

Would you be content for virtual / hybrid Area Forums, instead of Area Committees?	If you are happy with the idea of Area Forums, would you like grant applications to go to Area Forum meetings (virtually) and make recommendations on these to the Executive Member, or for these to a central panel?	Would you be happy for any Committee or Council meeting to start earlier, and if so:	Could any meeting start in the daytime	If yes, which meetings would you be happy to start in the daytime?	Do you have any other suggestions regarding meetings / removal of any Committees or arrangement you believe we can provide in a different and or more community engaging or efficient way?
--	---	--	--	--	--

1	No	Grants to still go to Area Forum	6:00pm;	Yes	Licensing, FARC	I do not believe that remote meetings help community engagement, in fact if anything, the opposite. We need to find ways of meeting members of the community face to face with something useful to discuss. Councillors' surgeries seem to achieve this and could provide some discussion points.
2	Yes	Grants to still go to Area Forum	No;	No		My concern about earlier meeting times is that it could limit the choice of members to those who are available in the daytime - not full time workers or those with child care commitments. I think that it is important that we have members from diverse backgrounds and age groups. Have we looked at the makeup of these committees?
3	Yes	Grants to still go to Area Forum	7:00pm;	No		<p>I'm a 'younger' Councillor with a full time job, I work proactively to recruit more and more diverse Candidates, and am on the 'more active' and 'more willing' side when it comes to proactively supporting group business from the back bench. I find these recommendations somewhat demoralising as my hope as a new Councillor, motivated to become a councillor, and be content as a backbencher, was because of local community engagement. My hope was that my future contributions could be part of reinvigorating our community engagement, to make the surgeries, committee meetings, town talks more of a success. This feels like a death by a thousand cuts as I understand the presence of town in district council life has been whittled away continuously.</p> <p>Pros:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Merging the Committee Meetings and Town Talks makes sense. You could arrange the agenda so the more procedural business proceeds/succeeds the town talk aspect.</li> <li>2. Moving to a forum model also strongly appeals if it retains what powers the Area Committees have left and enables the agenda to be more dynamic, engaging and relevant to our residents. Enabling hybrid meetings is fantastic.</li> <li>3. Reducing unnecessary procedure/bureaucracy always a win.</li> </ol> <p>Cons:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Bringing more meetings into the day reduces the opportunities for full-time employed members and particularly those with London commutes. Any of the proposals should have an equalities review. A number of our active members, and active bank benchers, are full timers, new/newer, and will be looking for opportunities to deepen their practice as Councillors through committee roles, leadership opportunities etc. This will further privilege part time and retirees participation.</li> <li>5. In particular, if we're merging Town Talks with Committee meetings, I do think they need to be hybrid not virtual. Otherwise we're structurally excluding our older residents. I appreciate uptake is low...but there's a</li> </ol>

Would you be content for virtual / hybrid Area Forums, instead of Area Committees?	If you are happy with the idea of Area Forums, would you like grant applications to go to Area Forum meetings (virtually) and make recommendations on these to the Executive Member, or for these to a central panel?	Would you be happy for any Committee or Council meeting to start earlier, and if so:	Could any meeting start in the daytime	If yes, which meetings would you be happy to start in the daytime?	Do you have any other suggestions regarding meetings / removal of any Committees or arrangement you believe we can provide in a different and or more community engaging or efficient way?
--	---	--	--	--	--

					democratic deficit there. 6. Town often feels missing, the powers of the area committees - I understand have been reduced. For residents, much of their affinity is with town, the District is purely administrative. Where is the forum for that?
4	No	Grants to still go to Area Forum	6:00pm;	No	The changing of meetings to daytimes means that becoming a Cllr is less likely for the majority of working age people. To engage the community more perhaps moving area committees to weekend. But definitely taking them outside the council chamber and into the community.
5	No	Grants to go to a district panel, which has all the Area Forum Chairs as members	No;	No	Personally, I would abolish area committees as they serve little purpose other than to approve grants and therefore I support the idea that this responsibility could be discharged via a District wide Grants Committee. Whilst I acknowledge the differences proposed between an Area Committee and an Area Forum I don't believe this would improve engagement between Members of the Public and the Council and therefore I'm not supportive of this proposal. I know the Council holds a "pop-up Surgery" every month in Town Centres. This type of engagement is visible and accessible to residents as well as being informal when compared to a meeting, and therefore I feel we should look to build on this idea. In Rural Area's, the Council should think about strengthening relationships with Parish Council's. In Kimpton, Parish Council meetings are better attended than the Southern Rural Committee and is a forum for discussion and debate on a variety of local issues. The briefing we receive from the Constabulary during the area committee is very helpful however, we could invite them to present and take questions from Members at a Meeting of Full Council. Whilst I would be open having a discussion about moving the start time of meetings to 19:00, I'm against moving Statutory Committee meetings from an evening to during the day as for those Members who work Full Time this would be inconvenient.
6	Yes	Grants to still go to Area Forum	No;	No	Whilst I understand that we need an Audit Committee I really do not see why we need the other functions of Finance Audit and Risk.
7	Yes	Grants to still go to Area Forum	6:30pm;6:00pm;7:00pm;	Yes	Any - providing it doesn't disadvantage any member from attending I do appreciate the difficulties which all organisations have of encouraging greater and more diverse public participation particularly with the demands on peoples time and availability. All we can do is to continue to be as responsive and accommodating as possible to changed circumstances.
8	Yes	Grants to still go to Area Forum	6:30pm;7:00pm;	No	Ability to use a budget for larger hall/room bookings across an area to make meetings more accessible in person.

Would you be content for virtual / hybrid Area Forums, instead of Area Committees?	If you are happy with the idea of Area Forums, would you like grant applications to go to Area Forum meetings (virtually) and make recommendations on these to the Executive Member, or for these to a central panel?	Would you be happy for any Committee or Council meeting to start earlier, and if so:	Could any meeting start in the daytime	If yes, which meetings would you be happy to start in the daytime?	Do you have any other suggestions regarding meetings / removal of any Committees or arrangement you believe we can provide in a different and or more community engaging or efficient way?
--	---	--	--	--	--

9	Yes	Grants to still go to Area Forum	No;	Yes	The above mentioned ones. Anything in which we are trying to engage the public needs to be done in evenings. This includes Full Council, Panels, Cabinet and Planning.	No
10	Yes	Grants to go to a district panel, which has all the Area Forum Chairs as members	7:00pm;	Yes	Standards, licensing, any committee which meets infrequently and working members could realistically use flexible hours to facilitate. Avoid school run times.	Area Forums at Chairs' discretion should be able to meet in person from time to time when this is felt to be of benefit for effective engagement.

Would you be content for virtual / hybrid Area Forums, instead of Area Committees?	If you are happy with the idea of Area Forums, would you like grant applications to go to Area Forum meetings (virtually) and make recommendations on these to the Executive Member, or for these to a central panel?	Would you be happy for any Committee or Council meeting to start earlier, and if so:	Could any meeting start in the daytime	If yes, which meetings would you be happy to start in the daytime?	Do you have any other suggestions regarding meetings / removal of any Committees or arrangement you believe we can provide in a different and or more community engaging or efficient way?
--	---	--	--	--	--

11	Yes	Grants to go to a district panel, which has all the Area Forum Chairs as members	7:00pm;	No	<p>Town talks are an idea but can get hijacked by one issue visitors, which would require managing. Never been to Hitchin TT, but when we tried it in Letchworth as an area committee it failed because no one was bothered or had heard and when we had one with visitors it was on one issue alone and they left after voicing their opinion.</p> <p>Stop the need for getting a sub in advance. There are times when a member is delayed/unable to make it at short notice and I cannot see why it is essential to give advanced warning.</p> <p>If there are decisions to be taken you must have politically balanced meetings.</p> <p>Disagree that there is little time to interact when not in person. If they are registered to talk, they can interact. Which leads me on to time limits for speeches. This must be abolished and the sense of the chair person used. Time limits must be a guide. There is no worse way to make a visitor feel like they are being ignored, uncared for etc, when you shut them off after 5 minutes or sometimes less (but then give councillors and advocates longer as well).</p> <p>You can't start any earlier. I for one and I know others work 9 to 5 ish and a start at 6 would tend for me anyway to be worse than a late night. I don't think we are too late most of the time apart from planning. The best idea is coming now (even though I say so myself) put all Councillors on planning and rotate on a fortnightly basis. Two meetings a month with group A, B, C etc and we take it in turns. Put less on the agenda and give people time to discuss and voice concerns/opinions etc. The obvious downside is officer time, but if they can be rotated and virtual, that's a little help for them.</p>
12	Yes	Grants to still go to Area Forum	7:00pm;	No	Not currently.

Would you be content for virtual / hybrid Area Forums, instead of Area Committees?	If you are happy with the idea of Area Forums, would you like grant applications to go to Area Forum meetings (virtually) and make recommendations on these to the Executive Member, or for these to a central panel?	Would you be happy for any Committee or Council meeting to start earlier, and if so:	Could any meeting start in the daytime	If yes, which meetings would you be happy to start in the daytime?	Do you have any other suggestions regarding meetings / removal of any Committees or arrangement you believe we can provide in a different and or more community engaging or efficient way?
--	---	--	--	--	--

13	No	Grants to go to a district panel, which has all the Area Forum Chairs as members	7:00pm;	Yes	Only licensing subcommittees, which is what happens at the moment. The reason being that there are normally members of the public, Police, legal representatives. officers and members. Also, these meetings can take several hours and it would not be practical for them to start in the evening. This should not change.	I do not have a problem with abolishing area committees. I sit on the cabinet panel on the environment. I do not think it serves any purpose. It's just a talking shop for a few of the two or three usual members of the public. It has no power. It does not really engage with the public. Other the members of the public did initially attend and subsequently lost interest. I guess they are all a waste of members and officers time and money.
14	Yes	Grants to still go to Area Forum	No;	Yes	Standards and Licensing are infrequent and could therefore be held in the daytime	We could rationalise the Cabinet Panels!
15	No	Grants to go to a district panel, which has all the Area Forum Chairs as members	No;	Yes	FAR, O & S	The newly formed Cabinet Panels are superfluous as they have no decision making powers at all.

Would you be content for virtual / hybrid Area Forums, instead of Area Committees?	If you are happy with the idea of Area Forums, would you like grant applications to go to Area Forum meetings (virtually) and make recommendations on these to the Executive Member, or for these to a central panel?	Would you be happy for any Committee or Council meeting to start earlier, and if so:	Could any meeting start in the daytime	If yes, which meetings would you be happy to start in the daytime?	Do you have any other suggestions regarding meetings / removal of any Committees or arrangement you believe we can provide in a different and or more community engaging or efficient way?
--	---	--	--	--	--

16	Yes	Grants to go to a district panel, which has all the Area Forum Chairs as members	7:00pm;	Yes	Licensing but this relies on having members who are available during the day. FAR is the subject of the peer review and could be revamped so it is just audit so could be a day time meeting or early evening say 5 start but again depends on members availability Standards should be evening	Get rid of the panels - should have task and finish groups or review groups that look into a topic and end up with actions that are achievable for the Council to implement rather than just talking and thanking those who attended for coming . Area committees to be replaced by single grants Committee meets twice in civic year - Sept and March. Area Committees to be replaced by a 2 forums - North and south . 5 Area committees is just too many to resource.
17	No	Grants to still go to Area Forum	No;	No		if we wish to be inclusive and maximise our pool of potential Councillors we need to avoid daytime meeting and those sufficiently early in the evening to deter working members. To be most effective, Area Committees have to be a genuine community activity and attract as wide a range of attendees as possible. I am not convinced that moving on-line does that. Whilst it may make access easier for some sections of our community it will deter other. A concerted and imaginative effort to promote knowledge of Area Committees and encourage attendance would be welcome. I suspect we would be horrified if we knew few members of the community are aware of their existence. [Question 3 above needs to be struck out since it is loaded - if you answer 'no' to Q2 you should not be required to answer Q3.]
18	No	Grants to still go to Area Forum	No;	Yes	Licensing Sub-Committee	Area Committees and Town Talks should start slightly later to accommodate residents returning from work.
19	No	Grants to still go to Area Forum	7:00pm;	Yes	Licensing & Regulatory	No

Would you be content for virtual / hybrid Area Forums, instead of Area Committees?	If you are happy with the idea of Area Forums, would you like grant applications to go to Area Forum meetings (virtually) and make recommendations on these to the Executive Member, or for these to a central panel?	Would you be happy for any Committee or Council meeting to start earlier, and if so:	Could any meeting start in the daytime	If yes, which meetings would you be happy to start in the daytime?	Do you have any other suggestions regarding meetings / removal of any Committees or arrangement you believe we can provide in a different and or more community engaging or efficient way?
--	---	--	--	--	--

20	Yes	Grants to still go to Area Forum	No;	No		Flexible area forums are a good idea. Hybrid meetings are also a good solution but I realise government legislation does not allow this.
21	Yes	Grants to still go to Area Forum	No;	Yes	That would vary for me as I work full time but can adjust my working day if enough notice	No
22	Yes	Grants to still go to Area Forum	No;	No		Area forums - good idea, should be in person or hybrid.
23	Yes	Grants to go to a district panel, which has all the Area Forum Chairs as members	7:00pm;	Yes	Standards and licensing	Cabinet panels are a waste of time and resources and should be scrapped. Overview & Scrutiny should operate more along the lines of the Commons Select Committee concentrating on specific subjects With regards the area forums these should be held in differing locations within the community - again with a basic theme to the meeting.
24	Yes	Grants to still go to Area Forum	7:00pm;	No		Combining the Area Committee and Town Talk is a good idea and ensures consistency - there needs to be a mechanism for deciding the focus which will engage residents, I think a lot of that will be trial and error. It also shouldn't duplicate discussion that happens at other council meetings e.g. the cabinet panels. Any changes to start times should be trialled. There are pros and cons to bringing the meeting times earlier in the day. I can see benefit in starting at 7pm and seeing how that works.
25	Yes	Grants to go to a district panel, which has all the Area Forum Chairs as members	No;	Yes	Whichever have members with no daytime commitments	Allow all presentations from members of public to be via zoom at all meetings
26	Yes	Grants to still go to Area Forum	7:00pm;	Yes	Licensing & Regulatory	Not at this point in time
27	Yes	Grants to go to a district panel, which has all the Area Forum Chairs as members	6:00pm;6:30pm;	No		Any topics/areas of interest to be shared via social media and to hold special in forum meetings but generally virtual. This still makes it inclusive to those who would prefer to attend face to face.
28	Yes	Grants to still go to Area Forum	7:00pm;	No		Have community groups "own" the agenda of one meeting a year
29	Yes	Grants to still go to Area Forum	No;	No		No

Would you be content for virtual / hybrid Area Forums, instead of Area Committees?	If you are happy with the idea of Area Forums, would you like grant applications to go to Area Forum meetings (virtually) and make recommendations on these to the Executive Member, or for these to a central panel?	Would you be happy for any Committee or Council meeting to start earlier, and if so:	Could any meeting start in the daytime	If yes, which meetings would you be happy to start in the daytime?	Do you have any other suggestions regarding meetings / removal of any Committees or arrangement you believe we can provide in a different and or more community engaging or efficient way?
--	---	--	--	--	--

30	Yes	Grants to go to a district panel, which has all the Area Forum Chairs as members	No;	No		<p>For me, I feel that meetings starting during the day preclude Councillors in full time employment taking part in those meetings. This is unfortunately not very democratic and lowers the talent pool of people able to attend committees. This would also make a number of Councillors who are of working age disengage from the processes at the Council or prevent them for running to stand on the Council.</p> <p>I actually feel that holding area panels in a less formal setting is a good idea, with recommendations going to a central body to vote on, as long as the area panels views are always agreed with. problem with this however is you may find some area panels over ruled by Councillors who do not represent those areas.</p> <p>Community engagement is clearly an issue at North Herts, [officer] was doing a fantastic job but his post being removed seems counter productive to the aims of this survey. The only way you are going to have genuine community engagement is vitally important you bring the community to be involved in decision making processes.</p> <p>As an example, North Herts recently allocated £18,000 to help Royston Town centre, but no information was given to the public. I discussed it at Royston Town Council but the public's ideas would have been really useful on this. this wasn't possible with such a short turn around time. although the Town Council will certainly be able to do more next year.</p> <p>With the budget now set for next year, perhaps we could see a steer from the Council on what funds are being spent in each area, to ask residents if this is a good use of tax payers cash or not and actually allow people to put in bids for certain projects / ideas that will help areas other than Hitchin.</p>
31	Yes	Grants to still go to Area Forum	No;	No		Other than going virtual, I believe the committee system is fit for purpose.
32	Yes	Grants to still go to Area Forum	No;	Yes	FARC.	<p>Could Full Council have an informal element to allow public to engage remotely?</p> <p>Earlier meeting starts is a major issue for those who commute, especially with the very unreliable rail service.</p>
33	Yes	Grants to go to a district panel, which has all the Area Forum Chairs as members	6:00pm;	No		<p>Area committees going on tour. Environment panel to go to some places. Understand that there is virtually zero carbon emissions being on Zoom. Would like to see some changes with not all meetings being on Zoom or in the Council Chambers.</p>
34	Yes	Grants still to go to Area Forum	No;	No		No
35	Yes	Grants still to go to Area Forum	7pm	Yes	Down to availability	No

Would you be content for virtual / hybrid Area Forums, instead of Area Committees?	If you are happy with the idea of Area Forums, would you like grant applications to go to Area Forum meetings (virtually) and make recommendations on these to the Executive Member, or for these to a central panel?	Would you be happy for any Committee or Council meeting to start earlier, and if so:	Could any meeting start in the daytime	If yes, which meetings would you be happy to start in the daytime?	Do you have any other suggestions regarding meetings / removal of any Committees or arrangement you believe we can provide in a different and or more community engaging or efficient way?
--	---	--	--	--	--

36	No	Grants to go to area committees	No;	Yes	Licensing & Regulatory; Standards Committee	More town talks with area committees (don't have to be on the same night). No issue with virtual meetings, but restricted by law & regulations. Wouldn't have a problem with virtual area committees but we aren't allowed to do that. Area committees should look at Grant requests, but smaller numbers go to a local committee.
37	Yes	Grants to go to a district panel, which has all the Area Forum Chairs as members	No;	No		The ability to join all meetings via Zoom if on holiday.
38	No	Grants still to go to Area Forum	7pm	No		Some of the Panels are just talking shops.
39	Yes	Grants still to go to Area Forum	6pm onwards	No		Holding meetings in the local areas - to get the public to attend more.
40	Yes	Grants still to go to Area Forum	6:30pm onwards	No		Area Committees work and local people attend. If move to virtual would still like occasional in person meetings.
41	No	Grants still to go to Area Forum	No;	No		Keep Area Committees, don't start meetings earlier than 7:30pm as limiting to people who work. It would mean you can't stand as a District Councillor if you work, and it also limits people that come to speak at meetings.
42	No	Remain as is	7pm	No		Nothing
43	Yes	Grants still to go to Area Forum	No;	No	N/A	Panel discussions are less engaging for the community.
44	-	Via email	-	-	-	<p>My initial thought after reading this was regarding the public interaction and viewing. I am very confident that the public's knowledge of when these meetings take place is exceedingly low. They are poorly advertised (if at all) and so my first comments would be around how to increase communication regarding our meetings to the masses. I appreciate that they are readily and freely available on the NHC website, the amount of clicks needed to navigate to the list or meetings schedule is perhaps proving inhibitive. Is there any way we could get a report on hits to the specific page? Would it be worth having a short cut from the NHC home page or the landing page? Maybe the use of social media sites may prove of more value.</p> <p>I would also agree with you about attendance at grant meetings being the exception, although I would hardly say "well attended"</p> <p>Just FYI, in Baldock, we use Facebook to advertise the next Baldock Area Committee and Town Talks, along with posters we distribute ourselves. The attendance of which is very much dependant on the subject/s on the agenda. As an example, at a meeting we had jst before Christmas, we discussed a planning application for a homeless shelter in town. This created such interest that we had residents queuing out the door because the room was so full. So perhaps subject matter could be a factor in increasing attendance.</p>