

BRIEFING NOTE – AUDIT COMMITTEE TIMING OF MEETINGS

1. The Local Government (Wales) 2011 Measure provides the opportunity for Committees to review the timings of their meetings to support the effective participation of its members at its meetings. The guidance indicates that:

Although many councillors are retired, others have difficulty in marrying their work commitments with those of their council duties, or, in other cases, did so at the expense of any meaningful personal time. For many councillors in full-time employment, the extent to which their employers are supportive of their new commitment is a vital concern. Although employment legislation entitles councillors to time off for public duties, operating that in practice may be more difficult. The timing and frequency of meetings is the most problematic issue in this respect. Other duties may be fulfilled at times which suit the individual but a meeting is at a set time and (subject to any arrangements made for remote attendance) at a set venue.

It is neither practical nor desirable for the Council to prescribe the times and frequency of meetings of committees and sub-committees as these are matters for each Committee to consider.

However, it is important that committees do not simply continue to hold their meetings at the same time as they always have done simply out of inertia. What may have been tradition or an arrangement which suited the previous councillors and committee members will not necessarily serve the interests of the other members

2. The legislation enables Committees to review the times at which meetings are held. The rule of thumb should be that meetings will be held at times, intervals and locations which are convenient to its members and as far as is practicable have regard to equality and diversity issues.
3. It should be acknowledged that this could result in long-serving members having to make changes to their pattern of working which would be worth doing if it meant that the committee was better able to support its members with outside responsibilities.
4. Issues to be taken into account in during this discussion could include: whether:
 - daytime or evening meetings are preferred.
 - particular times cause difficulties for Councillors/Members with particular characteristics, such as age, gender, religion, having caring responsibilities or being in employment.
 - there may be advantages to rotating meeting times due to an impossibility of pleasing all their members all of the time.

Audit Committee members are requested to share their views on the timings of the committee meetings and to determine the most suitable time for future meetings of the Committee to be held.

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