



Report of the Chief Democratic Services Officer

North East (Outer) Area Committee

Date: 28th March 2007

Subject: Dates, Times and Venues of Area Committee Meetings 2007/08

Electoral Wards Affected:

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 and times of their meetings for the 2007/08 municipal year which commences in May 2007.

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 2007/08, the dates and times of your meetings need to be approved tonight.

2.0 Options

2.1 The options are:

- To approve the list of dates and times provisionally agreed with the NE Area Manager based on the existing pattern;
- To consider other alternative dates;
- To continue to meet at 7.00 pm, or to consider alternative times;

- To continue to alternate between suitable venues within the three Wards or to seek some other venues.

3.0 Meeting Dates

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

9th July 2007, 17th September 2007, 22nd October 2007, 10th December 2007
11th February 2008 and 31st March 2008.

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 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 Monday's at 7.00 pm 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 venues between the three Wards, which has generally proved to be a successful arrangement.

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 meetings back to Civic Hall. Whilst the meeting facilities might arguably be better in some instances, and the venue

possibly more convenient for Members, Members are reminded of the 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.

6.0 Recommendation

- 6.1 Members are requested to consider the options and to decide their meeting dates and times for 2007/08 in order that they may be included in the Council's official diary for 2007/08. Meeting venues can be agreed at a later date, or left for the officers to sort out, taking into account Members' views.