

**Standing Orders Working Group update and schedule of meeting dates
2025/2027****Report by Saty Kaur, Chief Officer Corporate Solutions****Report for Decision****1 Recommendations**

Council is recommended to:

- Approve the updates to the Standing Orders (Appendix B) which includes changes to reflect the proposed process for recording private items (subject to approval of the next recommendation below)
- Approve the process for recording of private items as set out in paragraph 3.4 and 3.5 and in doing so agree that the Standing Orders and Scheme of Administration are updated to implement the process as set out in paragraph 3.6 to 3.8
- Approve the schedule of meetings dates for 2025/26 and 2026/27 (Appendix C)

2 Purpose of Report/Executive Summary

To update the Standing Orders, provide Council with the future meeting schedule for the next two academic years and agree a process for the recording of private items of meetings of Council and its Committees.

Date Monday 20 January 2024

Report Contact:

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3 Background/Main Body of Report

Standing Orders updates

- 3.1** Appendix B presents an update to the Standing Orders. This was reviewed by Standing Orders Working Group (SOWG) at its meeting of Thursday 23 January 2025 and referred to Council for consideration and approval.

Recording of private items of Council meetings

- 3.2** The Midlothian Council meeting of 17th of December 2024 requested a process be designed and presented to its meeting of February 2025 for the recording of private Council agenda items.
- 3.3** A paper was presented to SOWG who agreed in principle and has referred the process to Council for its consideration and approval.
- 3.4** It is proposed that all private agenda items (for Council and its Committees) are automatically recorded via Microsoft Teams, and a recording and transcript of the recording is retained by Democratic Services for 6 months after the meeting date. The recording and transcript will be stored safely with limited access only accessible by Democratic Services.
- 3.5** Members of the Committee and relevant Officers may request access to the recording within the retention time of which Democratic Services will keep a record of. After 6 months from the meeting date, the recording and transcript will be destroyed, of which Democratic Services will keep a record of.
- 3.6** If agreed, Standing Orders will be amended (as set out in Appendix B).
- 3.7** If agreed, the Scheme of Administration will be updated. Wording would be added in the Minutes section:

Private items of any meeting agenda will be recorded and the recording retained by Democratic Services which will be accessible to all Elected Members and relevant Officers for 6 months from the date of the meeting.”

- 3.8** This will be amended under Midlothian Council, Cabinet, Performance Review and Scrutiny Committee, Audit Committee, Planning Committee, Local Review Body, General Purposes Committee, and the Police Fire and Rescue Board.

Schedule of meeting dates

- 3.9** Appendix C presents the proposed meeting cycle for two years – August 2025 – June 2026 and August 2026 – June 2027. The schedule takes into account the academic holidays and has been drafted to not hold meetings during Christmas/New Year, February and October midterms, Easter and summer holidays. As far as possible it is drafted to not issue papers during these times, with some exceptions where papers are issued on the last day of the holidays in order to meet Standing Orders for notice of meetings.
- 3.10** The Council currently operates on a six-weekly cycle of most of its governance meetings, with the exception of Police and Fire and Rescue Board which meets 4 times per annum and Audit Committee which has agreed to move to 4 times per annum at its November meeting. Council should note the schedule has been drafted with the assumption that Council will agree to the proposed changes to the Scheme of Administration to facilitate the Audit Committee frequency of meetings change (as per the report prior to this one on the Council agenda).
- 3.4** The schedule has two new entries (highlighted in green) from previous schedules. These are not included in the Scheme of Administration. These are contained in the schedule for ease of planning:
- Cost of Living Task Force was established by Council in 2022
 - Licensing Board dates have been proposed quarterly. Council should note that the approval of these dates will be by Licensing Board and are included in the schedule for information.
- 3.5** Council should note that meetings of the Midlothian Integration Joint Board (MIJB) and its sub-Committees are not included. The schedule of dates for these meetings are approved by the MIJB.
- 3.6** SOWG have reviewed the schedule of meeting dates and agreed to refer to Council for consideration and approval. Council should note there are some small changes to the schedule presented to SOWG. Upon further review of the proposed schedule, Council in May 2027 has been moved back by one week to accommodate the anticipated Local Government elections and allow for paper issue to take place after the election date (scheduled for 6 May 2027); which means that the time between May and June Councils in 2027 has reduced to 4 weeks. Other minor changes have been made to accommodate Committees prior to the election date and after the first meeting of Council.

4 Report Implications (Resource, Digital and Risk)

4.1 Resource

None

4.2 Digital

Covered by existing digital solutions.

4.3 Risk

Good governance requires Standing Orders to be kept up to date and meeting schedules to be prepared in advance.

4.4 Ensuring Equalities (if required a separate IIA must be completed)

This report does not recommend any change to policy or practice and therefore does not require an Equalities Impact Assessment.

4.4 Additional Report Implications (See Appendix A)

See Appendix A

Appendices

Appendix A – Additional Report Implications

Appendix B – Standing Orders (updated Feb 2025)

Appendix C – Proposed Schedule of Meeting Dates August 2025/June 2026 and August 2026/June 2027

APPENDIX A – Report Implications

A.1 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

Not applicable

A.2 Key Drivers for Change

Key drivers addressed in this report:

- Holistic Working
- Hub and Spoke
- Modern
- Sustainable
- Transformational
- Preventative
- Asset-based
- Continuous Improvement
- One size fits one
- None of the above

A.3 Key Delivery Streams

Key delivery streams addressed in this report:

- One Council Working with you, for you
- Preventative and Sustainable
- Efficient and Modern
- Innovative and Ambitious
- None of the above

A.4 Delivering Best Value

The report does not directly impact on Delivering Best Value but the absence of a schedule of meetings may result in delays in the ability to carry out proper scrutiny and ensure Best Value is secured in decisions made by the Council.

A.5 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

The report does not directly relate to involving communities

A.6 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

The absence of a schedule of meetings may impact on Midlothian Council's performance and outcomes.

A.7 Adopting a Preventative Approach

Not applicable

A.8 Supporting Sustainable Development

Not applicable