

## Full Council

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<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>Schedule of Meetings 2023-24 and 2024-25</b>
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	<b>14 November 2023</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Lizzie Fuller, Committee Services &amp; Processes Officer</b>

### Purpose of the Report

1. To provide context for approving the Schedule of Meetings.

### Action Required

2. To approve the date, time, and location for the Annual Town Meeting 2024, and to consider delegating to Officers the theme / format of the meeting.
3. To approve the proposed Schedule of Meetings for the remainder of this civic year (February – May 2024) (Appendix A, page 1)
4. To approve a Schedule of Meetings for May 2024 – May 2025 (Appendix A, page 2).

### Background

5. The schedule of meetings for 2023/24 has previously been approved up to January 2024.

### Annual Town Meeting

6. The Annual Town Meeting (ATM) must be held between 1 March and 1 June. It is a meeting of the electorate and not the town council. Thame's ATM is usually held in March to avoid the pre-election period (which starts around 6 weeks before the day of an election<sup>1</sup>) so that all Councillors can be available to answer questions during the forum.
7. 2024 – As there is no election next year (for TTC / SODC / OCC), it is suggested that the ATM be held during April (hopefully better weather and sunset is 20:08) and at Thame Barns Centre. The Town Hall is not the most accessible venue due to stairs and audio. A potential theme for the 2024 ATM could be to launch the strategy work and/or 50 years of TTC. Other suggestions are welcome, although to enable planning to begin, the Council is asked to approve that the theme / format be delegated to Officers in consultation with the Mayor (who summons this meeting).
8. 2025 – There will be an election for OCC and therefore, the proposed ATM date is 18 March 2025.

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<sup>1</sup> Guidance from the Local Government Association advises that pre-election period guidance applies to local authorities for General Elections, regardless of whether there is a local election. A General Election is expected before January 2025.

## Schedule of Meetings

9. The council is asked to approve the schedule of meetings for the remaining months (Feb-May) of this civic year, and the dates for May 2024 – May 2025. It is important for the council to approve its schedule of meetings to:
  - Enable decisions / projects to progress, and for the council to fulfil its responsibilities including, but not limited to: budget monitoring, review of policies and risk assessments, auditing, Mayoral administration, and signing of legal documents.
  - Ensure meetings will be quorate, as advance notice of meeting enables Councillors and Officers to plan their personal / business commitments accordingly, and ensures the Town Hall is available.
  
10. Further information on meeting frequency is below:
  - P&E – Since August/September, a 4-week P&E cycle has been trialled. The impact on officer workloads has been difficult to assess as there has been a higher than usual number of planning applications and of greater complexity, requiring more Officer time to prepare reports. There have been some challenges with obtaining consultations for amended plans, and having to pre-emptively call-in some applications. For Feb-May 2024, due to bank holidays, most of the proposed P&Es are 4-weekly. For 2024/25, the P&E meetings are scheduled as either 3 or 4 weeks.
  - NPC – These meetings have been scheduled in (mainly on an 8-week cycle based on 4-week P&Es), however initial feedback from NPC is that TNP updates / actions may be better handled by Full Council, with the remainder of the committee responsibilities distributed to other committees as appropriate. Future NPC meetings will be scheduled as required dependent on TNP2 requirements.
  - Personnel – Meetings of this committee have been scheduled however as a small committee; these dates/times may change depending on the committee's availability.
  - Full Council – The council is legally required to hold an Annual Meeting (May) and at least 3 other council meetings, and the Annual Town Meeting.

## Options

11. The proposals (Appendix A) are largely based on previous committee frequency. There will inevitably be outcomes from the imminent strategy day (10 November 2023) which impact on how the committee structure / frequency evolves. For the reasons set out in paragraph 9, there are two options for 2024/25 Schedule of Meetings:

- a. Approve as proposed, with scope to change the names / responsibilities of the committees as required.
- b. Approve the meeting dates only, to ensure that Councillors/Officers/Town Hall are available. As a minimum it is recommended that the following Full Council meetings are approved as fixed: 14 May 2024 (Annual Meeting), 18 June 2024 (Annual Return), 21 January 2025 (Precept) and 29 April 2025 (Mayor Designate), and the Annual Town Meeting on 18 March 2025.

## Resource Appraisal

12. If the Council agree to hold the Annual Town Meeting at Thame Barns Centre there may be a hire fee (TTC has 1 free use a year currently used for Town Awards, therefore this needs to be discussed with relevant Officers). There would also be a small cost to provide refreshments and other sundries.

## Legal Powers

- Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12, Part II, Sections 7-10

## Recommendation:

### *It is recommended...*

- i) To approve that the Annual Town Meeting for 2024 be held at Thame Barns Centre on Wednesday 17 April 2024 at 7pm, and that Officers be delegated to determine the format / theme of the meeting in consultation with the Mayor.*
- ii) To approve the proposed Schedule of Meetings for the remainder of this civic year (February – May 2024).*
- iii) To consider the options outlined in Paragraph 11 and approve one for the proposed Schedule of Meetings for May 2024 – May 2025.*