

Annual Meeting Arrangements

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
Democracy and General Purposes Committee	13 September 2023
Will this be a Key Decision?	Not Applicable
Urgency	Not Applicable
Final Decision-Maker	Democracy and General Purposes Committee
Lead Head of Service	Angela Woodhouse, Director of Strategy, Insight and Governance
Lead Officer and Report Author	Ryan O'Connell, Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

To determine the date and time of the Annual Meeting in May 2024

Purpose of Report

Recommendation to Council

This report makes the following recommendation:

That the Committee recommend to Council for approval either:

- (i) Option 1, Saturday 18 May 2024 at 9.00 a.m. for the date and time of the Annual Council Meeting; or
- (ii) One of the other options set out in the report for the date and time of the May 2024 Annual Council Meeting; and

Annual Meeting Arrangements

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure • Safe, Clean and Green • Homes and Communities • A Thriving Place <p>The timing of the Annual meeting has no direct impact on the achievement of the Strategic Plan Objectives.</p>	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Cross Cutting Objectives	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage is Respected • Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced • Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved • Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected <p>The timing of the Annual meeting has no direct impact on the achievement of the Strategic Plan Objectives.</p>	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Risk Management	<p>Risks arising from this decision are minimal, as long as the Annual Meeting is held within the necessary time frame from the election then no significant risks are introduced.</p> <p>Operational risks are considered as part of the options assessment.</p>	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Financial	<p>Financial differences between the options are minimal (for example the provisions relating to overtime may vary slightly between options) and will be managed from within existing budgets depending on the option chosen.</p>	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager

Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Legal	<p>Accepting the recommendations will meet the requirement set out in the Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12 to hold an annual meeting</p> <p>"...in a year of ordinary elections of councillors to the council, on the eighth day after the day of retirement of councillors or such other day within the twenty-one days immediately following the day of retirement as the council may fix"</p>	Team Leader Contentious and Corporate Governance
Information Governance	There are none.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Equalities	There are none.	Equalities & Communities Officer
Public Health	There are none.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Crime and Disorder	There are none.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Procurement	There are none.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Biodiversity and Climate Change	There are none.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 With the introduction of Whole Council Elections in May 2024 there is an opportunity to review the date and time of the Annual Meeting of Council. This needs to be determined in good time to allow for event planning for the Annual Meeting and Civic Parade (which is impacted by the annual meeting date) to take place.
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3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

3.1 **Option 1 – Saturday 18 May 2024 at 9.00 a.m., combined with Civic Parade**

Practice in recent years has been to hold the annual meeting on a Saturday morning and combine it with the Civic Parade, which takes place following Mayor Making (which happens at the annual meeting). This allows the organisation of both events to be combined and also improves the availability of members of the public, guests and school children to attend the meeting (this latter reason was one of the primary reasons for switching to Saturdays and has been effective).

- 3.2 With the timings necessary for the publication of the agenda, to be held within the legally required period following the election, and to have the Council operating again in good time for the calendar of meetings the date for the annual meeting in 2024 would normally be 18 May 2024. This is the recommended option.

3.3 **Option 2 – Wednesday 22 May 2024 at 6.30 p.m., Civic Parade 25 May 2024**

Before the switch to a Saturday morning, for the reasons set out above, the Annual Council meeting had been held on a Wednesday separately from the Civic Parade which was then held on the Saturday afterwards. Wednesdays are the traditional day for Council meetings, and as a weekday outside of working hours it is possible that some Councillors may find it easier to attend.

- 3.4 However, this option would make it difficult for guests, particularly school children to attend. It also separates the Annual Meeting and Civic Parade. Making the organisation of two separate events more onerous, and potentially impacting Civic Parade attendance by Councillors. It does however allow slightly more time following the election to prepare the papers. Albeit, it does mean it is slightly longer before the structure of the Council, for example of Executive appointments, is determined.

3.5 **Option 3 – Wednesday 22 May 2024 at 11 a.m., Civic Parade 25 May 2024**

A variation on option 2 would be to hold the meeting during the day on Wednesday 22 May 2024 at 11 a.m. This would allow school children to attend more easily supported by teachers as it is during school hours and would have reduced overtime costs (though overtime for democratic services is factored into budgets already). It could increase the difficulty in

attending for Councillors with day time meetings not being the normal practice at Maidstone.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Option 1 is the preferred option as it meets the legal requirement for holding the meeting, ensures the Executive arrangements are put in place quickly following the election, combines with the Civic Parade making organisation more efficient, gives guests the best chance of attending and practice over recent years has shown that Councillors can attend then too.
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5. RISK

Discussed in the risk element of the table above.

The risks associated with this proposal, including the risks if the Council does not act as recommended, have been considered in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework. We are satisfied that the risks associated are within the Council's risk appetite and will be managed as per the Policy.

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 The issue of the date and time of the Annual Meeting has been raised by Councillors over the last year directly with Democratic Services. This report aims to set out the options clearly so a decision can be made.
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7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 Council will be recommended the option put forward by the Committee and then once agreed by Council whichever option is chosen will be implemented and the annual meeting and civic parade organised on that basis.
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8. REPORT APPENDICES

None

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None