

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

Report to Democratic Services Committee 8 January 2024

REPORT AUTHOR: Interim Head of Transformation and Democratic Services

REPORT TITLE: New Ways of Working and Council meetings – member survey 2023

REPORT FOR: Decision

1. Purpose

To consider the New Ways of Working report and the Council meetings member survey 2023.

2. Background

A report on the New Ways of Working was considered by Council on 18 May 2023 and after discussion it was resolved to refer the report back to the Democratic Services Committee for further consideration. Since then the following have been undertaken:

- a survey of members regarding the timing of meetings [excluding Cabinet] and format of meetings and
- a survey of Cabinet members regarding the timing of meetings and format of meetings and
- a log kept of the number of members attending online or in person when a hybrid meeting is held.

3. Members' survey

3.1 The Council, in accordance with Section 6 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, must review the timing of meetings at least once a term. In addition to asking a question about the timing of meetings, members were also asked their preference for the format of meetings i.e. Online only, in County Hall only or Hybrid meeting i.e. online and in County Hall.

3.2 Council meetings [excluding Cabinet] – Appendix 1

36 members [57%] and five co-opted members [100%] responded. The majority of members chose 10.00am as the most preferable start time for meetings. In respect of Full Council meetings, it should be noted that Group Leaders meet with the Chair of Council and officers prior to Group meetings. The meeting of Group Leaders with the Chair usually finish by 9.00am and so

Groups could meet between 9.00am and 10.00 am, allowing the Council meeting to start at 10.00a.m.

In respect of the format of meetings the majority chose hybrid meetings as the preferred choice for all meetings.

3.4 The comments from respondents should also be noted.

3.5 Cabinet meetings – Appendix 2

11 members [100%] responded. The majority of members opted for a preferred start time of 10am. In respect of the format of meetings all chose hybrid meetings for all meetings.

3.6 The comments from respondents should also be noted.

4. Log of the number of members attending online or in person when a hybrid meeting is held.

Between March and November 2023, 16 hybrid meetings have taken place [excluding Cabinet and Council meetings]. Information from the log shows the following:

- Majority of members attending online - 81% of meetings
- Members attending in person – 19% of meetings. These meetings were – a Planning, Taxi Licensing and Rights of Way Committee, a Leisure Review Joint Working Group and a Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee.

5. Issues for discussion

5.1 In respect of the timing of meetings it seems clear that Members support the current timings of meetings. It should however be noted that Committee Chairs, in discussion with their Committees, can change the timing of meetings to suit the Committee membership and also in response to agenda items, such as when external participants are required at a particular meeting.

5.2 When considering the format of meetings, the majority of members chose hybrid meetings for all meetings (evidenced by the actual attendance at meetings between March and November 2023). However, the Chair is able to change the format of a meeting as required.

5.3 In addition to the above, the Committee may also wish to consider whether:

- The meetings of all Committees, during the first six months at the start of a new Council term should all be held in person in County Hall. This will enable newly elected members to develop links with each other, with returning members, develop the relationships within a committee and support the sharing of skills and knowledge.
- That the Chair of each committee considers holding at least one meeting a year, as a meeting in person.

- That the Democratic Services Committee reviews the timing and format of meetings again in mid-2025, so that any changes can be implemented from 2026 onwards.

6. Recommendation

That the Committee considers the report and recommends to full Council that:

- the current working arrangements continue except that Full Council meetings commence at 10am
- Committee Chairs, in discussion with their Committees, can change the timing of meetings to suit the Committee membership and also in response to agenda items, such as when external participants are required at a particular meeting
- the Chair of each committee considers holding at least one meeting a year, as a meeting in person
- meetings of all Committees, during the first six months at the start of a new Council term should all be held in person in County Hall and
- the Democratic Services Committee reviews the timing and format of meetings again in mid-2025, so that any changes can be implemented from 2026 onwards.

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