



## Report of the Chief Democratic Services Officer

### West Inner Area Committee

Date: 3rd April 2008

### Subject: Dates, Times and Venues of Area Committee Meetings 2008/09

<b>Electoral Wards Affected:</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Ward Members consulted (referred to in report)	<b>Specific Implications For:</b> Equality and Diversity <input type="checkbox"/> Community Cohesion <input type="checkbox"/> Narrowing the Gap <input type="checkbox"/>	
Council Function <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Delegated Executive Function available for Call In <input type="checkbox"/>	Delegated Executive Function not available for Call In Details set out in the report <input type="checkbox"/>

### Executive Summary

The purpose of the report is to request Members to give consideration to agreeing the dates and times of their meetings for the 2008/09 municipal year which commences in May 2008.

#### 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 2008/09, the dates and times of your meetings need to be approved today.

#### 2.0 Options

2.1 The options are:

- To approve the list of dates and times provisionally agreed with the West Area Manager based on the existing pattern;
- To consider other alternative dates;
- To continue to alternate times between 9.00 a.m. and 5.00 p.m., or to consider alternative times;

- To continue to alternate between suitable venues within the two Wards or to seek some other venues, for instance possibly holding the meetings, or some meetings, at Civic Hall, Leeds, which some Area Committees are considering, due to a lack of public attendance when the meetings are held at Ward-based venues.

### **3.0 Meeting Dates**

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

26<sup>th</sup> June 2008 (5.00 pm), 18<sup>th</sup> September 2008 (9.00 am), 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2008 (5.00 pm), 11<sup>th</sup> December 2008 (9.00 am), 12<sup>th</sup> February 2009 (5.00 pm) and 9<sup>th</sup> April 2009 (9.00 am).

- 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 lead to co-ordination problems between the Area Committees.

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

- 4.1 Currently the Committee meets on Thursday at either 9.00 a.m. or 5.00 p.m. 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 an evening meeting.
- 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 venues between the two West Inner Wards. Although by and large the venues are suitable, the meetings are not well attended by the public.
- 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 take 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, some Area Committee Members suggest moving 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 meetings at the centre, and rather than move meetings to Civic Hall, Members might wish to look again at other ways of publicizing meetings and encouraging greater community engagement.

Another option might be to alternate meetings between the centre and local venues.

## **6.0 Recommendation**

6.1 Members are requested to consider the options and to agree their meeting dates and times for 2008/09 in order that they may be included in the Council's official diary for 2008/09. 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.