

Guildford Borough Council

Report to: Corporate Governance & Standards Committee

Date: 14 November 2024

Ward(s) affected: All

Report of Strategic Director: Legal & Democratic Services

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Report status: Open

Proposed Changes to Council Procedure Rule 6.2

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report proposes a change to Council Procedure Rule 6.2, to ensure that there are no changes to the start times of committees, unless there is an urgent requirement.

2. Recommendation

That the Corporate Governance & Standards Committee recommend to Council:

- (a) That Council Procedure Rule 6.2 be amended as set out in paragraph 6.4 below.

3. Reasons for Recommendation:

- 3.1 The Joint Constitutions Working Group at its meeting on 21 October 2024 were concerned that changing the start time of meetings might

have equalities issues, in that working members and the public might not be able to attend.

4. Purpose of Report

- 4.1 This report proposes a change to Council Procedure Rule 6.2, to ensure that the start times of the Committees are agreed by the Monitoring Officer and can only be changed where the Monitoring Officer (on the notification of the Chair) considers there are exceptional circumstances which warrant this.

5. Strategic Priorities

- 5.1 This report will assist in the delivery of the Council's corporate priorities and collaborative working agenda, in particular Priority 5: A resilient and well managed Council.

6. Background

- 6.1 Revised Council Procedure Rules were adopted by both Waverley and Guildford Borough Councils in April 2024.

- 6.2 The current Council Procedure Rule 6.2 provides as follows:-

6.2 Should a committee or sub-Committee agree to hold meetings at a time different to that determined by the Monitoring Officer, the Chair shall notify the Monitoring Officer via email at committeeservices@guildford.gov.uk who will make the necessary amendment to the calendar of meetings. The Committee or sub-Committee may only make such amendment to the time of the meeting at least 2 clear working days prior to the summons for the meeting being published.

- 6.3 The effect of this Rule is that a committee can vote to hold a meeting at a time other than that set by the Monitoring Officer. The JCRG recently considered this matter and were concerned that starting

meetings at a different time might involve equalities issues or make them less accessible to members or the public.

- 6.4 It is therefore proposed that Council Procedure Rule 6.2 is changed to read as follows:-

REVISED 6.2 Should a committee or sub-Committee need to hold a meeting at a time different to that determined by the Monitoring Officer, then the Chair shall notify the Monitoring Officer via email at committeeservices@guildford.gov.uk. The Monitoring Officer will consider whether there are exceptional circumstances which warrant the changing of the timing of the meeting, and if necessary they will make the necessary amendment to the calendar of meetings. The Monitoring Officer may only make such amendment to the time of the meeting at least 5 clear working days prior to the summons for the meeting being published.

- 6.5 The change to the Council Procedure Rule will not affect meetings of the Executive or full Council.
- 6.6 Waverley Borough Council will also be considering this matter, as both Councils adopted the same procedure rules.

7. Consultations

- 7.1 The JCRG considered this matter at its meeting on 21st October 2024. That meeting was attended by a wider group of members.

8. Key Risks

- 8.1 With the current Rule 6.2, there could be public complaints that the time is inconvenient for those who work/have childcare issues and who need to attend the Planning Committee (or other committees).
- 8.2 There is a risk that members might not be able to attend themselves due to the change in time, or that it might put members off sitting on the Committee if they have work or caring commitments which make the time difficult.

8.3 The proposed change reduces the risk as there is likely to be less impact on the published calendar of meetings, and any change will be 'exceptional'.

9. Financial Implications

9.1 There are no direct financial implications resulting from this report.

10. Legal Implications

10.1 Any change to the Council Procedure Rules would require the Corporate Governance & Standards Committee to recommend the same to the full Council.

11. Human Resource Implications

11.1 There are no direct HR implications.

12. Equality and Diversity Implications

12.1 Members may consider that there could potentially be equality & diversity implications arising from changing the time of meetings, if this would cause some sections of the community to be excluded e.g. those who are younger and in work, or those with caring responsibilities.

13. Climate Change/Sustainability Implications

13.1 There are no climate change or sustainability implications.

14. Summary of Options

14.1 The Corporate Governance & Standards Committee can either:

(1) recommend the proposed change to the Council

(2) decide not to recommend the proposed change

15. Background Papers

Council Procedure Rules contained in the Guildford Borough Council Constitution.