



## Report of the Chief Democratic Services Officer

### North East Outer Area Committee

Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2010

Subject: Dates, Times and Venues of Area Committee Meetings 2010/11

#### Electoral Wards Affected:

Ward Members consulted  
(referred to in report)

#### Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Council  
Function

Delegated Executive  
Function available  
for Call In

Delegated Executive  
Function not available for  
Call In Details set out in the  
report

### Executive Summary

The purpose of the report is to request Members to give consideration to agreeing the dates, times and forward plan of business of their meetings for the 2010/11 municipal year which commences in May 2010.

#### 1.0 Background Information

- 1.1 The Area Committee Procedure Rules stipulate that there shall be **at least** six ordinary meetings of each Area Committee in each municipal year (May to April).
- 1.2 The Procedure Rules also state that each Committee will agree its schedule of meetings for the year either at the last meeting in the current municipal year (i.e. tonight) or at its first meeting in the new municipal year. In order to appear in the Council's official Diary and Yearbook for 2010/11, the dates and times of your meetings need to be approved tonight – the venues can if necessary be agreed at a later date.

#### 2.0 Options

2.1 The options are:-

- To approve the list of dates and times provisionally agreed with the Area Manager based on the existing pattern (see Paragraph 3.1);
- To consider other alternative dates;

- To continue to meet at either 5.30pm or 6.00pm, or to consider alternative times;
- To continue to alternate between suitable venues within the three Wards and Civic Hall, Leeds, or to seek some other venues.

### **3.0 Meeting Dates**

3.1 The following provisional dates have been agreed in consultation with the Chair and the Area Manager. They follow roughly the same pattern as last year, i.e. Monday's in July, September, October, December, February and March :-

5th July 2010, 20<sup>th</sup> September 2010, 25<sup>th</sup> October 2010, 6<sup>th</sup> December 2010, 7<sup>th</sup> February 2011 and 21st March 2011.

3.2 A similar pattern of meetings is being suggested in respect of the other 9 Area Committees, so that for co-ordination purposes, all Area Committees are meeting in the same basic cycle and months. Whilst Members have discretion as to which actual dates they wish to meet, they are requested to take into consideration that any proposed substantial change to the cycle, e.g. changing months rather than dates within the suggested months, will cause disruption and is likely to lead to co-ordination problems between the Area Committees.

### **4.0 Meeting Days and Times**

4.1 Currently the Committee meets on Monday at either 5.30pm or 6.00pm ( 5.30pm in the so-called dark months of October, December and February ), and the above suggested dates reflect this pattern.

4.2 Meeting on set days and times has the advantage of certainty and regularity, which assists people to plan their schedules. The downside might be that it could serve to exclude certain people, for instance, who have other regular commitments on that particular day or who might prefer either a morning or afternoon meeting or a meeting immediately after normal work hours.

4.3 For these reasons, some Area Committees have chosen to vary their meeting days and times, alternating between different weekdays and holding daytime and evening meetings alternately. Others, however, have chosen a regular pattern similar to this Committee's existing arrangements – it really is a matter for Members to decide.

### **5.0 Meeting Venues**

5.1 Currently the Committee alternates between venues in the three Wards, and three meetings at Civic Hall, Leeds – the October, December and February ones.

5.2 If the Committee were minded to request the officers to explore possible alternative venues, then the considerations Members and officers would have to taken into account are matters such as cost, accessibility – particularly for people with disabilities – and the facilities available at the venue, e.g. IT facilities for presentations etc.

5.3 From time to time, Members suggest moving all meetings back to Civic Hall, Leeds. The meeting facilities might arguably be better in some instances, and the venue possibly more convenient for Members, and possibly also the public, as Leeds is the hub of the public transport system. However, Members are reminded of the stated role of Area Committees, as set out in Paragraph 2.1 the Area Committee Procedure Rules :-

- Act as a focal point for community involvement;
- Take locally based decisions that deal with local issues;
- Provide for accountability at local level;
- Help Elected Members to listen to and represent their communities;
- Help Elected Members to understand the specific needs of the community in their area;
- Promote community engagement in the democratic process;
- Promote working relationships with District Partnerships and Parish and Town Councils.

These aims and this role is unlikely to be enhanced by holding all meetings at the centre, and rather than move all meetings to Civic Hall, Members might wish to look again at other ways of publicizing meetings and encouraging greater community engagement.

Another option is to alternate meetings between the centre and local venues, and this is what the NE Outer Area Committee currently does.

## **6.0 Area Committee Forward Plan**

6.1 A forward plan has been drafted for the area committee cycle of meetings for 2010/11. This sets out the business of the area committee dictated by the strategic planning cycle, local priorities, monitoring and evaluation of outputs and community engagement. Clearly other items will come forward during the year which are not part of the forward plan. These will added to it as appropriate. A copy of the draft forward plan is attached at Appendix 1.

## **7.0 Recommendation**

7.1 Members are requested to consider the options and to agree their meeting dates and times for 2010/11 in order that they may be included in the Council's official diary for 2010/11. Meeting venues can if necessary be agreed at a later date, or left for the officers to sort out, taking into account Members' views, although a clear indication of Members' wishes in this regard would be helpful.

7.2 Members are requested to agree the forward plan setting out the business of the Area Committee

## **Background Papers**

Area Committee Procedure Rules.