



City of Westminster

General Purposes Committee

Date:	16 January 2019
Classification:	For General Release
Title:	Changes to Full Council Meetings and the Programme of Meetings 2019/2020
Wards Affected:	N/A
Financial Summary:	There are no financial implications
Report of:	Acting Head of Committee and Governance Services

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report is submitted to seek the approval of the Committee to the Programme of Committee Meetings for the 2019/2020 municipal year which in the case of Committees follows broadly the same programme as in recent years. For the reasons set out below revisions to the programme of meetings for full Council meetings are recommended together with changes to the relevant Council meeting procedures.
- 1.2 Given that the Leader gave a Leaders' Speech in July 2018 and the Council in November also debated and approved their provisional budget for 2019-2020 it is proposed to convert the Council meeting programmed for March 2019 to an Ordinary meeting at which the Council will consider the formal Council Tax resolution, upon the recommendation of the Cabinet.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the programme of meetings attached to the report as Appendix A be approved.
- 2.2 That the Council approve the programme for full Council meetings, as follows:

15 May 2019 (Annual); 26 June 2019; 18 September 2019; 13 November 2019 (Leader's Speech and Budget); 22 January 2020; 4 March 2020 (including Council Tax); 20 May 2020 (Annual).

- 2.3 That the Council be recommended to approve revised procedures for the Leader's Speech and budget proposals set out in the report, including the associated changes to Standing Orders set out in Appendix B.
- 2.4 That the Council, for the reasons set out in paragraph 3.10 below, agree that the Extraordinary meeting programmed to be held on Wednesday 6 March 2019 now be held as an Ordinary Council meeting.

3. Background Information

Programme of Meetings

- 3.1 The General Purposes Committee has previously agreed that the programme of meetings be prepared having regard to the following basic principles:

Mondays: Cabinet/Policy and Scrutiny meetings

Tuesdays: Planning/Policy and Scrutiny meetings (if necessary)

Wednesdays: Council meetings/Group meetings/other Committee meetings

- 3.2 Paragraphs 3.7 and 3.8 below sets out proposals to change the way in which the Council's budget is considered. As a result variations are proposed to the programme of full Council meetings, as follows:

15 May 2019 (Annual): No change except in future years it is proposed that the Vote of Thanks to the former Lord Mayor will also be considered at this meeting. This will avoid this impacting on timings at an Ordinary Council meeting and therefore the time available for debates.

26 June 2019: Ordinary meeting instead of July to better balance programme.

18 September 2019: New ordinary meeting to replace meeting previously held in April. This provides for a better balance of meetings.

13 November 2019: Extraordinary Council meeting to consider Budget and receive the Leader's Speech – No Council Questions and Councillor Issues.

22 January 2020: Ordinary meeting.

4 March 2020: Ordinary meeting but to also formally adopt the Council Tax resolution.

- 3.3 The approval of the budget for the following year at an earlier stage allows consideration of the proposals by the Budget Task Group during October and for these views to be fed into the budget process at that time.

- 3.4 The programme reflects 6 meetings per annum for each of the Policy and Scrutiny Committees as requested by their Chairmen during the consultation process. This also includes the proposals for a new policy and scrutiny committee which is reported elsewhere on this agenda. Two meetings of the Planning and City Development Committee have been programmed.
- 3.5 The programme includes provision for the Discretionary Housing Panel and the Rating Advisory Panel to meet on a programme basis. The programmes have been developed having regard to the expected weight of business in each case.
- 3.6 Dates have been included again for the Member Development Programme which were included for the first time last year.

Budget Process/Leaders Speech

- 3.7 The Council's procedures, set out in the Constitution, provide for the Leader, at an Extraordinary Council meeting held in early March each year to make a speech on the Council's aims and objectives for the following year and formally adopt the Council Tax resolution.
- 3.8 Advice from the City Treasurer and in accordance broadly with the approach adopted in each of the last two years it is proposed that the Leader's Speech and Budget Proposals be considered at an Extraordinary Council meeting in November. This allows for departments to better plan on a full year basis for the following fiscal year. Any changes which impact on the budget approved will be reported to the Cabinet in the following February and then to the full Council in early March when the formal Council Tax Resolution will be determined. The formal Council Tax resolution may only be adopted once the relevant information from the precepting authorities has been received. It must be adopted by full Council prior to 11 March each year.

Other Council Meetings and Procedural Impact

- 3.9 The programme of full Council meetings is proposed to be adjusted as set out in paragraph 3.2 above. If this programme is adopted it will be necessary to make minor adjustments to the Council meeting procedure, which currently provide for the Budget and Council Tax to be agreed at the same meeting. The proposed changes to the relevant Standing Order are shown as track changes in Appendix B.
- 3.10 The Council, in July 2018, received the Leader's Speech and in November approved and debated the provisional budget. Therefore, at the request of the Chief Whip of the Majority Party, it is recommended that the March meeting now take the form of an Ordinary meeting at which a report from the Cabinet submitting the formal Council Tax Resolution will be submitted. The next Leader's Speech will therefore, subject to the proposals in this report being adopted, be in November 2019.

4. Financial implications

- 4.1 No additional financial implications arise from the proposals set out in this report.
- 4.2 The Council's Section 151 officer confirms that it is prudent for the Council to approve its budget in November each year which is a common practice adopted by many other authorities. Whilst the formal settlement for Local Government will remain to be announced officers have sufficient advance information from the Treasury on which to base proposals. Advance knowledge of budgets allows for departments to plan services including carrying any consultation requirements.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 The Programme of Council Meetings allows the Council to take decisions in accordance with statutory requirements.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 The Programme of Meetings has been circulated to the Party Whips and adjustments made where requested. No outstanding issues remain as a result of this consultation.
- 6.2 The Chairman of the Policy and Scrutiny Committees and other committees have also been consulted and again no issues are outstanding.

If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers please contact Mick Steward: 7641 3134

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None

20. Annual Estimates and the Making of the Council Tax

- (1) The Chief Executive and the City Treasurer shall prepare draft Annual Estimates in consultation with the respective Chief Officers in a form and to a timetable approved by the Leader. The draft estimates and the Chief Officers' reports thereon shall be submitted to a meeting of the Cabinet. The estimates of Cabinet Members and Committees shall be based upon limits of expenditure to be set by the Cabinet after considering the Chief Executive and the City Treasurer's forecasts of Cabinet Members and Committees' requirements.
- (2) The Cabinet shall submit to an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council in November of each year a report including recommendations in respect of the reception of a Speech by the Leader of the Council on Council priorities and financial aims; estimates of income and expenditure. Other business shall be included on the agenda if in the opinion of the Chief Executive a decision of the Council is required before the next ordinary meeting of the Council. A report shall also be submitted by the Cabinet to Council in March each year setting out for consideration by the Council the Cabinet's recommendation on the amount of the Council Tax charge.
- (3) At the November meeting of the Council at which the report and recommendations of the Cabinet as to the items in (2) above are being considered, Standing Order 11 (consideration of reports to Council), Standing Order 12(1)(m) (motion to extend sitting), Standing Order 14 (conduct of debate), and Standing Order 19 (termination of meeting) shall be varied so that:
 - (a) the debate on recommendations in respect of the Leader's Speech, and the Budget Proposals be terminated at 9.45pm and the recommendations then immediately put to the vote.
 - (b) the Leader of the Council (or his nominee) in introducing the report of the Cabinet on the Budget Proposals to make a Leader's Speech for up to 20 minutes and then the Leader of the Opposition (or his nominee), in responding to the Leader of the Council's Speech to speak for up to 20 minutes; the Cabinet Member for Finance will then speak for up to 10 minutes with a Member nominated by the Minority Party responding for up to 10 minutes.
 - (c) there be one general debate on the Leader's Speech, and the Budget;
 - (d) at 9.35pm the Leader of the Council to reply to the debate for up to 10 minutes.