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Corporate Plan Output: Public Accountability	

At the inaugural meeting I was requested by the Council to report back on the proposal to hold monthly Council meetings commencing at 2.00 pm on a Thursday. The purpose of this report is to outline the background to this proposal, and to suggest other options for the Council’s consideration.

1. REASONS FOR SUGGESTING THURSDAY MEETINGS

The main reason for suggesting that Council meetings be held on a Thursday was to allow sufficient time for the printing and distribution of the Council agenda. By law, the agenda is required to be circulated two clear working days before the meeting. When Council meetings are held on a Wednesday (as previously) there are major problems in getting all reports completed in time for inclusion in the agenda. The printing of the agenda takes a minimum of 30 hours, and with a Wednesday meeting this means that reports have to be completed by 12 noon the preceding Wednesday, so that the agenda can be run off on the Thursday and Friday, for sending out on the Friday before the meeting. Under this previous arrangement, there were numerous instances where reports could not be completed in time for inclusion in the agenda, with the result that they had to be separately circulated or tabled at the meeting.

Shifting the Council meeting to a Thursday would greatly relieve this pressure, by allowing the agenda to be printed over the weekend, ready for circulation on the Monday prior to the meeting.

A second result of the change to Thursday would be that the Council agenda would become public on the Monday before the Council meeting rather than the Friday before. This would result in enquiries about the agenda items being made during the week rather than over the weekend.

2. WEDNESDAY VERSUS THURSDAY MEETINGS

During the previous term, Council meetings were held commencing at 2.00 pm on a Wednesday. At the inaugural Council meeting Councillor Fahey advised that he would be unable to attend meetings if they were shifted to a Thursday.

Despite the advantages of a Thursday meeting, it is accepted that Wednesday may be more suitable for some Councillors.

Attached to this report as Appendices A and B are two separate timetables, one based on a Wednesday meeting and the other on a Thursday meeting.

3. MEETING TIME

Some Councillors have indicated a wish to review the proposed 2.00 pm meeting time. In earlier years, the Council met at 4.00 pm. Most Council meetings run for six hours or slightly more, and in moving from 4.00 pm to the earlier time of 2.00 pm several Councillors expressed the view that this would allow meetings to finish at a more reasonable hour.

Presuming that for the same reason the Council would be loath to revert to a 4.00 pm start, then it is suggested that the Council meet at either 10.00 am, 12 noon or 2.00 pm, depending on Councillors' collective preferences.

It has previously been claimed that an earlier meeting time can disadvantage individuals and groups wishing to make submissions to the Council, in that it can inconvenience the parties involved if these have to be made during normal working hours, rather than late in the afternoon or early evening. However, this concern could be easily overcome as deputations do not necessarily have to be received at the commencement of meetings. A time slot could be set aside at a later stage of the meeting for groups and individuals to make submissions.

4. COMMITTEE MEETINGS

At its inaugural meeting the Council also resolved *“That the proposed dates for Standing Committee meetings during 1999 be approved, but that each Committee be given an opportunity to decide its regular meeting time at the first round of meetings in November”*.

Pursuant to this delegated power, Standing Committees have now chosen the following regular meeting times:

Strategy and Resources Committee	3.00 pm
Projects and Property Committee	2.00 pm
Parks and Recreation Committee	4.00 pm
Environment Committee	3.30 pm
Community Services Committee	12 noon
City Services Committee	2.00 pm

Recommendation: That the Council decide on its preferred meeting time and dates for 1999.