

West Surrey Shadow Authority		
Report title: Review of 2026/27 Shadow Authority Council & Committee Meeting Times		
Report to: Standards Committee		
Date: 6 July 2026		
Executive Portfolio Holder: Cllr Victoria Kiehl, Portfolio Holder for Governance, Democracy and Corporate Services		
Report of: Susan Sale, Monitoring Officer (interim)		
Report author(s): Democratic Services sub-workstream, Constitutional & Shadow Authority Workstream		
Wards affected: All		
Ward councillors informed: No		
Exempt from publication: No		
Key Decision: No	If a Key Decision, date registered on Forward Plan: Not applicable	
Report cleared for publication by:		
Workforce & People	Shella Smith	18 June 2026
Equalities	Vicky Hibbert	17 June 26
SRO (or their delegate)	Nicola Kilvington	23 June 26
Chief Finance Officer	Vicky Radford	21 June 26
Monitoring Officer	Susan Sale	25 June 26
Executive Portfolio Holder consultation		23 June 26
Chair of Standards Committee consultation		23 June 26
Head of Paid Service	Susan Sale on behalf of Andy Brown	23 June 26

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1** During the debate, at the inaugural meeting of the West Surrey Shadow Authority (WSSA) on 21 May 2026, on the proposed Schedule of Meetings, councillors expressed views on when shadow meetings should take place in order to ensure that shadow councillors are able to attend and fully participate as there were concerns about meetings taking place at the originally proposed 2pm start time.
- 1.2** Following the debate, WSSA approved all meeting dates, times and locations up to and including 30 July 2026, subject to the start time of the next meeting of Full Council, on 30 July 2026, being amended to 7pm. WSSA also agreed that the issue of the accessibility of council meetings for councillors be referred to the Standards Committee for consideration and to review the proposed Schedule of Meetings, having conducted an Equalities Impact Screening Assessment and consulted with the Leader. The matter would then be reported back to the Shadow Authority meeting on 30 July 2026.
- 1.3** The Standards Committee is asked to consider the implications of changing the proposed start times of shadow authority and committee meetings in the shadow year taking into account the impact different start times will have on councillors, staff and residents. Due to the complexities of managing the shadow authority meeting dates alongside the sovereign councils, this review has considered changing the start times of meetings and not changing the proposed dates.
- 1.4** The report sets out background research into authorities that have undergone Local Government Reorganisation and looks at other research undertaken into local government meeting accessibility.
- 1.5** Options are proposed for consideration by the Standards Committee to allow them to agree a proposal for future committee dates during the shadow period to put forward to the Shadow Authority at its meeting on 30 July 2026. It also sets out the further proposed work to be undertaken to prepare a schedule of meetings for West Surrey Council post vesting day (1 April 2027).

2 Recommendations:

That the Standards Committee resolves to:

- 2.1** **Consider the options (set out in paragraph 11) for future Shadow Authority committee meetings dates and agree a proposal for future meeting times for the duration of the ‘shadow authority’ term (to 31 March 2027) taking into account the research and background information set out within the report.**

- 2.2** **Agree the next steps for proposing and agreeing future meeting dates from 1 April 2027 (post vesting day), as set out in paragraphs 4.1 and 4.2.**
- 2.3** **Recommend the proposal for future meeting times for the remainder of the shadow period (as agreed in recommendation 2.1) to the Shadow Authority for consideration at its meeting on 30 July 2026.**

3 Reason(s) for recommendation:

- 3.1** (Recommendation at 2.1) To ensure that meeting times during the shadow period are properly considered and do not interfere with the work of sovereign authorities, or compromise attendance by councillors who are 'twin', 'triple' or 'quadruple' hatters.
- 3.2** (Recommendation at 2.2) To ensure that the approach to further work for the schedule of meetings from 1 April 2027 (post vesting day) is agreed.
- 3.3** (Recommendation at 2.3) Following consideration of the recommendations made to it by the Standards Committee, the Shadow Authority has the authority to approve the final recommendation. This will be considered in the wider context of equalities, accessibility and public engagement and in line with best practice, in order to maximise the potential for participation.
- 3.4** **Next steps**
- 3.5** This report, along with the views of the Shadow Standards Committee will be presented for consideration at the West Surrey Shadow Authority meeting on 30 July 2026.
- 3.6** It is proposed that a comprehensive exercise be undertaken in September 2026 to develop a proposed schedule of meetings for West Surrey Council that will run from 1 April 2027. This will involve seeking the views of councillors, revisiting best practice principles (as outlined in paragraph 7) and taking into account the increased number of committees that the authority will need to have in place once it has assumed full responsibility for council functions from the predecessor councils.

4 Exemption from publication

- 4.1** This report is not exempt from publication.

5 Background and Proposal

- 5.1** Parameters of the review

- 5.2** The Standards Committee is asked to consider the implications of changing the proposed start times of shadow authority and committee meetings in the shadow year taking into account the impact different start times will have on councillors, staff and residents. Due to the complexities of managing the shadow authority meeting dates alongside the sovereign councils, this review has considered changing the start times of meetings and not changing the proposed dates.
- 5.3** Background research and best practice case studies
- 5.4** This section of the report sets out research and current thought in this area, including both barriers to participation and examples of good practice, to identify principles that encourage inclusivity for elected representatives and potential candidates.
- 5.5** Although the amount of research in this area is surprisingly modest, useful practice, thought and guidance does exist from which some important general principles can be drawn. There is also helpful consideration, and application, of the issues in Welsh local authorities where [regulations](#) and associated [statutory guidance](#) has been issued, to which (Welsh) local authorities must have regard in respect of the times and intervals at which meetings of a local authority are held.
- 5.6** Examples of research and best practice has also been drawn from those unitary authorities created since 2020 as part of local government change programmes, namely Buckinghamshire, North Northamptonshire, West Northamptonshire, Cumberland, Westmorland & Furness, North Yorkshire, and Somerset.
- 5.7** **Groups with the potential to be negatively impacted by meeting start times**
- 5.7.1** Women in local government
- 5.7.2** In 2017 a report was published in England – [The Final Report of the Local Government Commission by the Fawcett Society](#) - looking at barriers to the participation of women in local government and amongst its findings said that:
- “Many women councillors face significant barriers from the inflexibility of meeting times, and almost two thirds of women councillors feel that changing this will bring more women in”*
- 5.7.3** People with caring responsibilities in local government
- 5.7.4** People with caring responsibilities also face barriers to meeting attendance where they have to arrange care for others in their place.

5.7.5 People with disabilities in local government

5.7.6 While accessibility, not for consideration in this report, is key to inclusion for those councillors with a physical disability, the Fawcett report, when considering timings of meetings refers to those councillors who have “*chronic or fluctuating conditions such as Crohn’s disease or ME*” and found that for these people “*the inflexibility of meeting times was an issue*”.

5.7.7 In their official [LGA Toolkit for Disabled Councillors](#), the Association also emphasises that rigid start times penalise councillors managing chronic, variable, or energy-limiting health conditions.

5.7.8 People in paid employment in local government

5.7.9 Many councillors will undertake their public duties alongside paid employment, and this balance can be difficult where meeting times are not carefully considered, for example some councillors may find it difficult to attend daytime meetings.

5.8 Potential mitigations

5.8.1 Support to attend meetings for those in employment

5.8.2 Section 50 of the Employment Rights Act 1996 entitles councillors to time off for public duties but in practice this will often require leave to be booked, and some employers are more sympathetic to this requirement than others.

5.8.3 Consultation and flexibility

5.8.4 The Fawcett and the LGA toolkit both recommend that councils should consult on meeting times before agreeing any schedule and that this schedule should be properly tailored to take into account the survey results.

5.8.5 In Wales, this is already included in statutory guidance with councils being expected to survey their councillors at least once per term, shortly after each election, to assess their preferences and be committed to act on the conclusions.

5.8.6 Further considerations

5.8.7 In 2012, a Parliamentary Select Committee (Communities and Local Government) heard evidence from the Chair of a previous commission on a similar topic of Councillor representation. While the evidence was

some time ago, it is still relevant. Dame Jane Roberts said of that Commission:

“We recommended that councils should adopt modern business and meeting processes which seek to remove potential barriers to participation. These should include accessible meeting times (not necessarily in the day, and with specified end times), efficient chairing, the use of modern technology where appropriate, support for childcare, and concise paperwork. We felt strongly that councillors should be able to work in a variety of other employments, have domestic commitments, and be a councillor”

- 5.8.8 These recommendations show that there are various considerations and mitigations that should be considered to ensure that local government is as inclusive as possible, with meeting times forming part of that picture.
- 5.8.9 One matter not considered in this report but widely supported as key to inclusivity is the ability of councils to hold hybrid meetings – the government has indicated that it intends to legislate for such meetings but as yet has not and those committees convened under the powers of the Local Government Act 1972 must meet in-person.

6 Unitary authorities meeting times

- 6.1 Those unitary authorities formed since 2020 do not all follow the same practice in relation to meeting start times.
- 6.2 The following information has been collated from council websites – it is not a scientific exercise as each council’s governance structure is established in order to meet to its own needs, but it may be useful to councillors as a guide:

Council		Council	Cabinet	Committees	Scrutiny	Planning (and similar)	Community Forums (and similar)
Buckinghamshire		16:00	10:00	16:00	10:00	18:00	18:00
N. Northamptonshire		18:00	10:00	Various	19:00	19:00	Various
W. Northamptonshire		17:00	18:00	18:00	18:00	18:00	Various
Cumberland		13:00	10:30	10:30	10:30	10:30	18:00
West Morland & Furness		13:30	10:00	Various	Various	Various (daytime)	18:00
N. Yorkshire		10:30	11:00	10:00	10:00	14:00	10:00
Somerset		13:00	10:00	Various (daytime)	Various (daytime)	14:00	N/a

- 6.3 Where the information is available on the council’s website for shadow authority meeting times, these are set out below:

Council			Council	Cabinet	Scrutiny
Buckinghamshire			16:00	10:00	18:00
N.Northamptonshire			19:00	19:00	18:00
W.Northamptonshire			19:00	18:00	18:00
Cumberland			10:30	10:30	
West Morland & Furness			Various (daytime)	10:00	
N.Yorkshire			Not available on the Council website		
Somerset			18:00	16:30	

6.4 There is some differentiation between shadow year meetings and those following vesting day and notably post vesting day a variety of times for meetings across the councils and within each council.

6.5 Further detailed research would need to be undertaken to establish the process by which the times were agreed upon should councillors think it useful to their consideration of the matter.

7 Adhering to best practice guidance and future arrangements

7.1 Best practice would suggest that a consultation should be undertaken to identify what the current cohort of councillors would find most useful.

7.2 This may be at authority level, at individual committee level, or both.

7.3 Equalities information should also be considered in order that the needs of not only current councillors, but prospective candidates and members of the public are also taken into account.

7.4 A variety of meeting times is likely to be most beneficial taking into account the types of meetings, numbers and types of attendees (including councillors, officers and witnesses) and the volume of democratic meetings for the whole authority.

7.5 Best practice also suggests that a guillotine be provided for in the council's constitution and adhered to in meetings – something that the West Surrey Shadow Authority has already provided for (three hours) in its Constitution.

7.6 Practically, any consultation and proper consideration of the results, will take time to undertake and would lend itself more reasonably to the agreement of times for the meetings post vesting day (1 April 2027).

7.7 In addition, a deferred decision on meeting times would allow for a clearer picture on hybrid meetings to emerge as this could influence decision making on the matter.

The government has said that

“The government is of the view that in-person authority meetings remain vital for local democracy, but that hybrid and remote attendance, and proxy

voting, will enable local authorities in England to develop more modern, accessible, and flexible working practices.

We have carefully considered arguments for and against remote attendance and proxy voting, and we plan to legislate to support permanent provision in relation to both policies, when parliamentary time allows.”

8 Analysis of sovereign council meeting schedules

- 8.1** The [meeting schedule](#) reviewed (and agreed up to 31 July 2026) by the West Surrey Shadow Authority on 21 May 2026 has been compared with sovereign council meeting schedules to identify times which can be facilitated without a clash of meeting, venue or support staff.
- 8.2** Availability was compared on the basis of four possible start times for each meeting date: **10am, 2pm, 5pm and 7pm**. These times were selected as they provide a broad range of options for each date and would be likely to provide sufficient time for a meeting to be held and complete the business on the agenda. Potential clashes with committee meetings held by sovereign councils were also taken into account.
- 8.3** The results of this comparison have been analysed to identify start times which are consistently available throughout the Shadow Authority year for each committee. The results of this analysis are as follows (and summarised in Table 1 below):
- 8.3.1 Shadow Authority:** Meetings could commence at 2pm or 7pm on all dates. The other start times were not consistently available on all dates. It should be noted that sovereign councils have meetings which clash with a 7pm start time, and these are likely to affect a number of West Surrey councillors who are also Borough/District Councillors. Affected councillors would be unable to attend either the Shadow Authority or sovereign council meeting if this start time is selected.
- 8.3.2 Executive:** Meetings could commence at 10am or at 2pm on all dates. The other start times were not consistently available on all dates. *(It should be noted that following discussions with the Interim Statutory Officers, the Leader of West Surrey Shadow Authority has already agreed that the West Surrey Shadow Executive will take place at 10am and this has been actioned.)*
- 8.3.3 Overview and Scrutiny Committee:** Meetings could commence at 10am or at 2pm on all dates. The other start times were not consistently available on all dates.
- 8.3.4 Audit & Governance Committee:** Meetings could commence at 2pm or 5pm on all dates. The other start times were not consistently available on all dates.

8.3.5 **Standards Committee:** Meetings could commence at 2pm on all dates. The other start times were not consistently available on all dates.

8.3.6 **Employment Committee:** Meetings could commence at 10am or at 2pm on all dates. The other start times were not consistently available on all dates.

Table 1: Summary of start time availability when compared with sovereign council meeting schedules

Meeting	Host	Start time (if consistent for all meetings during Shadow Authority year)			
		10am	2pm	5pm	7pm
Shadow Authority	Guildford Borough Council Offices	Not Possible	Possible	Not Possible	Possible*
Executive	Woking Borough Council Offices	Possible	Possible	Not Possible	Not Possible
Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Runnymede Borough Council Offices	Possible	Possible	Not Possible	Not Possible
Audit & Governance Committee	Waverley Borough Council Offices	Not Possible	Possible	Possible	Not Possible
Standards Committee	Spelthorne Borough Council Offices	Not Possible	Possible	Not Possible	Not Possible
Employment Committee	Surrey Heath Borough Council Offices	Possible	Possible	Not Possible	Not Possible

*Note: creates clashes with sovereign District and Borough Council committee meetings.

Principles of meeting scheduling

8.4 Meeting start times and venues are normally scheduled to be consistent throughout a council year for each committee. This provides clarity and certainty to councillors, residents and officers. It also facilitates effective administration of meetings and calendar management, as well as enabling the calendar of meetings to be approved rather than considering each individual meeting independently. Meetings which do not use the usual venue or start time should be exceptions agreed as necessary.

- 8.5** The schedules of meetings for the Shadow Period were prepared in consultation with the Joint Committees and due to the complexities of scheduling meetings, it was accepted that it would be challenging to coordinate dates for the Shadow Period. The West Surrey Joint Committee considered the draft schedule at its meeting on 13 March 2026 and noted the potential for holding Shadow Authority meetings in the evening, with the remainder of committee meetings during the day.
- 8.6** The key principle in scheduling shadow authority meetings has been to avoid clashes with sovereign council meetings; for the County Council, these are usually held in the morning (10 am or 10.30am start) with the exception of Cabinet meetings which are held at 2pm; for the District/Borough Councils, these are usually held in the evening, where meeting start times vary between 6.30pm and 7.30pm, with the exception of some Licensing Sub Committees which are held during the working day.
- 8.7** Holding meetings during the working day disadvantages councillors who have daytime employment; however, for councillors with parental or caring responsibilities, it can be easier to arrange childcare or carers' respite during working hours. For parents with school age children, holding meetings at 10am is more beneficial as this avoids both the morning and afternoon school run. These issues also apply to any members of the public wishing to attend meetings.
- 8.8** Transport is also a consideration – public transport is generally less readily available following late night meeting finishes, depending on location. There may be personal safety issues associated with using public transport late at night. For councillors, officers and members of the public travelling by private car, avoiding the morning and evening rush hours will be a consideration.
- 8.9** Consideration should be given to the distance councillors could be expected to travel following the late conclusion of a meeting.
- 8.10** There may be additional costs associated with holding council meetings outside of regular working hours, such as building security and utilities costs, staff overtime costs and the cost of additional Member expenses claims (for example, taxi fares).
- 8.11** The impact of the rules on the duration of meetings is another consideration to ensure that there is sufficient time to complete the necessary business as required. The Constitution makes provision for a meeting to run for three hours, unless members vote to continue it. There should also be consideration of the quality of decision making later in an evening.

9 Consultation

- 9.1** A formal consultation has not been undertaken with councillors for the purposes of this report however research into what other authorities have in place and initial WSSA member views have been taken into consideration when formulating options.
- 9.2** The West Surrey Shadow Standards Committee feedback will be included when the report is presented to the Shadow Authority.
- 9.3** For proposals around meeting dates and times from 1 April 2027, it is proposed that a full consultation exercise will be undertaken in September to seek views on potential meeting times from 1 April 2027.
- 9.4** Consultation has been undertaken with the Leader of West Surrey Shadow Executive, who has confirmed that all meetings of the Shadow Executive will commence at 10.00am. The Schedule has been amended to reflect that.
- 9.5** Consultation has also been undertaken with the Portfolio Holder for Governance, Democracy and Corporate Services. The Portfolio Holder's feedback is summarised as follows:
- Could members include consideration of 12 noon for formal meetings;
 - the start time does not need to be the same for different committees - for full meetings of the Shadow Authority maximising attendance by members is critical and evening meetings best achieve that;
 - Current members of each Committee should be asked for their views now; it would be a fair approach to allow committees to agree their own start time; and
 - Could the committee consider the geography of West Surrey and the miles members may have to travel in determining times when making its recommendations.

10 Key Risks

- 10.1** There is a risk that if the shadow committee meeting times do not align with councillors expectations and ability to attend that meetings will not be quorate and necessary committee business and decision making will not be able to take place.
- 10.2** There is a risk that the shadow authority may not be able to attract and retain staff in key areas where regular evening attendance at meetings is

required. There is also a risk of not being able to attract and secure witness attendance by partners at meetings outside of the traditional working day.

11 Options

11.1 Option 1:

Recommend adopting the originally proposed start time of 2pm (and previously agreed deviations) for the remainder of the shadow year.

Pros: This option aligns with the originally proposed governance arrangements, supports officer availability and operational efficiency and reduces additional costs.

Cons: This option may disadvantage councillors with employment or other daytime commitments, as well as be less accessible to the public and conflict with meetings in constituent local authorities.

Risks: Reduced attendance is likely to affect representation and create perception of reduced transparency and accessibility.

Mitigation: Schedule meetings well in advance, provide clear public access to agendas and recordings.

11.2 Option 2:

Recommend alternative proposed start times as follows:

- 11.2.1 Executive meetings to take place at 10am (as already agreed by the Leader of West Surrey Shadow Authority)**
- 11.2.2 Employment Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings to take place at 10am or 2pm**
- 11.2.3 Audit and Governance Committee meetings to take place at 2pm or 5pm**
- 11.2.4 Standards Committee meetings at 2pm**
- 11.2.5 Shadow authority meetings to take place at 2pm or 7pm**

Pros: This option is convenient for a variety of councillors and recognises the various different types of committee, numbers of attendees and special responsibility roles. It also supports inclusivity and still provides opportunity for public attendance.

Cons: Attendance could be compromised at either shadow authority or sovereign council meetings where there are meeting clashes.

Additional cost implications, resourcing pressures on officers and potential for reduced availability for key officers and/or witnesses to attend are a consideration for evening meetings.

Risks: Potential to isolate some councillors. Potential reduced administrative capacity to provide democratic services support and delay where urgent follow-up actions are required outside working hours for evening meetings.

Mitigation: Agree officer attendance model and build in support arrangements.

11.3 Option 3:

The Committee may wish to put forward one preferred start time for all shadow authority meetings

Pros: Member-lead approach reflects preferences of those who are required to attend and improves engagement, buy-in and attendance.

Cons: Potential delay in implementation and added administrative complexity.

Risks: Increased likelihood of meeting clashes and consequential inefficiencies in the governance arrangements.

Mitigation: The Committee to agree a preferred standard time.

12 Issues for consideration

12.1 Financial implications

- 12.1.1 There may be additional financial implications relating to holding meetings in the evening due to the use of buildings outside of regular office hours as well as payment of committee attendance allowance to Democratic Services staff (where applicable).
- 12.1.2 The Members' Allowances Scheme identifies two types of child and dependants' allowances. Whilst childcare is linked to a fixed rate, specialist care can be reimbursed at cost upon production of receipts, which may result in higher rates depending upon when the provision of specialist care is typically more expensive.
- 12.1.3 There is an assumption that the Members' Allowances Scheme makes provision via both the basic allowance and any Special Responsibilities Allowances to compensate councillors by way of loss of earnings and enable people to fulfil their councillor role. The reduced allowances

agreed for the shadow year reflect that full responsibility for functions has not yet been transferred from sovereign councils and that post vesting day, there will be additional governance and decision making required which will need to be accommodated both financially but also through an increased number of committee meetings.

12.2 Section 151 Officer Commentary

- 12.2.1 West Surrey Council will operate in a very challenging financial environment, with significant budgetary pressures from increasing demand and costs of service delivery, coupled with limited financial resources and reducing government funding from its inception. West Surrey Council will be increasingly reliant on Council Tax as the primary source of income.
- 12.2.2 Decisions made by the sovereign councils in West Surrey and the West Surrey Shadow Authority will need to consider the ongoing financial impact of those decisions and ensure that expenditure does not exceed the resources available. It is vital that significant importance is placed on effective financial management and medium-term financial sustainability to achieve a balanced budget position and protect service delivery.
- 12.2.3 Any direct cost implication of evening meetings will need to be put forward in the West Surrey budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy for 2027/28. There could also be Indirect cost implications (such as time off in lieu) that would also need to be identified.

12.3 Legal implications

- 12.3.1 The timing of local authority committee meetings is not prescribed by statute and is a matter for each authority to determine, but the arrangements must be sufficient to enable the authority to discharge its functions effectively and in accordance with public law principles.
- 12.3.2 Committee meetings should support timely decision making on key matters ahead of vesting day.

12.4 Monitoring Officer Commentary

- 12.4.1 West Surrey Shadow Authority has a duty to be inclusive and consider the public sector equality duty. Consideration needs to be given to councillors and their ability to fully engage and fulfil their role, officers and employment obligations towards them, and most importantly the outcome of residents, communities, partners and stakeholders and their ability to engage with the democratic process.

- 12.4.2 Such issues are addressed within the report and members will need to balance different and competing factors to come to a reasonable outcome for the shadow period, in the confidence that a full consultation process will take place when bringing forwards proposals for a post vesting day schedule of meetings.

12.5 Workforce Considerations

- 12.5.1 There are workforce implications arising from the proposed meeting time options, particularly where meetings are held outside normal working hours. Evening meetings may create additional resourcing pressures for Democratic Services and other officers required to attend, including potential overtime or allowance costs, reduced officer availability, and the need to ensure appropriate support arrangements are in place. There may also be staff wellbeing and personal safety considerations linked to late travel, as well as a potential impact on the Shadow Authority's ability to attract and retain staff in roles requiring regular evening attendance. These issues may be exacerbated by officers continuing to provide a service to their sovereign council during the Shadow Period. These implications should be considered alongside member accessibility, public participation and the practical arrangements needed to support effective decision making during the shadow period.

12.6 Equality and Diversity Considerations

- 12.6.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:
- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc. on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful.
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- 12.6.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).
- 12.6.3 An initial Equalities Impact Assessment Screening Tool has been used to identify potential impacts (Appendix 1). This indicates that the various proposals set out within this report could potentially have an adverse impact on any people with a particular protected characteristic depending on what decision is put forward in relation to the times of

future committee meetings. A summary of the potential areas for consideration can be found below.

- 12.6.4 Holding meetings during the daytime will potentially impact on councillors of working age and be a barrier to them being able to attend. However, evening meetings could also impact on older people who may have concerns about travelling at night and there could be a perception of increased health and safety risks.
- 12.6.5 Residents may experience a similar impact with regards to ability to attend meetings in the working day and staff may also share concerns about travel and personal safety for attendance at evening meetings.
- 12.6.6 There could be an impact on residents, councillors and staff with disabilities with regards to meetings being held in the evening with some not wanting to have to travel at night or not having access to support services to enable them to attend and participate in an evening meeting.
- 12.6.7 There are also considerations to be made regarding religion and belief as evening meetings could potentially have an impact on Muslim councillors during Ramadan.
- 12.6.8 Personal safety is another area that could have an impact and in particular women could potentially be impacted as some may feel unsafe attending a meeting taking place in the evening including the associated travel to and from the meeting. This could also be applied to pregnant and/or breastfeeding mothers.
- 12.6.9 Following review and discussion by the Standards Committee and once there is a confirmed agreed proposal regarding future meeting times to take forward to the Shadow Authority for decision, a full Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken.

Overview & Scrutiny Comments

- 12.7 Not applicable

13 List of Appendices

- 13.1 Appendix 1 - Equality Impact Assessment Screening Tool

14 List of Background papers

14.1 West Surrey Shadow Authority proposed schedule of meetings 21 May 2026.