

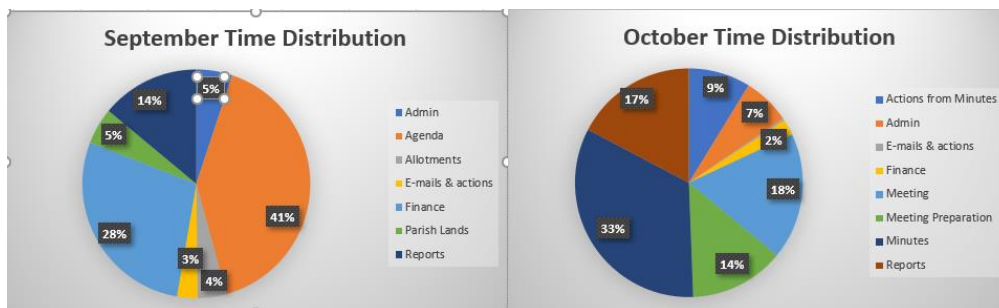
Proposal to amend Ordinary Council Meeting Cycle

The purpose of the meetings is to undertake any substantive business:

- Responding to consultations which have an impact on the parish (for example, planning)
- making decisions which give the Council authority to undertake the project work it has identified as necessary or desirable for the community; and
- authorising any additional spending not already approved in the annual budget.

Where necessary, an extra-ordinary meeting to consider any urgent matter which must be dealt with before the next ordinary meeting can be scheduled.

As part of the preparation of the draft budget, the Clerk has reviewed how her time is allocated to different activities which support the Parish Council. To do this, a free time recording software package has been used. The basic results have shown that a high proportion of each month is spent supporting the monthly meetings through agenda, report and meeting preparation, the meetings themselves, and subsequent minutes and actions (September 55%, October 82%).



This has an impact on the available time for project activities, for example:

- Research
- Allotment records
- Highways/VAS
- Play areas
- Budget preparation, year end and audit

and it is acknowledged that it is not always been possible to progress each project as far as would be wished between meetings as a result.

In order to free up more time for the project work which is both an essential part of the business of the Parish Council and highly desired by its members, a more time efficient approach would be to reduce the number of ordinary Council meetings, and schedule them at those times of the year when substantive business is undertaken. The benefit of this would be a reduction in the overall proportion of the Clerk's time spent supporting the meeting, freeing up more time between meetings to research, coordinate and deliver specific projects. Any urgent and unplanned for decisions could then be dealt with by means of an Extra-ordinary meeting for that specific issue.

Having looked at the scheduled work across the meeting calendar, an alternative meeting pattern which could be trialled might be:

January	Set final budget & precept, appoint internal auditor
March	Review policies, finalise contracts for next financial year Disburse any grants to village organisation or charities
May	Year end accounts, financial risk assessment Approve policies Annual Meeting & Parish Meeting Appointments
June	Sign off on risk assessment, internal audit, AGAR & period of public inspection of annual accounts.
August	General Business
October	Review contracts, fees & charges in advance of budget Review any comments from External Auditor
December	Draft budget

The key pinch points are March to May, preparation of year end accounts, internal audit and the annual meetings, and for this reason it is recommend that there are more frequent meetings in this period.

The move to internet banking, supported by the approved budget and BACS payments will address any issues of timely payment on invoices, and reduce the likelihood of high value uncleared payments at year end.

Recommendation:

Adjust the schedule of meetings in 2020 to that set out above as a trial for the financial year 2020/21 and review at the end of 2020 to establish whether additional meetings need to be scheduled.