



Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	Audit Committee 26 January 2023 Overview and Scrutiny (work planning session) 9 February 2023
Subject	Referral from Council - Time limit for Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Audit Committee
Wards affected	N/A
Accountable member	Cllr Joe Harris Email: Joe.Harris@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Angela Claridge, Director of Governance and Development (Monitoring Officer) Email: Angela.Claridge@cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	Ana Prelici, Democratic Services Officer Email: ana.prelici@cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To consider the request from Council that the Constitution Working Group considers recommending a change to the Council's Constitution so that meetings of Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Audit Committee shall have a maximum duration of three hours.
Annexes	None
Recommendation(s)	<i>That the Committee resolves to:</i> <i>1. Agree any comments the Committee wishes to refer to the Constitution Working Group</i>
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Delivering our services to the highest standards
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	



I. BACKGROUND

- At the Full Council meeting on the 17 November 2022, Council agreed to approve the programme of meetings for 2023 to May 2024 and, among other things, agreed that meetings shall start at the same times as in 2022/23 subject to the following changes:
 - all Planning and Licensing Committee meetings to start at 2pm
 - Licensing Sub-Committee meetings to start no earlier than 2pm
 - Annual Council meetings on 25/05/2023 and 15/05/2024 to start at 6pm
 - Overview and Scrutiny and Audit Committee meetings to start at 5pm
 - Authority is delegated to the Director of Governance and Development (Monitoring Officer) to set dates for member training, briefing sessions, and any working groups established by the Council.
 - The Constitution Working Group considers recommending a change to the Council's Constitution so that meetings of Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Audit and that committees should have a maximum duration of three hours.

1.1 At the request of the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny, the item was deferred from the Constitution Working Group to allow the Overview and Scrutiny and Audit Committees to review the proposals. The Chair of Overview and Scrutiny has requested that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers this matter at its informal work planning session on 9 February 2023 so that members may have regard to the emerging scrutiny work plan for the coming civic year.

1.2 The Constitution (Part D, paragraph 9) currently provides that all meetings, with the exception of Planning and Licensing Committee meetings, are subject to a rule whereby the maximum duration of one sitting of a meeting will be for four hours. Meetings at the time limit can either be adjourned or the business rescheduled to a subsequent meeting. At the conclusion of an item of business, after three hours have elapsed, a vote will be taken by a simple majority to continue for the final hour.

1.3 This report seeks the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Audit Committee on the suggestion that the time limit provision should be altered to give a maximum duration of 3 hours for their meetings, given that the later start time of 5pm has been agreed by Council.

2. ISSUES TO CONSIDER

2.1 As Council resolved to move the start time of Overview and Scrutiny and Audit Committees to 5pm (from 4pm), restricting meetings to a maximum of 3 hours would ensure that attendees (including members of the public, Members and officers) who have to travel long distances would not be required to do so late at night. This mitigates travel in



potentially inclement weather, at all times of the year. The proposal would affect all attendees but particularly pertinent in relation to officers who live outside of the district, which includes a significant number who work across Councils in the Publica partnership. Where the technology is in place, some officers may be able to join meetings remotely but certain officers need to be physically present at meetings as do members of the committee.

- 2.2 District councillors who also serve as county councillors and / or parish councillors may be required to travel to multiple evening meeting so may also benefit from additional flexibility allowed by this proposal.
- 2.3 These considerations need to be weighed against the need to ensure that the meetings are accessible to committee members and, for Overview and Scrutiny, Cabinet members who work during the daytime.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Members may claim expenses for travelling to meetings but there are no financial implications arising directly from this report, which is seeking views on the start times of meetings but not the overall number of meetings.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The responsibility for setting meeting dates for Council and committee meetings rests with Council under the Local Government Act 1972 (Schedule 12). The Constitution provides that meeting start times may be fixed by Council or the committee. The Constitution also includes a rule that meetings with the exception of Planning and Licensing Committee meetings will be subject to a 4 hour time limit for a single sitting, as detailed in paragraph 1.2.

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 Not applicable

6. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 6.1 The proposal is not expected to differentially affect any groups with protected characteristics.



7. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 This proposal is not expected to have any impact on the existing duration and frequency of travel undertaken to attend meetings and therefore the resultant emissions. Therefore, there are no climate and ecological impacts associated with this proposal.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 8.1 The Constitution Working Group could choose to not recommend a time limit for Audit and / or Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings. The views of the committee are sought to inform that decision.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1 Minutes from November Council 2022, available for inspection on the website.

(END)