

**Report of the Chief Officer (Democratic and Central Services)**

**Report to North West (Inner) Area Committee**

**Date: 12<sup>th</sup> April 2012**

**Subject: Dates, Times and Venues of Area Committee Meetings 2012/13**

Are specific electoral Wards affected?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): Headingley, Hyde Park & Woodhouse, Kirkstall and Weetwood		
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:		

**Summary of main issues**

1. In line with previous practice, Area Committees have agreed their meeting schedule for the forthcoming municipal year at the last ordinary meeting of the current municipal year, in order to enable the agreed schedule to appear within the Council's diary.
2. The purpose of the report is to request Members to give consideration to agreeing the dates and times of their Area Committee meetings for the 2012/2013 municipal year which commences in May 2012, whilst also considering whether any revisions to the current meeting venue arrangements should be explored.

**Recommendations**

3. Members are requested to consider the options detailed within the report and to agree the Committee's meeting dates and times for the 2012/13 municipal year, in order that they may be included within the Council's official diary for the same period.
4. Members are requested to give consideration as to whether they wish to continue with the Committee's current meeting venue arrangements or whether they would like to request any amendments to such arrangements.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is seek the Area Committee's formal approval of a meeting schedule for the 2012/2013 municipal year.
- 1.2 In addition, Members are requested to give consideration as to whether they wish to continue with the Committee's current meeting venue arrangements or whether they would like to request any amendments to such arrangements.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1 The Area Committee Procedure Rules stipulate that there shall be at least six ordinary meetings of each Area Committee in each municipal year.
- 2.2 The Procedure Rules also state that each Committee will agree its schedule of meetings for the forthcoming year, either at the last meeting in the current municipal year or at its first meeting in the new municipal year. However, in order to appear in the Council's official Diary and Yearbook for 2012/13, the dates and times of the Area Committee meetings need to be approved as soon as possible.

## **3 Main issues**

### **3.1 Meeting Schedule**

The following provisional dates have been agreed in consultation with the Area Leader. They follow the same pattern as last year, i.e. Thursday at 7.00pm:

28<sup>th</sup> June 2012, 20<sup>th</sup> September 2012, 25<sup>th</sup> October 2012, 13<sup>th</sup> December 2012, 21<sup>st</sup> February 2013, 11<sup>th</sup> April 2013 and 9<sup>th</sup> May 2013

- 3.1.1 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, may cause disruption in terms of co-ordination between the Area Committees.

### **3.2 Meeting Days and Times**

- 3.2.1 Currently the Committee meets on a Thursdays at 7.00pm and the above suggested dates reflect this pattern.
- 3.2.2 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 i.e. members of the public, 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.

3.2.3 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.

3.2.4 Together with the 6 ordinary meetings proposed for the Area Committee, you will note at paragraph 3.1.1 above, that there is also a meeting scheduled in May 2013 which in line with Area Committee Procedure Rule 5.0 is scheduled to elect a Chair for the next municipal year. In line with the Procedure Rule, this meeting is required to take place between the closure of nominations for Chair (1 clear working day prior to the issue of the summons for the Annual Council Meeting) and before the Annual Council Meeting.

### 3.3 **Meeting Venues**

3.3.1 Currently the Committee alternates venues between the four Wards and the Civic Hall.

3.3.2 If the Committee were minded to request officers to explore possible alternative venues not currently utilised, then the considerations Members and officers would need 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.

3.3.3 In some instances, Committees utilise the Civic Hall as a meeting venue. The meeting facilities in the Civic Hall may be better in some instances, and the venue is possibly more convenient, given that Leeds is the hub of the public transport system. However, when considering the scheduling of meeting venues between the locality and the city centre, Members may wish to balance the benefits of Civic Hall with 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.

## 4 **Corporate Considerations**

### 4.1 **Consultation and Engagement**

4.1.1 In compiling the proposed schedule of meeting dates and times, the current Area Committee Chair, the Area Leader and colleagues within Area Management have been consulted.

- 4.1.2 The submission of this report to the Area Committee forms part of the consultation process as it seeks the views of Elected Members with respect to the Area Committee meeting schedule and venue arrangements.

## **4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

- 4.2.1 There are no specific implications relating to equality and diversity or cohesion and integration arising from this report, however, in considering the matters detailed, Members may wish to give consideration to ensuring that the Area Committee meeting arrangements are accessible to all groups within the community.

## **4.3 Council policies and City Priorities**

- 4.3.1 An Area Committee meeting schedule which facilitates a widely accessible but robust decision making forum is in line with the Council's Policies and City Priorities.

## **4.4 Resources and value for money**

- 4.4.1 There are no resource implications directly arising from the submission of this report to the Area Committee.

## **4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

- 4.5.1 This report is not subject to Call In, as the decisions being taken fall within the Committee's Council Functions.

## **4.6 Risk Management**

- 4.6.2 There are no risks directly arising from the submission of this report to the Area Committee, however, not determining an agreed meeting schedule at this meeting may result in the dates not featuring within the 2012/13 Council diary.

## **5 Conclusions**

- 5.1 The Area Committee Procedure Rules stipulate that each Committee will agree its schedule of meetings for the forthcoming year, either at the last meeting in the current municipal year or at its first meeting in the new municipal year. In order to enable the Committee's meeting schedule to feature within the Council's diary for 2012/13, Members are recommended to agree the arrangements for the same period at today's meeting.

## **6 Recommendations**

- 6.1 Members are requested to consider the options detailed within the report and to agree the Committee's meeting dates and times for the 2012/13 municipal year, in order that they may be included within the Council's official diary for the same period.

6.2 Members are requested to give consideration as to whether they wish to continue with the Committee's current meeting venue arrangements or whether they wish to request any amendments to such arrangements.

## **7 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

7.1 Area Committee Procedure Rules

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available for inspection on request for a period of four years following the date of the relevant meeting. Accordingly this list does not include documents containing exempt or confidential information, or any published works. Requests to inspect any background documents should be submitted to the report author.