately represented? For example, compared to the general population do a higher proportion have disabilities?
No
What engagement/consultation has been undertaken or planned? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How has/will equality considerations be taken into account?• Where known, what were the outcomes of this engagement?
All Lead Officers were consulted on each of their meeting dates, to ensure that these were suitable for them as some occur in the evenings, and it is important for a healthy work/life balance.
What sources of data and evidence have been used in this assessment? Please consult the Equalities Evidence Grid for relevant data. Examples of other possible sources of information are in the Guidance document.
n/a

4. Equality Analysis

Please detail, **using supporting evidence**:

- How the protected characteristics below might influence the needs and experiences of individuals, in relation to this proposal.
- How these characteristics might affect the impact of this proposal.

Tick positive/negative impact as appropriate. If there is no impact, or a neutral impact, state 'Not Applicable'

More information on each protected characteristic is provided in the Guidance document.

	Details and supporting evidence	Potential positive impact	Potential negative impact
Age	<p>The virtual meeting technology used by the Council (Zoom) also 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.</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. 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>	<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>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 covid pandemic.</p>
Disability	<p>The setting of the programme of meetings does not affect persons with this protected characteristic, but in determining meeting venues issues of</p>	<p>The introduction of a new AV system in the Council</p>	<p>People with this protected characteristic may find it more difficult</p>

	accessibility will be taken into account.	Chamber, Town Hall in July 2022 has improved both audio and picture quality for hybrid meetings, including the introduction of a new hearing loop.	to access fully virtual meetings.
Sex	The proposals do not affect persons with this protected characteristic	n/a	n/a
Race, ethnicity and religion	The proposals do not affect persons with this protected characteristic	n/a	n/a
Sexual orientation and gender reassignment	The proposals do not affect persons with this protected characteristic	n/a	n/a
Pregnancy and maternity	The introduction of a new AV system in the Council Chamber at the Town Hall in July 2022 has improved both audio and picture quality for hybrid meetings.	People with this protected characteristic will be able to join remotely from their own home to participate in the meeting.	People with this protected characteristic may find it more difficult to access in-person meetings.
Marriage and civil partnership	The proposals do not affect persons with this protected characteristic	n/a	n/a
Armed forces community	The proposals do not affect persons with this protected characteristic	n/a	n/a
Socio-economic considerations e.g. low income, poverty	The introduction of a new AV system in the Council Chamber at the Town Hall in July 2022 has improved both audio and picture quality for hybrid meetings. Therefore, persons will not have to incur travel/parking costs when attending inperson meetings, as the hybrid option exists. If a person does not have access to technology, then the libraries will contain copies of agenda & minutes upon request.	People with this protected characteristic will be able to join remotely and not have to travel.	People with this protected characteristic may find it more difficult to access in-person meetings or not have access to technology to join remotely.

Children in care/Care leavers	The proposals do not affect persons with this protected characteristic	n/a	n/a
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5. Impact Assessment and Monitoring

If you have not identified any disproportionate impacts and the questions below are not applicable, leave them blank and proceed to Sign Off.

<p>What measures have been taken to ensure that groups with protected characteristics are able to benefit from this change, or are not disadvantaged by it? For example, adjustments needed to accommodate the needs of a particular group</p>
<p>All meetings are now livestreamed on YouTube and the Council has adopted a hybrid approach to all meetings, allowing persons to attend virtually. A new Audio Visual system has also been installed within the Town Hall, Maidenhead to increase accessibility and the quality of meetings for people at home.</p>
<p>Where a potential negative impact cannot be avoided, what measures have been put in place to mitigate or minimise this?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For planned future actions, provide the name of the responsible individual and the target date for implementation.
<p>n/a</p>
<p>How will the equality impacts identified here be monitored and reviewed in the future? See guidance document for examples of appropriate stages to review an EQIA.</p>
<p>This shall be governed by Government guidance, as and when this changes to allow for fully virtual meetings for decision making bodies.</p>

6. Sign Off

Completed by: Oran Norris-Browne	Date: 01/11/23
Approved by: Ellen McManus-Fry	Date: 15/11/23

If this version of the EQIA has been reviewed and/or updated:

Reviewed by:	Date:
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