



FOR PUBLICATION

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

GOVERNANCE, ETHICS AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

10 OCTOBER 2024

Report of the Monitoring Officer and Director of Legal and Democratic Services

Councillor Attendance at Meetings

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To consider the statistics regarding attendance of members at meetings within the context of member development and the effectiveness of the political structure.

2. Information and Analysis

- 2.1 The Terms of Reference for the Governance, Ethics and Standards Committee as outlined at Article 11 of the Constitution require the Committee to monitor the attendance of Members at meetings of the County Council and its Committees on an annual basis within the context of member development and the effectiveness of the political structure.
- 2.2 Members are expected to attend full Council meetings and meetings of those Committees to which they have been appointed by Council. Executive members are also expected to attend Cabinet meetings. It is however recognised that there are occasions when Members are unable to attend meetings and the Council Procedure Rules include provision for substitutes at committee meetings. Information relating to attendance of Members at meetings of the Council, its committees and Cabinet is now routinely recorded as part of the committee administration processes through the modern.gov reporting system and is available on the Council's website. This now enables more effective

monitoring and oversight by the Governance, Ethics and Standards Committee. Figures obtained from the modern.gov reporting system show that out of 1061 expected attendances, councillors attended 912 times during 2023-24 giving an average of 86% attendance. Attendance by individual Members ranged from 33% to 100%. The figures are calculated based on the meetings the Councillor is expected to attend and do not include meetings they may have attended as a substitute. The figures also do not include voluntary attendance at meetings, such as Cabinet where Cabinet Support members and opposition members attend voluntarily to observe.

2.3 A similar exercise was carried out for the last reporting year where the average attendance ranged between 50% and 100% and an average of 80% attendance across all Members. While it is pleasing to note an overall increase (6%) in the average percentage of meetings attended, the committee may wish to examine the data in more depth as it would appear that there are a small number of Members who fall way below the average.

2.4 Members are not expected to attend the same number of formal meetings each year. The number of attendances will depend on whether the Member is a Cabinet or Committee member and the frequency of the meetings held during the year. By way of comparison some Members were expected to attend in excess of 25 formal meetings during 2023-24 whilst others were required to attend fewer than 10 formal meetings. In relation to percentage attendance:

- 14 Members attended 100% of meetings
- 16 Members attended 90-99% of meetings
- 16 Members attended 80-89% of meetings
- 8 Members attended 70-79% of meetings
- 6 Members attended 60-69% of meetings
- 2 Members attended 50-59% of meetings
- 1 Member attended 45% of meetings
- 1 Member attended 33% of meetings

2.5 Committee will be aware that should a Member not attend meetings for six consecutive months, they would be disqualified from office by virtue of section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972. During 2023-24, no Members have failed to attend meetings throughout a period of six consecutive months resulting in vacation of office under section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972.

2.6 No Derbyshire County Council meetings have been cancelled as a result of the meeting not being quorate.

2.7 Therefore, there is no cause for concern in terms of member development or effectiveness of the political structure.

3. Consultation

3.1 As this is with regard to an administrative function, consultation is not required.

4. Alternative Options Considered

4.1 The Committee could choose not to consider the position regarding the attendance of members at meetings. However, this would not be in accordance with the Terms of Reference for the Governance, Ethics and Standards Committee which do require the Committee to consider this.

5. Implications

5.1 Appendix 1 sets out the relevant implications considered in the preparation of the report.

6. Background Papers

6.1 None identified.

7. Appendices

7.1 Appendix 1 – Implications

8. Recommendation(s)

That Committee:

- a) notes position with regard to member attendance at meetings;
- b) considers whether there is further information that may assist the committee in its task of monitoring attendance of members; and
- c) is satisfied that there is no cause for concern with regarding to member development and the effectiveness of the political structure.

9. Reasons for Recommendation(s)

- 9.1 The Terms of Reference for the Governance, Ethics and Standards Committee require the Committee to monitor the attendance of members at meetings of the County Council and its committees on an annual basis. Therefore, it is appropriate for the Committee to consider this report and the statistics demonstrating the level of attendance.
- 9.2 To promote a culture of openness, ready accountability and probity in order to ensure the highest standards of conduct of Councillors as required by the Terms of Reference for the Committee.

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Implications

Financial

1.1 None directly arising.

Legal

2.1 As set out in the report.

Human Resources

3.1 None directly arising.

Information Technology

4.1 None directly arising.

Equalities Impact

5.1 None directly arising.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

6.1 This report links to the Council Priority of 'High Performing value for Money and Resident Focused Services'. The monitoring supports efficient, effective and lawful decision making.

Other (for example, Health and Safety, Environmental, Sustainability, Property and Asset Management, Risk Management and Safeguarding)

7.1 None directly arising.